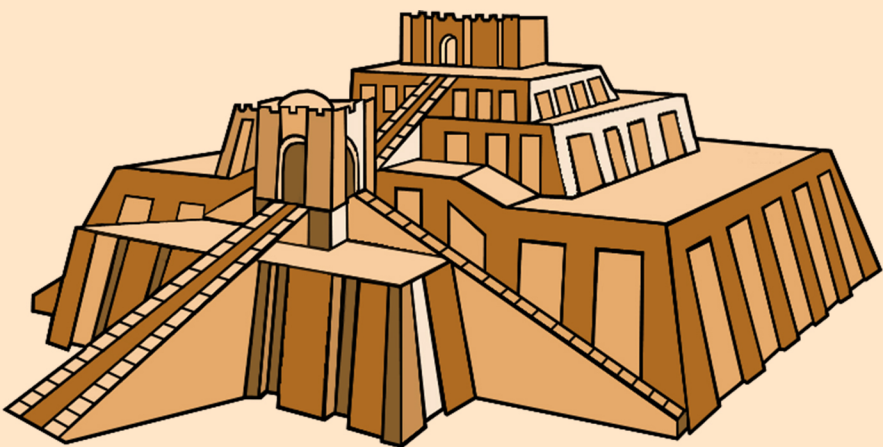


Ancient Civilizations

COURSE CODE: B21HS01DC



BACHELOR OF ARTS

HISTORY

SELF
LEARNING
MATERIAL



SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.



Ancient Civilizations

Course Code: B21HS01DC

Semester - I

Bachelor of Arts

History

Self Learning Material



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MESSAGE FROM VICE CHANCELLOR

Dear

I greet all of you with deep delight and great excitement. I welcome you to the Sreenarayanaguru Open University.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University was established in September 2020 as a state initiative for fostering higher education in open and distance mode. We shaped our dreams through a pathway defined by a dictum 'access and quality define equity'. It provides all reasons to us for the celebration of quality in the process of education. I am overwhelmed to let you know that we have resolved not to become ourselves a reason or cause a reason for the dissemination of inferior education. It sets the pace as well as the destination. The name of the University centres around the aura of Sreenarayanaguru, the great renaissance thinker of modern India. His name is a reminder for us to ensure quality in the delivery of all academic endeavours.

Sreenarayanaguru Open University rests on the practical framework of the popularly known "blended format". Learner on distance mode obviously has limitations in getting exposed to the full potential of classroom learning experience. Our pedagogical basket has three entities viz Self Learning Material, Classroom Counselling and Virtual modes. This combination is expected to provide high voltage in learning as well as teaching experiences. Care has been taken to ensure quality endeavours across all the entities.

The university is committed to provide you stimulating learning experience. The UG programme in History is structured with due care for the recent trends in the historical knowledge. The concept, methodology and interpretations were presented as a coherent narrative drawn up in the backdrop of ODL format. We hope that the programme will enthuse students for further reading in the discipline. The main objective of this programme is to produce competent students of history who are committed to the grammar of the historical understanding. We assure you that the university student support services will closely stay with you for the redressal of your grievances during your studentship.

Feel free to write to us about anything that you feel relevant regarding the academic programme.



Wish you the best.

Regards,
Dr. P.M. Mubarak Pasha

01.03.2023

Contents

Block -1	Egyptian Civilization	1
Unit-1	River System and Geography	2
Unit-2	Stages of Egyptian History	13
Unit-3	Evolution of Religion	33
Unit-4	Intellectual Contributions	48
Unit-5	Social and Economic Life	64
Unit-6	Egyptian Art	77
Block -2	Mesopotamian and Persian Civilizations	98
Unit-1	Political History	99
Unit-2	Sumerian Origins	107
Unit-3	The Babylonians	117
Unit-4	Assyrians and Akkadians	125
Unit-5	Persian Empire	140
Unit-6	Persian Culture	147
Block -3	Chinese Civilization	155
Unit-1	Formative Phase	156
Unit-2	Chang Culture	166
Unit-3	Chou Dynasty	174
Unit-4	Religion and Philosophy	189
Unit-5	Script and Literature	204
Unit-6	Chinese Legacy	213
Block-4	Greek Civilization	226
Unit-1	Homeric Age	227
Unit-2	City States	233
Unit-3	End of Greek Culture	241
Unit-4	Alexander's Empire	246
Unit-5	Greek Philosophy	252
Unit-6	Greek Legacy	259

Block-5	Roman Civilization	267
Unit-1	Early Rome	268
Unit-2	War and Conflict	276
Unit-3	Rise of Roman Empire	284
Unit-4	Decline of Rome	295
Unit-5	Roman Legacy	302
Unit-6	Roman Heritage	309
Block-6	Latin American Cultures	318
Unit-1	Early cultures	319
Unit-2	Mayan Civilization	330
Unit-3	Mayan Legacy	340
Unit-4	Aztec Society	352
Unit-5	Aztecs-Knowledge and Technology	363
Unit-6	Incas	370
Model Question Paper Set-1		384
Model Question Paper Set-1		388



EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION



UNIT

River System and Geography

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ introduced to the background of Egyptian Civilization
- ◆ familiarised with the role of the river Nile in the growth of Egyptian Civilization
- ◆ made aware of the importance of geography in shaping Egyptian Civilization

Prerequisites

The term civilization is generally defined as ‘an advanced state of a human society containing gradually or highly developed forms of government, culture, industry, and common social norms’. The settled social life was considered to be the initial form of civilization. The earliest civilizations formed on the fertile river plains. River valleys were striking locations for settled life because they ‘provided a steady supply of drinking water and made the land fertile for growing crops’. The river Nile supported and allowed life for the early Egyptians. The earliest inhabitants of the Nile valley ‘found that the river provided many sources of food’. More importantly, the river’s annual flooding ensured reliable and rich crop-growing soil. With the use of animals and irrigation, agriculture was born, which paved the way for the emergence of Egyptian civilization. In this section, let’s discuss the emergence, growth and development of the earliest river valley civilization. The unit is about the river system and geography of Egypt as a background to study Egyptian civilization. Geography and climate are the determining factors in defining culture and civilization. Being one of the ancient civilizations in the world, the role of the river Nile is strategic in shaping the life of ancient men in that region.

Keywords

Nilometer, Wafaa El-Nil, Akhet, Peret, Shemu, Nile, Flood

Discussion

1.1.1 The River Nile

The river Nile is an ‘international river that covers eleven countries, including the Republic of Sudan, Congo, Kenya, and particularly Egypt’. It flows over 6,600 kilometres (4,100 miles) until emptying into the Mediterranean Sea, making it one of the longest rivers in the world. The Nile River flows from south to north through eastern Africa; it begins in the rivers that flow into Lake Victoria (modern-day Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya). The Nile is formed by three prime tributaries: the Blue Nile, the Atbara (flowing from the highlands of Ethiopia), and the White Nile. It runs through the green basin of Egypt and branches out over fertile soil. The two tributaries, Blue Nile and White Nile join at the city of Khartoum in Sudan, flow north through Egypt and, finally reach the Mediterranean Sea. West of the Nile is the Sahara Desert, the largest desert in the world, and the Eastern Desert in the east.

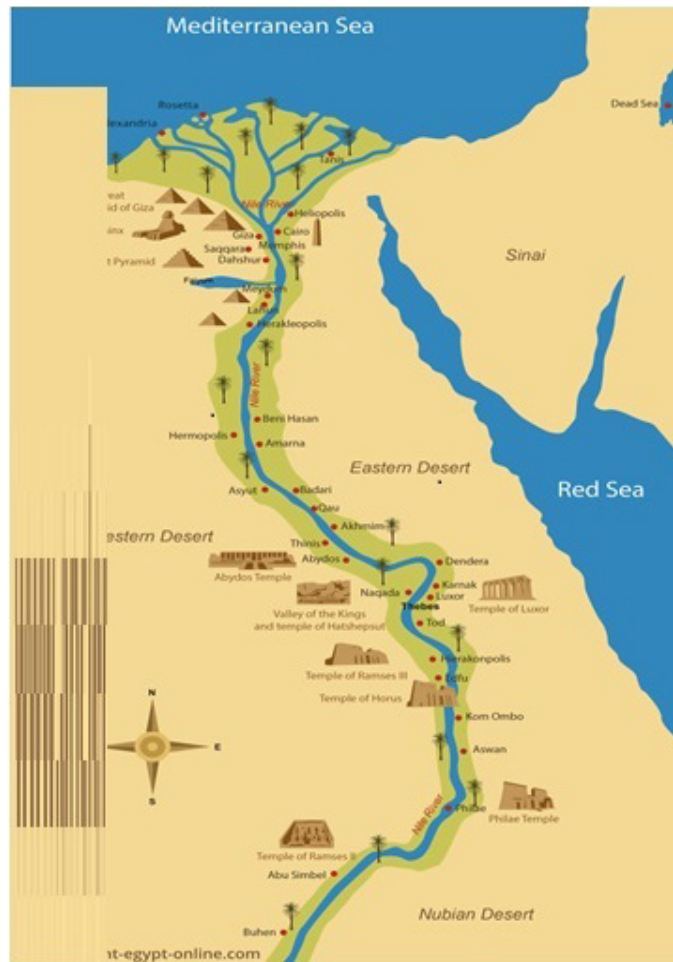
The river's name 'Nile' originates from the Greek root 'Neilos' (Latin: Nilus), which means a valley or a river valley. According to ancient Egyptians, this northward-flowing river was a mystery to them and the Greeks as it created floods at the warmest time of the year. They called the river 'Ar' or 'Aur', meaning “Black,” to denote the colour of the sediments carried by the river when it is in flood. Another old name, Kem or Kemi, also means “black” and signifies the darkness of the fund in the river. A society that was among

the first to employ systematic cultivation using the plough was on the banks of this river.

Egypt is known as ‘the gift of the Nile’. Herodotus, the Greek historian and the father of History, rightly regarded this because the people of Egypt are that much indebted to the river Nile. The Greek civilization owed its survival to the annual flooding of the Nile and the resulting depositing of fertile silt. Have you ever thought about how a river gave birth to civilization? It is true that most of all ancient civilizations emerged in the river valleys. There was a sound reason for that. Firstly, the climate, the granite shelter of man, became hotter, and gradually they stepped down to the river valley. The ready availability of water, fish for food and fertile land for growing food crops enabled man to settle in river valleys.

The river Nile was the lifeline as well as the base of economic activities of ancient Egypt. ‘Egypt was conceived, born, nourished and sustained by the Nile’. This river facilitated the growth of the unity of language and culture, which ultimately overshadowed the particular characteristics of each group in the Nile valley. The Nile influenced or affected every aspect of Egyptian life, including science, art, economy, religion, culture and politics. Also, this river gave Egypt its unique feature and enduring characteristic.





1.1 Map of the Egyptian civilisation

<https://luxurytourseg.com/blog/2022/11/04/history-of-the-nile-river/>

1.1.1.1 The Geographical features of the Nile

The River Nile played a critical part in the development of ancient Egypt. As mentioned earlier, apart from Egypt, the Nile runs through or along the border of ten other African countries: Burundi, Tanzania, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Due to the large silt deposits resulting from regular floods, the soil of the Nile delta between Cairo and the Mediterranean Sea is rich in nutrients. From time immemorial, much of Egypt's food has been produced

in this delta region. A better part of Egypt is desert, but along the Nile River, the soil is rich and fertile for growing crops. The three most important crops cultivated on the banks of the river Nile were wheat, flax, and papyrus. They effectively managed the annual flooding of the Nile through the appropriate scheduling of agricultural activities. An aerial view will reveal the contrast between the Nile's lush green river banks and the barren desert it flows through.

With its natural boundaries, the region was reasonably free from outside attacks from the early days. The Sahara Desert

to the west, the mountainous Eastern Desert and the Red Sea to the east, the Mediterranean Sea edging the marshy Delta to the north and the Cataracts to the south are its natural borders. The Nile also served as an important transportation route for thousands of years. It served as a valuable transportation route for inland navigation and foreign trade. The Nile protected Egypt and its people from any external penetration.

1.1.1.2 Floods in the Nile

The Nile basin experiences neither a true equatorial nor a true Mediterranean type of climate in most of the areas. The nature and rate of rainfall also show this variation in different regions. While the Nile basin up to Egypt is rainless during the northern winter, its southern parts and the highlands of Ethiopia experience heavy rain during the northern summer. An aridity climate prevailed in most of the basin between October and May because of the influence of the northeast trade winds. The maximum annual rainfall experienced in the river basin is during August. The humidity reaches its highest at the peak of the rainy season and reaches its low level between January and March.

The flood in the Nile has been an important expected cycle for the Egyptians since ancient times. They celebrated it as an annual holiday for two weeks starting on 15 August, known as Wafaa El-Nil. The periodic rise of water in the Nile continued to be a mystery till the discovery of the role of tropical climates with well-distributed rainfall in East Africa. The flood in the Nile was the natural consequence of

the annual monsoon, causing enormous precipitations in the Ethiopian Highlands. 90% of this rainwater is taken into the Nile by the Blue Nile and Atbarah River within a short period. Comparatively, less amount flows through the Sobat and the White Nile into the Nile during this period. Even though, over this short period, these rivers alone contributed to the high rise in water of the Nile and deposited large portions of sedimentation into the Nile basin. But after the monsoon season, these tributaries stay as minor rivers.

In South Sudan, the flood begins as early as April, and its effect starts to be seen at Aswan in June. The initial indications of the flood could be visible at the cataract of the Nile in Aswan during the first quarter of June. Followed by June, the steady increase of water continues till September, and the raised water level continues throughout August and September, with the maximum occurring in mid-September. In Cairo, the maximum water level is delayed until October. The water level then falls rapidly through November and December. From March to May, the water level is at its lowest. Although flooding is a regular phenomenon, it rarely varies in dimension and date. During the early days, it was impossible to regulate the river or predict the flood, resulting in crop failure, famine, and disease. But when the Egyptians developed detailed knowledge about the hydrology of the Nile, they succeeded in utilising 'nature's gift' in agricultural practices. The early method of river level gauging that the ancient Egyptians used was with the aid of 'nilometers', that is, gauges formed by graduated scales cut in natural rocks or stone walls.



1.2 Nilometer (Wiki-images)

Based on the seasonal flood in the Nile, the Egyptian year was divided into three seasons, Akhet (Inundation or Flooding), Peret (Beginning of crop), and Shemu (Harvest). The Egyptian flood cycle was so regular that the Egyptians timed its onset and used it as the key event to set their calendar. The ancient Egyptian civilization was indebted to the Nile River and its dependable seasonal flooding. At each time of the flood, the Nile deposits large amounts of silt in the soil, which makes the soil fertile and great for flourishing agriculture.

The early Egyptians simply laboured in areas which were inundated by the floods and started agriculture in those areas. Approximately, 7000 years ago, along the Nile basin, they developed simple irrigation methods. Agricultural land was divided into large fields and subfields along the dykes and set up the intake and exit canals for effective irrigation of the agrarian land. During August, the flood time, they close the agrarian land for about 45 days to saturate the soil with moisture and allow the silt to deposit. After the set time, the water was discharged to the lower fields or back into the Nile through the exit

canals. Sowing and harvest followed some three to four months later.

1.1.2 The Sea and Desert, A Sense of Security

The Sahara Desert, the Arabian Desert or the Eastern Desert, the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea served as natural boundaries around the Nile region and barriers to foreign invasions. Because of these barriers, the Egyptians enjoyed long years of peace and security and developed their culture and civilization. Ancient Egyptians mentioned the desert as the "red land" and the flood plain around the Nile River as the "black land". They used the colours to indicate that the desert sands have a reddish hue, and the land around the Nile turned black due to sediment deposits when the annual flood waters receded. The desert and River Nile emerged millions of years ago when the proto-sea that covered most of Europe and northern Africa withdrew, forming the Mediterranean Sea basin. It resulted from platonic movements on the earth's crust, creating the Himalayas and the Alps. For thousands of years, the Nile River evolved

into its present shape surrounded by the Eastern and Western deserts.

The Eastern Desert, also called the Arabian Desert, is a large desert in eastern Egypt. It originates just southeast of the Nile River delta, further extends south-eastward into north-eastern Sudan and from the Nile River valley to the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea. It covers an area of about 221,940 square km, and comprises of rolling sandy highlands that rise from the Nile valley and merge some 80 to 137 km east of the Nile into the Red Sea Hills.

The Sahara desert forms the western barrier for the Nile valley. It is one of the harshest terrains on Earth, covering 9.4 million square kilometres, an area about the size of the United States and spanning nearly a third of the African continent. The Atlantic Ocean borders it to the west, the Red Sea and the Nile valley to the east, the Mediterranean Sea to the north and the Sahel savanna to the south. Although the deserts played a significant role in Egyptian Civilization, it was not fit for habitation. The hostile weather and terrain protected the people living in the Nile River valley from external invasions.

The Red Sea is an inlet of the Indian Ocean that forms a natural border between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula and has played a crucial role in shaping Egyptian culture. It is a relatively narrow sea extending southeastwards from the Suez of Egypt to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. Connected to the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal, it is one of

the most traffic waterways in the world. Land transportation was challenging in ancient times because of the lack of proper transportation infrastructure, so civilizations with direct access to waterways held a major strategic advantage over those without. A canal was dug to connect the Nile River to the Red Sea around 595 B.C. This canal facilitated inward and outward transportation of grain, cattle, species, people and artisan goods.

A history of the Mediterranean Sea is the history of civilizations that emerged and flourished around it. Trade, transport, colonisation, war and cultural exchange between different peoples played a crucial role in shaping the social life surrounding it. The ancient civilizations like Egyptian, Phoenician, Greek and Roman were organized around it. The Mediterranean and red sea allowed the passage through which the Egyptians 'won the freedom of space and time. The Egyptian civilization owed its long existence to its unifying elements, especially the surrounding sea and deserts.



Recap

- ◆ The River Nile played a critical part in the development of ancient Egypt.
- ◆ Herodotus regarded Egyptian Civilization as the 'Gift of Nile'
- ◆ Akhet- The natural flood cycle in the Nile is denoted in the Egyptian calendar.
- ◆ Shemu- The period of harvest according to the Egyptian calendar.
- ◆ The Eastern Desert, also called the Arabian Desert, is the largest desert in Eastern Egypt.
- ◆ The soil of the Nile delta is rich in nutrients.
- ◆ Three tributaries of the Nile - Blue Nile, the Atbara and the White Nile.
- ◆ The periodic floods in the Nile were celebrated as an annual holiday for two weeks known as Wafaa El-Nil.
- ◆ The Sahara Desert, the Arabian Desert the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea served as natural boundaries.
- ◆ The Red Sea played a crucial role in shaping Egyptian culture.
- ◆ Without access to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, Egypt would have been isolated from the other continents.
- ◆ Ancient Egyptian culture and social life flourished because of the 'stability provided by their specific geographical location'.
- ◆ The Nile River's natural flood cycles allowed the development of a well-established agricultural system.
- ◆ The Egyptians were indebted to these trade and transportation channels to assimilate technology and culture through communication with other lands.

Objective Questions

1. What was the chief cause of the 'Flood in the Nile'?
2. What were the three seasons according to the Egyptian calendar?
3. How did the ancient Egyptians measure the water level in the Nile?
4. What is Wafaa El-Nil?
5. Which is the Flood period of the river Nile?
6. Which are the two ancient names of the river Nile? Which were the three most important crops cultivated on the banks of the river Nile?
7. What were the natural boundaries around the Nile region that served as barriers to foreign invasions?
8. Which are the three prime tributaries of the river Nile?
9. What name was used by the Egyptians to denote the desert?
10. Where does the Nile River empty?
11. Which important event provided rich soil year after year around the Nile River?
12. Why is Egypt considered the Gift of the Nile?
13. What prevents the Nile River from flooding the cities of modern-day Egypt?
14. What was the Ancient Egyptian superstition about the cause of floods in the river Nile?

Answers

1. The tropical climates with well-distributed rainfall in East Africa
2. Akhet (Inundation or Flooding), Peret (Beginning of crop), and Shemu (Harvest)



3. The early method of river level gauging that the ancient Egyptians used was with the aid of 'nilometers'
4. The annual holiday is for two weeks starting August 15 during the flood in the Nile
5. June to September is the period of flood, and August –September is the expected peak in the rise of water level
6. Ar or Aur and Kem or Kemi. Wheat, flax, and papyrus
7. The Sahara Desert, the Arabian Desert, the Eastern Desert, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea
8. The Blue Nile, the Atbara and the White Nile
9. Red Land
10. Mediterranean Sea
11. The river flooded into its banks.
12. Due to the availability of fish, fresh water and the rich black soil from the Nile flooding.
13. Aswan Dam
14. The tears of the goddess Isis

Assignments

1. Prepare an assignment on 'The prime natural factors that secured ancient Egypt from foreign invasions.'
2. Discuss the role of geography on the daily life of ancient Egyptians.
3. Examine the impact of the river Nile on the development of ancient Egypt.

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UNIT

Stages of Egyptian History

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ able to outline the emergence of Egyptian Civilization
- ◆ introduced to the various stages of development in Egyptian Civilization
- ◆ familiarised with the features of different stages of Egyptian Civilization
- ◆ narrated to the reasons for the rise and fall of the dynasties

Prerequisites

The settlements and human social life existed much before the rise of the organised 'Egyptian civilization'. Even though the structured history of ancient Egypt is consequently divided into three major periods of stability, this unit will discuss the detailed history of these developments on the Nile coast. In the previous unit, it was discussed that the Egyptian civilization flourished along the Nile River largely because the river's annual flooding ensured reliable, rich soil for growing crops. Availability of fertile soil, constant supply of water, mild climate and natural boundaries for protection and security were the requirements for developing an organized settled life.

Archaeological evidence reveals the presence of human settlements along the Nile coast from almost 120,000 years ago. However, the early civilization in the Nile valley dates back to approximately 3100 BC, during the Early Bronze Age. The civilization is renowned as one of the world's oldest and longest lasting civilizations, as it existed for nearly 3000 years. Over these periods, power

passed from one dynasty to another. Each dynasty ruled until it was overthrown or there were no heirs left to rule. These dynasties ended in havoc either after a period of infighting or after being invaded. Thus the entire history of ancient Egypt after the pre-dynastic and dynastic period can be divided into groups of kingdoms. The three main Kingdoms or Dynasty of Egyptian history were, the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

Keywords

Nomarchs, First Intermediate Period, Second Intermediate Period, Hyksos Co-regent, New Kingdom, Thutmose III, Akhenaten, Aten

Discussion

1.2.1 Pre-Dynastic Period

Early men in Egypt lived a nomadic life based on the collection of seasonal resources before the advent of agriculture. According to Archaeologists, these people stored their excess resources for future use in storage bins. Such storage bins were first discovered in the 1920s and could have held 800 weights of cereals, mixed mostly of wild seed, emmer wheat and six-rowed barley. Due to the lack of sufficient archaeological evidence, we failed to form a complete picture of the pre-dynastic period.

Egyptian history around 3100 BC is generally regarded as the Pre-dynastic period and is conventionally the period between the Early Neolithic and the beginning of the Pharaonic monarchy, starting with King Narmer. However, the dates of the pre-dynastic period were changed after recent archaeological excavations. Even so, the historicity becomes more or less confirmed with archaeological evidence, showing the course of pre-dynastic development to have been very gradual. Historians have

mentioned this period by different names as Proto-dynastic Period, Dynasty Zero and Pre-dynastic by some and Dynastic by others. During the Pre-dynastic Period, Egyptians developed a written language and established cultural and religious practices. There was evidence of a developed and settled society with agricultural civilization along the fertile and dark soils (Kemet or black lands) of the Nile. It was believed that Nile valley agrarian societies were the first men to have the revolutionary use of the plough.

The pre-dynastic period is generally divided into cultural periods named after the places where a certain type of Egyptian settlement was first located. Historians argued that the process of state formation began during this time with the rise of small city-states along the Nile. But like the case of 'Mahajanapadas' in India, these small states were engaged in constant conflicts with each other and finally reduced into three, **Thinis, Naqada, and Nekhen**.

The predynastic period is classified into four separate stages. The first stage is the '**Early Pre-dynastic period**',

which ranges from 5500-4000 BCE. It is otherwise known as the Badrian Phase to indicate the 'el-Badari' region of Hammamia site in Upper Egypt. This stage was considered to be the first agricultural settlement in Egypt. At this time, the Egyptians began making pottery, especially the fine polished red ware with blackened tops and constructing tombs from mud brick. Their burial practice was also quite distinctive as corpses were merely wrapped in animal hides.

The second stage is the '**Old Pre-dynastic period**', which ranges from 4000 to 3500 BCE. It is also known as the Amratian or Naqada I stage to indicate the Naqada site near the centre of the huge bend in the Nile, north of Luxor. A number of cemeteries and a rectangular house at Hierakonpolis, clay pottery, and terracotta sculptures were unearthed from this site.

The third stage is the '**Middle Pre-dynastic period**', which roughly goes from 3500-3200 BCE. It is also known as the Gerzean stage, named for Darb el-Gerza of the Nile region. It is also known as the Naqada II Phase as it was an advanced stage which resembles Naqada's old pre-dynastic stage. Pottery excavated from this stage is decorated with depictions of birds and animals and more abstract symbols for gods. The tombs unearthed here are substantial because of their structure, with several chambers built out of mud bricks.

The next stage is the '**Late Pre-dynastic period**', the most advanced stage, which lasts up to 3100 BCE. It is also known as the proto-dynastic stage, also known as the transition stage to the dynastic period. Agriculture was the chief occupation for the people in this period, and they exchanged goods and used a common language for communication. It was during this phase that the process

of wider political agglomeration began, and the more successful communities extended their spheres of influence to include nearby settlements.

1.2.2 The Old Kingdom

The Old Kingdom was the first of three socio-political systems or "Kingdom" periods that marked a high point of civilization in the Nile Valley. The term 'Old Kingdom' was coined by archaeologists in the 19th century CE to demarcate Egypt's long history. Its span is estimated from 2575 BCE to 2150 BCE. It is also known as the 'Age of the Pyramids' or 'Age of the Pyramid Builders' as it includes the 'great 4th Dynasty when King Sneferu perfected the art of pyramid building and the pyramids of Giza were constructed under the kings Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure'.

The 'Old Kingdom' spanned four major dynasties from the 3rd Dynasty to the 6th Dynasty (Some records include the 7th and 8th Dynasties as part of the Old Kingdom). The glory of the Old Kingdom reached its zenith during the 4th Dynasty when powerful pharaohs such as Sneferu and Khufu ruled. The reliable historical records for this period are scarce; only through the monuments, architectural remains and stone inscriptions can we reconstruct the history. The pyramids and mortuary temples were built nearby, and the stele accompanying them relayed primary information on their builders and provided the king's names and other important information.

Manetho (3rd century BCE historian) prepared a chronological record of the Egyptian kings in his work *Aegyptiaca*.

The step pyramid and other massive



building projects, including the Sphinx, was identified as the key feature of this period. Additionally, trade became more widespread, new religious ideas were born. The king (not yet regarded as Pharaoh) during this period resided in the royal capital, Memphis. The King was considered the living god and was believed to ensure the annual flooding of the Nile as it was necessary for agriculture.

The first remarkable ruler of the Old Kingdom was Djoser of the **3rd dynasty**, who reigned from 2691-2625 BCE. He was considered the constructor of the step pyramid in Memphis' necropolis, Saqqara. It was in this era that a centralised system of administration and modern state formations were started. The pre-dynastic states became known as 'nomes' (districts), and were ruled solely by the king. The traditional rulers of these states were forced to assume the role of governors or tax collectors.

Imhotep (c. 2667-2600 BCE): Imhotep was Djoser's architect who revolutionized construction in Egypt by building the king's tomb at Saqqara out of stone. Prior to Imhotep's innovation, tombs and other structures were built of mud brick. The early tombs of Egypt were mud brick mastabas, but Imhotep wanted a lasting memorial to his king and so created a complex with a stone pyramid as its center and surrounding temples; thus inventing the paradigm which would be followed by every dynasty to greater or lesser degrees (World History.org)

the latter. For instance, Djoser's pyramid of stone was a wholly novel construction; but it utilized the ancient techniques of the Early Dynastic Period. Similarly, the pyramid at Saqqara is a stack of mastabas rather than a true pyramid. Regarding the political reforms like nomes (districts), the central government of the 3rd Dynasty did not have the reach nor command the resources of the 4th Dynasty. Thus, some historians opined that the 4th Dynasty was the beginning of the 'Old Kingdom'.

The Old Kingdom and its majestic power reached its peak under the **Fourth Dynasty**, which started with Sneferu (2613-2589 BCE). Some Egyptian historians opine that Sneferu may have been Huni's son (the last ruler of the 3rd dynasty). He 'initiated the golden age of the Old Kingdom, his most notable achievements being the two pyramids built for him at Dahshur' (Barbara Watterson). Using a greater mass of stones than any other king, he began to build the pyramids of Meidum, the Bent Pyramid (actually started by Huni but completed by Sneferu), and the Red Pyramid. Sneferu was succeeded by his son, Khufu (2589-2566 BCE), who got the credit for constructing the Great Pyramid in Giza. He sent some military expeditions into Sinai, Nubia and Libya and entered into prosperous trade agreements with Byblos and Lebanon. His agricultural interventions and innovations improved the wealth of his treasury and subjects. During his reign, the earliest known dam in the world was built in Wadi Gerawi, in the mountains west of modern Helwan. This dam aided the farmers and others in the community by improving the water supply.

However some scholars viewed the 3rd Dynasty as a transitional period more closely linked to the pre-dynastic stage than



1.3 The Step Pyramid at Saqqara constructed by the architect Imhotep (Source: World History.org)

“Were it not for the two months every year when the Nile's water covered Egypt's farmland, idling virtually the entire workforce, none of this construction would have been possible. During such times, a pharaoh offered food for work and the promise of a favoured treatment in the afterworld, where he would rule just as he did in this world. For two months annually, workmen gathered by the tens of thousands from all over the country to transport the blocks a permanent crew had quarried during the rest of the year. Overseers organized the men into teams to transport the stones on sleds, devices better suited than wheeled vehicles to move weighty objects over shifting sand. A causeway, lubricated by water, smoothed the uphill pull. No mortar was used to hold the blocks in place, only a fit so exact that these towering structures have survived for 4,000 years - the only Wonders of the Ancient World still standing today”(Bob Brier and Hoyt Hobbs).

It was thought that after Khufu's death, one of his sons built the second pyramid and the Sphinx in Giza. Construction of these massive structures pre-required a strong centralized government, sophisticated technology and financial prosperity. The workers of the pyramids were not slaves but peasants who rendered labour (sometimes forced) in the farming off-season, along with specialists like stone cutters, mathematicians, and priests.

The Great Pyramid was one of the structures at Giza, but it was considered one of the ancient 'Seven Wonders' of the World with a good reason. Till the Eiffel Tower was finished in 1889, the Great Pyramid was the tallest human built structure on earth.



1.4 The Pyramids at Giza (Source: Worldhistory.org)

The Fifth Dynasty began with Userkaf (2494-2487 BCE). The notable feature of this period was the changes in religion and faith. The worship of sun god Ra, and temples built for him, began to grow in importance during this time. 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. They began to put up ships to trade across overseas routes. Ships were held together by tightly tied ropes. Archaeological remains prove the use of goods, including ebony, incense, gold, and copper.

Many historians considered the Sixth Dynasty the last dynasty of the Old Kingdom, even though the Oxford History of Ancient Egypt includes the 7th and 8th dynasties as part of the Old Kingdom. The rulers of the 6th also ruled from the capital Memphis, and their pyramids were built at Saqqara, very close to one another. The power of the king and central government declined during this period, and the nomarchs (regional governors) assumed autonomy. They passed down the title through their lineage, thus creating local dynasties that were not under the control of the king. Internal disorder broke out after Pepi II (2278-2184 BCE) due to succession struggles, eventually leading to the civil war, which resulted in the collapse of the Old Kingdom. The final blow was a stern drought between 2200-2150 BCE, which prevented Nile flooding. The famine, drought, internal conflicts and civil war together contributed to the end of the reign of the Old Kingdom.

1.2.3 The First Intermediate Period

The period between 2181 to 2055 BCE was the First Intermediate Period, often

described as a “dark period” in ancient Egyptian history after the end of the Old Kingdom. It lasted for approximately 100 years. Historians included the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, and part of the Eleventh dynasties as the First Intermediate period. It was a dynamic time in history when the rule of Egypt was divided between two competing power bases; Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt and Thebes in Upper Egypt. It is measured as a dark period because political chaos during this time resulted in the plunder of temples, and artwork being vandalized, and statues and monuments destroyed. There was a frequent military conflict between these power blocks. Eventually, 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.

Most details about 7th and 8th dynasties are missing and 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.

After the murky reign of the 7th and 8th dynasty rulers, a powerful group rose out of Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt and ruled for approximately 94 years. These rulers comprise the 9th and 10th Dynasties, each with 19 rulers. The founder of the 9th Dynasty, Wahkare Khety I, is often regarded as a brutal ruler who unleashed a terror rule over the inhabitants of Egypt. He was succeeded by Kheti I and Kheti II, respectively. When compared to him, their reign was essentially peaceful. But soon, the Nile delta experienced social and political insecurity, and the successive rulers failed to maintain order in the Nile

basin.

The Theban kings are the descendants of Intef or Inyotef, the nomarch of Thebes. They are also regarded as the “Keeper of the Door of the South” because they are credited with organizing Upper Egypt into an independent ruling body in the south. Intef I was followed by Intef II, who started the Theban assault on northern Egypt, and Intef III completed the attack and moved into Middle Egypt against the Heracleopolitan kings. 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.

1.2.4 The Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom designates a period stretching from roughly 2030 to 1650 B.C and was considered ancient Egypt's Classical Age because it produced some of its greatest works of art and literature. Historians remain divided on which dynasties constitute the beginning of the Middle Kingdom as some argue for the latter half of the 11th through the 12th, but others for the 12th to 14th. The generally agreed period for the Middle Kingdom was between 2040 and 1782 BCE, which included the last part of the 11th Dynasty through the middle of the 13th Dynasty. About this time, the cultural traditions set out during the pre-dynastic period. They codified during the Old Kingdom were asserted, including the principles of kingship, the structure of society, religious customs, death and afterlife beliefs, and relations with neighbours. These transitions are visible in architecture, sculpture, painting, relief

decoration, stele, ornaments, personal possessions, and literature.

While the Old Kingdom weakened and the centralized political control disintegrated, the local rulers came to the fore, unleashed an era we call the First Intermediate Period. The chaotic situation was perhaps the result of famine caused by failure of the Nile floods, although the reasons have been debated. The Heracleopolis in the north and Thebes in the south controlled the political scenario, and the southern rulers eventually defeated the Heracleopolitans. Hence the ancient culture of the Nile basin never seemed to recover from this cataclysm completely. Evidently, the surviving Middle Kingdom texts hint that there was a more pronounced fear of chaotic forces and an emphasis on unity within the country. At the same time, the memory of chaos certainly proved inspiring to the ancient Egyptians, as it was a period of strong recovery from the period of disorder. Perhaps this is at least part of the reason the Middle Kingdom was viewed in subsequent eras as an ideal epoch.

Mentuhotep II, the 6th ruler of 11th dynasty, campaigned in Lower Nubia, against Inyotefs and Thebes became his capital. He was praised as a "second Menes", and his mortuary monuments in Thebes contained the earliest known depictions of Amon-Re, the dynastic god of the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. Mentuhotep II was himself posthumously worshiped, notably in the Aswan area. In administration, he attempted to break the power of the nomarchs, but his policy was unsuccessful in the longer term.



“The era that began with the fall of Herakleopolis to Mentuhotep II was an era of great artistic gains and stability in Egypt. A strong government fostered a climate in which a great deal of creative activity took place. The greatest monument of this period was at Thebes, on the western bank of the Nile, at a site called Deir el-Bahri. There Mentuhotep II erected his vast mortuary complex, a structure that would influence architects of the 18th Dynasty. The Mentuhotep royal line encouraged all forms of art and relied upon military prowess to establish new boundaries and new mining operations” (Margaret Bunson).

Mentuhotep II was succeeded by Mentuhotep III (c. 2010-1998 BCE), who continued the policies and enlarged their scope. He sent an expedition to Punt and fortified the boundaries of the north-eastern Nile Delta. He was succeeded by Mentuhotep IV (c. 1997-1991 BCE), but nothing much is known other than that he

sent his vizier, a man named Amenemhat, on an expedition to quarry stones. His entire seven-year reign was silent, but he most likely continued the policies of his predecessors successfully because when Amenemhat succeeded him as king, the country was flourishing.

It is argued by some historians that the Middle Kingdom was truly opened with the 12th Dynasty because of the reign of Amenemhat I (1991-1962 BCE) and the culture this dynasty forged. They ruled Egypt for about 200 years, maintaining a strong, united country and extensive interactions with contemporary neighbours. Thebes witnessed the initiation of one of the greatest temples of ancient Egypt, the Karnak complex, devoted to the god Amun. The presence of idol temples in strategic locations throughout Egypt can also be understood as a means to unify the lay people and stress the king's dominant role in those regions. The following table contains the chronological order of the Middle Kingdom.

Dynasty 11 (second half)	2030–1981
Mentuhotep II	2030–2000 BCE
Mentuhotep III	2000–1988 BCE
Qakare Intef	1985 BCE
Sekhmentibre	1985 BCE
Menekhkare	1985 BCE
Mentuhotep IV	1988–1981 BCE
Dynasty 12	1981–1802 BCE
Amenemhat I	1981–1952 BCE
Senwosret I	1961–1917 BCE
Amenemhat II	1919–1885 BCE
Senwosret II	1887–1878 BCE
Senwosret III	1878–1840 BCE
Amenemhat III	1859–1813 BCE
Amenemhat IV	1814–1805 BCE
Nefrusobek	1805–1802 BCE
Dynasty 13	1802–1640 BCE

Source: Department of Egyptian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

1.2.4.1 The Middle Kingdom as Classical Age

Senusret I, who succeeded Amenemhat, improved the infrastructure and initiated the constructions, including temples. The creation of a standing army was the next feature of the 12th dynasty. Before the 12th Dynasty, the King's army was made up of conscript troops raised and maintained by the nomarchs. Amenemhat I enlarged the power of the king by reforming the military structure so it was directly under his control. The successive rulers also followed the same policy, which resulted in greater wealth and power for the throne and a stable central government. The bureaucracy structure of this time was so efficient that, unlike the Old Kingdom, it kept wealth concentrated with the king but allowed for the growth and flourishing of individual districts without autonomy or strong power.

The lack of friction between component districts and the king allowed for development in infrastructure, extension of borders, defence, agricultural production, and the development of art and literature. All of these improvements made Egypt one of the wealthiest and most stable political units in the world at the time.

“The 12th Dynasty kings raided Syria and Palestine and marched to the Third Cataract of the Nile to establish fortified posts. They sent expeditions to the Red Sea, using the overland route to the coast and the way through the Wadi Tumilat and the Bitter Lakes. To stimulate the national economy, these kings also began vast irrigation and hydraulic projects in the Fayyum to reclaim the lush fields there. The agricultural lands made available by these systems revitalized Egyptian life” (Margaret Bunson).

These policies started during the time of Senusret I by draining the lake at the centre of the Fayyum through the use of canals. This made the fertile land of the lake bottom available for agriculture and freed up the water for easier irrigation for more nearby lands. Also the construction of White Chapel and its significant engagements facilitated the archaeologists and scholars to list all the names of the time on it. Although the capital had shifted from Thebes, the city retained its prestige by constructing the great Temple of Karnak and other buildings. In artistic expression, the glory of the king or the gods retained their position, and found new subject matter also during the Middle Kingdom.

The inscriptions seen on monuments, pyramid texts, theological works still exist. Still, a true literature developed which dealt not just praising gods or rulers but also the lives of common man and their experience. The literary works such as ‘The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor’ and ‘The Tale of Sinuhe’ were the best - known works of this period. Other art works, such as sculpture and painting, also focus on daily life and common surroundings. Images related to usual life activities were painted in tombs with the belief that the soul would be reminded of the life it had left behind on earth.

Another distinctive feature of the Middle Kingdom was the practice of co-regency; a man, usually the son, was chosen by the king as his successor and would rule with him in order to learn the position and ensure a smooth transition of power. Historians are divided on whether this practice was usually observed. The most powerful king was Senusret III, whose reign was prosperous and deified as the golden age. The prestige of the nomarch declined during his reign,

and the title vanished from the official records suggesting the position was absorbed by the crown. His conquest of Nubia expanded Egypt's boundaries, and the fortifications he built along the border fostered trade. He also led an expedition into Palestine and afterwards increased trade relations with that region.

1.2.4.2 The Decline

The 13th Dynasty was not as strong as their predecessors. The 13th Dynasty seems to have continued the policies of the kings of the 12th and kept the country unified, but, as far as the fragmentary records indicate, none of them had the personal strength of the previous kings. Some kings are only mentioned in the Turin King's list and nowhere else. Some are named in inscriptions but not in lists. During this time, certain minor political entities appeared in the Nile basin, which gradually challenged the authority of the dynastic rulers. Mortuary complexes, temples, and steles were still raised during this time, and documents show the efficient bureaucracy of the 12th Dynasty was still in place. Still, the momentum which propelled Egypt throughout the 12th Dynasty was lost.

The transition of the Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period is characterized as a chaotic decline, as what happened in the case of the Old Kingdom. The Middle Kingdom decayed during the 13th Dynasty rule, when about fifty kings ruled over approximately 150 years. Some historians would characterize the time of the Hyksos as a dark period for the country. But certainly they were responsible for the disintegration of the Middle Kingdom as they overran the existing dynastic rule in the Nile Basin. It was during this time that the pharaoh's control of Egypt began to weaken. As the country fell into disarray,

the Middle Kingdom collapsed, and the Second Intermediate Period began.

1.2.5 The New Kingdom

The Second Intermediate Period marks a transition period when the ancient Nile valley fell into disarray for a second time between the end of the Middle Kingdom and the start of the New Kingdom. The concept of a Second Intermediate Period was introduced in 1942 by the German Egyptologist Hanns Stock. This period is marked by a divided Egypt, with the Hyksos holding north and Nubians ruling the south after the fall of the Middle Kingdom. It was a time of disunity, and records of chronology, and lineage are confused or missing, but it was not as dark a time as appeared during the First Intermediate Period. The inheritance of the Second Intermediate Period is the glory which would become the New Kingdom, a time of unprecedented wealth and prosperity in Egypt. The thrust toward securing the country from another invasion by enlarging Egypt's borders and bringing more material wealth into the land through conquest led to the period in Egypt's history which is the best - known and most - admired.

Late in the Second Intermediate Period, the Theban rulers tried to drive the Hyksos from the Northern Delta. This effort was conclusively accomplished by Ahmose I, who reunited Egypt, ushering in the New Kingdom, a third great era of Egyptian history. The New Kingdom of Egypt comprised the 18th to 20th Dynasties and lasted from 1550-1077 BCE. It was regarded as Egypt's most prosperous time. The 18th Dynasty successors of Ahmose I profitably extended their influence in the Near East and established Egyptian control of Nubia to the fourth

cataract. The New Kingdom pharaohs consequently accumulated incredible monetary prosperity, much of which they donated for their gods, especially Amun-Re of Thebes.

The 18th Dynasty or otherwise called the Thutmosid Dynasty, contained Egypt's most famous pharaohs, including Ahmose I, Queen Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, Amenhotep III, Akhenaten and his queen Nefertiti, and Tutankhamun. Queen Hatshepsut (1479 – 1458 BCE), the longest-reigning woman pharaoh of ancient Egypt, was determined to

escalate Egypt's foreign trade through sending some commercial expeditions to the nearby and far lands. The supreme military pharaoh, Thutmose III, enlarged Egypt's army and wielded it successfully in consolidating the empire considerably. During his reign, the term "pharaoh," originally referring to the king's palace, became a form of address for the king. These victories consequently maximized Egyptian power and monetary influence during the reign of Amenhotep III. The following table contains a list of rulers during the Second Intermediate Period and New Kingdom.

Second Intermediate Period	1640–1540 BCE
Dynasty 14–Dynasty 16	1640–1635 BCE
Dynasty 17	1635–1550 BCE
Tao I	1560 BCE
Tao II	1560 BCE.
Kamose	1552–1550 BCE
New Kingdom	1550–1070 BCE
Dynasty 18	1550–1295 BCE
Ahmose	1550–1525 BCE
Amenhotep I	1525–1504 BCE
Thutmose I	1504–1492 BCE
Thutmose II	1492–1479 BCE
Thutmose III	1479–1425 BCE
Hatshepsut (as regent)	1479–1473 BCE
Hatshepsut	1473–1458 BCE
Amenhotep II	1427–1400 BCE
Thutmose IV	1400–1390 BCE
Amenhotep III	1390–1352 BCE
Amenhotep IV	1353–1349 BCE
Akhenaten	1349–1336 BCE
Neferneferuaton	1338–1336 BCE
Smenkhkare	1336 BCE
Tutankhamun	1336–1327 BCE
Aya	1327–1323 BCE
Haremhab	1323–1295 BCE

Dynasty 19	1295–1186 BCE
Ramesses I	1295–1294 BCE
Seti I	1294–1279 BCE
Ramesses II	1279–1213 BCE
Merneptah	1213–1203 BCE
Amenmesse	1203–1200 BCE
Seti II	1200–1194 BCE
Siptah	1194–1188 BCE
Tawosret	1188–1186 BCE
Dynasty 20	1186–1070 BCE
Sethnakht	1186–1184 BCE
Ramesses III	1184–1153 BCE
Ramesses IV	1153–1147 BCE
Ramesses V	1147–1143 BCE
Ramesses VI	1143–1136 BCE
Ramesses VII	1136–1129 BCE
Ramesses VIII	1129–1126 BCE
Ramesses IX	1126–1108 BCE
Ramesses X	1108–1099 BCE
Ramesses XI	1099–1070 BCE
Hight Priests (HP) of Amun	1080–1070 BCE
HP Herihor	1080–1074 BCE
HP Paiankh	1074–1070 BCE

Along the New Kingdom, Egypt attained its high status, the power of the rulers reached its peak, extended wealth and territory as well. The government was reorganized into a military state with a highly centralised administration in the hands of the Pharaoh and his chief minister. The aggressive military conquests of Pharaoh Thutmose III brought Palestine, Syria, and the northern Euphrates area in Mesopotamia within the New Kingdom. In fact, through a complicated system of diplomacy which includes alliances and treaties, the territorial extension of Egypt was completed. After Thutmose III, the succeeding Pharaohs were in constant warfare to defend the empire against the military challenges of Libyans from the

west, Nubians and Ethiopians (Kushites) from the south, Hittites from the east, and Philistines (sea people) from the Aegean-Mediterranean region of the north.

One of the well - known 18th Dynasty pharaohs was Amenhotep IV, who changed his name to Akhenaten in honor of Aten, the exclusive supreme deity. It 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.

Tutankhamun, original name Tutankhaten, byname King Tut, was the ruler of ancient Egypt (reigned 1333–23 BCE), known chiefly for his intact tomb, KV 62 (tomb 62), discovered in the Valley of the Kings in 1922. He restored the traditional religion and art which were abandoned by his predecessor Akhenaten. By his third regnal year Tutankhaten had moved his residence to Memphis, the administrative capital, near modern Cairo. He issued a decree restoring the temples, images, personnel, and privileges of the old gods. He also began the protracted process of restoring the sacred shrines of Amon, which had been severely damaged during his father's rule. Tutankhamun suddenly died at the age of 19. In 2010 scientists found traces of malaria parasites in his mummified remains and posited that malaria, in combination with degenerative bone disease, may have been the cause of death.

The New Kingdom enjoyed its height of glory under Seti I and Ramesses II, who fought against the Libyans and Hittites. The flash point, the city of Kadesh, was captured first by Seti I and used as a peace bargain with the Hatti. Eventually, Pharaoh Ramesses II and Hittites signed a lasting peace treaty. The territorial advancements as well as cultural progress during this time were well evident in the monuments and archaeological evidence. The massive funerary complexes still flourished in the Valley. But the Nineteenth Dynasty ended in a revolt led by Setnakhte, the founder of the Twentieth Dynasty.

The 20th Dynasty was the third and last dynasty of the New Kingdom, lasting from 1189 BC to 1077 BC. The 19th and 20th Dynasties together constitute an era generally known as the Ramesside

period. During the 20th dynasty rule, the decline of the New Kingdom began. Setnakhte stabilized the political situation in the valley, and successfully drove off an attempted invasion by the Sea People. He was succeeded by his son Ramesses III. He defended the Libyan invasion of Egypt. Ramesses III is most known for his victories over Denyen, Tjekker, Peleset, Shardana and Weshesh in the Battle of Djahy and the Battle of the Delta. He was then succeeded by his son Ramesses V who struggled to maintain power against the priests of Amun and held together the empire. His successor, Ramesses VI, continued this struggle with no better success.

About the end of the 20th Dynasty rule, Egyptian power declined at home and abroad. The Nile valley was once more separated into its natural divisions of Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt. The pharaoh now ruled from Memphis, and it remained the hallowed capital where the pharaoh was crowned, and his jubilees celebrated. Upper Egypt was governed from Thebes.

There were several reasons for the decline of the New Kingdoms, which included a loss of military power, lack of natural resources, and political conflicts.

- ◆ The reigns of the last powerful pharaohs, Ramses II and Ramses III, were characterized by the defence of Egypt against its enemies. However, it took significant manpower and resources to ward off these continual attacks, and these defences left the empire's economy struggling.
- ◆ Ramesses II's resolution to change the capital to Avaris weakened the central power

as it left Thebes to the priests. The Cult of Amun continued to be under the authority of the pharaoh, but in reality the power rested in the hands of priests with the greatest wealth and influence. They enjoyed power without any interference from the pharaohs who were now so far away in the north.

- ◆ It was soon preached that the priests of Amun, the supreme deity, were in direct contact with the creator and sustainer of the universe. As worship of Amun increased in popularity, priests assumed power and wealth. Consequently pharaoh's power diminished as he was 'no longer a necessary intermediary' between the people and their gods. Now the

priests of Amun emerged as an alternative in respect of religion as well as state matters.

- ◆ After the death of Ramesses XI (last powerful ruler of the 20th dynasty), Smendes I succeeded him. Smendes I was from Tanis in Lower Egypt and established his capital there. He hardly managed the affairs of the empire except Lower Egypt only, and other territories gradually became under provincial monarchs.

The First and Second Intermediate Periods led to the Middle and the New Kingdoms. Still, the Third Intermediate Period concluded with the Persian invasion of Egypt following the Battle of Pelusium in 525 BCE.

Recap

- ◆ Early men in Egypt lived a nomadic life based on the collection of seasonal resources before the advent of agriculture.
- ◆ Egyptian history around 3100 BC is generally regarded as Pre-dynastic period.
- ◆ The pre-dynastic period is generally divided into cultural periods.
- ◆ The pre-dynastic period of ancient Egypt is marked by the absence of any political centralisation.
- ◆ The gradual growth of an exploitative elite class and the institution of chieftains transformed into political, religious and administrative unification.
- ◆ The Old Kingdom was the first of three socio-political systems that marked a high point of civilization in the Nile Valley.
- ◆ The 'Old Kingdom' spanned four major dynasties from the 3rd Dynasty to the 6th Dynasty.

- ◆ The step pyramid and other massive building projects, including the Sphinx, were identified as the key features of this period.
- ◆ First Intermediate Period (2181BCE and 2055 BCE): A period of political conflict and instability lasting approximately 100 years and spanning the Seventh to Eleventh Dynasties.
- ◆ The Middle Kingdom designates a period stretching from roughly 2030 to 1650 BCE is called the classical age.
- ◆ Mentuhotep II, the 6th ruler of 11th dynasty, and rule from Thebes. He was praised as a "second Menes".
- ◆ The transition of the Middle Kingdom to the Second Intermediate Period is characterized as a chaotic decline.
- ◆ Second Intermediate Period (4th to 7th Dynasties): Power was split between the Hyksos and a Theban-based dynasty in Upper Egypt.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ The 18th Dynasty (Thutmosid Dynasty), contained Egypt's most famous pharaohs, including Ahmose I, Queen Hatshepsut, Thutmose III, and Amenhotep III.
- ◆ Thutmose III: The sixth pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty, who greatly consolidated political power through a series of military conquests.
- ◆ Akhenaten: Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty known for his religious fervour to the god Aten.
- ◆ Aten: The disk of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology and originally an aspect of Ra.
- ◆ Queen Hatshepsut was the longest-reigning woman pharaoh of ancient Egypt.
- ◆ New Kingdom: The period in ancient Egyptian history between the 16th century BCE and the 11th century BCE. Considered to be the peak of Egyptian power.
- ◆ The New Kingdom enjoyed its height of glory under Seti I and Ramesses II.
- ◆ The 20th Dynasty was the third and last dynasty of the New Kingdom period.
- ◆ The centralized monarchy during the Old Kingdom and Middle Kingdom collapsed because of succession disputes, internal conflicts, civil war and famine related to Nile Flood.

- ◆ The constant military campaign resulted in economic miseries towards the end of 20th Dynasty.
- ◆ Another era of division and weakness known as the Third Intermediate Period. Egypt would not emerge as stronger and more advanced than before.
- ◆ Nomarchs: Ancient Egyptian administration officials responsible for governing the provinces.
- ◆ Co-regent: The situation wherein a monarchical position, normally held by one person, is held by two.

Objective Questions

1. Which period corresponds to the pre-dynastic history of Egypt, according to Archaeologists?
2. How was the pre-dynastic period divided into cultural periods?
3. Which was the first stage in the pre-dynastic period?
4. Which period is considered as the 'dark period' in Egyptian History?
5. What is the significance of the White Chapel?
6. What does 'co-regency', a distinctive feature of the Middle Kingdom, denote?
7. Which was the capital of the Middle Kingdom?
8. Which pharaoh's period is considered as the golden age?
9. When did the disintegration of the Middle Kingdom begin?
10. Which great temple of ancient Egypt is located at Thebes?
11. Which is the capital of Khufu?
12. Who is the author of the book 'Aegyptiaca'?
13. Who was Djoser's architect who revolutionized construction pyramids during the Old Kingdom?

14. Who constructed the 'Great Pyramid' in Giza?
15. Who was the first ruler in the 4th Dynasty?
16. Which are the most obvious material symbols of ancient Egyptian societies?
17. Who built the greatest Egyptian pyramids ?
18. What was the purpose of the pyramids in ancient Egypt?
19. What was Tutankamun(King Tut) known for other than being a renowned pharaoh?
20. Which world's earliest form of paper was invented by the Egyptians.

Answers

1. 3100 BCE
2. Named after the places where early Egyptian settlements were located
3. 'Early Pre-dynastic period', which ranges from 5500-4000 BC
4. First Intermediate Period (period between 2181 BC and 2055 BC)
5. It helps in reconstructing the chronological antecedents of ancient Egypt
6. One younger man, usually the son, was chosen by the king as his successor and would rule with him in order to learn the position and ensure a smooth transition of power
7. Thebes
8. Senusret III
9. During the 13th dynasty rule
10. The Karnak complex of god Amun
11. Memphis
12. Manetho

13. Imhotep
14. Khufu
15. Sneferu
16. Pyramids
17. Sneferu, his son Khufu, Khufu's son Khafre, and Khafre's son Menkaure
18. To protect the body of the pharaoh to help it reach the afterlife
19. A revolutionary thinker
20. Papyrus

Assignments

1. Draw an outline of the Ancient Nile valley and mark the territories under the political influence of the New Kingdom.
2. Prepare a timeline of important rulers of Old, Middle and New Kingdoms.
3. Collect the pictures of important pharaohs of Ancient Egypt.
4. Prepare a timeline of the Intermediate Period.
5. After comparing the causes for the decline of Old and Middle Kingdoms, prepare an anticipatory report on 'the causes for the decline of the New Kingdom'.

Suggested Readings

1. Alfred.C, *The Egyptians*, (3rd revised edition), Thames and Hudson, London, 1998.
2. Burns, Edward McNall, Philip Ralph, Robert E Lerner, *World Civilizations*, 3 Vols, Goyal Publishers, New Delhi, 2019.

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UNIT

Evolution of Religion

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ able to get an outline of the background of the emergence of Egyptian Religious faith
- ◆ introduced to the features of ancient Egyptian religion
- ◆ familiarised with different stages of the development of Egyptian metaphysical thoughts
- ◆ explained to the beliefs on life and life after death

Prerequisites

The most striking feature of Egyptian religion was their belief in a higher power and a life after death. The depth of early Egyptian speculations and the rich imagination find expression through the creation of ideas and images of the gods and goddesses, which are beyond comparison. Egyptian religion was basically polytheistic and a combination of beliefs and practices, which would include Egyptian mythology, science, medicine, psychiatry, magic and spiritualism. The unit is oriented around the origin of Egyptian religious faith, its development from naturalism to polytheism and the elaborate customs and rituals around the temples of Egypt.

Religion is considered to be the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. While Polytheism is the belief in or worship of more than one god, Egyptians had a practice of preserving

the physical remains of the dead as a part of belief in life after death. The ancient Egyptians believed that life on earth was only one part of an eternal journey which ended not in death, but in everlasting joy. When one's body failed, the soul did not die with it but continued on toward an afterlife where one received back that entire one had thought lost. In this Unit, we will explore how these beliefs came into existence.

Keywords

Akhenaton, Aten, Ra, Osiris, Afterlife, Polytheism, Mummy

Discussion

One day, a kid asked his father 'what religion is'. Father, after a minute's thought, replied that 'religion is a set of beliefs that humans have about the existence of a higher power'.

The kid listened carefully. Then he asked again, 'how did these beliefs come about?'

Father once again deemed into thought. He answered carefully that 'the belief in a creator god starts after creation'.

The kid was not satisfied with this answer. Once again, he started to question, but father then made an explanation.

When man started settling social life, he began to face the troubles of the forces of nature. Then he started to worship the forces which are beyond their capacity and control. Thus religion and faith came into existence. It was true in the case of all ancient civilizations. The ancient people followed a common pattern of belief about god, origin of the world and creation.

From the above story, what did you learn about religion and its origin?

The origin of religion begins from human thought on 'birth and death'. The creation and a creator is the center of all religions. The ancient religious belief in Egypt was a complex system of polytheistic beliefs and rituals that formed an integral part of their culture and social life. It originated and centered on the Egyptian notion of the 'origin and development of the world.' The Egyptian religion had its roots in prehistory and lasted for around 3,500 years. The nature of religious belief transformed over time, and the prominence of particular gods rose and declined accordingly. These changes in religious faith influence their intricate relationships in social as well as political aspects. Like Hinduism in India, certain gods became preeminent over the others during certain periods, including the sun god Ra, the creator god Amun, and the mother goddess Isis. The ancient Egyptian religion and mythology left

behind many writings and monuments, along with significant influence on ancient and modern cultures.

1.3.1 Origin of Religion

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a religion is 'the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods'. The exact time when humans first became religious remains unknown. However research in evolutionary archaeology shows credible evidence of religious-cum-ritualistic behavior from around the Middle Paleolithic era (Elizabeth Culotta, On the Origin of Religion, 2009). Even so, the origin of religion in an organized form can be traced from the Neolithic period onwards. The beginning of agriculture and manufacturing of tools and artifacts invited man to live in accordance with the forces of nature. They conquered all possibilities and then started worshiping those forces which were unconquered.

The history of Egypt has been long and wealthy due to the flow of the Nile River with its fertile banks and delta, as well as the accomplishments of Egypt's native inhabitants and outside influence. Egyptian religious beliefs were originally rooted in the pre-historic period, but organized practices were closely integrated into Egyptian society of the historical period (from 3000 BCE). The earliest written records of religious practice in Egypt come from around 3400 BCE in the Pre-dynastic Period. Religion influenced every aspect of the lives of the ancient Egyptians because they conceived life on earth as only prerequisites of an eternal journey after death, so to live a life worthy of continuance was the responsibility of every individual on earth.

The concept of ma'at or mayet (harmony), similar to 'rita' in Indian

Philosophy, was the congruence of individual actions and interactions with universal order. In other words, it is an understanding that one's actions in life affect not only one's self but others' lives as well and the function of the universe. People were expected to depend on each other to keep the status quo as this was the will of the gods to ensure peace in this world.

1.3.1.1 Early Polytheism

Polytheism is a type of theism in which people hold belief in multiple deities at a time. Anthropologists argue that it was the most primitive type of belief, followed by animism and nature worship. The early Egyptians believed in animism and lived a life in harmony with nature and its supernatural inhabitants. Ancient scripts reveal the practice of polytheism, and it was noted that they worshipped nearly 3000 gods. Soon in the form of gods, animals, sun, moon and so on, worship order was established. The godmuns who inhabited the bounded and ultimately perishable cosmos varied in nature and capacity. From the burial practices and debris it is inferred that the religious beliefs were commonly shared among the inhabitants of ancient Egypt.

Most gods were generally benevolent, but worship was started as a defense against punishments because their favour could not be counted on. The polytheistic period was also a transition period as the animals, trees, mountains, and natural forces like sun, moon, fire, etc., turned to be god-like with man (Anthropomorphism). Idol worship also begins at this time. All the supreme gods assumed the characteristics of creator gods. Sometimes a single god has many names; for instance, the sun god was known mostly as Khepri (the



morning form), Re-Harakhty (a form of Re associated with Horus), and Atum (the old, evening form). There were three key 'social' categories of deity, like gods, goddesses, and youthful deities, mostly of male.

Gods had local inclinations corresponding to their chief cult places. The sun god's cult place was Heliopolis, Ptah's was Memphis, and Amon's was Thebes. These were not necessarily their original cult places but depended on the patronage of the corresponding rulers. The chief cult of Khnum, the creator god who shaped man from clay like a potter, was Elephantine, and he was the lord of the nearby First Cataract. His cult was not famous before the New Kingdom, but was worshipped from the time of 1st dynasty. The main earlier sanctuary there belonged to the goddess Satet, who became Khnum's companion. Similarly, Mut, the partner of Amon at Thebes, seems to have originated elsewhere.

These deities may have some manifestations, most of which were associated with one or more species of animals. There were gender choices in these manifestations; for gods, the most important forms were the falcon and bull, and for goddesses, the cow, cobra, vulture, and lioness. Certain deities were closely associated with some particular animals, as Sebek was with the crocodile and Khepri with the scarab beetle. Not surprisingly, Thoth had two animals, the ibis and the baboon. Similarly, animal cults were only partly attached to a few gods, notably the Ram of Mendes in the Delta and the Apis and Mnevis bulls at Memphis and Heliopolis, respectively. These animal representations could express mood aspects of a deity's nature. For instance, some goddesses were lionesses in their fiercer aspects but were cats when mild or

calm.

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The following table contains a list of some important Egyptian Gods.

Aker	The deified horizon, guardian of the eastern and western horizons of the afterlife.
Amun	A creator god, patron deity of the city of Thebes, and the preeminent deity in Egypt during the New Kingdom
Anhur	A god of war and hunting
Anubis	God of the dead associated with embalming.
Aten	The sun disk, originally a sun deity who was elevated by pharaoh Akhenaten to the position of sole god, creator of the universe.
Atum	A creator god and solar deity, first god of the Ennead
Bennu	An avian deity better known as the Bennu Bird, the divine bird of creation and inspiration for the Greek Phoenix.
Geb	An earth god and member of the Ennead
Hapi	Personification of the Nile flood
Horus	Associated with the sun, sky, and power, Horus became linked with the king of Egypt as early as the First Dynasty
Khepri	A solar creator god, often treated as the morning form of Ra
Khnum	A ram god, the patron deity of Elephantine, who was said to control the Nile flood and give life to gods and humans
Khonsu	A moon god, son of Amun and Mut
Maahes	A lion god, son of Bastet
Ra	The foremost Egyptian sun god, involved in creation and the afterlife.

Amunet	Female counterpart of Amun and a member of the Ogdoad
Anuket	A feathered headdress wearing goddess of Egypt's southern frontier regions, particularly the lower cataracts of the Nile
Bastet	Goddess represented as a cat or lioness, patroness of the city of Bubastis, linked with protection from evil
Bat	Cow goddess from early in Egyptian history, eventually absorbed by Hathor
Hathor	One of the most important goddesses, linked with the sky, the sun, sexuality and motherhood, music and dance, foreign lands and goods, and the afterlife.
Hatmehit	Fish goddess
Heqet	Frog goddess said to protect women in childbirth
Hesat	A maternal cow goddess
Imentet	An afterlife goddess closely linked with Isis
Isis	Wife of Osiris and mother of Horus, linked with funerary rites, motherhood, protection, and magic.
Maat	Goddess who personifies truth, justice, and order
Menhit	A lioness goddess
Heh	Personification of infinity and a member of the Ogdoad
Kek	The god of Chaos and Darkness, as well as being the concept of primordial darkness. Kek's female form is known as Kauket.
Nu (Nun)	Personification of the formless, watery disorder from which the world emerged at creation and a member of the Ogdoad
Mut	Consort of Amun, worshipped at Thebes
Neith	A creator and hunter goddess, patron of the city of Sais in Lower Egypt
Nekhbet	A vulture goddess, the tutelary deity of Upper Egypt
Nephthys	A member of the Ennead, the consort of Set, who mourned Osiris alongside Isis
Nepit	A goddess of grain, female counterpart of Neper
Nut	A sky goddess, a member of the Ennead
Pakhet	A lioness goddess mainly worshipped in the area around Beni Hasan
Renenutet	An agricultural goddess

1.3.2 The Solar Cult

The essential principle of Egyptian religion was known as heka (magic) personified in the god Heka. He was the god of magic and medicine but was also the power which enabled the gods to perform their functions and allowed human beings to commune with their

gods. A god or goddess was invoked for a specific purpose, was worshipped for what they had given, but it was Heka who enabled this relationship between the people and their deities. The gods of ancient Egypt were the lords of creation and custodians of world order. They had created order out of chaos and given the

people peace and prosperity on earth.



1.5 Pictorial Representation of Sun God, Ra (Source: Worldhistory.org)

The worship of nature and its forces was the basic feature of ancient religions. The sun, the supreme source of energy on earth, was worshipped in all the ancient civilizations around the world. Similarly, the veneration of the sun or a representation of the sun as a deity is common in Egypt in the 14th century BCE. Sun played a prime role shaping the ancient Egyptian life and society. It was natural then, given the vital functions of the sun, that a culture might begin to worship it in the form of a god. They believed that “sun is the bestower of light and life to the totality of the cosmos; with his unblinking, all-seeing eye, he is the stern guarantor of justice; with the almost universal connection of light with enlightenment or illumination, the sun is the source of wisdom”. The sun god Re (Ra) was the dominant deity among the high gods and retained this position till the modern times. In Egyptian myths relating the voyage of the sun, he ‘sets out as the young god Kheper; appears at noon in

the zenith as the full-grown sun, Re; and arrives in the evening at the western region in the shape of the old sun god, Atum’. When the pharaoh Akhenaton reorganised religion, he took up the cult of the ancient deity Ra under the name of Aton, ancient designation of the Sun’s disk. Under Akhenaton patronage, Aton qualities as creator, nourisher and protector of the Earth and its inhabitants are glorified.

The Sun God Ra was believed to be the king or father of all gods. Later pharaohs typically worshiped him as the primary deity of his kingdom. Ra served as the supreme deity for Egyptians starting around 2700 B.C.E. in the second dynasty. Ra is always symbolically depicted by a large, golden disk. When he was represented in human form, was symbolised as a ‘man with a hawk head, wearing the golden disk on top of his head, with a serpent wrapped around the base of the disk like a crown’. In his idol form, Ra is generally represented as a figure holding a scepter in his left hand and an Ankh in his right hand. An ankh is like a cross with a loop at the top and is the ancient Egyptian symbol for life. In more than a few cases, Ra is shown in animal form like other deities of the time. Most commonly, he was represented as a hawk, but sometimes also a beetle, lion, ram, or snake, as all of these were considered powerful animals in ancient Egypt. In iconography, ancient paintings represented Ra as simply a large solar disk between two large falcon wings.

Because of his prominence, Ra was incorporated into many aspects of ancient life and art of Egypt, including paintings, sculptures, statues, and even jewellery. They believed that Ra used to have two trips to the heavenly sea daily by boat. His morning voyage to bring the sun out of the sea was called Matet, which means becoming strong; his evening sail to return

the sun back into the sea was called which means becoming weak. Later on, Ra was mentioned with the Egyptian title of Horus, called Ra-Horakhty. The title Ra-Horakhty was believed to have complete command over the universe. Even though he was not a different deity, it is considered by scholars that the additional title was used to mention the journey to and from the sea each day.

1.3.3 Osiris

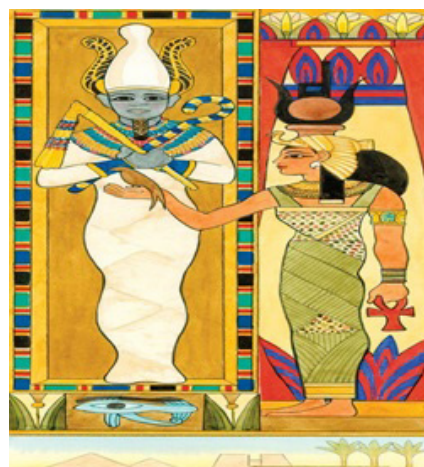
Osiris (Usir) was the next prominent god of ancient Egypt. The origin of the god as well as faith, is perhaps obscure but was a local god of Busiris in Lower Egypt and the personification of chthonic (underworld) fertility. From about BC 2400, he assumed a double role as he was both a god of fertility and the embodiment of the dead and resurrected king. The assumed dual role was perhaps the assertion of Egyptian notion of divine kingship. When the burial rituals became institutionalised by the Pharaohs, it was set that the dead king became Osiris, his son, the living and proposed king, was recognized with Horus, a god of the sky. Through this conviction, Osiris and Horus became father and son. It was believed that goddess Isis was the mother of the Horus. Thus the royal mother of the proposed king was to be Isis, the consort of the dead king. Consequently, the enemies of the disposed king were to be identified as god Seth, who was considered the murderer of Osiris and adversary of Horus.

This was the mystical divine connection established by the Pharaoh to assert the divine kingship over the people. The old myth reported by the Greek author Plutarch describes that Osiris was slain or drowned by Seth, who tore the corpse into 14 pieces and flung them over Egypt. But the wife, Isis and her sister Nephthys searched and buried all the pieces, except

the phallus. Thereby, Osiris started a new life and remained in the underworld as ruler and judge. His son, Horus, lucratively defeated Seth, and was crowned as the new king of Egypt.

According to Egyptian belief, Osiris was not only the ruler of the dead but also a source of power granted from the underworld, which assures sprouting vegetation to the annual flood of the Nile River. But in practice, from about BC 2000 onwards, it was believed that every man, not just the royal death, becomes Osiris at death. This identification with God did not imply a belief in resurrection, for even Osiris did not rise from the dead. Instead, it signified the continuation of an otherworld life and renewal and protection of one's descendants on Earth. In the generalized form Osiris cult spread throughout Egypt.

“Where, when, and how Osiris was first worshiped is much disputed. It has been claimed that Osiris was originally a deified Pre-dynastic king, a primitive vegetation spirit, a jackal god of an early royal necropolis, or a mother goddess. Even the etymology of his name is uncertain, though it may simply mean ‘The Mighty One’” (Geraldine Pinch)



1.6 Osiris and Isis(Source: Worldhistory.org)

Eventually, the idea of rebirth in the next life could be gained through Osiris was celebrated through certain forms of cult. Osiris' rebirth was connected with the Nile River and was considered a symbol of his life-giving power. He was also known as 'The Lord of Love', 'King of the Living', and 'Eternal Lord'. The Middle Kingdom festivals consisted of processions and nocturnal rites at the temple of Abydos, in which Osiris had assumed the ancient god of the dead, Khenty-Imentiu. This name, denoting "Foremost of the Westerners," was then used as an epithet for Osiris. Naturally, west was associated with death, and 'westerners' became synonymous with those who had passed on to the afterlife. By the early 2nd millennium BC, it had become common and fashionable to be buried along the processional road at Abydos or to erect a cenotaph there as a representative of the dead.

Among the other important gods were Amun, Mut, and Khons. Amun was a local fertility god of Thebes until the Theban noble Menhotep II defeated his rivals and united Egypt, elevating Thebes to the position of capital and its gods to supremacy. Amun, Mut, and Khons of Upper Egypt took on the attributes of Ptah, Sekhmet, and Khonsu of Lower Egypt, who were much older deities. Amun became the supreme creator god, symbolized by the sun; Mut was his wife, symbolized by the sun's rays and the all-seeing eye; and Khons was their son, the god of healing and destroyer of evil spirits. These gods were also allied with Ogdoad of Hermopolis, a group of eight primordial gods who "embodied the qualities of primeval matter, such as darkness, moistness, and lack of boundaries or visible powers".

1.3.4 Upheaval under Akhenaton



1.7 A depiction of King Akhenaten and Queen Nefertiti (Source:worldhistory.org)

During the 18th dynasty of Egypt's New Kingdom, Akhenaton ascended his throne as pharaoh in the year 1353 BCE. For the new religion he founded was centred on the Aten, Akhenaton became best known to modern scholars. This figure often came to be portrayed as a sun disc in Akhenaton's new religion and is best understood as the light that the sun itself produces. He changed his birthname, Amenhotep IV, in his fifth regnal year to Akhenaton, which means "Effective for Aton" (Amenhotep means "Amun is satisfied"). Then he began to make modifications to Egyptian art, poetry, and religion.

Akhenaton's rule in Egyptian history was marked by social, political, and religious upheaval. During his brief reign of less than two decades, Akhenaton introduced new elements of Egyptian religion, relocated the capital to a previously uninhabited location, introduced a novel style of architecture, and made an effort to decimate the names and representations of some of Egyptian gods. The Amarna period in Egyptian history has attracted a great deal of attention from academics and the general public, in part because of the turbulent nature of Akhenaton's reign.

Before Akhenaton's rule, Egyptian religion was firmly polytheistic, with many different gods being worshipped. Akhenaton appears to have had a realisation that all of these other manifestations of divinity that people so admired really had no reality. He claimed the sun as the single form of power that one can't really grasp, but it's there; one can see it, and that's all that matters. Therefore, Akhenaton's monotheistic religion, by worshipping the sun god, Aton, caused tremors through Egypt, upending long-standing beliefs.

After an engraving of her and Akhenaton riding in a chariot was found in a tomb carved into one of the rocks outside Armana, it is thought that Nefertiti, queen of Akhenaton, played a significant role during that period. When the traditional gods were removed, Akhenaton and Nefertiti assumed the roles of the male creator god and the female creator goddess, respectively, and hence, the recreation of the universe.

Harmony & Eternity

The ancient Egyptians believed that Egypt (earth) reflected the cosmos. According to them, the stars and the constellations were to have a direct influence on human behaviour and future fortunes. The creator god lived alongside the people of Egypt and interacted with them daily. Trees were considered the homes of the gods. Hathor, a prominent deity, was known as "Mistress of the Date Palm". Vegetation and flowers were also connected with the gods, and the flowers of the ished tree were known as "flowers of life" for their life-giving properties. To experience eternal bliss, however, one needed to be aware of the importance of harmony with nature and god. The maintenance of harmony was thus the responsibility of the people and duty of the ruler.

Recap

- ◆ Egyptian religious beliefs were originally rooted in the pre-historic period.
- ◆ Egyptians followed a complex system of polytheistic beliefs and rituals that formed an integral part of their culture and social life.
- ◆ The essential principle of Egyptian religion was known as heka (magic), personified in the god, Heka.
- ◆ The sun, the supreme source of energy on earth, was worshipped from the very beginning.
- ◆ The Sun God Ra was believed to be the king or father of all gods. Later pharaohs typically worshipped him as the primary deity of his kingdom.
- ◆ When the burial rituals were institutionalised by the Pharaohs.

- ◆ It was set that the dead king became Osiris, his son, the living and proposed king, was recognized with Horus, a god of the sky.
- ◆ According to Egyptian belief, Osiris was not only the ruler of the dead but also a source of power granted from the underworld.
- ◆ Vegetation and flowers were also connected with the gods.
- ◆ The ancient Egyptians accomplished a variety of religious practices starting from primitive fetishism to monotheism.
- ◆ They believed in many deities (polytheism) and regarded them as a part of life.
- ◆ The pharaohs had their own leanings towards different deities, and thus many gods were worshipped during different times.
- ◆ Sometimes, many deities were merged into one or one deity holding more than one name and duty.
- ◆ Death and afterlife form the basis of these beliefs and assign gods accordingly.
- ◆ Akhenaton: Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty known for his religious fervor to the god Aten.
- ◆ Aten: The disk of the sun in ancient Egyptian mythology and originally an aspect of Ra.
- ◆ Ra: The foremost Egyptian sun god, involved in creation and the afterlife.
- ◆ Osiris: He was both a god of fertility and the embodiment of the dead and resurrected king.

Objective Questions

1. Who is known as the Egyptian god of the dead and ruler of the underworld?
2. Who is called the Egyptian sun god?
3. Who is considered as the Nile god of ancient Egypt?
4. Who is the Egyptian god of embalming and the dead?
5. Which ancient Egyptian protective goddess who used her magic spells to help people in need?



6. What was the human form of Egyptian god Ra?
7. What was Ra worshipped as among all ancient Egyptian gods?
8. Ra is often shown with an ankh. What does the ankh symbolise?
9. Which belief was cardinal to Egyptian religion?
10. What was the burial practice of Egyptians?
11. Why were tombs filled with art, jewellery, etc.?
12. What is the term used to denote the belief or worship of many gods?
13. Who was placed at the top of the Egyptian social hierarchy?
14. What was the process of embalming and drying a corpse to preserve it called?
15. What form did the gods and goddesses of the Ancient Egyptians typically take?
16. Which Pharaoh changed the polytheistic belief system to monotheistic in ancient Egypt?

Answers

1. Osiris
2. Ra
3. Sobek
4. Horus
5. Isis
6. Man with a hawk's head
7. Creator
8. Life
9. The afterlife

10. Preservation of dead bodies as mummies
11. The ancient Egyptians believed that the dead enjoyed their materials in the afterlife.
12. Polytheism
13. Pharaoh
14. Mummification
15. Humans with animal head
16. Akhenaton

Assignments

1. Prepare a table of important female Gods of Ancient Egypt.
2. Collect the pictures of important Gods of Ancient Egypt.
3. Discuss the belief system and the Burial Practices of Ancient Egyptians.

Suggested Readings

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UNIT

Intellectual Contributions

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ aware of the contributions of ancient Egyptians in the field of science and technology, medicine, philosophy and literature.
- ◆ familiarised with ancient Egyptian inventions
- ◆ aware of the contribution of ancient Egyptians to subsequent human civilizations.

Prerequisites

The ancient Egyptian civilization dates to around 3000 BC, and it flourished there until 30 BC when it joined the Roman Empire. The long existence of civilization demonstrates that it had access to everything it required, including an excellent natural environment with water, fish, fertile soil, and plants, as well as sophisticated architecture such as the pyramids, which called for the use of precise measurements, mathematical calculations, and long-lasting materials. Cleopatra's beauty or perhaps Tutankhamun's magnificent mask is just a few of the images that may pop up when we think about Egypt. Some of you could also consider hieroglyphics, a type of pictorial writing carved and written on various materials, including papyrus, stone, and wood. Technology seems to have advanced significantly around 3000 BC, especially metalworking. Both the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians separately realised that they could create bronze, which is harder and more lasting, by combining a little amount of tin ore with copper ores. This sparked a series of related discoveries that would not have occurred without the initial discovery. In this unit, let's examine some of the most intriguing intellectual contributions of Egyptians to the ancient world.

Keywords

Hieroglyphic, Shadoof, Egyptian System

Discussion

1.4.1 Egyptian Philosophy

Ancient Egypt is one of the earliest civilizations to have left written, pictorial, and archaeological records of its culture, including medicine, mathematics, and astronomy (Ancient Egyptian Philosophy, Juan José Castillos). However, the great Greek philosophers like Thales, Pythagoras and Plato recognized their vast indebtedness to the veteran thinkers of Egypt for their knowledge and ideas. Plato, for example, spent 13 years studying with the Egyptian priests at Heliopolis (Philosophy in Ancient Egypt, Julian Scott). However, we have no precise records of a discursive Egyptian philosophy. According to Pierre Hadot, author of 'Philosophy as a Way of Life', philosophy was entirely different in ancient Egypt as it was characterized by two formulas: learning to live and learning to die. It was, in fact, eminently practical on the one hand and metaphysical on the other. One can infer both of these elements from their moral philosophy, which dealt with how to live; and their 'funerary texts' concerned 'learning how to die'.

From the above statements, you can easily draw a conclusion that there was a rich heritage of intellectual thought in ancient Egypt, even though there was no readily available substantiating evidence. The later thinkers at different parts of the world recognized or referred to the Egyptian root of their scholastic contribution. Now, one can have a basic doubt, that is, what is philosophy?

Philosophy is the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence, especially when considered as an academic discipline (Oxford Dictionary). Quite literally, the term "philosophy" means "love of wisdom." In a broad sense, philosophy is an activity people undertake when they seek to understand fundamental truths about themselves, the world in which they live, and their relationships to the world and to each other (philosophy.fsu.edu, 'What is Philosophy').

Here the doubt may be resolved and also could earn a view on what philosophy is. From the explanations above, we can categorically assure that a rich civilization like ancient Egypt would definitely produce great philosophical treatises as well.

'Don't be proud of your knowledge, consult the ignorant and the wise, the limits of art are not reached, no artist's skills are perfect, good speech is more hidden than greenstone, yet may be found among maids at the grindstones' (M. Lichtheim, Ancient Egyptian Literature). Perhaps not less important is the ancient Egyptian wisdom in the perception that accurate observations and true knowledge are not always the privilege of the eminent philosopher.



1.4.1.1 Features of Ancient Egyptian Philosophy

- ◆ Ancient Egyptian social life, religion and philosophy were deeply interrelated and it is difficult to differentiate these into separate fields.
- ◆ It was primarily influenced by religion and was eminently practical on the one hand and metaphysical on the other.
- ◆ In a deep analysis, it is evidently visible that all the sub fields of philosophy, such as ethics, aesthetics, logic, axiology etc, were present in Ancient Egyptian philosophy.
- ◆ Life in ancient Egypt was considered so perfect that the Egyptian afterlife was imagined as an eternal continuation of life on earth.
- ◆ The pessimistic view of life in ancient Egypt is often that it was a death-obsessed culture in which powerful pharaohs forced the people to labour at constructing pyramids.
- ◆ Regarding political philosophy, it was believed that the gods had given the people everything and had set the king over them as the one best-equipped to understand and implement their will.
- ◆ Their belief influenced the social philosophy towards death in immortality. They regarded death as a temporary interruption rather than the cessation of life.
- ◆ Metaphysical view on the universe is that it emerged from a vast cosmic ocean of nothingness.
- ◆ The human body is both the physical form inhabited by an individual “self” and the medium through which an individual engages with society. Hence the body both shapes and is shaped by an individual’s social roles.
- ◆ Ethics was viewed as a network of interrelated moral values whose content touch upon all social roles that can be played by a member of an organized community and whose aim is the practice of good.
- ◆ The principle on which the moral philosophy of the ancient Egyptians was based was called Maat. Maat was personified as a goddess whose symbol was the feather. She represents the universal order of the Cosmos and the law of life. This principle of Maat resulted in a strong ethic of public service and responsibility, flavoured with an attitude of benevolence.
- ◆ No ancient Egyptian text on epistemology has come down to us, still, if we study their scientific papyri, we may infer some notions on how they went about in the pursuit of knowledge and the limitations they found while engaged in such work.
- ◆ One Egyptian figure often considered an early philosopher is Ptahhotep. He served as vizier to the pharaoh in the late 25th and early 24th century BC. Ptahhotep is known for

his comprehensive work on ethical behaviour and moral philosophy, called The Maxims of Ptahhotep.

An amazing example of classical Egyptian philosophy is found in a 3,200-year-old text named “The Immortality of Writers.” This skeptical, rationalistic, and revolutionary manuscript was discovered during excavations in the 1920s. The paper containing the twenty horizontal lines of “The Immortality of Writers” is divided into sections by rubrication. They seem composed to be read aloud, as the Egyptologist Toby Wilkinson points out in his new Penguin Books translation.

1.4.2 Ancient Egyptian Science & Technology

The pyramids were the best example of ancient Egyptians' brilliance in the field of engineering technology. Similarly, behind the practice of burial of the dead, there was strong scientific as well as knowledge of medicine. So from this primary information, we can imagine the development of science and technology in ancient Egypt.

1.4.2.1 Science in Daily Life

It was inferred that the ancient Egyptians were extremely aware of their self-image and paid more attention for individual hygiene and appearance. For simple, the handheld mirror of the present day was created by the Egyptians. They often decorated mirrors with inscriptions and figures, such as that of the protector-god Bes, and were owned by men and women alike. More ornate wall mirrors were also a part of middle - and upper-class homes and were likewise decorated. They also

invented toothbrushes and toothpaste. It was noted that toothpaste was made of rock salt, mint, dried iris petals, and pepper (according to one recipe from the 4th century CE). Another deciphered inscription contains information about preparing toothpaste from ox hooves and ash, which, mixed with one's saliva, create a cleansing paste. They also prepared tablets from spices like cinnamon and frankincense heated in a honey mixture, which became the world's first breath mints.

Ornamentation on furniture became more elaborate in Egypt and more refined as time went on. The Egyptians also developed different colours of ink and different weights of paper through their invention of paint cakes and processing of the papyrus plant. Small figures of gods, such as Isis, Bes, Horus, Hathor, among others, have been excavated from different parts. These figures were made of material ranging from sun-burned mud to gold. These are the strong basic evidence for the common practice of mining and metallurgy in case of household purposes.

1.4.2.2 Water Treatment

According to the archeological findings, many different water treatment methods are mentioned in ancient Egyptian record. To disinfect water, ancient Egyptians used copper, iron, or hot sand in conjunction with boiling it. Herbs were often used in the process of well filtration, such as amla which is high in vitamin C, and khus. Plants were sometimes used to purify water, such as water lily roots and the seeds of the nirmali (*Strychnos potatorum*). Another practice was that the aluminum sulfate, iron sulfate, or a mix of the two was used to remove suspended solids.

1.4.2.3 Engineering Technology

The sophisticated technological skill, as seen on the small scale of household goods, elaborated in the construction of great temples and pyramids. The central value observed in creating any of these goods or structures was the detailed evidence for the engineering technology that existed in ancient Egypt. Thus, our understanding of ancient Egyptian engineering technology and architecture is based mainly on religious buildings and burial monuments, massive structures characterized by thick, sloping walls with few openings, geometrical shapes possibly echoing a method of construction used to obtain stability in mud walls.

There are three main factors relevant to ancient Egyptian engineering. The prime factor was the Egyptian pharaohs, who were willing to devote almost unlimited time and resources to the construction of the pyramids. The next factor was the ability to organize all of these workers in an efficient way. The ancient Egyptian labourers worked under the total control of a centralized engineer. The third factor was the abundance of source materials like sandstone, limestone, and granite very close to the sites of the pyramids.

Ancient engineers of Egypt had outstanding knowledge of geometry and measurement, which is apparent from the pyramids which still remain. It was found that the engineers worked from plans or blueprints drawn on papyrus. There are numerous inscriptions relating to supplies and difficulties in building the pyramids at Giza, but no definitive explanation of the practical means by which they were built. The pyramids were probably constructed using earth ramps to raise the stones to the level necessary; the ramps were later removed. Regarding this, Bob Brier and Hoyt Hobbs made notable observations as

follows :

“The problem is one of physics. The steeper the angle of an incline, the more effort necessary to move an object up that incline. So, in order for a relatively small number of men, say ten or so, to drag a two-ton load up a ramp, its angle could not be more than about eight percent. Geometry tells us that to reach a height of 480 feet, an inclined plane rising at eight percent would have to start almost one mile from its finish. It has been calculated that building a mile-long ramp that rises as high as the Great Pyramid would require as much material as that needed for the pyramid itself - workers would have had to build the equivalent of two pyramids in the twenty-year time frame”.

In addition to the pyramids, they built many temples and other buildings. The engineering and technological skill exhibited to build the Great Pyramid still mystifies scholars in the present day.

“Because of their immense size, building pyramids posed special problems for both organization and engineering. Constructing the Great Pyramid of the pharaoh Khufu, for example, required that more than two million blocks weighing from two to more than sixty tons be formed into a structure covering two football fields and rising in a perfect pyramidal shape 480 feet into the sky. Its construction involved vast numbers of workers, which, in turn, presented complex logistical problems concerning food, shelter, and organization. Millions of heavy stone blocks needed not only to be quarried and raised to great heights but also set together with precision in order to create the desired shape” (Bob Brier and Hoyt Hobbs's comment).

1.4.2.4 Water Engineering

The river Nile was an important part of ancient Egyptian life. As an unending source of sustenance, it played a crucial role in the development of Egyptian social life and culture. The flooding of the Nile was a natural disaster, but the ancient Egyptians effectively used this natural phenomenon and lived accordingly. Based on the features of the flooding of the Nile, they divided the natural year into three broad natural seasons of, Akhet, Peret, and Shemu, and invented a calendar system.

With the help of this calendar, they dig canals and irrigation ditches to harness the Nile river's yearly flood and bring water to distant fields. Besides, they built regulators to manage the flow of the water

and constructed reservoirs to save water supplies in case of drought. They practiced a form of water management called basin irrigation, a productive adaptation of the natural rise and fall of the river. It meant a network of earthen banks, some parallel to the river and some perpendicular to it, which formed basins of various sizes. This method was useful to regulate the rise and fall of the river to best suit their agricultural needs. This water grid would hold an amount of water longer than it would have naturally stayed, allowing the land to become fully saturated for later planting.

The following table contains two major instruments used by the ancient Egyptians as part of their water engineering practices.

Shadoof	Nilometer
Shadoof, also spelled Shaduf, is a hand-operated device for lifting water. The shadoof was a long tool on a seesaw type of bottom, with a weight on one end and a bucket on the other. The bucket could be lowered into the canal and filled with water. Then, the bucket could be rotated around to the area in need of water. The ancient Egyptians used it to help move water from the canal to the fields.	A nilometer was used to predict flood levels. This instrument was a method of marking the water level of the Nile from early days. Nilometers acted as an early warning system, alerting people that waters were not as high as usual, so they could prepare for drought or unusually high floodwaters.
	

Later on, they built dams at right angles to the flow of the Nile, separating the Nile Valley into basins. For instance, Sadd el-Kafara ("Dam of the Infidels"), a masonry embankment dam built on Wadi al-Garawi, 10 km southeast of Helwan in Helwan Governorate, Egypt. The dam was built in the first half of the third millennium BC. It was the oldest dam of such size in the world.

1.4.2.5 Mathematics & Astronomy

Astronomy was important to the ancient Egyptians on two levels: the spiritual and the practical. The stars told the stories of the gods' accomplishments and trials but also indicated the passage of time and the seasons. At a practical level, astronomical observations enable us to predict when it is going to rain, what time is suitable to plant or harvest crops, and even the favourable times for making important decisions, such as building a home or temple or starting a business venture. Accurate astronomical calculations based on the night skies were interpreted in terms of pragmatism and recorded in mathematical calculations measuring weeks, months, and years. Although the calendar was invented by the ancient Sumerians, the concept was adapted and improved upon by the Egyptians. Thales of Miletus (546 BCE), credited with the first successful prediction of a solar eclipse, is said to have studied astronomy and geometry in Egypt. Democritus (425 BCE) also spent five years studying the same subjects there. And Plato (347 BCE) spent thirteen years living with Egyptian priests, reading texts of mathematics and theology and becoming cognizant of their work in astronomy.

Astronomy was held in high esteem as

evidenced by the following points:

- ◆ Ancient Egyptian astronomy began in prehistoric times, ie, with the Pre-dynastic Period.
- ◆ In the 5th millennium BCE, the stone circles at Nabta Playa have made use of astronomical alignments.
- ◆ By 3rd millennium BCE, observing the sky and stars, they devised the 365 day period calendar and determined the annual flooding of the Nile.
- ◆ As an evident influence of astronomy, the Egyptian pyramids were carefully aligned towards the pole star, and the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak was aligned on the rising of the midwinter Sun.
- ◆ Astronomy played a considerable part in fixing the dates of religious festivals and determining the hours of night.
- ◆ It was believed that the temple astrologers were especially adept at watching the stars and observing the conjunctions and risings of the Sun, Moon, and planets, as well as the lunar phases.
- ◆ Beginning with the 9th Dynasty, ancient Egyptians produced 'Diagonal star tables', which were usually painted on the inside surface of wooden coffin lids.
- ◆ Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius (395–423 CE), through his "Egyptian System", formulated a planetary theory which says that the Earth rotates on its axis and the

interior planets Mercury and Venus revolve around the Sun.

- ◆ In Ptolemaic Egypt, the Egyptian tradition merged with Greek astronomy and Babylonian astronomy, with the city of Alexandria in Lower Egypt becoming the centre of scientific activity across the Hellenistic world.

It was generally acclaimed that the mathematics in ancient Egypt were entirely practical rather than intellectual interests. It was used in record keeping, in developing the schematics for machines such as the water pump, in calculating tax rates, and in drawing up designs and siting locations for building projects. Rosalie David argues that "Mathematics served basically utilitarian purposes in Egypt and does not seem to have been regarded as a theoretical science". Ancient philosophers like Herodotus and Pliny consistently mention the Egyptians as the source of theoretical mathematics. Plato, to insist his argument that 'study of geometry necessary for clarity of mind', mentions Pythagoras, who first learned it from the priests in Egypt.

Features of ancient mathematics and its polemic are listed here:

- ◆ The ancient Egyptians used a numeral system for counting and solving mathematical problems.
- ◆ Multiplication and fractions were also in use.
- ◆ Prolonged Mathematical treatises were absent in ancient Egypt except some surviving sources written on papyrus.
- ◆ From the available sources, it is assumed that the ancient

Egyptians utilized concepts of geometry, such as determining the surface area and volume of three-dimensional shapes useful for architectural engineering, and algebra, such as the false position method and quadratic equations.

- ◆ The earliest true mathematical documents date to the 12th Dynasty (c. 1990–1800 BC). The Moscow Mathematical Papyrus, the Egyptian Mathematical Leather Roll, the Lahun Mathematical Papyri, which are a part of the much larger collection of Kahun Papyri and the Berlin Papyrus 6619, all date to this period.
- ◆ The Moscow Mathematical Papyrus and Rhind Mathematical Papyrus are regarded as mathematical problem texts. They consist of a collection of problems with solutions. They were, perhaps, compiled by a teacher or a student engaged in solving typical mathematical problems.

1.4.3 Ancient Egyptian Medicine

Herodotus (The father of History), about 450BCE, wrote about Egyptians: 'The practice of medicine is so divided among them, that each physician is a healer of one disease and no more. All the country is full of physicians, some of the eye, some of the teeth, some of what pertains to the belly, and some of the hidden diseases' (Todd T.W. Egyptian Medicine: A Critical Study of Recent Claims, 1921).

The ancient people of the Nile valley



believed in prayer as a solution to health problems, but they also had practiced natural or practical remedies such as herbs. They thought that gods, demons, and spirits played a key role in causing diseases. The early physicians preached that spirits or demons blocked channels in the body and that this affected the way the body worked. As a means to unblock these channels, they used a combination of prayer and natural — or non-spiritual — remedies. These early healers were also priests, but, in time, the profession of a “doctor of medicine” emerged.

Later on, by the 5th century onwards, they practiced medicine with highly professional methods. It was evidenced that they possessed advanced knowledge of anatomy and surgery. It was of no wonder that they treated a lot of diseases, including modern specialisations like dental, gynaecological, gastrointestinal, and urinary disorders. Different plants, several animal products and minerals were used for therapeutic purposes. Some of these plants are still used for medical purposes at present day. Fortunately, they documented their life details by carving on stone, clay, or papyri. Although a lot of these records have been lost or destroyed, the surviving documents represent a huge source of knowledge in different scientific aspects, including medicine.

Pharaohs documented day-to-day incidents using hieroglyphic script by carving on walls of temples, stones, clay, or papyri (Baines, 1983). The ancient medical papyri documented several details about the way by which they practiced medicine. The papyri describe in-depth the diseases, how to diagnose, and different remedies that were used to treat. These remedies included herbal remedies, sometimes surgery, and even magical spells. (Leake, 1952). Starting from the

Middle Kingdom, about 1800 to 300 BCE, the remains of more than 40 papyri describing the medical procedures that used to treat various illnesses have been explored (Pommerening, 2012). These documents contain over 700 remedies and magical formulas, and scores of incantations aimed at repelling demons that cause disease.

It has been inferred that the doctors had fairly good knowledge about bone structure and some awareness of how the brain and liver worked. Ebers Papyrus reveals that the centre of the body’s blood supply is the heart, and every corner of the body is attached to vessels. The heart was the meeting point for vessels that carried tears, urine, semen, and blood. We also have evidence about the practice of dentistry. Caries and tooth decay appear to have been common. They advised people to wash and shave their bodies to prevent infections, to eat carefully, and to avoid unclean animals and raw fish.

The “channel theory” of medicine was derived from observing farmers who dug out irrigation channels for their crops. It allowed medicine to move from entirely spiritual cures towards practical, natural ones. The heart was the centre of 46 channels, seen as types of tubes. The doctors believed that, as in irrigation, channels provide the body with routes for good health. If blockages occurred, they used laxatives to unblock them. Egyptian physicians underwent training and could successfully fix broken bones and dislocated joints.

The practice of preserving corpses by mummification was evidence that the Egyptians had some knowledge about the human body. In one process, the priest-doctor inserted a long, hooked implement through the nostril and broke the thin bone of the brain case to remove the brain.

Kings and queens from faraway lands sought Egyptian doctors because of their reputation for excellence.

1.4.4 The Hieroglyphic writing

Ancient Egyptians written in four different scripts: Hieroglyphs, Hieratic, Demotic, and Coptic. These scripts did not all appear simultaneously, but appeared consecutively over the long period that the ancient Egyptian language existed. The Hieroglyphic was the prime script used for communication. The term is derived from two Greek words: 'hieros' and 'glyphos'. They mean "sacred inscriptions", referring to its inscription on the walls of sacred places such as temple walls and tombs. The need to identify a pictorial representation with a royal individual or a specific, unique event, such as a hunt or a particular battle, led to the application of hieroglyphic writing to a monumental context.

Hieroglyphic writing is a system that tends to employ the characters in pictorial form. There are individual signs that are known as hieroglyphics. These alphabets can be read as symbols for certain objects or pictures, or sounds as well. This language was first seen in the writings of Diodorus Siculus in the 1st Century BCE. According to the history of hieroglyphics symbols, they have been in use to describe the monumental inscriptions related to the Indus Civilization along with the Hittites. Because the alphabets only existed in the form of pictures, hieroglyphics were pretty difficult in terms of writing and hence were just used to write on monuments.

1.4.4.1 Main features of Hieroglyphic Script

The system of hieroglyphic writing consisted mostly of signs that would represent certain recognizable objects in the constructed, natural world. So, these writing alphabets could be classified into three different groups. The first one is known as a logogram. In this form of writing, a single sign is used to write a word. This would provide the meaning as well as the sound. This was used for denoting the objects that the sign would properly represent. The hieroglyphics translator will easily be able to decipher what these signs would mean.

The second group is known as a phonogram. It represents the sound in this language. The group doesn't just have phonemes which are a derivation of the logograms. The third group in hieroglyphics consisted of certain determinatives. These signs didn't have any phonetic significance but still are used in order to specify the meanings in word divisions. The grouping and spelling of these signs were also pretty important. Egyptians always avoided the vowels except for the semivowels. Hence, hieroglyphic writing is often a representative of some consonant words.

During the classical period, when Egyptian writing was at its peak, the total number of hieroglyphic symbols used was about 700. However, during the late period, these numbers were multiplied with the addition of more symbols and alphabets. Such a type of proliferation took place because all the scholars and educationists began inventing new signs and forms of writing.

Recap

- ◆ Ancient Egypt is one of the earliest civilizations to have left written, pictorial, and archaeological records of its culture, including medicine, mathematics, and astronomy.
- ◆ According to Pierre Hadot, philosophy was entirely different in ancient Egypt as two formulas characterised it: learning to live and learning to die.
- ◆ Egyptian philosophy was primarily influenced by religion and was eminently practical, on the one hand and metaphysical, on the other.
- ◆ As part of science, according to the archeological findings, many different water treatment methods are mentioned in ancient Egyptian records.
- ◆ Ancient engineers of Egypt had outstanding knowledge of geometry and measurement, which is apparent from the pyramids which still existed today.
- ◆ Based on the features of the flooding of the Nile, they divided the natural year into three broad natural seasons of Akhet, Peret, and Shemu and invented a calendar system.
- ◆ Astronomy was important to the ancient Egyptians on two levels: the spiritual and the practical.
- ◆ As an evident influence of astronomy, the Egyptian pyramids were carefully aligned towards the pole star.
- ◆ It is assumed that the ancient Egyptians utilized the concepts of geometry, used for architectural engineering, and algebra.
- ◆ The ancient Egyptians used a numeral system for counting and solving mathematical problems.
- ◆ The early physicians preached that spirits or demons blocked channels in the body affecting the way the body worked.
- ◆ These early healers were also priests, but, in time, the profession of a “doctor of medicine” emerged.
- ◆ It has been inferred that the doctors had fairly good knowledge about bone structure and some awareness of how the brain and liver worked.
- ◆ Starting from the Middle Kingdom, about 1800 to 300 BCE, the remains of more than 40 papyri describing the medical procedures that used to treat various illnesses have been explored.

- ◆ Hieroglyphic writing is a system that tends to employ the characters in pictorial form.
- ◆ During the classical period, when Egyptian writing was used the most, the total number of hieroglyphic symbols used was about 700.
- ◆ They were successful in inventing mathematics, geometry, surveying, metallurgy, astronomy, accounting, writing, paper, medicine, the ramp, the lever, the plough, and mills for grinding grain.
- ◆ The ancient Egyptians invented toothpaste, with one recipe containing powdered ox hooves, ashes, burnt eggshells, and pumice.
- ◆ The Egyptian hieroglyphic writing system is believed to date back to 3300 BC
- ◆ Egyptians used hieroglyphics for the next 3,500 years. Egyptian hieroglyphs may be the oldest writing form.

Objective Questions

1. What is hieroglyphics?
2. Which plant did the Egyptians use to make their paper?
3. Which region provided cedar wood to Egyptians in order to build their boats?
4. What strange cure did the Ancient Egyptians use to cure a cough?
5. What did Maat represent?
6. What is the theme of the work 'The Maxims of Ptahhotep'?
7. Which were the ingredients used in the first breath mint made by Egyptians?
8. Which were the three natural seasons division based on the features of the flooding of the Nile?
9. What are the two major instruments used by the ancient Egyptians as part of their water engineering practices?

10. Which is the instrument used to mark the water level of the Nile from early days and to predict flood level?
11. What is the name of the masonry embankment dam built in Egypt during the first half of the third millennium BC?
12. Which were the four different scripts used by ancient Egyptians?

Answers

1. A type of writing used by the Egyptians
2. The papyrus plant
3. Lebanon
4. A whole cooked mouse
5. The universal order of the Cosmos and the law of life
6. Ethical behaviour and moral philosophy
7. Cinnamon and frankincense heated in a honey mixture
8. Akhet, Peret, and Shemu
9. Shadoof and Nilometer
10. Nilometer
11. Sadd el-Kafara ("Dam of the Infidels")
12. Hieroglyphs, Hieratic, Demotic, and Coptic

Assignments

1. Prepare an animated powerpoint presentation on ‘Ancient Egyptian Science and Technology’.
2. Compare the achievements of Ancient Egyptian people with that of Harappan people with respect to science and technology.

Suggested Readings

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UNIT

Social and Economic Life

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be :

- ◆ introduced to ancient Egyptian social structure
- ◆ aware of the pyramid of social classes in Egyptian society
- ◆ familiarised with the connection between Egyptian trade and economy

Prerequisites

Aristotle, the legendary Greek philosopher said, “Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual”. Man cannot live in isolation. We must satisfy certain natural basic social needs in order to survive. He has to enter into relationships with his fellowmen to live a life. No man can break the shackles of mutual dependence. This is a universal fact about human beings and his social life.

“The popular view of life in ancient Egypt is often that it was a death-obsessed culture in which powerful pharaohs forced the people to labor at constructing pyramids and temples and, at an unspecified time, enslaved the Hebrews for this purpose” (Joshua J. Mark, 2016). Is this statement totally ‘strong and valid’? In order to verify the statement let’s see the nature of ancient Egyptian society, its structure and formation in detail, in this unit.

Keywords

Social Pyramid, Government Officials, Priests, Scribes, Deben, Papyrus

Discussion

1.5.1 Social Structure in Ancient Egypt

Actually, the ancient Egyptians loved life, no matter their social class or status in the society. It was also true that the pharaohs used slave labor as every other ancient culture did without regard to any particular ethnicity. They believed that they were living the best life possible in the best of all possible worlds because they were having all possible means of a prosperous social life.

The better defense against ‘slave society’ is that life in ancient Egypt was perfect, so that, that the Egyptian afterlife was imagined as an eternal continuation of life on earth. The burial practices show the evidence of their hope for a prosperous life in the afterlife too. The slaves in Egypt were either criminals, those who could not pay their debts, or captives from foreign military campaigns. These people were considered to have forfeited their freedoms either by their individual choices or by military conquest and so were forced to endure a quality of existence far below that of free Egyptians.

Imagine, if you get a chance to visit the historic times, you will meet members of Egyptian society. There you can see what Egyptian life was actually like during the ancient times. Each year, when the Nile River flooded its banks, all of Egypt celebrated the Opet Festival. Work in the fields stopped while people at all levels of Egyptian society joined in a great festival honoring the pharaoh and his patron, the

god Amon-Re (AH-muhn-RAY). Almost everyone in Egyptian society took part in the Opet Festival. Priests decorated the god’s statue with jewellery. They put the statue in a shrine and placed the shrine on a ceremonial boat called a barque. The beautifully decorated boat was made by artisans, or craftspeople. High-ranking government officials competed for the honor of carrying the barque on poles through town. Members at the lower levels of society such as farmers lined the streets to watch the procession. Scribes made a written record of the celebration. The Opet Festival brought all these groups together. But in everyday life, they belonged to very different social classes. These classes made up a social pyramid, with the pharaoh at the top and peasants at the bottom. In between were government officials, priests, scribes, and artisans. The daily lives of the Egyptian people were distinct for each class.

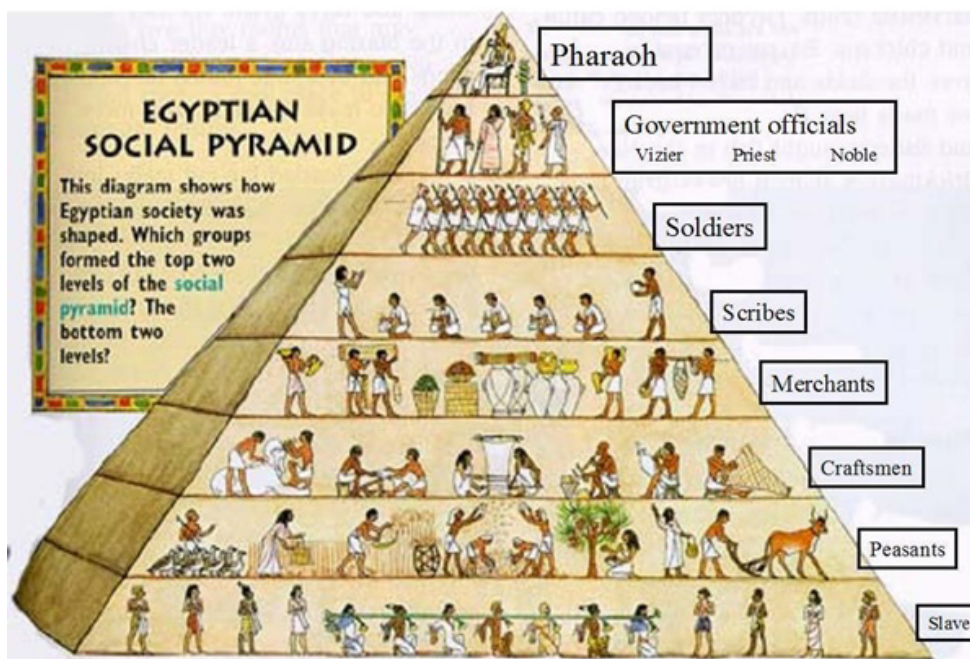
1.5.1.1 Egyptian Social Structure - The Social Pyramid

Like all other civilizations and societies of the time, Egyptian society was also divided into different sections or classes. Based on occupation, there were laborers, farmers or peasants, priests, soldiers, etc. existed. The rulers or pharaohs enjoyed special privileges and immunities in the society. Based on the available documents and evidence, the Egyptian social structure



was placed into a strict hierarchy called the social pyramid. Social Pyramid is a hierarchic distribution of power seen in Egyptian social structures that are in a pyramid shape. Power is given to a few people at the top and each descending tier represents more people with a diminished level of power. In a social pyramid, the lowest tier has the most people and the least power.

The ancient Egyptian society was firmly divided into a hierarchy with the Pharaoh at the top and then his vizier, the members of his court, priests and scribes, regional governors (Nomarchs), the generals of the military, artists and craftspeople, government overseers of worksites (supervisors), the peasant farmers, and slaves.



1.8 (The ancient Egyptians were grouped into various social classes. The kings (pharaohs) were the most powerful, while the slaves were the lowest class.)

(Source:thehistoryofancientmesopotamia.weebly.com)

At the very top of this social pyramid was the pharaoh, as Egypt's supreme ruler. Religions strengthened the pharaoh's authority and treated them as God's representative initially and then were believed to be gods in human form. Being the god on earth, their word was law.

The government officials and priests were the next two highest classes in the social pyramid below the Pharaoh. They were the next most powerful sections in the society after the ruler. Government

officials carried out the orders of the pharaoh, and most of the officials came from noble families. Being powerful and wealthy, they enjoyed a high quality of life in the society.

Priests were also a powerful group, because religion touched every aspect of Egyptians daily lives. Priests were in charge of the temples and religious rituals. They also oversaw the important ceremonies surrounding death and burial.

The next in the hierarchy was the

soldiers. Through the time of the Old Kingdom (c. 2613-2181 BCE), the central government relied on regional governors (nomarchs) to supply men for the army. The nomarch would conscript soldiers in their region and send them to the king.

Next on the social pyramid were scribes. Scribes held a respected position in society. They recorded information for government and religious leaders. The ancient Egyptians covered their temples and tombs with hieroglyphs, but they also employed scribes to record everything from the stocks held in the stores for workers, the proceedings in court, magic spells, wills and other legal contracts, medical procedures, tax records and genealogies.

Egyptian merchants (actually, they were more like traders) carried products such as gold, papyrus made into writing paper or twisted into rope, linen cloth, and jewellery to other countries. In exchange, they brought back cedar and ebony wood, elephant tusks, panther skins, giraffe tails for fly whisks, and animals such as baboons and lions for the temples or palaces.

Artisans occupied the next layer of the social pyramid. This group included craftspeople like carpenters, metalworkers, painters, sculptors, and stone carvers. Artisans were highly skilled, but they had little social status.

Peasants comprised as much as eighty percent of the population. The majority of peasants worked in the fields producing crops, while some worked as servants in the homes of wealthy nobles. When not farming, peasants worked on the pharaoh's massive building projects.

There is some controversy whether there was slavery at all in ancient Egypt. "Hem" ("Hm"), generally translated as

'slave' and originally meaning body, was seemingly a person with lessened rights dedicated to a certain task such as the service of a god (since the 1st dynasty) or the royal administration.

It is true that there were several layers of social classes that existed in ancient Egypt. The classes near the top of the pyramid had fewer people and enjoyed higher status. The classes nearer the bottom had greater numbers of people but lower status.

Ancient Egypt's class system was not rigid. People in the lower or middle class could move to a higher position. They improved their status mainly through marriage or success in their jobs. Even slaves had rights. They could own personal items, get married, and inherit land. They could also be given their freedom. The society was dominated by men. The man was the head of the family, but women had extensive rights, and could own and inherit property and participate in trade. Women could even divorce their husbands.

1.5.1.2 Peasants as a Social Class

The peasants or farmers made up the lowest and largest class in Egypt's social structure. They were usually measured as unskilled laborers. Still, Egyptian society, like all other ancient societies, depended largely on their work. Peasants who grew the crops would feed everyone with food.

The peasant life of Egypt is totally tied up with the Nile River. The three agricultural seasons were the flooding season, the planting season, and the harvest season. The flooding season lasted from June to September. During this time, the Nile burst its banks and fertilized the valley and its fields. Farmers had to wait

for the waters to go down before they could work the fields. In the meantime, they labored on royal projects, such as building pyramids and temples.

In October, the planting season began, and farmers sowed seeds in the field. The common crops were wheat and barley, which were used to make their staple food, the bread. Peasants worked in pairs to sow the fields. The farmers prepare the field with a plow pulled by cattle. A second person, often the farmer's wife, followed behind to scatter the seeds. Throughout the season, farmers carefully irrigated the land.

The harvest season starts in March. It was common for the entire family helped with the harvest. The elders cut down the plants with sickles (metal blades with short wooden handles). Then the women and children gathered the tall stalks of grain. During harvest time, everyone worked from dawn to dusk. Peasants often sang songs to make the long hours of labor go more quickly. Sometimes, musicians played in the fields while the workers sang.

When considering the living standards, the peasants had the fewest comforts of any of the social classes. They lived in ordinary plain houses made of mud bricks. Their household items and furniture were sparse, often just woven mats. The peasants were the producers of food, but they had little to save. A typical daily meal might be made up of onions, cucumbers, fish, and homemade bread. Peas and lentils were also common. Unlike the upper classes, peasants rarely ate meat. In times of famine, they often had to boil tough papyrus plants for food.

The peasants spent most of their time in the field, but they did manage to have some time for recreation. It was revealed

from paintings and other records that the men enjoyed a river game that involved knocking each other off papyrus rafts. Similarly, holidays were celebrated before planting and after the crops were harvested. Peasants also actively participated in the seasonal festivals held to honor the Egyptian gods. The most notable time of year for peasants was the end of the harvest season. As a reward for their hard work, they were allowed to gather up any leftover grain and keep it for food. But it was a fact that the farmers could also be punished for a poor harvest. They had to pay taxes in the form of crops. If a harvest came up too short of paying the required tax, a farmer might be brutally beaten.

1.5.2 Economy of Ancient Egypt

When you think about ancient Egypt, what comes to your mind? You may picture giant pyramids, mummies in ancient tombs or majestic pharaohs sitting on thrones. All this indicates the prosperity of civilization. Such an elaborate civilization should possess a strong and well-devised economy too. Apart from agriculture, there has to be a good deal of trade and commerce, both inland and overseas. Let's have a brief look into the economic and commercial activities of ancient Egyptians.

1.5.2.1 Agriculture

The fertile Nile Valley and extensive irrigation facilities enabled the Egyptians to reap large harvests. As the farmers produced more food crops than they needed for themselves, many of them would turn to trade and commercial

activities. Egyptian traders relied mainly on ships to transport their goods. Trade reached its height during the New Kingdom, when Egypt controlled the trade routes of the Near East. Egyptian ships carried products such as wheat and linens across the Mediterranean to Europe and Asia, returning with lumber and metal weapons, which Egypt did not produce.

1.5.2.2 Barter System

Grain was used like we use money today. When workers worked the fields, they were paid in grain. They could then take that grain and use it to feed their own family, or if they had extra, use it to barter for other things that they needed. Most of the local bartering happened in the market, where people would meet together to trade bread, grain, fish, fruits, and vegetables for things like fish hooks, leather sandals, linen and ceramic pots.

1.5.2.3 Tax

Ancient Egyptians did not have coined money; the taxes were levied on harvests and property. Heavy taxes were levied at least once a year and included payment in grain and various kinds of labor. Taxes were calculated for cattle, grain and other goods. The people paid taxes in the form of labor or grain. The collected grains in the form of tax were stored by the pharaoh in large warehouses. During special occasions, the farmers could be charged up to 60 percent of his yearly harvest as the tax.

The pharaoh relied on taxed grain as a source of supplementation during years of drought and bad harvest. Manual labor was also a tax requirement that supported the Egyptian army as well as large harvest and building projects throughout the year.

The vizier or minister kept records of taxes collected and ensured that needs for labor and grains were met. Better portion of the taxes collected were used to stabilize society against less productive years or years of bad harvest. Public workers were fed from grain stores, and artisans constructing public buildings were paid by the treasury.

1.5.2.4 Measure of Value

It was not until the Persian Invasion of 525 BC that a cash economy was instituted in Egypt. Soon a unit of exchange called 'deben' came into existence. Goods and services were valued on the unit known as deben. It was actually a weight unit. The goods were exchanged on the basis of this weight unit. If a scroll of papyrus cost one deben, and a pair of sandals were also worth one deben, the pair of sandals could be traded fairly for the papyrus scroll. In this same way, if three jugs of beer cost a deben and a day's work was worth a deben, then one would fairly be paid three jugs of beer for one's daily labor.

1.5.2.5 Trade

The people of ancient Egypt were able traders. They traded gold, papyrus, linen, and grain, cedar wood, ebony, copper, iron, ivory, and lapis lazuli (a lovely blue gem stone.) Ships sailed up and down the Nile River, bringing goods to various ports. Internal trade among Upper and Lower Egypt, and between the different provinces of those regions, flourished prior to 3150 BC. By the time of the First Dynasty, (BC 3150 - 2890 BC) overseas trade was established with Mesopotamia. The First Dynasty kings established a strong central government at their capital of Memphis, and a bureaucracy soon developed which handled the details of



running the country, including trade with neighboring lands. Mesopotamia was an early trade partner whose influence on the development of Egyptian art, religion, and culture has been noted, contested, and debated by many different scholars over centuries.

In the case of distance trade, Egypt had a trading colony in Canaan, one in Syria, and even more in Nubia. The Egyptians had already graduated from building papyrus reed boats to ships of wood, and these were sent regularly to Lebanon for cedar. It was said that the overland trade route through the 'Wadi Hammamat' wound from the Nile to the Red Sea, the goods packed and tied to the backs of donkeys. Most of these trade relations were achieved through peaceful negotiation; some were acquired through military campaigns as well.

Djer (3050-3000 BC), the third king of the First Dynasty, sent a military expedition against Nubia, which secured valuable trade centers. Nubia was rich in gold mines and, in fact, gets its name from the Egyptian word for gold, 'nub' (Joshua J. Mark, Trade in Ancient Egypt, 2017). "One of the most important trade centers in Nubia is referred to in Egyptian texts as yam, a resource for wood, ivory, and gold" (Joshua, 2017). Khasekhemwy, (last ruler of the Second Dynasty- 2890 - 2670 BC), also led campaigns to Nubia to put down rebellions and secure trade centers and his methods became the standard for the kings who came after him. Yam continued as a strategic trade center till the Middle Kingdom of Egypt (2040-1782 BC) but then disappeared from the records and perhaps was replaced by another called Irem during New Kingdom (1570 -1069 BC).

The kinds of goods traded varied from region to region. Egypt had grain in plenty

and would eventually become known as 'Rome's breadbasket' during the Roman period, but lacked wood, metal, and other precious stones needed for amulets, jewelry, and other ornamentation. It was noted that there were no government-sponsored incentives for trade in Egypt because the Pharaoh owned all the land and whatever it produced. It was Pharaoh's responsibility to care for the people, the land, and maintain the principle of ma'at (harmony). If the harvest was successful and there was enough food consumption and exchange, Pharaoh was regarded as successful; if not, the priests would intervene and interpret it as against the goodwill of the gods.

1.5.3 Family and the Status of Woman

The nuclear family was the core of Egyptian society, and many of the gods were even arranged into such groupings. There was tremendous pride in one's family, and lineage was traced through both the mother's and father's lines. Respect for one's parents was a cornerstone of morality, and the most fundamental duty of the eldest son (or occasionally daughter) was to care for his parents in their last days and to ensure that they received a proper burial (Douglas J. Brewer & Emily Teeter, Ancient Egyptian Society and Family Life- 1999).

One of the central values of the Egyptian civilization was ma'at - the concept of harmony and balance in all aspects of one's life. This ideal was the most important duty observed by the pharaoh who, as mediator between the gods and the people, was supposed to be a role model for how one lived a balanced life. Countless genealogical lists indicate

how important family ties were there in the Egyptian society. A family in ancient Egypt was made up of a couple, their children, their parents and grandparents, and sometimes their sisters and brothers. A family had the duty of supporting and protecting its members under any circumstances.

They considered their children to be a blessing from the gods and so they took exceptional care of them. Everyone who wanted to have children, would pray to their gods and goddesses. Life expectancy was low for both men and women, probably in the 30s. The dead relatives were considered a living presence. Egyptians believed that the dead had the power to make good and bad things happen in the life of the living relatives. They constantly worshiped and prayed to the dead, took food and drink to their tombs, and tried to show how much they loved and respected them.

1.5.3.1 Marriage

Read the following passage.

In the New Kingdom, there was a saying that:

"Take a wife while you are young
That she make a son for you
She should care for you while you are youthful
It is proper to make people
Happy is the man whose people are many
He is saluted on account of his progeny." (Tignor Robert L, Egypt: A Short History-2010)

The chief purpose of marriage was to have more children and descendants of the family. The wife always shared responsibilities and helped her husband

in the work. Generally society upholds monogamy, but it also was not uncommon for a man of high economic status to have more than one wife. There were divorces, but it was very difficult. Child marriage was very common. Girls married at around 12 years old, and the boys were just a bit older than the girls when they got married. Even though girls of higher ranking families had the choice to marry when they were older, these marriages were usually arranged by the parents of the boy and girl. The parents created a pre-nuptial agreement. These contracts also said that anything the wife brought to the marriage would always belong to her, even if the marriage ended.

1.5.3.2 Status of women

Egyptian women had a level of equality to the men, but were expected to obey their husbands and fathers. They participated in business arrangements and in the royal families, were often the real power behind the pharaoh's decisions. Egyptian wives were well-respected and often ran the farms and businesses when their husbands were away. Some were hired in the temples and courts as dancers, musicians and singers.

The respect accorded to women in ancient Egypt is evident in almost every aspect of the civilization, from the religious beliefs to social customs. The gods were both male and female, and each had their own equally important areas of expertise. Women could marry who they wanted and divorce those who no longer suited them, could hold what jobs they liked - within limits - and travel at their whim. The earliest creation myths of the culture all emphasize, to greater or lesser degrees, the value of the feminine principle. Women could be scribes and also priests, usually of a cult with a feminine deity. The priests



of Isis, for example, were female and male, while cults with a male deity usually had only male priests (as in the case of Amun). The high prestige of the God's Wife of Amun is another example of the balance observed by the ancient Egyptians in that the position of the High Priest of Amun was balanced by an equally powerful female.

When we compare the ancient societies of Egypt and India, one can find that patriarchy was the common feature of both societies. Though women had ample rights related to education and economic independence, yet they had no power over these areas. They were encouraged to develop feminine traits as it assisted them to serve their family and society. Serving of women as dancers, musicians and vocalists in temples in both the civilizations exhibits societies advocating feminine skills and using women as

sexual objects. As the norms of society were delineated and implemented by men, women's life got circumscribed by tradition and feminine roles ascribed to them. They were expected to be dependent on men in all the stages of their life. The impact of the crystallized and cemented notions of patriarchy thrived in the social structure and impacted the life of ancient women in both the civilizations. The secondary status designated to women in both the societies reflects its shadow on the status of contemporary women. The seed of woman as a 'weaker sex' was implanted in the womb of ancient societies where it was nurtured and passed on to the subsequent generations. Patriarchy has its roots in ancient civilizations.

Recap

- ◆ The Pharaoh was the ultimate authority in Egypt.
- ◆ The people held the pharaoh responsible for their well-being.
- ◆ Government officials helped ensure that the country ran well.
- ◆ Priests oversaw the temples and the rituals and ceremonies to honor the gods.
- ◆ Scribes recorded the events of the kingdom.
- ◆ Soldiers protected the kingdom from military threats.
- ◆ The middle class made craft items for the other classes and sold them.
- ◆ Farmers grew the food that supported the entire kingdom.
- ◆ Slaves were prisoners-of-war who worked in houses, mines or quarries.

- ◆ Barter system was prevalent and later developed as a unit and medium of exchange.
- ◆ Tax was collected in kind and the rate of tax was high.
- ◆ Fertility and success in agriculture led to trade.
- ◆ Evidence of inland and overseas trade, trade articles were available.
- ◆ In case of distance trade, Egypt had a trading colony in Canaan, one in Syria, and even more in Nubia
- ◆ Trade had been occurring in the 5th century BCE onwards, especially with Canaan, Lebanon, Nubia and Punt.
- ◆ In the Second Dynasty, Byblos provided quality timber that could not be found in Egypt.
- ◆ Patriarchy was the pattern of society
- ◆ Egyptian women had a level of equality to the men
- ◆ The respect accorded to women in ancient Egypt is evident in almost every aspect of the civilization from the religious beliefs to social customs

Objective Questions

1. Which place was once known as 'bread basket of Rome'?
2. Who occupied the next two highest classes in the social pyramid, after Pharaoh?
3. What were the two factors that helped the Egyptians to reap large harvests?
4. What type of economic system was followed by Ancient Egyptians?
5. What is the synonym for barter?
6. Who would the people of Egypt blame if crops did not grow or if disease struck?

7. What was the major occupation of people in ancient Egypt?
8. What type of government was followed by the ancient Egyptians in which the rule is based on religious authority of the pharaoh?
9. What was the unit in which ancient Egyptians valued goods and services?
10. Which were the items traded by ancient Egyptians?
11. Which Egyptian trade centre was rich with gold mines?
12. Who led a military expedition against Nubia?

Answers

1. Egypt
2. The government officials and priests
3. The fertile Nile Valley and extensive irrigation facilities
4. Barter system
5. Trade
6. The Pharaoh
7. Agriculture
8. Theocracy
9. Leben
10. Gold, papyrus, linen, and grain, cedar wood, ebony, copper, iron, ivory, and lapis lazuli
11. Nubia
12. Djer (3050-3000 BC), the third king of the First Dynasty

Assignments

1. Prepare an Ancient world map and locate the trade routes of ancient Egypt.
2. Describe the social hierarchy that existed in ancient Egypt.
3. Analyse the marriage system in ancient Egypt considering the forms of marriage, age and consent, dowry system, divorce and family relations.

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UNIT

Egyptian Art

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ familiarised with the development of ancient Egypt in the fields of art and architecture.
- ◆ introduced to the characteristic features of ancient Egyptian architecture
- ◆ made aware of the relationship between Egyptian art and spirituality and its influence on Egyptian society.

Prerequisites

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when we hear the term Egypt? Yes, it is the mighty construction, that is, the pyramid. The pyramid is an ancient massive construction with a square or rectangular base and four triangular sides meeting in an apex, such as those built as tombs in Egypt or as bases for temples in Mesoamerica. Then it can be undoubtedly asserted that the pyramids are the immortal construction of the people of ancient Egypt.

From this reference, we can assume the fact that the people of the Nile valley developed their own architectural techniques and style from the very old days. Like the other civilizations of the time, Egyptians also have conceived and demonstrated unique styles of art and architecture. In the art section, we have archaeological as well as other documentary evidence on pottery, sculptures, paintings, craft works, etc. The ancient temples, remains of residential buildings and more importantly the burial castles, ie, pyramids were the tools and evident remains for us to learn deeply about their architecture. The following discussion will enable you to think and assimilate more factorial concepts about ancient Egyptian art and architecture.

Keywords

Wadi, Scarabs, Faience, Ushabti, Ka, Sunk relief, Vienna System, Regalia

Discussion

A major contributor to late Neolithic art, Egyptian culture is probably the best-known form of ancient art in the Mediterranean basin, before the advent of Greek civilization (600 BCE) (Encyclopedia of Ancient Art). Ancient Egyptian architecture, for instance, is world famous for the extraordinary and elaborated Pyramids, while other features unique to the art include their script based on pictures and symbols (hieroglyphics), and its meticulous hieratic style of painting and stone carving. This unique civilization was shaped by the geography of the country as well as the political, social and religious customs of the time. Secluded by the desert borders and sustained by the waters of river Nile, Egyptian arts and crafts developed largely unhindered for many centuries.

Their art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, and other forms of arts produced in the Nile valley from 5000 BCE to 300 BCE. This art reached considerable sophistication in painting and sculpture, and was both highly stylized and symbolic. Most of the surviving art comes from tombs and monuments; hence, the emphasis on life after death and the preservation of knowledge of the past. Apart from the pyramids, Egyptian buildings were decorated with paintings, carved stone images, hieroglyphs and three-dimensional statues. The art tells the story of the pharaohs, the gods, the common people and the natural world of plants, birds and animals. The beauty and grandeur of these sites are beyond

comparison. How the ancient Egyptians were able to construct these massive structures using primitive tools is still a mystery.

It was said that ancient art has twofold functions. The first function was to glorify the gods - including the Pharaoh - and facilitate human passage into the after-life. A second function was to assert, propagandize and preserve the values of the day. Due to the general stability of Egyptian life and culture, all arts - including architecture and sculpture, as well as painting, metalwork and goldsmithing - were characterized by a highly conservative adherence to traditional rules, which favored order and form over creativity and artistic expression. Decorative arts included the first examples of Nail Art.

1.6.1 Features of Ancient Art

- ◆ The art was two-dimensional or three-dimensional pieces that served aesthetic and functional purposes.
- ◆ It reveals the political, cultural and spiritual course of ancient Egypt.
- ◆ Most of the artwork is cemented in tradition, with gradual evolution of conventions and rare instances of massive deviation.

- ◆ Sculptures were made of wood, metal, and stone.
- ◆ The most common surviving sculptures are funerary statues.
- ◆ These statues were placed in recesses or other architectural settings in a place of honor because they were the conduit for their intended soul or deity to manifest in.
- ◆ Divine cult statues were the subject of daily rituals and were also carried during festival processions.
- ◆ Familial statues were placed in family chapels, typically representing a deceased forefather.
- ◆ Reliefs were used for preservation in the afterlife.
- ◆ Most surviving reliefs are in tombs, sealed away from human activity and weathering.
- ◆ Temple reliefs depicted historical events and royal deeds or demonstrated how to conduct certain ceremonies.
- ◆ Jewelry was made from gold, silver, and semiprecious gems like jasper, lapis lazuli, and turquoise; with a focus on color and design.
- ◆ Metalworking started with copper but developed to produce bronze with the introduction of tin.
- ◆ Metal was used for vessels, bowls, statues, weaponry, and jewelry.
- ◆ One of the most famous types of ancient Egyptian artwork is

hieroglyphics. Hieroglyphics combined function and form, as it's a written language that uses pictographs. The hieroglyphics are tiny pictures that either stand for what they depicted or stand for phonetic sounds.

1.6.1.1 Egyptian Artists and Craftsmen

It was noted that the sculptors and painters of ancient Egypt were not the original artists in the modern sense of being a creative individual. Their art was rather the work of paid artisans who were trained and who then worked as part of a team. It was interesting to note that the leading master craftsman might be very versatile, and capable of working in many branches of art, but his part in the production of a statue or the decoration of a tomb was anonymous. He would guide his assistants as they worked, and help to train novices, but his personal contribution cannot be assessed. Artists at all stages of their craft worked together.

Painters would follow in the same manner. Where scenes have been left unfinished it is possible to see the corrections made to the work of less-skilled hands by more practiced craftsmen. Many master craftsmen reached positions of influence and social importance, as we know from their own funerary monuments. Imhotep, the architect who built the Step Pyramid complex for King Zoser (2660-2590 BC), was so highly revered in later times that he was deified. Over the entire history of ancient Egypt, one thing is quite similar: that the credit for any work of art was believed to belong to the patron who had commissioned it. In Mesopotamia, Greek or Indus Valley civilizations also we have seen elaborate artistic works, but the credits of these works were ascribed to the ruler in general.



Being a highly religious society, most of the Egyptian artworks involve the depiction of their gods and goddesses, including the Pharaoh. Also, their respect for order and conservative values led to the establishment of complex rules for how both Gods and humans could be represented by artists. For instance, in figure painting, the sizes of figures were calculated purely by reference to the person's social status, rather than by the normal artistic rules of linear perspective. Head and legs always in profile; eyes and upper body viewed from the front. For Egyptian sculpture and statues, the rules stated that male statues should be darker than female ones; when seated, the subject's hands should be on knees (Ancient Egyptian Arts). Gods too were depicted according to their position in the hierarchy of deities, and always in the same guise. For instance, Horus (the sky god) was always represented with a falcon's head, Anubis (the god of funeral rites) was always depicted with a jackal's head.

The use of colour in paintings was also regulated and used symbolically. Basically, artists used six colours in their paintings (red, green, blue, yellow, white and black). The colour red symbolizes the colour of power, life and victory, as well as anger and fire. Green symbolized new life, growth, and fertility, while blue symbolized creation and rebirth, and yellow symbolized the eternal such as the qualities of the sun and gold. Yellow was the colour of Ra and of all the pharaohs, which is why the sarcophagi and funeral masks were made of gold to symbolize the everlasting and eternal pharaoh who was now a god. White was the colour of purity, symbolizing all things sacred, and was typically used in religious objects and tools used by the priests. Black was the colour of death and represented the

underworld and the night.

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.

Painters, before painting a stone surface, whitewashed and sometimes covered it with mud plaster. They used pigments made of minerals which were able to stand up to strong sunlight with minimal fade. Their binding medium is still unknown; the paint was applied to dried plaster in the “fresco a secco” style. In the fresco secco, or lime-painting, method, the plastered surface of a wall is soaked with slaked lime and the lime-resistant pigments are applied swiftly before the plaster sets. The stability of these paintings depends upon the presence of a binding medium—such as egg, oil, gum, or glue—mixed with the pigments to adhere them adequately to the wall surface. 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.



Example of Ancient Egyptian Frescos
(Digital Maps of the Ancient World)

1.6.1.2 Sculpture

There were numerous native stones used for statuary, including the ubiquitous soft limestone of the desert cliffs that line most of the Nile valley, as well as sandstone, calcite, and schist (Dr. Amy Calvert). Quartzite, diorite, granite, and basalt like hard stones were also used by the artist. Carving on softer stones was done with copper chisels and stone tools. But hard stone required tools of copper alloys, and the use of abrasive sand to shape them. Polishing was achieved with smooth rubbing stone and abrasive sands with a fine grit.

Using the technique of sunk relief, they created both monumental and smaller sculptures. 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.

Sunken relief is a technique of relief sculpture in which figures or images are carved in low relief, but set within a sunken area, so that the relief never rises beyond the original flat surface. This technique is largely restricted to ancient Egypt, where it became common in the Amarna period and later.(Glossary of Art History)

Most statues were painted. Sometimes stones selected for the symbolism of their color were painted. For example, the exemplary statues of Menkare (builder of the smallest of the three major pyramids at Giza), were executed in dark schist or greywacke. This smooth black stone is connected with Osiris, who is often shown with black or green skin referring to the fertile silt and lush vegetation of the Nile valley. The Egyptians also used a variety of woods in sculpture work, including the native acacia, tamarisk, and sycamore fig as well as fir, cedar, and other conifers imported from Syria. Evidence of excellently built statuary, coffins, boxes, and furniture using these woods were available even today.



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 (Picture Source: Wikipedia)

1.6.1.3 Egyptian Pottery

Ancient Egyptians started making pottery around 4,000 B.C.E (earlier than the Old Kingdom). The earliest Egyptian pottery followed the hand-building pottery technique. Many of the discovered pieces use the coil hand building technique. Decorations were often simple and patterns were commonly geometric designs like the ancient Greeks. Early potters produced clay pots using slow-turning pottery wheels. On the finished pots, they smoothed the surface and dipped it into a dye bath for colour. They could then use a spatula or comb to scratch decorations into the surface.

The two types of clays used for Egyptian pottery are Nile clay and Marl clay. Year by year, the flood in the Nile brings silt and clay. Nile clay has high levels of silicon and iron oxide, and typically is of brown and red colour. Marl clay found in the desert, hence often referred to as desert clay. It has a yellow or white coloring to it because of limestone deposits. Over history, we can see the transformative nature of the art of pottery as each era had different processes of making, new materials, distinct styles, forms, and colors. Egyptologists identified each period, each site, as having its distinct style. In order to properly classify pottery in Egypt, a special system, the ‘Vienna System,’ was set in place. The Vienna System’s aim is to provide a means for Egyptologists working anywhere in Egypt to understand each other’s pottery finds. The system looks at the size of the organic and non-organic components of the pottery fabric.

It was assumed that bowls and platters were used as everyday items and were also placed in tombs to ensure a ready supply of food and drink in the afterlife. The excavated tombs reveal that there

was a practice of placing model vessels in the burial goods. Sometimes these were miniature versions of real ones, and served the same symbolic function of providing food and drink for the dead person in the afterlife.

1.6.1.4 Jewellery

Every Egyptian – from child to old, peasant to priest, poor to pharaoh – was believed to be wearing jewelry and ornaments. It was reported that from pre dynastic times, jewelry was made, worn, offered, gifted, buried, stolen, appreciated and lost across genders, generations and classes. Egyptians adorned themselves in a variety of embellishments, including rings, earrings, bracelets, pectorals, necklaces, crowns, girdles and amulets. A variety of ornaments appears in the archaeological record in Egypt as early as 4500 BC, in the form of beads made of shell and glazed stones.

Gold and copper were the predominant metals used to craft ornaments. The common man could afford copper, while the nobility opted for gold. The metals were extracted from Nubian deserts and were abundant in supply. Silver is very rarely uncovered in excavations through Egypt- any use of it was due to its importation, as silver wasn’t available in ancient Egypt. Semi Precious stones and various gems were the common materials used in jewelries. The most prized stones were lapis lazuli, as well as obsidian, garnet, rock crystal, and carnelian. Pearls and emeralds were also commonly used by the people. Faience made from ground quartz and then mixed with a colourant that was heated and then moulded to mimic more natural and expensive stones. The most popular of which was a blue-green shade made to imitate turquoise.



A collection of ancient Egyptian jewelry in the British Museum, London (Left)
Broad collar of Nefer Amulets- 1504–1450 BCE (Right)(Source: Worldhistory.org)

Spiritual Significance

Egyptian deeply believed in the spiritual significance of jewellery. It was worn to ward off evil spirits, protect their health, as well as bring good luck. Certain colours, designs, and materials were associated with supernatural powers and deities. Carnelian, for example, is an orange-red stone suggestive of blood-which infused an ornament with potency and energy. Egyptian jewellers followed very strict rules regarding the mystical aspects of their jewellery creations.

1.6.1.5 Music

One thing that is very sure about ancient Egyptians is that they were lovers of entertainment, music and dance. A number of images have been found of people dancing and playing musical instruments on the walls of the tombs, temples, on pottery as well as inside ancient Egyptian homes. From this evidence, it is noted that most of the musical instruments were played by males. Very few females played music. Females would clap during performances but they did not necessarily play musical instruments.

From the time of the old kingdom, clapping and percussion instruments were used like drums, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. One of the common instruments was flute and they were created with reeds from various grasses that grew along the Nile River. During the middle and new kingdom, people used different types of instruments, such as harps, lyres, and lutes. The “Harp” is the oldest and most common string instrument used by the ancient people. It was a wooden box (sometimes, of different size) to amplify sound and produce vertical strings connecting to the wooden leg on its limbs. Different types of harp were used, including those placed directly on the floor or fixed on a base, some of which were curved and could reach the length of the musician or higher, and therefore played standing, and the music was played using hands on different chords to obtain two accompanying tones (resolution and response). For elite use, the harp was made of ebony and decorated with gold and precious stones.

Another common instrument popular in ancient Egypt was the Kanara. It is a wooden instrument (Asian in origin) with five strings and a parallel stretch between the sound box and the wooden frame,

attached horizontally or vertically while playing, resembling a harp. The number of his strings increased to 13, three of which were placed in the Berlin Museum, one in Leiden in the Netherlands and one in Cairo.

Other common instruments are,

- ◆ The Tanbura: It is an instrument with an oval wooden box from which emerges a long or short neck and is like today the instrument called oud. It was worn on the chest or in a horizontal or vertical position.
- ◆ The Rababa: It is a single-string instrument made of tree antlers and goat or deer skin, and the string can come from the ponytail as well as the bow string.
- ◆ Nay: It is one of the oldest wind musical instruments in Egypt. It is a simple bamboo flute and can be a double.
- ◆ The Water Organ: This was formed of a group of long and short pipes that work by compressing water on the air.

‘The Egyptians linked music to the movement of celestial bodies, and believed that the rhythm of music is only one aspect of the rhythm of the universe, and therefore sought to reveal the relationship between the balance of planets and stars and musical tunes, and so they put for each tone of the seven-note musical scale a symbol of Hieroglyphs similar to the symbol of the planet, and thus the symbols of the planets became the symbols of the Egyptian seven-way musical scale’. (Music and Dance in Ancient Egypt, <https://hurghadalovers.com>)

1.6.1.6 Dance

Dance first emerged as a kind of rites in temples and in the processions of the gods during religious and agricultural festivals. Gradually, it became an art practiced by male and female dancers for entertainment in public popular life. “Dancing among the ancient Egyptians represented celestial movements on the model of musical melodies, and they danced around structures and temples in the form of a circle” (Menes Trier, Ancient and Modern Dance). It was also argued that the ancient people imagine ‘the temple as the sun in the middle of the sky, and they revolve around it as a representation of the zodiac, that is, as planets, stars that orbit the sun in its daily and annual cycle’. Even though we have no reference in the ancient texts on details of ancient religious dance on the structures.

Forms of Dances in ancient Egypt

- ◆ Rhythmic dance was performed by a group of young men or women along with the rhythm of instruments or by applause. The participants performed by moving the legs in slow or fast steps and raising the arms above the head.
- ◆ Sports Dance: This form of dance is faster and stronger than rhythmic dance. It includes dances related to the rhythm and flexibility of the body, such as standing on one leg or elevating the other dancer from the ground and others following it.
- ◆ Acrobatic dance: It is a form of dance that shows the

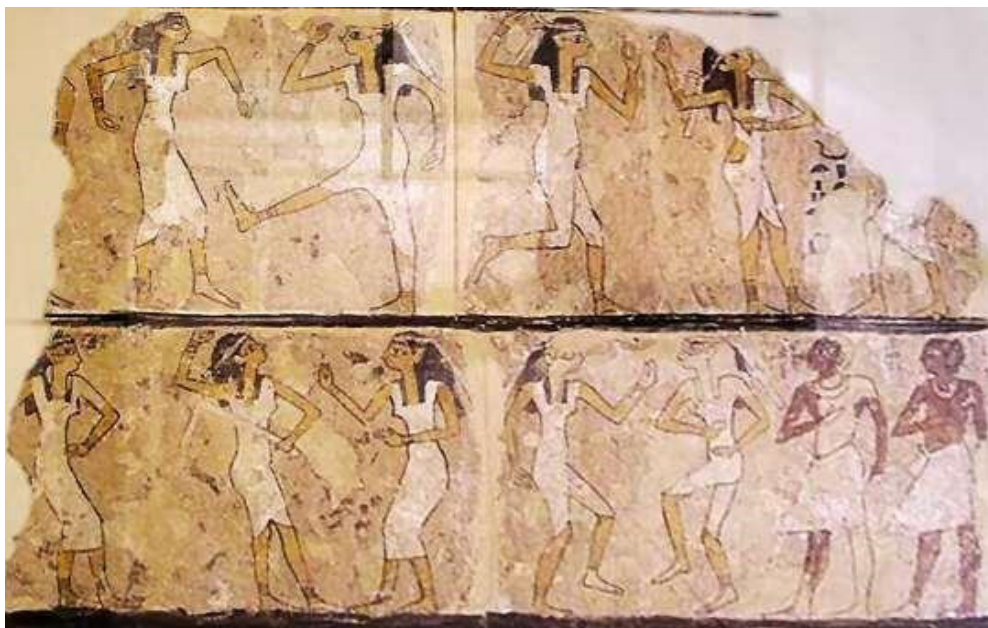
exaggeration of the movements of its dancers.

- ◆ Marital dance: It was for men or women where couples are composed of one sex. Basically, it meant for martial workouts in a rhythmic form.
- ◆ Simulation dance: This is a form of dance which imitates or ingests animals or aims to rain or imitate hunting, agriculture, etc.
- ◆ Religious dance: This is a dance that constitutes a religious ritual inside or outside the temple when following the gods during religious holidays.
- ◆ Funeral dance: It is also a religious dance, but it appears in the processions and aims to exorcise the dead and bring

pleasure to his heart, and this dance may have been sad.

- ◆ War Dance: It included the embodiment of movements that occur in battles and wars, jumping and fencing movements, conflicts, ball and running, intended to entertain fighting soldiers, and was generally practiced by Libyan and Nubian soldiers fighting with the Egyptian army.

From the above information, one can understand that music and dance were highly valued in ancient Egyptian culture, but they were more important than was generally thought. They were integral to creation and communion with the gods and, further, were the human response to the gift of life and all the experiences of the human condition.



Dance in ancient Egypt (<https://www.coolaboo.com>)

1.6.2 Ancient Egyptian Architecture

The art of architecture was the most notable and familiar aspect of ancient Egyptian civilization. It includes burial monuments and pyramids, temples, palaces and other buildings of the time.

These monuments tell the story of the engineering and architecture skills of the people and showcase their societal relations and religious culture as well. Although earthquakes, wars and the forces of nature have taken their toll, the remains of these monuments are visible across the Nile valley as a tribute to the greatness of this civilization. These building remains took a high degree of architectural and engineering skill, and show the organization of a large workforce consisting of highly trained craftsmen and labourers.

Features of Construction

- ◆ The two predominant construction materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and stone, mainly limestone. Sandstone and granite in considerable quantities were also used.
- ◆ The stone was generally reserved for tombs and temples.
- ◆ The bricks were used for making royal palaces, fortresses, the walls of temple precincts and towns, and for subsidiary buildings in temple complexes.
- ◆ The core of the pyramids consisted of locally quarried stone, mud bricks, sand or gravel.
- ◆ For the casing of the pyramids, stones were used. The stones have to be brought from other places, predominantly white limestone from Tura and red granite from upper Egypt.
- ◆ The houses were made out of mud collected from the damp banks of the river Nile.
- ◆ Sun baked bricks were made through placing the mud in moulds with specific desired size and left to dry in the hot sun to harden.
- ◆ Because they were made of sun dried mud bricks and also situated near the Nile flood valley, many of the ancient social centers including buildings had disappeared.
- ◆ The dry, hot climate of Egypt preserved some mud brick structures.
- ◆ Also, many temples and tombs have survived because they were built on high ground unaffected by the Nile flood and were constructed of stones.
- ◆ As far as the surviving buildings are concerned, the exterior and interior walls, as well as the columns and piers, were covered with hieroglyphic and pictorial frescoes and carvings painted in brilliant colors.
- ◆ However, the temples were aligned with astronomically significant events, such as solstices and equinoxes, requiring precise measurements at the moment of the particular event.
- ◆ Among the construction structures, mortuary architecture was highly developed and often grandiose.
- ◆ Most tombs comprised two principal parts, the burial chamber (the tomb proper) and the chapel, in which offerings for the deceased could be made.

- ◆ In royal burials the chapel rapidly developed into a mortuary temple which was usually built separately and at some distance from the tomb.
- ◆ Mastabas were the standard type of tomb in the earliest dynasties.
- ◆ These were flat-roofed, rectangular superstructures (sides constructed at first from mud brick and later of stone) in the form of paneled niches painted white and decorated with elaborate “matting” designs. They were built over many storage chambers stocked with food and equipment for the deceased, who lay in a rectangular burial chamber below the ground.
- ◆ The tomb for Djoser, second king of the 3rd dynasty, began as a mastaba and was gradually expanded to become a step pyramid.
- ◆ During the Old Kingdom, the most characteristic form of tomb building was the true pyramid, the finest examples of which are the pyramids at Giza.
- ◆ The temple constructions were of two forms. They were the cult temples and funerary or mortuary temples.
- ◆ Mud brick and wood were the standard materials for houses and palaces throughout the Dynastic period; stone was used occasionally for such architectural elements as door jambs, lintels, column bases, and windows.

The architecture of Ancient Egypt mainly contains mighty constructions like pyramids and temples. There are two factors probably responsible for this pattern. First, the belief that life on earth was merely a brief interlude compared with the eternal afterlife to come. Second, the fact that Egypt was a theocracy, whose King (or Pharaoh) was worshipped as a God, with absolute powers: a ruler who owned a large chunk of Egypt's land and much of its resources. As a result of these two factors, a huge proportion of Egyptian architectural designs, building materials and labour force were devoted to the construction of huge Pharaonic tomb complexes, known as Pyramids, designed to preserve the Pharaoh's body and protect his belongings after death, so as to facilitate his passage into the after-life. (Architecture of Ancient Egypt, Visual Arts Encyclopedia.)

1.6.2.1 The Pyramids and Other Structures

It is of no doubt that the most famous form of late prehistoric art, the pyramids of ancient Egypt are the world's largest funerary edifices or tombs. It is assumed that the pyramids, the most enduring symbols of Egyptian art and architecture, were developed from the mastaba tomb. The common feature of each pyramid was that they routinely contained a wide variety of Egyptian sculpture, mural painting, jewelry and other types of ancient art necessary to sustain the deceased in his after-death existence. The oldest known Egyptian pyramids are located at Saqqara, near Memphis, just south of the Nile delta. The earliest among these is the Pyramid of Djoser. The tallest one was 'the Great Pyramid' of Giza.

How did pyramid architecture evolve and developed?

“The architectural design of the pyramids was a reflection of both politics and religious custom. Until about 3,000 BCE, Ancient Egypt was effectively two countries with two traditions of burial. In Lower Egypt (to the north) the country was wet and flat, and the dead were buried under their family house which was usually built on higher ground. In Upper Egypt (to the south) the dead were buried away from settlements, in dry sand at the edge of the desert. A mound was usually erected over the grave. When the people and burial customs were united, during the period 3000-2700, it became customary for nobles to be interred in a simple tomb called a mastaba. This was a simple tomb consisting of a flat-roofed, rectangular structure, made from mud-bricks, with slightly sloping walls, inside which, a deep burial chamber was dug into the ground and lined with stone or bricks. After a while, the flat roof of the surface building was replaced by a pyramid design. Finally, came the idea - conceived by Imhotep - of stacking mastabas one on top of another, forming a series of "steps" that decreased in size towards the top, thus creating the familiar design of the step pyramid. Not all pyramid designs were successful. Architects employed by King Snefru constructed three pyramids: the first of these, the Pyramid at Meidum, collapsed in antiquity; the second, the Bent Pyramid, had its angle dramatically altered mid-way through its construction; only the third, the Red Pyramid proved to be successful” (Encyclopedia of Ancient Art).

It can be evidenced that the early pyramids were different from the later ones in respect of construction form and style. As an example, the monumental

pyramids of the Old Kingdom were built out of stone blocks, while those of the later Middle Kingdom were smaller and were typically made out of mud brick cased in limestone. The early structures usually had a core of local limestone. Traditionally, granite was used for the royal chambers inside the pyramid. It was estimated that around 2.5 million limestone blocks and 50,000 granite blocks might have been used to construct a single pyramid. In major pyramids, the capstone (at the top of the structure), usually of basalt or granite, was plated with gold, silver or electrum (a mixture of both) which would dazzle viewers with its reflection of the sun. Deep inside each pyramid was the Pharaoh's Chamber, which contained the mummified body of the dead ruler, placed inside a precious sarcophagus. A huge number of artifacts were buried with the pharaoh to sustain him in the afterlife which was another common feature.

It was a striking point that all pyramids were constructed on the west bank of the Nile, where the sun sets. It was in accordance with official religious doctrine concerning the realm of the dead. The Egyptians believed that the pharaoh's soul supposedly joined the sun during its descent before continuing with it in its eternal journey. These structures were built over a period of 2,700 years, ranging from the beginning of the Old Kingdom to the close of the Ptolemaic period.

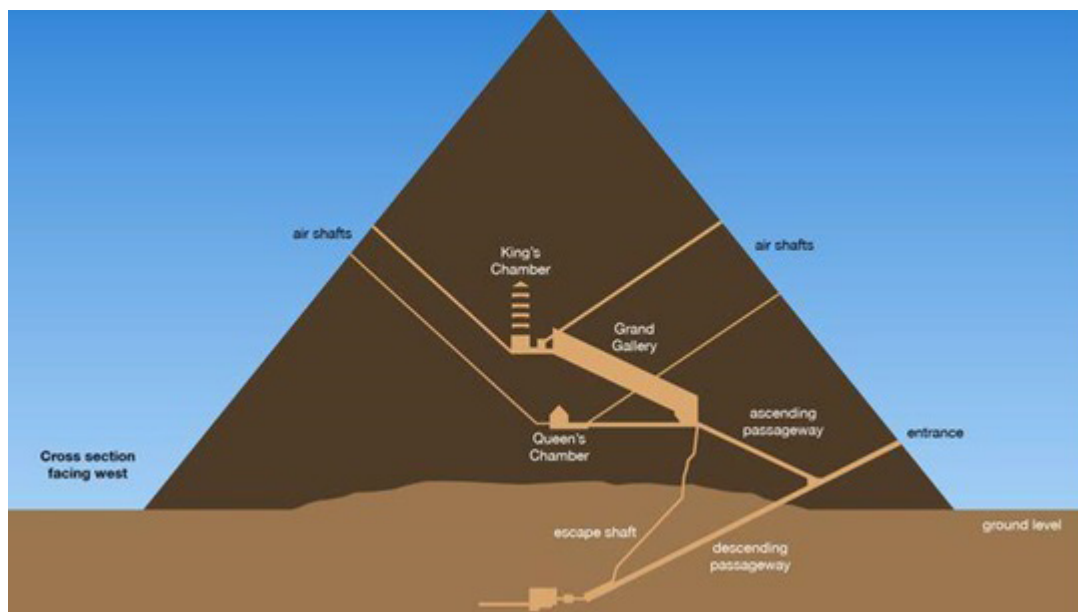
It is interesting to know how these architectural wonders were built, but remains a mystery. However, this question remains a source of intense speculation among historians, archaeologists and engineers. Still, they made certain assumptions based on available records and archaeological evidence.

The scale and precision of the pyramids demonstrate extraordinary skills in

mathematics, astronomy, logistics and advanced engineering. But unfortunately, the Egyptians did not devote the same level of effort to documenting their planning and construction processes. Therefore, much of what we know about these constructions comes from observations made and artifacts unearthed by archaeologists from different sites.

In the book 'How the Great Pyramid Was Built', Craig B. Smith detailed the planning and engineering behind the pyramids of Egypt. He remarks that the Red Pyramid which began in 2560 B.C. marked the zenith of engineering and it would serve as a prototype for the later pyramids. He also codified the following facts about pyramid construction.

- ◆ The pyramids were built on solid rock to ensure adequate support for its structure.
- ◆ They used precise measurements (square, plumb) to maintain the pyramid's shape.
- ◆ The burial chamber was within the pyramid and not in the underground.
- ◆ Place masonry courses horizontally to better distribute the loads.
- ◆ Used large blocks on the lowest levels to create an accurate and stable base.
- ◆ Used smaller blocks on higher levels as they will be easier to place.
- ◆ They used corbelled ceilings to create spacious, dramatic rooms, while providing the structural strength required.
- ◆ Before the construction, they selected a pyramid angle that minimizes labor and maximizes height.
- ◆ Finish the pyramid with fine white limestone to make it visible from great distances.



Cross section of a pyramid's interior (Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc./Patrick O'Neill Riley)

The most remarkable aspect of the Egyptians' success in building pyramids is the absence of any sophisticated mechanical tools. They designed and used simple tools needed to build the pyramids. They used plumb bobs and square levels to ensure that corners of blocks were square and that surfaces were flat. These instruments were made of wood, twine, and lightweight stones. The copper drills and saws were used for stone cutting, probably the quartz. The slurry, mostly, was a solution of water, sand, and gypsum. Copper chisels were used to smooth the sides of stones. All of the tools probably used for operations to build the pyramids have been found archaeologically.

The three characteristics of the pyramids lead to the assumptions about their ability to survey and align buildings. First, the sides of pyramids are aligned to the cardinal points of the compass. Second, the corners of the pyramids form perfect right angles. Finally, the foundation of the pyramid had to be perfectly level in order to support the enormous weight of the upper courses. It was also noted that the alignment to the cardinal points of the compass was most likely accomplished by astronomical observations.

It is noteworthy that the final stones of the Great Pyramid were raised to the top up to 479 feet. Engineers as well as scholars have long agreed that some form of ramp was employed to raise the stones to the upper courses and envisioned ramps running perpendicular and parallel to the sides of the pyramids. There is another hypothetical notion that a ramp encircled the pyramid. Archaeological evidence suggests that there were some ramps perpendicular to the face of the pyramid, and in addition, others that wrapped around the structure.



Construction of a Pyramid (Conceptual Image) - <https://www.q-files.com>

Historians and engineers unanimously opine that there were a variety of methods used to ensure that the four sides of the pyramid would meet evenly at the top and form a point. During the period of the third Dynasty, the walls were built of vertical layers that sloped toward the center. In fourth Dynasty times, the walls were built of horizontal layers that were shaped to a slope on the outside edges. But during the fifth and sixth Dynasty, the pyramids had rough cores with casing stones layered on the outside. Finally, in the time of the twelfth Dynasty, the pyramids had mud-brick cores and outer casings.

“The Egyptian pyramids, one of the last remaining Seven Wonders of the World, remain a fascinating and extraordinary chapter in the history of engineering. They are a testament to human organizational skills, the extraordinary vision of the ancient Egyptians and the sheer determination of a civilization to succeed” (Brooks McKinney, 2020).

1.6.2.2 Temples

From hieroglyphic inscriptions, reliefs, and decoration in the temples, one can

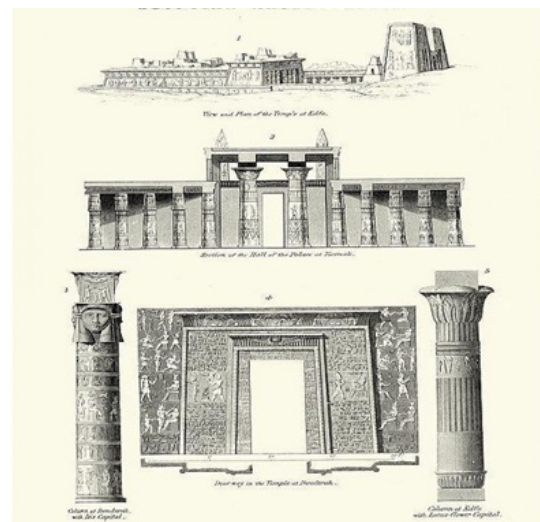
identify the gods worshipped, the Pharaoh who built the temple, and the religious beliefs and rituals of ancient Egypt. These are essential elements of their temple architecture of the time. These elements shall interpret the whole temple building as well as its portals, walls, columns, and ceilings. They also give references on perpetuation of the daily ritual, and of the special ceremonies during the great festivals. Because of its architectural features, the cult image and the whole temple, with all its chapel, gate, pillars, reliefs, inscriptions, and emblems still seen as having an existence.

Why did the ancient Egyptians erect many temples? The reasons were of many kinds. The royal jubilee was the principal occasion for building temples, large and small, to symbolize the eternal continuance of the dynastic succession and confirm the close relations between the king and the gods. Temples were an important part of Egyptian society because it was the place where rulers were chosen by the gods, wars were won, distribution of the share of crops, and other important events took place. The temples were generally utilized for the state's official, ceremonial worship of the gods as well as to memorialize pharaohs. Like the other societies of the time, the temple was the home of God, where Egyptians would perform rituals, make sacrifices to maintain cosmic order (ma'at). Memorials were also made in temples for the dead through offerings of food and drink, music, dance, and beauty treatments for the body.

Ancient Egyptian temples were not public places of worship like churches and mosques of our time. In fact, they were private sanctuaries. Only the Pharaoh or chief priests could enter the shrine. Common man prayed outside the temple and entered the courtyards to watch

ceremonial events.

There were six parts for each main temple. They are pylon, courtyard, hypostyle hall, the second halls, sanctuary and the sacred lake. The temples were in large rectangular spaces enclosed by high walls with entrances flanked by two large pylons/sloping towers and a door between them. They entered a large courtyard with colonnades on two or three sides, where the people gathered. Beyond the courtyard was a large hypostyle hall with a forest of columns that supported a roof. Next was the sanctuary in which a statue of the prime deity was placed in a shrine. The ceiling of temples was viewed as the heavens and the floor was regarded as the fertile soil from which life emerged. The prime temples like Karnak had a series of courtyards, each with pylons, leading from the entrance, and multiple sanctuaries. The temples were regarded as embodiments of cosmology and symbols of renewal. The sacred lake was a pool of water next to the temple. It represented the world before time began. The priests used water from the sacred lake to perform rituals in the temple.



The Drawing of Ancient Egyptian Temple (Source: pinterest.co.uk).

The temple builder had to take into

account the entire prevailing theological system, the nature of the principal god for whom the temple was to be built and those of his co-deities, together with all their festivals and cult requirements. Accordingly, the details of the plan had to be worked out by a large team of

theologians, translated into drawings, and presented for the Pharaoh's approval. The prime temple architecture of ancient Egypt can be seen in the old city of Thebes. The northern ruins include the Karnak temple, and the southern ruins feature the Luxor complex.

Karnak Temple Complex (1550-323 BCE)	Luxor Temple Complex (1400-1200 BCE)
◆ Situated on the east bank of the Nile, a few km north of Luxor. ◆ This complex has four main sections: the Precinct of Amon-Re, the Precinct of Montu, the Precinct of Mut and the Temple of Amenhotep IV, and a few smaller temples. ◆ The main reason for its size, as well as the unique complexity of its architectural design and decoration, is because it was developed over a long period of time, and involved the active participation of architects employed by more than 30 Pharaohs. ◆ The complex's most striking feature is the pillared hall (hypostyle) in the great metropolitan temple of the state god Amon, erected by Ramesses I. This hall area contained 134 colossal columns arranged in 16 rows. The vast majority are over 30-feet tall; the remaining 12 are 65-feet tall and some 12-feet in diameter.	◆ It is located on the east bank of the Nile. ◆ This temple complex was started during the reign of Amenhotep III in the 14th century BCE. ◆ More columns, pillars, chapels, statues, and friezes were added by the architects of King Horemheb and Tutankhamun, while Akhenaten added a shrine to the Aten. ◆ The biggest expansion was undertaken by Ramesses II. Indeed, originally, the main entrance to the complex was guarded by six massive statues of Ramesses – four seated, two standing – of which only two seated statues remain. ◆ Sporadic construction work continued as late as the Ptolemies.

Recap

- ◆ The Nile River allowed the ancient Egyptian to thrive culturally.
- ◆ Ancient Egyptian art includes painting, sculpture, architecture, and other forms of art, such as drawings on papyrus, created between 3000 BCE and 100 BCE.
- ◆ Art was highly stylized and symbolic coming from tombs and monuments, and thus focused 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.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Papyrus was used for writing and painting, and was used to record every aspect of Egyptian life.
- ◆ They used mainly sun-baked mud brick, limestone, sandstone, and granite.
- ◆ Bowls and platters were used as everyday items and were also placed in tombs to ensure a ready supply of food and drink in the afterlife.
- ◆ Gold and copper were the predominant metals used to craft ornaments. The common man could afford the copper, while the nobility opted for gold.
- ◆ Egyptians believed jewellery should be worn to ward off evil spirits, protect their health, as well as bring good luck.
- ◆ From the time of the old kingdom, clapping and percussion instruments were used like drums, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals.
- ◆ Dance first emerged as an expression of religious fervour. Gradually, it became practiced by male and female dancers for entertainment.
- ◆ Architecture, the bright part of this civilization includes burial monuments and pyramids, temples, palaces and other buildings of the time.

- ◆ Construction materials used in ancient Egypt were sun-baked mud brick and stone, mainly limestone.
- ◆ The stones have to be brought from other places, predominantly white limestone from Tura and red granite from Upper Egypt.
- ◆ The finest examples of pyramids were those at Giza.
- ◆ The temple constructions were of two forms. They were the cult temples and funerary or mortuary temples.
- ◆ Ancient Egyptian temples were not public places of worship like churches and mosques of our time. They were private sanctuaries.
- ◆ There were six parts for each main temple; the pylon, courtyard, hypostyle hall, the second halls, sanctuary and the sacred lake.

Objective Questions

1. What were the Ancient Egyptian houses made out of ?
2. What did the dancing among the ancient Egyptians represent
3. What did the Ancient Egyptian temple reliefs depict?
4. Which are the two prime temple architectures of ancient Egypt ?
5. What is Ma'at?
6. Why were temples to the gods important in Egyptian cosmology?
7. What is Pharaoh's burial place known as?
8. Who built the first true pyramid of Egypt?
9. What were the two main parts of the tomb?
10. Which type of pyramid uses flat platforms as steps, receding from the bottom up to form a pyramid shape and has the bottom step as a mastaba in some cases?
11. Which type of pyramid has a perfect geometric shape with flat and smooth sides?

12. Who was the architect and advisor for King Zoser (Djoser), who designed the first pyramid, for Zoser's funerary complex at Saqqara?
13. What building materials did the Ancient Egyptians use?

Answers

1. Mud collected from the damp banks of the river Nile
2. Celestial movements on the model of musical melodies
3. Historical events and royal deeds or demonstrated how to conduct certain ceremonies
4. The Karnak temple and the Luxor temple
5. A name for the divinity of the pharaoh
6. So that the spirits of the pharaohs had a place to rest
7. The Pyramids
8. King Djoser
9. Cult & Chamber
10. Step pyramid
11. True Pyramid
12. Imhotep
13. Limestone, Brick, Sandstone, Granite

Assignments

1. Discuss the 'Features of Ancient Egyptian Architecture'.
2. Analyse 'Ancient Egyptian's achievements in the field of art.

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MESOPOTAMIAN AND PERSIAN CIVILIZATIONS



UNIT

Political History

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ outline the earliest civilizations that emerged in the fertile crescent
- ◆ understand why early civilisations developed along river valleys
- ◆ familiarise with the cultural elements and material elements of early Mesopotamian societies

Prerequisites

We have learnt that man after a period of wandering life began to settle down in communities on river banks. There were several factors that attracted them to settle near river banks. Rivers provided them with a steady supply of water and fish, reed for the hut-like residences and much more. Later on, their attempts to cultivate cereals were also supported by the rivers, which had thick deposits of alluvial soil on their banks and water for irrigation. Their settlements on the banks of rivers flourished and developed into acclaimed civilizations like Egyptian Civilization, Mesopotamian Civilization, Indus Civilization and Chinese Civilization. The following content would help us to know better the geographical settings in which the Mesopotamian people settled and developed into a class civilization on the banks of Euphrates and Tigris.

Keywords

Mesopotamia, Cuneiform, Ziggurat, Sumer, Hittites, Kassites.



Discussion

The study of history is the result of man's quest to know himself. Our present is connected with our past, and therefore, both cannot be separated. However, it is always possible to travel to the past with the available evidence that we collect from different sources and surroundings in which the early humans lived. It is interesting to note that most of our modern-day material features and abstract ideas can be traced back to the past. No one can say with accuracy the time and place where humans originated. Yet it may have been in south-central Africa or south-central Asia that mankind took its first steps towards progress. The climatic conditions of the region were favourable for the growth of the early human

population here. After remaining primitive for hundreds of years, about 3500 BCE, a section of them developed superior civilization. They invented writings and art along with better techniques of material life. They also made spectacular achievements in the fields of science and technology when compared to the surrounding peoples. These developments took place in the Near East, extending from modern-day Iran to the Mediterranean Sea and further to the banks of the river Nile. There developed a number of mighty empires like the Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans and Persians. It is really awesome to know how they developed into full-fledged civilizations fighting odds and ends.



Fig.2.1 Edward McNall Burns, Philip Lee Ralph, Robert. E Lerner, Standish Meacham, World Civilizations, Volume A, WW. Norton and Company, 1969.

2.1.1 Prelude To Ancient Near-East

Before ten thousand years, soon after the ice age, the human population began to adopt a settled pattern of living in Mesopotamia and other parts of the world. The physical environment of the ancient civilizations has always been promoted by

the presence of water bodies on the banks of which man preferred to live and settle down. Such water bodies provided for the livelihood of the man with provisions for food and accommodation. The history of ancient Mesopotamia also tells a similar story through its very name, which means in between two rivers. The word is of Greek origin combining words like **mesos**

(middle) and **potamos (rivers)** which means ‘**land between two rivers**. The geographical area of ancient Mesopotamia is also called ‘**the Fertile Crescent**’ due to the fertile soil deposited by the flooding of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, which resulted in the shaping of modern-day Iraq and Kuwait into a moon shape. The two rivers, Euphrates and Tigris, flowed through the region, providing the region with rich alluvium suitable for human settlement.

The civilization of Mesopotamia flourished out of these river systems and through the socio-political and economic system that came upon fertile soil rendered by these rivers. Both these rivers flow southeast and join the Persian Gulf. The region was occupied by several ethnic groups in ancient times, often reshaping its geographical boundaries. However, some natural borders separated the region from the surrounding areas. In the northwest, there existed the Taurus Mountains separating it from Greece. The Elburz Mountains existed in the north, and the Zagros Mountains in the east separated the region from Asia. In the west, there existed the Mediterranean Sea, and in the extreme south-west, there was Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula separated by the Red Sea. Though the Syrian and Nafud deserts were very hot during summers, Mesopotamia had enough water supply to make life possible there. In the Southern part of the region, there is a Rub-al-Khali desert bordering the Indian ocean and the Gulf of Eden.

The vast collection of **Cuneiform** tablets, the **Sumerian** Civilization is considered the first civilization of mankind. They were conquered or succeeded by the **Akkadians** from the north, and then the Amorites overpowered the region. Following the Amorite rule,

there was a long period of anarchy and chaos which came to an end with the rise of Babylon. Around 1595 BCE, The **Hittites** attacked Babylon and sacked it. Thus, the Amorite rule came to an end, and the dark age of Babylon began, followed by the invasion of the **Kassites**. Around 1220 BCE, Assyrians attacked Babylon and conquered it. The prolonged rule of Assyrians marked the height of the glory of Babylon. Around 734 BCE, Babylon was conquered by the Chaldeans, and the dynasty became popular under **Nebuchadnezzar II**, popularly known as Nebuchadnezzar. Persians’ attack on Babylon in 538 BCE marked the fall of Babylon. Until the first century before the Common Era, Babylon was under Persian rule.

As evident from the cuneiform scripts, the settlers of Mesopotamia were largely dependent on the major rivers that watered the land. Fishing and farming by making irrigation canals were the main economic activities of the people. A variety of crops like barley, linseed, lentils, peas, dates and grapes were cultivated. The trade flourished with Europe, Asia and Africa. The original settlers of Mesopotamia were hunter-gatherers who settled in the region gradually and became known as the Sumerians, who gradually took to fishing and farming. By 2000 BCE, there seemed to have existed large populations consisting of the rural and urban population. Another ethnic group who settled along the northern borders were the Akkadians, who spoke a different language. It was the Akkadian king Sargon who conquered and unified the entire region by conquering one tribe after another. Some sources say that the magnificent city of Babylon was founded by Sargon the Great, while some others say that it was founded before the Akkadians.



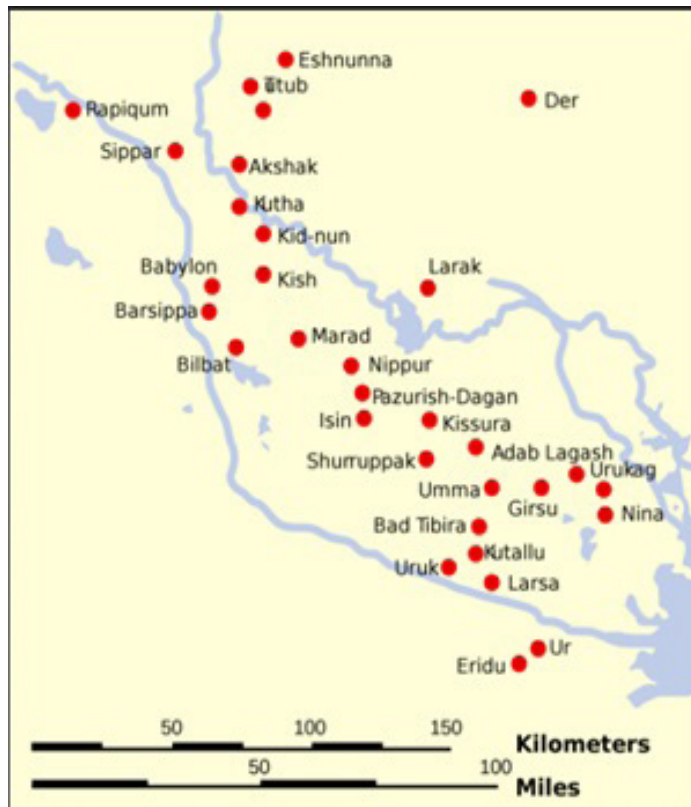


Fig 2.2 Ancient Mesopotamia <https://www.bing.com/images>

The ancient Sumerians built up their civilization in between the land deposited with rich alluvium by the river systems of Euphrates and Tigris. The city-states of the period emerged on the banks of the river and they were locations of great fertility and later gave way to urban culture. In a terrain where stone was absent, clay was effectively for construction. The Sumerian city of Eridu is arguably the oldest city in the world.

2.1.2 Ancient Mesopotamia

Archaeological evidence attests to the existence of the Sumerians in Sumer in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) between circa 4100 and 1750 BCE in the lower valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Upon the delta of the rivers, marshes and small trees grew, while outside the delta region it was arid land. Their original home is shrouded in mystery. The name *suma* means the land of the black-headed people. However, they were known to the northern Akkadians as civilized people. The Akkadians were confined to the north, while the Sumerians occupied the Southern region. The predecessors of the Sumerians were the hunter-gatherers, and the adoption of settled life was promoted by the farming and pastoral life facilitated by the river systems. Those who took to the new economic activities gradually

developed themselves into small village communities and, later on, into urbanised city-states, while some others continued with the primitive practices. Sumer was a region of city-states protected by the ramparts with its ruler. By 2900 BCE, the Sumerians seem to have established their political control over southern Mesopotamia. As mentioned earlier, the untimely flooding of the rivers and the rich deposit of fertile silt along the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris became a blessing in disguise that promoted their material wealth. The early history of Sumerians can be divided into Ubaid Period and Uruk Period. 2.1.2.1 Ubaid Period: (circa. 5500- 4000 BCE)

According to scholars, the group of people who settled the area was the Ubaid people who emerged in this region around 6200 BCE and spread over the land from circa 5500 BCE to 4000 BCE

approximately. They inhabited an area which was sparse in vegetation and mineral resources. They followed farming, fishing and cattle rearing along with craft and trade. It was this period that witnessed the growth of city-states in the region. They flourished in Eridu, Ur, Akshak, Adab, Larsa, Umma, Erech, Sippar, Lagash, Nippur, Shuruppak and Kish. Archaeologically, the period is marked by the presence of a special type of pottery. The people took to farming and fishing during this period. Some of the early villages developed themselves into towns like Eridu and Uruk. The Ubaid culture spread to the north, replacing an early farming culture called Halaf Culture. The find of Ubaid pottery from the southwest of Mesopotamia must have been the result of trade contacts. Several baked clay figurines have been excavated from Ubaid sites. These clay figures symbolised commodities of daily use and trade. The Ubaid period was well-advanced in many aspects when compared to contemporary societies. There were also figures of snakes, birds and animal figures with humans. The Uruk period succeeded the Ubaid culture with continuity in many of the features of the Ubaid period.

2.1.2.2 Uruk Period (circa 4000 BCE- 3000 BCE)

It was, in fact, the Uruk period which is marked as the Sumerian period in the history of Mesopotamia. This period is considered a blooming period of the Mesopotamian civilization. The region witnessed the rise of the first metropolitan

cities like Uruk, Tell Brak and Hamoukar. During the Uruk period, people lived in hamlets and one or two towns. Gradually, the simple system of settlements developed into larger urban centres, cities, towns, and villages by 3500 BCE. It was around 3500 BCE the Sumerian take-off happened. The Mesopotamian civilization is now known by the name of Sumerians, with the recent findings. Earlier, the civilization of Mesopotamia was known as the Babylonian or Assyrian Civilization. The term Mesopotamian civilization is now used as an all-inclusive term to denote the civilizations of Sumerians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians and Persians.

Mesopotamian civilization was inaugurated by the Sumerians around 3500 BCE. Scholars believe that Central Asia was their original home from where they migrated to southern Mesopotamia. Though they have some kind of cultural resemblance with the earliest Indian civilization, their language has the least resemblance with any of the modern languages. They seem to have mingled with the early settlers of Mesopotamia and began to spread in the southern part of the region. Initially, they were the wandering communities who lived near the rivers and slowly took to farming activities. Gradually, they flourished and developed into urban settlements with towns like Lagash and Ur. Their legal system, language and writing, scientific and commercial practices and art and architecture had a profound influence on the following civilization.

Recap

- ◆ Ancient Mesopotamian civilizations developed on the banks of rivers Euphrates and Tigris rivers.
- ◆ Several tribes occupied the land by succeeding tribes like the Sumerians, Amorites, Assyrians, and Chaldeans, who migrated to Mesopotamia from time to time.
- ◆ The land, which was marked by the untimely floods and aridity,
- ◆ The floods were utilised by the settlers to make the first-ever known civilizations in the ancient world.
- ◆ Earliest city-states like Uruk developed in Mesopotamia with essential features of urban life.
- ◆ They followed urban as well as rural ways of life.

Objective Questions

1. Who were the first settlers of the land of Mesopotamia?
2. Name the script developed by the ancient Sumerians.
3. Who attacked Babylon in 1595 BCE?
4. When did the Chaldeans invade Babylon?
5. What is meant by the word 'Mesopotamia'?
6. Who was the most famous ruler of the Chaldean dynasty?
7. To which water body did the Euphrates and Tigris flow ?
8. Which Sumerian city is considered the oldest city in the world?
9. Which early farming culture was replaced by Ubaid culture?
10. In the term Sumeria what does 'suma' stand for?

Answers

1. Sumerians
2. Cuneiform
3. Hittites
4. In 734 BCE.
5. The land between Two Rivers
6. Nebuchadnezzar II
7. Persian Gulf
8. Eridu
9. Halaf Culture
10. Land of black headed people.

Assignments

1. Write an assignment on “How Mesopotamian civilization influenced other civilizations of the world?”
2. Discuss the factors that led to the rise of Mesopotamian civilization.
3. Explain the socio-cultural and political structure under the various dynastic rulers of ancient Mesopotamia.

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UNIT

Sumerian Origins

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be :

- ◆ familiarised with the cultural pursuits of the Sumerians
- ◆ explained the factors that promoted the growth of Sumerian material culture
- ◆ made aware of the achievements of the Sumerians

Prerequisites

The river Euphrates and Tigris played a vital role in the creation of a splendid culture out of Mesopotamia. The land between two rivers became the region of settlement of different ethnic groups by 5500 BCE. The two river systems benefited the growth of material culture in Mesopotamia by the third millennium BCE. The Sumerians were the first among the many communities in the fertile crescent to place themselves in a frame of civilised people. Early city-states came up in southern Mesopotamia as a part of the Sumerian culture.

The Sumerians were one of the earliest civilizations in human history, flourishing in Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq) around 4000 BCE. Their origins are shrouded in mystery, but it is believed that they migrated to the region from the east, possibly from the mountains of Iran or the Zagros Mountains in modern-day Iraq. The Sumerians were known for their advanced culture and technology, including their system of writing (known as cuneiform), their use of irrigation to cultivate crops, and their impressive architecture, such as the ziggurats, which were towering structures used for religious and administrative purposes.

The Sumerians developed a complex system of government and social hierarchy, with city-states ruled by powerful kings and priests. They also had a

rich mythology, which included a pantheon of gods and goddesses who were believed to control the forces of nature and human destiny. The legacy of the Sumerians is still felt today, with their contributions to fields such as mathematics, astronomy, and literature influencing the development of Western civilization. By studying the origins of the Sumerians, learners can gain a deeper appreciation for the origins of human civilization and the innovations that have shaped the world we live in today.

Keywords

Tablets, Akkadians, Hammurabi, Ziggurat, City - states

Discussion

According to archaeological evidence excavated by the mid-19th century by a team of archaeologists under Leonard Woolley, Sumerians appeared in Mesopotamia around 5500 BCE. The evidence of the existence of Sumerian culture became revealed to the world through a number of excavations conducted in Iran, when a number of royal cemeteries were uncovered. The archaeologists were able to uncover a number of graves and Sumerian clay tablets with cuneiform writings. These graves provided lavish quantities of gold, silver, and semiprecious stones.

Sumerian Civilization is known as the earliest of world civilizations and as the first urban civilization in the world. The Sumerians made spectacular achievements in the fields of Science, Art and Architecture, Literature, knowledge system and agriculture and heralded many later civilizations. We come to know about their achievements from the clay tablets on which they recorded their details in cuneiform script, which they developed around 3000 BCE. They had a different grammar, syntax and vocabulary when

compared to the other Semitic tribes of the surrounding region. The Sumerian body of alphabets and letters were in practice for a long period, even after their decline.

2.2.1 Political System

Many of the general features attributed to the Mesopotamian civilization sprang from the Sumerian people. The political system of the Sumerians had a monarchical form of government in which there were classes like nobles, free citizens and slaves. The king and queen were respected as representatives of Gods or Gods themselves. The most famous king of Sumerians was **Ur-Nammu**, who was the founder of the third dynasty. He was famous for building many aqueducts and ziggurats.

The political system of Sumerians seems to be the administration of a collection of city-states which were united only at times of war. Each city state was led by a chief who also carried out functions of priest, commander of the army and the controller of irrigation. They seem to have followed the priest-king concept. The

chief acted as an intermediary between God and the people. Each city-state had its own God. The state may be termed as a theocratic state where the elite group and the common people lived. At times, a powerful ruler declared his supremacy over the other city-states. Still, the region was not knit into an empire-like unit as in the case of the following Akkadians or Babylonians.

The **Sumerian city-states** functioned on the basis of democratic principles. In spite of the monarchical character of the state it functioned on popular representation like the modern parliamentary democracies. There were two houses consisting of the Senate, or an assembly of elders, and a lower house or an assembly of arms-bearing free male citizens. The members of the senate came from the noble and the rich sections of the society while the lower house was composed of representatives of craftsmen, temple administrators, men employed by the nobleman and agricultural workers. The most important decisions, like the declaration of war, were taken by the house. The Sumerian democratic set up could be seen as the forerunner of the democratic arrangements which the Greek and Roman people later practiced.

2.2.2 Justice and Legal System

Sumerian civilization is best-known for its legal practices. The formation of the legal system was the result of gradual derivation from practices and adoption from the neighbouring people. Their legal system introduced six provisions of law which could control all walks of Sumerian life. However, only a few have been recovered in the form of clay tablets. The lawmakers of Sumer were not interested in awarding severe punishments to the offenders. Instead they thought of making

them useful for the society by awarding them money fines which would be better than corporal punishments.

Public laws governed all spheres of public life like marriages, divorces, inheritance, business and trade. Laws were also there binding to women and slaves. The Law code of the Babylonian king Hammurabi was a variant of the Sumerian laws. Slavery existed as a legal institution; mainly, prisoners of war were used as slaves. Sometimes, free citizens who were indebted and who committed desperate acts were also treated as slaves. In return for the debts, creditors accepted children and even the family of the debtors.

2.2.3 Economy

Sumerian economic life was based on simple individual practices. The concept of private property was absent in Sumer. The priest had the technical knowledge about the change of seasons and, thus, monopolized the irrigation system. They practiced farming, trade and industry without interference from the government. Temples must have been treated as a centre of collective enterprise. They controlled vast areas of land and facilitated the functioning of workshops and warehouses within its walls. Farmers, potters, artisans and craftsmen functioned under the temples. Daily necessities of the citizens were supplied from the temple, while the finest products were exported to Syria or Iran.

Some of the industries, like pottery, also functioned within the city states. There was no institutionalised slavery; instead a major section of the people was treated as serfs with little or no rights over the land or production. Sumerians utilised the silt deposit of the two rivers and the untimely flooding to cultivate different



types of cereals and pulses along with nuts and fruits. They knew the irrigation techniques by which they accumulated or channelized the river water and prepared the floodplain for cultivation. The land was divided among the elite, that the common people belonged to that group of cultivators or serfs.

Trade and commerce also contributed to the wealth of Sumer. Timber, agricultural products and handicraft materials were major items of exchange along with precious metals. All aides of business, like bills, receipts, notes and letters of credit, developed in Sumerian economic system. They were skilled potters, also. The archaeologists from the sites of city-states have excavated specimens of pottery.

Sumerians were excellent at metalwork, gem carving and sculpture. Their specimens of artwork expressed in their weapons, vessels and jewellery, and animal representations were a combination of their technical skill and imagination. They also developed industries of gold, silver, tin, lead, copper and bronze. They prepared agricultural tools, vessels, containers, hooks, nails and weapons out of these metals.

Free from religious influences, artists liberally gave expressions to their own imaginations. Their architectural skills were reflected on the sun-baked bricks and there was no stones used. A remarkable structure which their successors adopted was ziggurat. Ziggurat was a terraced tower constructed on a platform surmounted by a shrine and surrounded by steps leading from bottom to the top. A temple was found set up usually on the ziggurat, which was a pyramid-like structure. These temples were decorated with clay ones which were put in patterns on the walls of the temples. The temples were decorated with mural paintings. The first great Ziggurat

(stepped) was built by Ur -Nammu. The ziggurats were tall structures for their time, and the highest structure measured 300 feet. They carved relief sculptures on the walls of buildings. Their seals were cylindrical and carved with the figures of animals, humans and gods. The patterns of the seals were impressed on clay bands and clay tablets. They also constructed royal tombs and houses where their features like arch, vault and dome were reflected.

Farming was the major source of income and livelihood. Agriculture flourished with the proper irrigation facilities of the fields. The irrigation system consisted of canals, dams, dykes and reservoirs. Their knowledge of trigonometry, map making and designing were helpful in the preparation of irrigation devices. They were also able to assess the speed of the flow of water in canals. Their irrigation system did not only consist of long canal systems watering individual fields, but also a wider structure which covered thousands of kilometres.

Physicians were highly educated and respected people. They had an advanced medical system. Information about the properties of minerals and plants to heal wounds and illnesses was given in the clay tablets. Through sophisticated chemical processes, they prepared medicines. Medicinal practices in India and Egypt have close resemblances with that of Sumerians. Their medicinal practices were a mixture of use of herbs and magical chants. To ward off the evil spirits or ghosts, the physicians used to utter magical charms which, they believed, would eventually cure the disease. The priests must have acted as a person with magical powers who could cast away the evil spirits with magical chants. This belief essentially promoted the already pre-eminent position of the priest.

2.2.4 Sumerian Script, Language and Literature

The Sumerian script was in vogue for nearly two thousand years, even after the decline of civilization. It was known as Cuneiform after its wedge shape, which in Latin is represented by the word '*cuneus*'. The script consisted of wedge-shaped characters inscribed on the clay tablets. The imprints were made on wet clay tablets with square tipped reed pens (stylus) available on the banks of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris. Then the clay tablets were dried in the sun and preserved. Cuneiform evolved from a pictographic script into a hoard of syllabic and phonetic signs.



2.1 A tablet from the Epic of Gilgamesh

Courtesy: Boundless/ www.khanacademy.org

Though it did not have a specific alphabetic system, it was used in the Near East for about two thousand five hundred years. A number of clay tablets have been recovered from Sumer. The symbols on the clay tablets were used for the purpose of business transactions of the city-states. Sumerians were the pioneers of archival keeping. The clay tablets were used to keep the records of temples and used as palace archives. The entire body of Sumerian literature has been preserved in the form

of clay tablets dried in the sun. Royal hymns and popular poems were written on clay tablets, most of which survive to this day. The most famous poem in the Sumerian language was the 'Legend of Gilgamesh', written probably around 2100 BCE. Another version of the same was written in the Akkadian language, too.



2.2. The Blau monuments combine proto-cuneiform characters and illustrations of early Sumerians, Jemdet Nasr period, 3100–2700 BC. *British Museum. Courtesy: Sumer - Wikipedia*

2.2.5 Science, Philosophy and Education

Though they did not write any philosophical themes, they knew mathematics and had a scientific temper, as evident from their clay tablets. They knew the process of multiplication and division and also the extraction of square and cube roots. They had developed a system of duodecimals for weights and measures in which sixty was the most common unit. Water clock and Lunar calendar were their innovations, and later on, they also roughly changed the year into months based on lunar cycles. They believed in astrology and showed interest in watching the movement of the heavenly bodies. They believed that there was some kind of connection between the life of human beings and the movement of stars.

Schools in Sumer were centres of learning and knowledge. The subjects

mainly taught were botany, geography, zoology and mathematics. As they believed that nature and the universe were the gifts of gods, they gave prime importance to the learning of skills rather than truths of nature. Schools employed teachers to impart knowledge in different subjects. The students were mainly from the richer sections of the society, who paid the tuition fee, out of which the teachers were given payments. They developed a knowledge system which was exemplary to the later civilizations.

2.2.6 Social Life

2.2.6.1 Culture and Religion

The culture and social life of the Sumerians was well-expressed through their religious practices. Though their religion was not an organized concept, it had a profound influence on the life of the Sumerians. They seem to have followed polytheism characterized by anthropomorphism (involving human characteristics). They believed in personal gods and guardian angels.

The Sumerians had a pantheon (all gods and goddesses of a certain culture), of which the most important one was Anu, the supreme god of Uruk. Enlil was the god of plenty and a god of harsh justice. Enki was the god of wisdom and sea. The god of Ur was Nanna, who was the moon god. The sun god was Utu, who was worshipped in Larsa and Sipper. Inanna, goddess of fertility and war, was the most important goddess. They followed a high ethical life. They gave primary importance to goodness, truth, law and order, justice, freedom, honesty, directness, mercy and charity. Against these high ideals of life, they also believed

that there existed opposites like evil and falsehood, lawlessness and anarchy, injustice, oppression, sinfulness and perversity, cruelty and pitilessness. Thus, Sumerians had a moral code based on these values, which became universal after the disappearance of their civilization.

Myths and legends associated with these gods and goddesses formed a major portion of Sumerian literature. A number of gods and goddesses were there who were attributed with diverse functions. There were gods like sun god, god of rain and wind, goddess of natural powers. They believed that these gods could perform good and evil as well.

Unlike the modern religions, the Sumerian religions did not propagate a heavenly life after death; instead it promoted the wellbeing of this world. For them, the life after death was a temporary world from where the spirits of the dead disappeared after a certain period of death. This can be perceived through their attention to the dead bodies. No elaborate customs were associated with the dead, as in the case of Egyptians. Their burial practice seems to be very simple and without much complex customs. Dead bodies were buried underneath the floor of the house in a coffin with few articles. Gods of Sumer were exalted as lovers of truth and goodness. They were also hailed as just and judicious. As mentioned earlier, there were also royal graves specially prepared in honour of the ruler with exotic gods such as precious and semi-precious stones. These groups of burials were found beneath large structures.

2.2.6.2 Lifestyle

Sumerian civilization marks the transition from hunting and food gathering to settlement life and agriculture. The staple

food of Sumerians consisted of barley, wheat and millets. They cultivated other edibles like vegetables, including beans, onions, lentils, chickpeas, garlic, leeks, cucumber, cress, mustard, green lettuce, etc. Many of these are still continued as a part of the cultural life of the people in this region. They also used milk, egg and meat of pigs, wild fowl, deer, goats, chicken and venison. Fish was an important item of their food system. Around fifty types of fish varieties are mentioned in the clay tablets. Ur was an important centre of dry fish trade and other food items such as fruits like dates, apples, watermelon, grapes, plums, mulberries and peaches. As per the records, they used honey, butter, and vegetable oil. Edibles were taken from the farms to urban centres. Irrigation canals were utilised as channels to transport food items.

Both men and women were clad with sheepskin clothes. The style of sheepskin skirts differed according to the position of the citizens. It seems that from 2500 BCE, there was a change in the way of dressing, when a woven cloth replaced the sheepskin. Men and women wore sheepskin skirts, but they added a shawl to it. The shawl was covered with ruffles and fringes. These shawls were also worn above the head. Their clothes were stylish and colourful. Tunics later replaced the skirts. The tunics had short sleeves and a round neckline. To hold up the shawl, they also used a belt made up of leather. Embroidery was also invented during this period. Men wore sandals or boots of soft leather. Both men and women had long curly hair, and most men had long curly beards.

2.2.6.3 Society

Sumerian society was urban in character when compared to the surrounding social

groups. A number of cities marked the regional landscape. The streets were narrow, unattractive, dirty and dusty. The houses were made of mud bricks, and there were also multi-storied houses.

The cities had streets, marketplaces, and public squares. There were also walled enclosed areas with temples and tall towers. Cities were not thickly populated, having ten thousand to fifty thousand people approximately. The population consisted of free citizens and slaves. The noble class consisted of palace officials and landowners who were free citizens. Free citizens also included farmers, fishermen, traders, craftsmen and scribes. There were also clients who lived depending on the temples, palaces and rich estates. They possessed small plots of land given by the nobles, which were temporary possessions. They were provided with the daily necessities by the upper sections of the society. Slaves could borrow money and do business to buy their own freedom.



2.3. A clay disc with an ancient Sumerian star map.

Courtesy: <https://humanoriginproject.com/>

The basic unit of society was the family. Marriage was generally arranged, which was recognized by the society when the groom presented a bridal gift to the bride's family. Women enjoyed a number of rights, including the right to property, and they could start business. Divorce was in vogue, and if the first wife was childless, man could go for remarriage. Children were under the protection of the parents; however, there were also instances of selling the children as slaves. Their day-to-day life was centred around temples. The law protected the orphans and the widows from exploitation.

The fall of Sumer seems to be the result of the struggle between the different kings of the region. The Sumerians were constantly at war against the Akkadians and vice versa. The Akkadian king Sargon's invasion and conquest of Sumer marked the fall of Sumer. However, the Sumerians are credited with a number of achievements such as the development of a writing system, pioneering people of archival keeping, earliest law givers, developers of city-states and so on.

Recap

- ◆ Sumerian civilization - The world's first civilization
- ◆ Development and spread of Sumerians in the city states of fertile crescent
- ◆ Influence of Sumerian Civilization on the later civilizations
- ◆ Political system of Sumerians
- ◆ Sumerian achievements- Literature, art, architecture, polity, social life, and moral ideals
- ◆ Sumerian legal system
- ◆ Sumerian economy
- ◆ Medicine and measurement- Sumerian contributions to health and science
- ◆ Pioneers in written language and archiving
- ◆ Sumerian Literature- Religion, tradition, and practice
- ◆ Transition from hunting and gathering to settlement life and agriculture
- ◆ Rise and fall of city-states in Sumer - The birthplace of urbanization

Objective Questions

1. What does the Latin word *cuneus* mean?
2. Name the important gods worshipped by the Sumerians.
3. Which was the most famous legend in Sumerian literature?
4. Which were the most important city-states developed by the Sumerians?
5. Which were the two houses that controlled the administrative system?
6. The invasion of which Akkadian king marked the decline of the Sumerians?
7. What was the basic unit of Sumerian society?
8. Name the Sumerian goddess of fertility and war.
9. Who is believed to have built the first Ziggurat?
10. What is the major source of historical information about the Sumerians?

Answers

1. Wedge shape
2. Enil, Enki and Innana
3. The Legend of Gilgamesh
4. Ur and Uruk
5. An assembly of elders and a lower house
6. Sargon
7. Family
8. Inanna

9. Ur Nammu

10. Clay tablets

Assignments

1. Discuss the origin of Sumerian civilization.
2. Analyse the causes for the fall of Sumerians.
3. Prepare an assignment on the topic “Sumerian legal system”.

Suggested Readings

1. H.Crawford, *Sumer and The Sumerians*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
2. Kramer S N, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character*, University of Chicago Press, 1963.

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1. Duncan Ryan, *The Sumerians :History's First Recorded Civilizations*, 2016.
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UNIT

The Babylonians

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be :

- ◆ introduced to the legacy of Babylonians to the world civilizations
- ◆ familiarised with the cultural milieu of the Babylonians
- ◆ explained the importance given to the law by the Babylonians

Prerequisites

We have heard of the seven wonders of the modern world. Do you know about the seven wonders of the ancient world? The Tower of Babel and Hanging Gardens of Babylon were counted among the seven wonders of the ancient world. The tower of Babel given in the Old Testament is believed to be the location from where the people were divided into different communities based on linguistic differences. Both these structures were the contributions of the Mesopotamians. However, the glory of the Sumerian culture came to an end with the inception of Akkadian rule, which came from the north. The following unit will let us know more about the growth and development of ancient Babylonia.

We are familiar with terms like IPC, Death Penalty, Life imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment. They are all related to Indian Penal Code or IPC. The judges use other terms given above to pronounce the verdict in criminal cases in India. The legal structure and law system of modern world countries derive from the ancient Babylonian criminal law. Do you know anything about Jewish Diaspora? The term Jewish Diaspora is used to denote the dispersion of Israelites or Jews out of their ancestral homeland. The following unit will let you know about the Babylonian Legacy and also answer all the above-mentioned questions.



Keywords

Babylon, Code of Hammurabi, Gilgamesh, Jewish Diaspora

Discussion

2.3.1 The Babylonians

The geographical area of ancient Babylon was a region extending all over the south-eastern Mesopotamia, stretching from modern Iraq (Baghdad) to the Persian Gulf region. Until the 19th century, when the archaeologists unearthed its remains, the glory of ancient Babylon, capital of the Babylonians, was considered a biblical myth. In Akkadian language, the word 'babilani' stands for 'Gate of God (s)'. Etymologically, the word Babylon is the Greek version of the Hebrew word Babel. It was bordered by the Arabian Desert in the south and west, Elam in the east,

Assyria in the north and Persian Gulf in the south-east. Babylon was a cultural region occupied by different ethnic groups in ancient times. Ancient Babylonia was developed in the Euphrates-Tigris river plains around 4000 BCE. Since the city of Babylonia remained the capital of the area for centuries, the culture that flourished from its inception period is termed as Babylonian Culture. The cultural heritage of the Sumerians was adopted by a number of succeeding people like the Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians and Chaldeans. The glory of Babylon came to an end with the Chaldeans, and the Persians occupied Babylon.



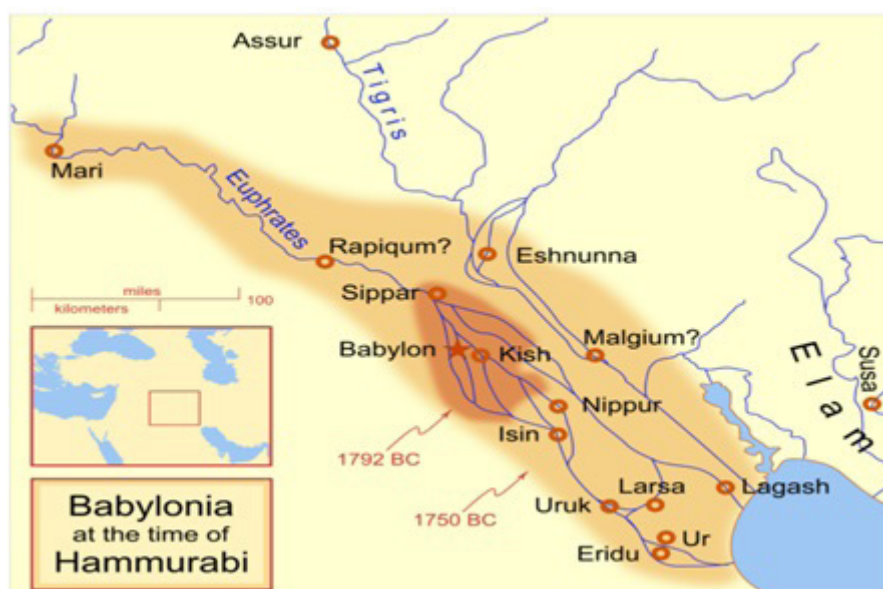
3.1 Map of Mesopotamia during the Akkadians.

Akkadian Empire - Wikipedia

2.3.2 The Amorites

The Amorites were also known as Martu in the ancient world. They grew powerful and overpowered Akkadian empire in Mesopotamia. The first Babylonian dynasty was that of Amorites. They were a Semitic tribe who occupied Mesopotamia around 1900 to 1600 BCE. The Amorites became a powerful state during the administration of Hammurabi (1782-1750 BCE). He was the sixth ruler of the Amorites. Babylon emerged

important under the rule of Hammurabi. He succeeded his father Sin-muballit in 1792 and ruled Babylon till 1750 BCE. He is remembered as the first known law giver of the ancient world. However, the role of Hammurabi in designing the ancient code of law has often been exaggerated. Nothing much is known about his early life and family. He was interested in constructing temples and renovating the old ones, digging canals and constructing city walls.



3.2. Babylon under Hammurabi 1782 BCE. Empire under Hammurabi.

<https://www.ancient-civilizations.com/>

2.3.3 Code of Hammurabi

The law code of Hammurabi was a variant of the Sumerian legal system, as stated before. The code treated all the people alike irrespective of their social or political position. The severity of the punishment went up according to the position of the wrongdoer in the political or social hierarchy. 'An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; and a limb for a limb' was the basic maxim of the code of Hammurabi. It also became a part of the

Jewish legal system later. The victim or his family had to bring the offender before the law. The court remained impartial between the petitioner and the defendant to maintain public safety. Even accidental homicide cases did not escape punishment under Hammurabi's code of criminal procedure. The Sumerian society was classified into three by the legal system as patricians or nobles, burghers or the commons and serfs or the slaves. The army officials and the military personnel were not permitted to engage themselves

in riotous conduct. He maintained a strong state with his famous Babylonian Code of criminal laws. It was an improved version of the earlier law codes of the Sumerians. It constituted the basis of the laws of almost all Semitic ethnic groups like the Hebrews and Assyrians.

As an efficient ruler, he introduced a taxation system, an efficient bureaucratic system and a centralised administrative system. Hammurabi freed Babylon from the threat of external enemies, and it achieved the pre-eminent socio-cultural position enjoyed by Nippur till then. Enil, the protector god of Nippur, was replaced by Marduk and other gods like Ashur and Ishtar. He supervised the transformation of Babylon from a small town to a large and influential city with magnificent buildings, and it was hailed as a 'holy city'. He also conquered southern Mesopotamian city-states like Larsa, Kish, Lagash, Nippur, Ur, Uruk and Eridu. Being a farsighted and shrewd administrator, he joined hands with the city-states knitting them into a single political unit and forging coalitions. Hammurabi had a prolonged and worn out war with the Assyrians who had been controlling the southern Anatolian region. He was able to defeat the Old Assyrian empire, who paid tributes to Hammurabi.

2.3.4 Babylonian Literature

Myths and legends dominated Babylonian literature. Literature essentially reflected their religious beliefs and practices. There existed a 'creation myth' according to which god Marduk created the earth and heaven from the corpse of a goddess called Tiamat. Most of these epics and myths have evolved over time since the period of Sumerians. The most important literary contribution of the Babylonian people was the Epic

of Gilgamesh, written around 2000 BCE. Gilgamesh, the hero of the epic, was a Mesopotamian king who faced many adventures. The epic speaks of an old man and his wife who were protected by gods when they decided to destroy the world by a flood. The story has much in common with the biblical story of Noah, who was directed to make an ark to save himself from the deluge. However, the end of the epic of Gilgamesh has a different ending from that of the Old Testament. The Babylonian literature also included works on astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, botany and medicine.

Chaldean invention of astronomy was the most notable achievement of the Babylonians. The archaeologists recovered a list of systematic observations of Venus. Babylonians created stellar catalogues, which helped them to prepare almost an accurate calendar. They were able to predict the eclipses, which they considered as bad omens. In the fifth and fourth centuries they followed two types of mathematical calculations, and they were able to predict the eclipses. Thus, mathematics and astronomy can be considered as the lasting legacy of the Babylonians.

2.3.5 Babylonian Art

Babylonians ran schools for boys in Babylonia. The students used to dig up clay from the school courtyard and make clay tablets on which they used to learn to write. They were also taught to read, spelling, cartography, astrology and religious studies. They also had outdoor physical training sessions. Their artistic motif of a bull with a man's head may be compared to that of sphinx in Egypt, where a lion figure has a human head.

2.3.6 International Trade

During the period of Chaldeans, Babylon became a centre of international trade and commerce. Spices and Myrrh from Arabia, Timber from Lebanon, and Ivory, spices, jewels and silk from India found their way into the world market. The craftsmen set up stalls and booths in the streets of Babylon to sell goods to the passengers. The products included carpets, and silver, ornaments made of ivory and gold, articles of bronze, glass and brass. Service of the scribes was available to prepare letters and documents. The Jewish tribes taken to Babylon were later scattered to different parts of the world, and they proved to be the best middlemen in international trade.

Babylonian civilization played a vital role in the shaping of the succeeding civilizations, not only in the fertile crescent, but also in other parts of

the world. Their religious philosophy influenced many other Semitic religions though not as far as Zoroastrianism. Astrology was an important feature of Babylonian society. The ancient city of Babylon was divided by the Euphrates river with the large new city on its western side and old city on the eastern side. Therefore, the city of Babylon could enjoy all the privileges rendered by the river. It was a fertile land which produced all the food crops in plenty which was the source of prosperity for the Babylonians. In spite of all the skirmishes and frequent wars, Babylonia provides an example of sustainability and progress. The dispersal of Jews out of their ancestral homeland (The Jewish Diaspora) was caused by the intervention of the Babylonians. Thus the Babylonians played a decisive role in the cultural diffusion of the Semitic people.

Recap

- ◆ Geographical location of the Mesopotamian region and its role in Babylonian culture
- ◆ Babylon- the world's largest city during the 2nd Millennium BCE
- ◆ Rise and decline of the ethnic groups of Babylon - The Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians, and Chaldeans
- ◆ The significance of Hammurabi's Code
- ◆ Classification of Sumerian society
- ◆ Administrative changes under Hammurabi
- ◆ Babylonian cultural achievements- Contributions to the development of Mesopotamian civilization
- ◆ Babylon's enduring legacy - Contributions to science, astronomy, art, architecture, and literature



- ◆ Epic of Gilgamesh
- ◆ Chaldean invention of astronomy
- ◆ International exchange
- ◆ The Jewish diaspora and the intervention of Babylonians

Objective Questions

1. What does the word Babylon mean?
2. What was the basic maxim of the code of Hammurabi?
3. Mention a Semitic tribe who occupied Mesopotamia around 1900 to 1600 BCE.
4. What was the basic feature of Babylonian literature?
5. What was the most important literary contribution of the ancient Babylonians?
6. Which artistic motif of Babylon can be compared to the Sphinx of Egypt?
7. Which Biblical story has much in common with the Legend of Gilgamesh?
8. What was the cause of the dispersal of Jews out of their ancestral homeland?
9. Which were the ethnic groups emerged in Babylonia?

Answers

1. Gate of Gods
2. 'An eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth; and a limb for a limb'

3. The Amorites
4. Myths and legends dominated their literature.
5. The Epic of Gilgamesh
6. Babylonian artistic motifs like the bull with a man's head at Nineveh
7. The great flood and Noah
8. Intervention of Babylonians
9. Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians and the Chaldeans

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Babylonians in the cultural diffusion of the Semitic people.
2. Explain the legacy of Babylonians in the fields of science, art, architecture and literature .
3. Analyse the significance of Hammurabi's code of law.

Suggested Readings

1. H.W.F. Saggs, *The Greatness That was Babylon*, Hawthorn Books, 1962.
2. Marc Van De Mieroop, *King Hammurabi of Babylon: A Biography*, Wiley Blackwell, 2004.
3. Michael Seymour, *Babylon: Legend, History and the Ancient City*, I.B. Tauris, 2014.

References

1. Beaulieu & Paulm Allian, *A History of Baybon 2200 BC -AD 75*, John Wiley & Sons Limited, 2018.
2. Mario Liverani, *Imagining Babylon :The Modern Story of an Ancient City*, Walter De Gruyter, 2016.



4 UNIT

Assyrians and Akkadians

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ introduced to the developments in the fertile crescent
- ◆ familiarised with the circumstances that led to the rise of different ethnic groups in Mesopotamia
- ◆ made aware of the features of the Assyrian and Akkadian empires

Prerequisites

Mesopotamia saw the rise of many distinct ancient empires. It was the birthplace of the first empires and a collection of independent city-states in an agriculturally affluent region, which the invaders could easily access. The majority of people lived in walled cities under a king's dominion. Along the Tigris and Euphrates, several city-states engaged in conflict over control and few resources. Meanwhile, a new set of people, who conversed Semitic language, arrived in northern Mesopotamia around 3000 BCE. They were known after the city they found, Akkad and established an empire.

The Akkadians had a strong military, with the famous Akkadian ruler Sargon the Great conquering much of Mesopotamia and creating one of the first empires in history. The Assyrians were once pastoral people who moved south into Mesopotamia and conversed in Akkadian. The Assyrian Empire emerged in the city of Asur, where Akkads initially reigned over. The Assyrians were known for their powerful military and sophisticated warfare tactics. They used iron weapons and chariots to dominate their enemies, and they built a vast empire that stretched from modern-day Iran to Egypt. Despite their reputation for brutality

and violence, the Assyrians also made significant contributions to culture and art. They created intricate relief sculptures that depicted scenes from daily life, as well as impressive architectural feats such as the famous palace at Nineveh. In this Unit, we will discuss the circumstances that led to the rise and establishment of the Assyrians and Akkadians in Mesopotamia region.

Keywords

Assyrian Kings List (AKL), Library of Assurbanipal, Tiglath Pileser, Sennacherib, Chaldeans, Neo-Babylonian phase, Gilgamesh Legend

Discussion

2.4.1 Chaldeans

The final stage of Mesopotamian glory was inaugurated by the Chaldean advent to the fertile crescent. This phase is often termed as Neo Babylonian phase. The Semitic-speaking tribe, Chaldeans, migrated to the Mesopotamian region near the Persian Gulf between c. 940 and 855 BCE Chaldea was a small marshy land located in the south-eastern corner of Mesopotamia chiefly on the left bank of Euphrates river. They spoke a language similar to that of Aramaic. The Assyrian Empire conquered the Chaldeans in 852 B.C.E. Thus, they were looking forward to declaring their independence whenever there was unrest in the Assyrian empire. On the decline of the Assyrians, they came to power.

By the ninth century, they started to migrate to the southern part of Mesopotamia. Gradually, they began to take control over the cities of Babylonia. Bit- Dakkuri, Bit-Amukani and Bit-Jakin were the three tribes which constituted the Chaldean ethnic group. They met with stiff

opposition from the Assyrians. However, Nabopolassar, an unknown chieftain till then, took advantage of the chaos and anarchy prevailed in the Assyrian empire and Babylon in particular, grabbed the opportunity and seized the city of Babylon in 620 BCE. He had the support of the native Babylonians. With the ascendancy of the Chaldeans, Mesopotamian civilization entered its final stage. The period of Chaldean supremacy is also known as the **Neo-Babylonian period**. The capital of Neo-Assyrian Empire, Nineveh, was destroyed by the Chaldeans, and they re-established the Babylonian glory. The lost prestige of the capital city of Babylon was restored, and there was an attempt of cultural revival, too. They tried to restore the old system of governance and legal system, literature and art and also the economic system with great effort. However, instead of the pantheon of classic Babylonian gods, what they tried to restore was their astral religion, that is, religion related to the stars.

2.4.2 Nebuchadnezzar II (605-562 BCE)

The chronicles of Chaldean Kings and Babylonian chronicles provide details of the greatest king of Chaldeans, namely, Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was the most famous king of Chaldeans. He was the son of Nabopolassar and Shuadamqa of Babylon and married the princess of Media Amytis. He is generally referred to as King Nebuchadnezzar in world history. He is also known for his military conquest and his role in Jewish history. He attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the city, and captured the Jews as prisoners of war in 526 BCE. The Jewish people lived under Babylonian bondage for a long period which is known as '**Babylonian Captivity**'. This event led to far reaching changes in the Jewish History. According to Israel records and historians, among the twelve tribes taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, only two returned. The remaining ten tribes are known as the **Lost Ten Tribes of Israel**. His name is often referred to in the Old Testament as responsible for the 'Babylonian Captivity'. The books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel in the Old Testament speak of his intervention in the history of Jews.

Inspired by the Assyrian military tradition, he wished to conquer vast areas of land with no enemies. He was a brilliant tactician and a strategic conqueror and administrator. He sent ambassadors to Asia Minor as a part of his diplomatic moves. He was very much interested in the building and beautification of Babylonia. He built a surrounding wall and a moat around the city. He also prepared a ceremonial procession path, rebuilt main temples, and constructed canals. He rebuilt the old city of Babylonia and constructed a number of palaces surrounded by huge walls in Babylonia. It is told that the walls

were so wide that even a chariot could be mounted on it. Around his palace, he constructed the famous hanging gardens. According to the British Archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley, the gardens were built inside the city and were not exactly hanging but were gardens with roofs. The **Hanging Gardens of Babylon** was hailed as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. They were built on tiers of high platforms and had a wide variety of shrubs and plants, beautiful flowers and vines in it. It is said that Nebuchadnezzar built the gardens in honour of his wife.

Nebuchadnezzar was able to establish his control over Babylonia Chaldea, Armenia (Syria), Phoenicia, Israel, Judah, Philistia, Samarra, Jordan, northern Arabia, and parts of Asia Minor by 572 BCE. Nebuchadnezzar died in 561 BCE when he was 80 years old. Though his son succeeded him, he could rule only for a period of two years. In 556 BCE, Nabonidus, an Assyrian from Haran, which was the last capital of Assyria, attacked and conquered Babylonia and brought an end to the Chaldean rule. In 539 BCE, Cyrus the Great of Persia conquered Babylon and ended the rule of Mesopotamian rulers in Babylon, absorbing it to the Achaemenid empire. The name of Chaldeans is often found repeated in the Old Testament and interlinked in the history of Hebrews and Israelites.

2.4.3 Advent of Assyrians

After Hammurabi, Babylon was left to the attack of invaders through the open and vulnerable boundaries. His successors were also not capable enough to protect the possessions. Babylonia was then dominated by a dynasty founded by the Kassites who were the natives of Zagors Mountains in the north and their rule

lasted for 400 years. During the period of Kassites, there were great achievements in literature in Babylonia. The most famous Babylonian epic of creation, Enuma Elish, was composed during this period. By 1157 BCE, the Assyrians emerged as a powerful militaristic people ending the rule of Kassites. Following this, there were a series of wars in which Nebuchadnezzar I of the second dynasty of the city of Isin resisted the Assyrians for a brief period. Following him there took place a tripartite struggle between Assyrians and Armenians and Chaldean tribesmen.

From 9 to 7 centuries, the Assyrians ruled Babylon. Ashurbanipal was the last ruler of the Assyrian dynasty; whose period saw a civil war which led to the devastation of the city and population. It was then the last line of the Babylonian

dynasty started by Nebopolasser who attempted to restore the lost glory of the city of Babylon. His son Nebuchadnezzar II was the most famous ruler among the last line of kings. He is the same who is referred to in the Old Testament as the one responsible for the famous Babylonian Captivity. He ruled from 602 to 562 BCE conquering Syria and Palestine. He was responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem and Babylonian captivity of the Jews (587 BCE). He completed the reconstruction of Babylon and the temple of Marduk and the Ziggurat. In the late Bronze Age, Assyrians emerged as a major power with the city of Ashur as its centre and was in control of the region till 12th century BCE. After a few centuries, they again came back with a stronger administrative system.



4.3 Assyrian Empire in c.700 BCE. Assyrian Empire. (<https://www.ancient-civilizations.com/courtesy:->)

Assyrian Empire, at its height of glory, was extended to modern Iraq, Lebanon, Israel, parts of Iran, Turkey and Egypt. They were the descendants of the Semitic people who had been living in northern Mesopotamia since 5000 BCE. Historians have divided the Assyrian period in to

Early Kingdom (c. 2600-2025 BCE), **Old Kingdom** (c. 2025-1364 BCE), **Middle kingdom** (c. 1363 – 912 BCE) and **Neo-Assyrian kingdom** (c. 911-609 BCE) and **the Post-imperial period** (c.609-240 BCE) extending from Bronze Age to Iron Age. There are a number of dynasties

who ruled over Assyria about which we have evidence in the form of clay tablets preserved by them. However, there are differences among historians about their chronological order and duration of administration. The earliest city founded by them was Nineveh and later the other two important cities Ashur and Arbela were constructed. All the three were located in the mountainous region of Armenia, sometimes termed as 'Mountains of Ashur'. As the Sumerians developed in the South, they started flourishing in their own ways. According to the Old Testament, Asshur, son of Shem who was the ancestor of Israelites, was the founder of the city of Ashur. Both Assyrians and Israelites shared similar cultural heritage. Their major cities were **Calah, Zab, Ashur** and the capital, **Nineveh**. Their capital cities were **Nineveh, Arbela, Khorsabad and Nimrud**.

Babylon became a political and commercial centre combining the Southern Mesopotamia and Assyria in the north. It was Assyrians who underwent an independent social and political formation after the fall of Sumerians. They occupied the upper valley of Tigris initially and came under the influence of the Sumerians. Assyrians were a group of people of great audacity and courage. The scarcity of resources in their original homeland and the hostility of the neighbouring people were factors accounted for their war-like lifestyle. Being a population of warriors, the Assyrians were always after territorial conquest. The more they conquered, the more they wanted to conquer. Mesopotamia and Anatolia were the countries which were acquainted with the use of the metal iron as early as 3rd century and 2nd millennium BCE. Assyrians were successful in establishing a prolonged empire after a short period of setback, due to their expertise over the use of iron.

2.4.3.1 Early Kingdom

We have scanty evidence about the early period of Assyrians. Historians have attributed the early kings of Assyria as the Kings who lived in Tents. As like the twelve tribes of Israel, before settling down in one place they must have followed a life similar to that of nomads. The name of the rulers mentioned in the Assyrian Kings list may be contemporaries rather than the successors. Early kings of Assyria had their capital at Ashur which was a dominant city state among three main Assyrian city states established around 2500-2400 BCE. It was a great centre of trade and commerce having trading colonies at Hattusa and Kanesh. Nothing much is known about the early history of these city states. The dates of the early history of Assyrians are not known to us. **The Assyrian Kings List (AKL)** prepared in 722 BCE does not give the dates of rulers, specifically. A more or less consistent list of kings had been found in each of the three cities, prepared by an official called limmu appointed annually for presiding over the New Year festival. The early Assyrians were settled in the Upper Tigris region. Their initial attempt to establish a kingdom was a failure. However, after a period of retreat, they restored their power and prestige all the more vigorously. Early kingdom may be considered as the seminal period of the foundation of the later vast Assyrian kingdom.

2.4.3.2 Old Kingdom

The Old kingdom rose to prominence by the rise of an independent city of Assur under Puzur-Ashur I around 2025 BC. The period between the rise of Assur to the rise of Assur-uballit is known as the period of the Old Kingdom. During this period a definite Assyrian culture and



dialect began to take shape. The earliest known Assyrian calendar belongs to this period. Assur also became actively involved in international trade. The city of Assur seems to have fallen to the invasion of a number of neighbouring tribes of the period. The dynasty of Puzur-Ashur I came to an end with the attack of Amorites around 1808 BCE. The kings during this period were having very less power when compared to the other periods. There are references about the slaves; but they seem to be free servants. Both men and women of the Old kingdom had almost equal rights including the right to property. Both had legal rights even pertaining to divorce and making a will. They also actively participated in the trading activities. Ashur was the chief deity of the period and was worshipped by all.

2.4.3.3 Middle Kingdom

With the accession of Assur-uballit (c. 1363 BCE) started the Middle Assyrian Kingdom and it prolonged up to c.912 BCE. During this period, the Assyrian kingdom rose to the status of an empire. It also witnessed a number of socio-economical and material developments which helped the Assyrian kingdom to remain as the most powerful state for a long time in the Near East. Major rulers of the period were Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I. The period of the Middle Kingdom saw the transformation of God Enil from an agricultural deity to a military deity. Unlike the rulers of the Old kingdom who used the term governor for themselves, the rulers of the Middle kingdom were necessarily autocratic rulers who used the term king for themselves. The importance of the assembly of city-states seems to have declined during this period.

Among the kings of the medieval empire, Tiglath-Pileser I was one of the famous rulers of Assyria, who ruled during the medieval period from 1100 BCE. He led a number of military expeditions against Syria and Babylonia. He claimed to have defeated a number of kings and was an expert hunter who is said to have killed 900 lions and many elephants. He set up a hunting park in the city of Ashur and in Nineveh, he started a botanical garden where he planted a number of plants and trees. Under him Assyria became a great power in the Ancient Near East and remained so for the next few centuries.

2.4.3.4 Neo-Assyrian Empire

In 911 BCE, after a short period of dynastic struggle, Adad-nirari II came to power. The last and the greatest phase of the Assyrian empire began with his period. The transformation of Assyrian empire to the height of its glory and power was completed during this phase. During this period Assyrian rulers ruled Mesopotamia, Levant, Egypt, Anatolia, Arabia and modern-day Iran. Thus, it was called the first largest empire in world history. During the initial years, under Ashurnasirpal II, the capital city was shifted to Nimrud due to its location. Important rulers of Neo Assyrian empire were Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser III, Shalmaneser IV, Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and his son Assurbanipal.

Tiglath-Pileser III (745-727 BCE) was a significant ruler of Assyria who had a number of achievements to his credit. He is hailed as an intelligent and vigorous king of Assyria. He came to power after putting an end to the long stagnation of Assyrian rule. He subjugated Medes, Syria and Palestine and merged Assyria

and Babylonia. He introduced a number of political and economic reforms and expanded the geographical area of the Assyrian territory. He maintained a well-equipped standing army and his period marked the transition of the Assyrian kingdom into an empire. His measures were carried forward by his successors.

Sennacherib (705-681 BCE) succeeded his father Sargon II in 705 BCE and ruled up to 681 BCE. He is the famous Assyrian ruler referred to in the Old Testament. He succeeded in extending the empire to Southern Palestine and Asia Minor. His period also was one of great wars with the Chaldeans and the Levants. He destroyed the city of Babylon and renovated the capital city of Nineveh. He constructed inner and outer walls for the city and built a beautiful palace in it. He utilised the service of the prisoners of war for constructing buildings. The walls he constructed in the city of Nineveh still remain as a mark of their skilled labour. He was also interested in making gardens and planting trees. Around his palace in Nineveh he designed orchards and gardens, with needed irrigational facilities. He seems to have introduced cotton in Mesopotamian region. He took initiatives for technological development of the empire. He searched out sources of timber and alabaster for construction purposes. He devised a novel method of bronze extraction and drawing water from deep wells. His technological outlook assisted him in his campaigns.

Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) was the ruler of the Neo Assyrian empire from c.680 BCE to his death in c.669 BCE. He was the youngest son of Sennacherib, yet he was declared as the successor by the latter. He was the governor of Babylon and came to the throne after a short period of war of succession. He is known for his

conquest of Egypt and the reconstruction of Babylon. He constructed a number of buildings in Babylonia and Assyria. He extended the Assyrian control to Media, Levant, Arabian Peninsula, Anatolia, Caucasus and lower Egypt. At his death, there was a peaceful succession, since he had proclaimed detailed instructions about the succession.

Assurbanipal (669-627 BCE) is considered as the last great ruler of Assyrian dynasty. He ascended the throne in 669 BCE and spent much of his time in dealing with the rebellions of Egypt. He was well educated in all scribal and priestly knowledge and he was able to read the Sumerian script and the obscure Akkadian script. He is known for the construction of the first systematically arranged library in the world, Library of Assurbanipal. It had a collection of clay tablets of several handbooks, traditional stories and religious documents. He was interested in hunting, archery and horse-riding. He exercised control over the nobles and the court and supervised the state-building projects. Being a person of great religious zeal, he reconstructed many shrines in Babylonia and Assyria. Historians generally assign 606 BCE as the end of Assyrian glory with the destruction of Nineveh.

2.4.4 Assyrian Civilization-Features

2.4.4.1 Polity

Assyrian state was a military state. Assyrian political system was centralised and organized. Under Assyrians, Babylonian empire extended from Zargos mountains to Egypt in the west, which was connected by roads for the smooth



movement of the army and the messengers. Military leaders were very rich and influential. They shared the spoils of the war and inherited large estates as rewards of victory. Their standing army outnumbered the army of any of their contemporaries in the Near East. They excelled over their counterparts in military tactics and the use of sophisticated arms. Their weapons of aggression included iron swords, heavy bows, long lances, fortresses on wheels and were equipped with defensive shields, metal breastplates and helmets. However, their dreadful nature was as good as their arms. They inflicted numerous inhuman atrocities on the soldiers captured in war or individual combat. The torturing of such victims included skinning alive, impaling on stakes, cutting off body parts like nose, ears and reproductive organs, taking out eyes and exhibiting the mutilated bodies in the vicinity of the people who were reluctant to surrender. Accounts of such atrocities were recorded by the Assyrians themselves in their chronicles. This may be the reason that the Assyrians remain the most hated people of the ancient times.

To sustain their political authority and to evade any possible resistance to their rule, Assyrians adopted measures like deportation, killing and enslaving. Initially they permitted the rulers of the conquered area to rule their respective area with a payment of tribute to the Assyrians. However, at a later stage, this system gave way to a centralised form of government. The empire was divided into provinces under a **governor** appointed by the king. The governors were chosen on the basis of merit alone which assured the loyalty to the king. The king had control over the local administration. There were scholarly advisors to the king called **scribes** who were responsible for the correspondence and documentation. The **Treasurers** controlled the financial affairs while the

delegates were in charge of diplomatic affairs. The delegates acted as advisers to the rulers of these allied peoples. Including the king, all the high officials had a deputy or second in command. Chief deputy of the king acted as the commander-in-chief of the military force. They had a standing army and were the first militaristic society in the ancient world. About 120 civil servants assisted the king to administer the vast empire. The civil servants had seals to ensure the authority. The seal represented the royal power.

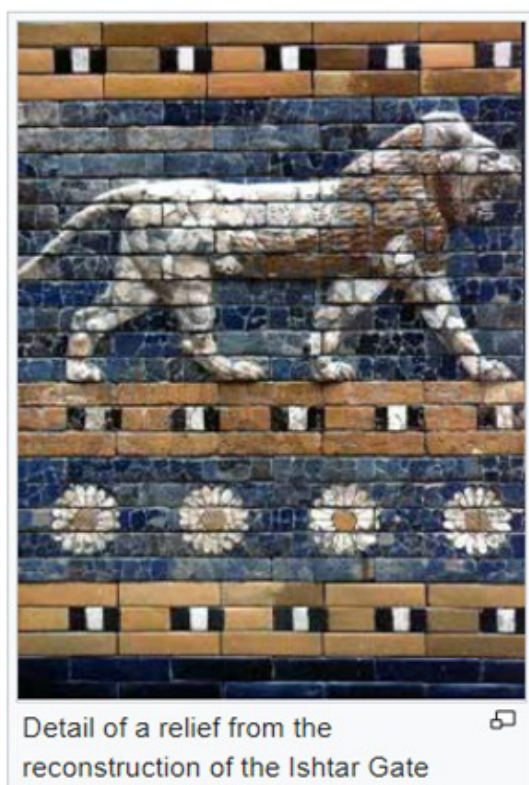
2.4.4.2 Society and Economy

The social and economic system of the Assyrians was not that promising. Frequent military expeditions and exploits drained the resources of the state and human resources equally. In the long run, the army officers became corrupt and shifted their responsibilities to the subordinates, engrossing themselves in luxurious life. There was the presence of an affluent merchant class who were engaged in long distance trade. The serfs constituted the majority of the population and there were also slaves who were deprived of any rights. The serfs cultivated the land of their masters and the slaves did not have even a plot of land. They were given additional public works and sometimes compulsory military services. The slaves were of two types; domestic slaves who performed the household business and the business of their masters and the second type was those captured as prisoners of war. The latter had a pathetic situation compared to the first type who had more freedom. They were bound by heavy shackles, forced to work round the clock for building the roads, canals and palaces. Women did not enjoy much freedom. Polygamy was permitted and the right to

divorce rested with the male. Many of the laws of Hammurabi influenced that of Assyrians. However, several features of Hammurabi's code were absent. Assyrians followed drastic punishments for crimes like abortion and homosexuality.

2.4.4.3 Scientific Achievements

The scientific achievements of Assyrians were not many. They divided the circle into 360 degrees and tried to locate on earth with certain arrangements like latitudes and longitudes. They nearly predicted the eclipses and named five planets. Considerable progress was made in the field of medicine. More than five hundred drugs of vegetables and minerals were discovered and listed.



Detail of a relief from the reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate

2.4.4.4 Art, Architecture and Sculpture

In the field of art, the Assyrians had a closer resemblance to Sumerians than that of Old Babylonians. They tried to follow a different style in sculpture developed on low reliefs. War and sport were the major topics for the relief sculptures. They also portrayed the bravery scenes and agonies of the beasts at the face of death. The purpose of the art was to glorify the exploits of the ruling classes. Architecture was not that excellent when compared to sculpture. The palaces and temples were built of stones collected from the northern mountains. Major features of the buildings were arch and dome. In spite of the militaristic character and invincibility of the Assyrians, they could not last for long. Continuous warfare with the neighbouring people and their conspiracy against the Assyrians led to their decline. After a century or so, their glory began to decline and soon faded out completely.

2.4.5 The Akkadians

Akkadian empire was founded by Sargon the Great with the city of Akkad as its centre in Mesopotamia. It was the Akkadians who united the Mesopotamian mainland into a well-knit empire around 2300 BCE. Archaeologists have not been so far able to locate exactly the city of Akkad, yet. Earliest accounts about the Akkadians are not known due to the absence of records. Later history has been recorded in the Akkadian language and the Sumerian script. The Akkadian city began to flourish with the support of the Akkadian Semites from the Ubaid culture from the north. The time bracket of the Akkadians can be fixed as between 2350 BCE and 2050 BCE. The Akkadians

probably conquered Assur during the period of Sargon the Great.

The first known ruler of Akkad is Sargon the Great or Sargon of Akkad. His origins are not clear. Historians are not sure about the early profile of Sargon. No one knows who Sargon, the founder of the Akkadian Empire, was, nor the location of the fabled city of Akkad. He conquered and ruled all of Mesopotamia and parts of Syria, Iran, Kuwait, Jordan, Turkey and Cyprus. He is credited with founding the first empire. The dynasty of Sargon was in power for the next 150 years, ruled by his sons Rimush and Manishtusu and grandson Naram-Sin.

2.4.5.1 Sargon the Great (2334 to 2279 B.C.E)

The reign of Sargon witnessed continuous military campaigns in and around Mesopotamian region. He set on an expedition of conquest starting from the conquest of Umma, whose ruler Lugalzagesi had conquered the Sumerian city-states. Sargon consolidated his territories and constructed a network of roads. He introduced the postal system in his region. He reigned for fifty-six years. Though there were rebellions in Sumer during his lifetime, he successfully tackled them. After his life, he was venerated as a divine person.

Sargon was succeeded by his son Rimush in 2279 BCE. The death of Sargon initiated rebellions and Rimush spent his beginning years suppressing and restoring social order. He was able to recapture Elam, before his death in 2271 BCE. Manishtusu, who succeeded his brother Rimush, also faced a number of rebellions. He succeeded in establishing trade with Egypt. He constructed the temple for Ishtar at Nineveh. He reigned

for fifteen years and was killed in a palace conspiracy in 2255 BCE. He was succeeded by his son Naram-Sin.

Naram-Sin was the third ruler of Akkad and the grandson of Sargon of Akkad, who ruled for 36 years. He was successful in conquering the neighbouring regions and maintained law and order in his kingdom. He constructed a number of temples. He had also constructed palaces like the Palace of Tell-Brak. After his death in 2224 BCE, the glory of Akkad came to an end due to the invasion of the neighbouring tribes and calamities like drought and famine by 2193 BCE

2.4.6 Legacy of Mesopotamian Civilization

According to Herodotus, Father of History, the prosperity and glory of Sumerians surpassed during the ancient period. The region produced astonishingly copious crops when compared to other Mediterranean regions. They mainly cultivated barley, wheat, sesame, cress, and lentils. It is believed that they used the seeder plough at such an early time of agricultural development. The earliest urban centres of the world developed in Sumer. They were also the first people who attempted to write and preserve their records. They were also pioneering people to build temples, create great artistic works, and establish organized forms of administration. Their literary texts, which appeared by 2600 BCE, became an inspirational source for the succeeding civilizations.

The Babylonians worshipped a number of gods who were assigned a variety of functions. An or Anu was the god of Heaven and Enlil was the god of the air. Enki was the god of water, Ki-the mother-goddess, Ninlil- the goddess of air and

Inanna was the goddess of love and war. Ea was the god of Wisdom while Marduk was the god of light. Nanna - The god of the moon and Utu or Shamash - The god of the sun, as well as god of justice. Ashur was the main God of Assyria and the sky god.

The Akkadians spoke Semitic language, similar to Arabic and Hebrew. In the second century, Akkadian language was spoken all over Mesopotamia. Akkadians are credited with the task of uniting the region, under their able ruler Sargon. He was acclaimed as the conqueror of **‘Four corners of the world’**. The entire Southern Mesopotamia was knit into a centralised state for the first time. They also had trade relations with Anatolia and India. The Akkadian period provided a bulk of sources on the administrative system. The towns ruled by the bureaucracy were now turned into provinces ruled by the governors. It was around 2000 BCE, the Amorites entered the region and the name Babylon was first heard.

It was right from the period of the Amorite king, Hammurabi, Babylon gained popularity. He is famous for

his conquests and he introduced the Code of Law. The Code of Hammurabi exercised profound influence over the succeeding Semitic ethnic groups. The period witnessed a great deal of peace and security, till the region was attacked and ransacked by the Hittites around 1595 BCE. It was by 18th century BCE, the Babylonians became the authors of a popular culture. They developed a body of literature rich in content with epics and myths. Their religious ideas were exhibited in their works prepared on the clay tablets. Their ziggurats were the first institutions to represent the meeting place of Gods with human beings. Simultaneously, they represented the socio-economic networks. Babylonian artistic motifs like the bull with a man's head have been found in Hattusa, Nineveh, and Persia. There were also reliefs depicting the Babylonian creation myth. The library of Assurbanipal in Babylon contained texts like that of Gilgamesh. Later on, Greek philosophers sought to learn many things from the Babylonian culture. The Jews followed the Babylonian calendar. Their festival Akitu was celebrated in Syria even in the 3rd century CE.

Recap

- ◆ The Chaldean migration to the Mesopotamia
- ◆ The Assyrian conquest of Chaldeans
- ◆ Decline of Assyrians and rise of Chaldeans
- ◆ Chaldeans' control over the city states of Babylonia
- ◆ Stiff opposition from the Assyrians
- ◆ Siege of Babylon

- ◆ Re-establishment of Babylonian glory by Chaldeans
- ◆ Nebuchadnezzar II - Military conquest of Jerusalem and 'Babylonian Captivity'
- ◆ The Hanging Gardens of Babylon- An ancient wonder of the world
- ◆ Classification of Assyrian period
- ◆ Assyrian Kings List (AKL)
- ◆ Features of Assyrian civilization - Polity, society and economy
- ◆ Assyrian achievements- Education, learning, literature, art, and architecture
- ◆ Akkadian empire and conquests of Sargon the Great
- ◆ Legacy of Mesopotamian civilization

Objective Questions

1. Where was Chaldeans located?
2. Who was the most famous ruler of Chaldeans?
3. Which incident of the history of Hebrews is related to king Nebuchadnezzar?
4. Who is considered the last great ruler of Assyrian dynasty?
5. What was the language the Akkadians spoke?
6. Who conquered and subjugated Babylon in 539 BCE?
7. Who was Enki ?
8. Who was the first known ruler of Akkad?
9. Who constructed a palace at Tell- Brak?
10. Which were the capital cities of the Assyrians?
11. What is AKL?

12. Who is considered the last important king during the Neo-Assyrian period?
13. Which Assyrian king had a famous library to his credit?
14. Who is hailed as the most intelligent ruler among the Assyrians?
15. Which region was called 'Mountains of Ashur'?
16. Which capital city of Assyrians was destroyed in 606 BCE, marking the end of their glory?
17. Which festival of Babylonians was celebrated in Syria till 3rd century CE?
18. Who is acclaimed as the Father of History?

Answers

1. South-eastern corner of Mesopotamia
2. Nebuchadnezzar
3. The Babylonian Captivity
4. Assurbanipal (669-627 BCE)
5. Semitic language
6. Cyrus the Great
7. The god of water
8. Sargon the Great
9. Naram-Sin
10. Nineveh, Arbela, Khorsabad and Nimrud
11. AKL stands for Assyrian Kings List
12. Assurbanipal
13. Assurbanipal



14. Tiglath-Pileser III

15. Aramedia

16. Nineveh

17. Akitu

18. Herodotus

Assignments

1. Evaluate the achievements of the Assyrians in the field of political system, Economy and Science.
2. Elucidate the rise and growth of Assyrians as an invincible military power in the fertile Crescent.

Suggested Readings

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5 UNIT

Persian Empire

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ familiarised with the geographical extent, the rise and growth of the Persian empire.
- ◆ explained the factors that influenced the growth of the Persian empire.
- ◆ exposed to the career and administration of rulers like Darius and Cyrus.

Prerequisites

Darius the Great was the Persian King and one of the successors of Cyrus the Great who brought the Babylonian Empire to an end. The magnificent Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Persians. Have you heard of a Persian ruler who had conquered some regions of Punjab in North-Western India? He was none other than Cyrus. The western boundary of the Persian empire was India. How were they able to rule such an extensive empire? The following unit will discuss the details of the Persian occupation of Babylonia.

Keywords

Achaemenids, Satrapy, Delian league.

Discussion

The Persian empire which is also known as the Achaemenid empire consisted of a number of ethnic groups who are supposed to have originated somewhere in the steppes and came to the central Iran region around 1000 BCE. We come to know about the Persian exploits and extent of their empire from the accounts of scholars like Herodotus, Xenophon, Strabo and Arrian. Major tribes which constituted the later Persian population belonged to Medes, Parthians, Sogdians and Persians. Little is known about their original home and history before the sixth century BCE. They spoke an Indo-European language to which belonged Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and most of the modern European languages. They were the vassals of the Medes who had controlled the north and east of the Tigris.

2.5.1 Cyrus and His Conquests

In 559 BCE, a prince called Cyrus of a southern Persian tribe succeeded as vassal king of Anshan. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, in 553 BCE Cyrus rebelled against the Mede king and defeated him in two battles, helped by the rebels. Shortly after that overthrowing Median domination, he became the ruler of all the Persians. He also took the title of the Median kings 'King of Kings' to

ascertain his succession. Thereafter, he set on conquering the neighbouring states. He is known as the founder of the largest empire excelling its preceding empires. He conquered Lydia (present Turkey) in 546 BCE and Babylon in 539 BCE conquering the whole of Chaldean empire. After occupying Babylonia, he permitted the traditional bureaucratic rule there, while in Syria and Asia Minor, he installed rulers and in other places he let the old rulers continue, on the agreement that they would be obedient to him.

Cyrus followed a policy of religious tolerance as he himself was a devotee of Ahura-Mazda, the God of Zoroastrians. He presented himself to the Babylonians as the one appointed by their God Marduk. Cyrus was killed in a battle in 530 BCE, and was succeeded by his son, Cambyses. Cambyses conquered Egypt in 525 BCE. While he was away in Egypt, there broke out revolts in Persia initiated by the Chaldeans and the Medes. Though Cambyses tried to return home to suppress the revolts, he was murdered on the way and for a while there was a period of unrest and anarchy for a while. A powerful noble namely Darius suppressed the revolts and captured power.



5.1 The Achaemenid Empire at its greatest extent, c. 485 BCE. Persian Empire • Greatest & (Most Powerful) Empire of Ancient World! | PANA (persiansarenotarabs.com)

2.5.2 Darius the Great (522-486 BCE)

Darius the Great (Darius I) ruled the Persian empire from 522 to 486 BCE. He belonged to the royal Achaemenian clan and was a distant relative of Cambyses and his father Cyrus. His initial years in administration were spent in solving the succession issues and revolts in the empire. He also consolidated his power in organizing a well-knit administrative system. After consolidating the imperial possessions, he expanded his empire up to western India and into Europe. He led an expedition against the Scythians to the Steppes. He also controlled Ionia and Greek city states and appointed or approved the rulers. He dominated the Greeks in Lydia and made them pay heavy tributes to him and increased his oppression over them. He also forced them to serve in his armies. All these measures invited the wrath of the Greek city-states which rose in revolt under Athens against Persia resulting in the famous Graeco-Persian Wars. Darius faced stiff resistance from the Athenians. He sent a joint naval-military expedition to Athens in 490 BCE. The battle known as the **Battle of Marathon** turned to be detrimental to Darius and he was defeated in the battle. The battle between the Achaemenid empire and Athens became the subject of study by Herodotus who wrote an account of the same under the title 'Histories'. While the issues with the Greek city-states were still alive, he breathed his last in 486 BCE. He left the struggle with Athens to be continued during the period of his immediate successor Xerxes I.

2.5.2.1 Reforms of Darius the Great

Darius laid a solid foundation to the

administration of the empire which was left as a loose federation by his predecessors. He divided the empire into satrapies or provinces, and fixed an annual amount as tribute to each province to be submitted to the central treasury. A commission was sent by Darius to fix and collect the tribute. The satrapies were further divided into smaller administrative units under governors. His system of administration was the best example for **'checks and balances'** in the ancient world. It prevented the concentration of power in a single satrapy. Inspectors who acted as the **'ears and eyes of the king'** were appointed to visit each satrapy and report directly to the king. He created a centralized standing army that responsible to the king alone. He raised it in Iran with a troop of 10,000 powerful Persians as its core. These elite troops were called **'the immortals'** and functioned as a royal guard. He constructed a new capital at Persepolis and a summer capital Ekbatna in Iran. However, he opted for Susa as his seat of power due to its strategic location. Darius made Aramaic a co-official language of the empire along with Persian and introduced a uniform monetary system. His **Behistun inscription** is an important source of information about the old Persian language.



Darius standardized the currency and weights and measures to promote the growth of trade and commerce and the

economic growth of the state. He also repaired an old canal from the Nile to the Red Sea. He constructed roads and way-houses throughout his empire to have effective control over the far-flung areas of his empire. He also introduced a system of government couriers who took messages to the king and back to the provincial offices at the earliest. Such measures and his introduction of new silver coinage positively increased commerce and trade activities. His religious policy was modelled after that of Cyrus. He repaired and maintained the dilapidated temples in the empire. He restored the local cults and ordered the satrap of Egypt to codify the Egyptian laws in consultation with the native priests.

By the time of **Xerxes** (485-465 BCE), the control of Persians over Greece was overthrown. Added to this, there was a revolt already broke out in Egypt during the last days of his father. He suppressed the revolt with great difficulty and added it as a new satrapy to his empire which he later did to Babylonia, too. During 480-489 BCE, he led a series of battles against the Greeks, which ended up in failure. Persians also lost their say over Europe and Greece during this period. Greek states also led a joint army under Athens called the **Delian League**. In 465 BCE, he was murdered in a palace coup, leaving the kingship to his son **Artaxerxes I** (465-425 BCE). His term was also troubled by frequent rebellions and skirmishes. He restored peace for a short period. After his death in 404 BCE, a major rebellion took place in Egypt and it became free from Persian rule. His successor Darius II was succeeded by unpopular rulers. During this period, Macedonia rose to prominence under **Philip II**. The weak successors of the Persian Empire were not able to sustain the past glory. In 334 BCE, **Alexander III** conquered most of the territories which were previously

parts of the Persian empire. Thus, the fall of the Persian Empire was completed by 330 BCE, as a result of the invasions of Alexander III, who later became famous as Alexander the Great of Macedonia.

Though the Persian government had its own drawbacks, it was outstanding in some aspects when compared to its contemporary culture. They were not interested in the terrorizing militarism followed by the Assyrians. Although they levied heavy tributes on the people they conquered, they allowed the conquered regions to continue with their cultural pursuits. The outstanding feature of Persian culture was that it was a synthesis of the cultural traits of people who lived in the regions of Mesopotamia, Asia Minor, Syria-Palestine coast and Egypt. The Persians constructed a network of roads to facilitate the easy movement of the army and also goods and services. The most famous of them was approximately 1600 miles. It extended from the Persian Gulf region to the western coast of Asia Minor. The road was well-maintained to assist the day and night movement of people swiftly. The four leading cities of the Persian empire like Susa, Persepolis, Babylon and Ecbatana were interlinked to each other with a road network. It was effective in controlling the outlying areas of the empire effectively by the central government.

2.5.3 Persian System of Government

From roughly 550 BCE to 651 CE, the Achaemenid Persian system of administration raised the benchmark for governance in Mesopotamia and Central Asia. The administrative systems of the ancient Akkadian and Assyrian peoples served as models for the Persian government. The emperor was at the head of the hierarchy, followed by



administrative officials and advisors, and then secretaries. The empire was split into provinces or satrapies, each of which was governed by a Persian governor or satrap, who was only in charge of civil affairs. Generals were in charge of military affairs in each satrapy. This structure forbade any satrap from instigating an uprising if he lacked access to the military and barred any military leader from doing the same since he lacked private funding to incite troops to rebel.

Cyrus's government was based on the central rule, which was carried out by the decentralised satrapies. Like the Assyrian system, these satrapies were monitored by Cyrus' officials, who served as the king's eyes and ears. No uprisings are known to have taken place under Cyrus the Great's rule. The fact that his subjects greeted him as their father is evidence of his success

as a ruler.

Darius divided the empire into seven regions and split it up into twenty satrapies. The earlier system followed by Cyrus the Great, was now modified for the smaller satrapies, by Darius I to ensure that the satraps were carrying out their responsibilities legitimately. He appointed a Royal Secretary to support the satrap but report to Darius in each province. In addition, there was a Royal Treasurer who was responsible for overseeing government expenditure, approving any undertakings the satrap requested funding for, and who also reported Darius. With a Garrison Commander in charge of a province's armed troops but no access to the revenue, the combined responsibilities of satrap and military commander remained with him.

Recap

- ◆ The fall of the Babylonian empire
- ◆ Conquests of Cyrus the Great and the foundation of the Persian empire
- ◆ Consolidation and Expansion of empire under Darius the Great
- ◆ Administrative reforms of Darius the Great
- ◆ Extent of the Persian Empire - From Western India to Eastern Europe
- ◆ The inability of successors to manage the large empire
- ◆ Invasion of Alexander the Great and the fall of the Persian empire
- ◆ Persian road networks and trade
- ◆ Persian system of government

Objective Questions

1. Who were the last rulers of Babylonian empire?
2. Which Persian ruler repaired and completed a canal connecting river Nile to Red Sea?
3. Who wrote an account of the Greco- Persian wars?
4. Against which Persian ruler the Delian League was formed?
5. Who dealt a final blow to the Persian empire in 330 BCE?
6. What was the name of the Greek city-state alliance against Persians?
7. Who was the founder of the Persian empire?
8. Which inscription gives information about the old Persian language?
9. Who standardised the currency, weights and measures during the Persian empire?
10. Name the God of Zoroastrians.

Answers

1. Chaldeans
2. Darius
3. Herodotus
4. Xerxes
5. Alexander the Great
6. Delian League
7. Cyrus
8. Behistun Inscriptions



9. Darius
10. Ahura Mazda

Assignments

1. Discuss the role of Darius and Cyrus in the growth of the Persian Empire.
2. Explain the background of the decline of the Persian Empire.
3. Discuss the reforms of Darius the Great.

Suggested Readings

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UNIT

Persian Culture

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ able to describe the features of Persian culture.
- ◆ familiarised with the factors that promoted the growth and spread of Persian culture.
- ◆ explained to the growth and spread of Zoroastrianism in the Persian empire.

Prerequisites

Imagine a ruler who named 20 cities after himself! This sounds like a wild dream, but it was a reality for none other than Alexander the Great, the famed conqueror of ancient times. However, he had his quirks and fears. For instance, did you know that he suffered from ailurophobia, a fear of cats? It's hard to imagine a great warrior like him trembling in the face of a tiny feline, but that's just the kind of paradox that makes history so fascinating.

Of course, Alexander's legacy extends far beyond his personal quirks. He dealt a final, crushing blow to the mighty Persian Empire, which had reigned supreme for centuries. The Persian Empire was a cultural melting pot, a vibrant hub of diverse ethnic groups and ideas that spanned from the Mesopotamian-Persian Gulf region all the way to Western India. The Persian civilization had a lot to offer in terms of culture, art, and science. They were skilled architects and engineers, building grandiose structures such as the famous Persepolis, a sprawling palace complex that still stands today. They were also adept astronomers and mathematicians, making significant contributions to our understanding of the cosmos.

So while Alexander's conquest may have marked the end of the Persian Empire

as a political entity, it certainly didn't mark the end of its legacy. The Persian civilization continues to inspire and intrigue us to this day, and its impact can still be felt across the globe. In this unit, we will discuss the important features of the Persian culture.

Keywords

Qanat, Zoroastrianism, Ahura-Mazda, Mithraism, Ahriman

Discussion

The Achaemenian empire rose to prominence around c. 550 BCE, and lasted up to 330 BCE, when Alexander the Great conquered the Achaemenian empire and occupied it. Iranian culture is one of the oldest in the world and has exercised profound influence on the cultures of Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Russia, Arabian Peninsula and parts of Asia. As rightly observed by the famous Iranologist Richard Nelson Frye, “Iran’s glory has always been its Culture”. The society of the Persian empire was a conglomeration of different cultures and ethnic groups. Therefore, Persian society was the sum total of a multi-cultural influence. The Iranian **land-owning class** began to spread and exercise influence in the society. The large estates and land areas of the defeated rulers and nobles were taken up by the Persians rulers and redistributed to the high officials and members of the Persian nobility. Mesopotamia had a number of vast estates with great agricultural productivity. Another social class who became prominent was the merchant class. The expansion of the **trading class and the bankers** contributed to the rise of the merchant community. Some traders and bankers who became very rich turned out to be future land-owners, too. In

Mesopotamia, Syria and Asia Minor there was the development of urban centres.



Relief of two figures can be seen in the ancient Achaemenid capital of Persepolis.

(<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/>)

2.6.1 Economy

Agriculture was the economic base of the empire. Large estates were owned by the monarchy, the nobles, ranked soldiers, temples and business class. There were tenants to cultivate the land and they in turn made use of the hired labour for agricultural activities. There were also gangs of slaves to work in the field in some estates. There were also individual peasant farmers who also owned the land. Irrigation was given primary importance by the rulers except in the declining years. Irrigation spread in most of the parts of Iran

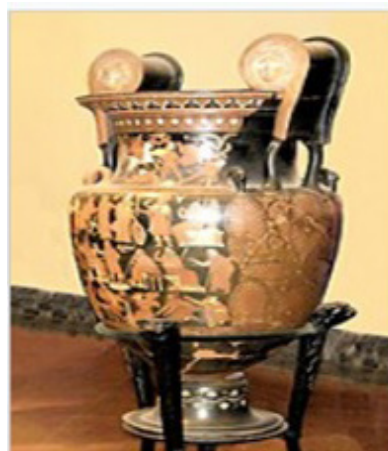
through a system called **qanat**, a practice of fetching water through underground channels. Government provided tax incentives to the construction of qanats. Thus, many of the previous grazing lands were converted to cultivable land.

The Achaemenid rulers encouraged trading activities more than any of the previous rulers. A single legal administrative framework was essential for international commerce and that was provided by the Persian monarchs. International business houses were operated at different commercial points of the empire. Measures taken by Darius the Great like standardizing of the weights and measures and introducing a single monetary system based on a two-tier gold and silver coinage. It led to the hoarding of the silver and gold coins in the treasuries of later rulers which eventually constrained the metal money circulation. The construction of a network of roads contributed heavily to the movement of trading goods and services and the Royal Roads became the backbone of domestic and international trade. One among such roads ran through modern day Israel to Egypt and others connected Babylonia to Ecbatana, Bactria and India. The road network benefited a lot to the communication and transport system.

After the completion of the old version of the Suez Canal, linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, maritime activities of the Persian empire became extensive. It allowed ships from India to sail through the Mediterranean in four days. Through this route, the spices from India and Arabia were taken to the West. In the later years of the empire, the maintenance could not be done due to the constant Egyptian unrest and the canal fell into disuse.

The artistic and intellectual

achievements of the Persians were influenced by their preceding cultures. The ancient Egyptian Culture, Mesopotamian culture, and also the Palestinian cultural elements also influenced the Persian culture. They followed the cuneiform writing with an updated alphabetic system containing 39 alphabets. It was based on the alphabets of Armenian who had close contacts with the Persians. In science, they could only slightly modify the existing solar calendar. They diffused the knowledge of making coins throughout their empire.



6.3. The Darius' Vase (c 340-320 BCE) preserved at the Archaeological Museum of Naples. Achaemenid Empire - Wikipedia

During this period, a number of Ziggurats were reconstructed or refurbished in Mesopotamia. The temple Centered life continued as before. In Egypt, temples and statues were constructed in the traditional style with the continuation of the official and priestly texts. The temple at Jerusalem which was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar was reconstructed in its old style and a number of Jewish scriptures were composed during this period. Metal tableware (vessels, plates, cult utensils) in gold and silver, jewellery (earrings, bracelets), weapons (daggers), seals and gem, and Iranian figures were recovered by the Archaeologists from

different sites. Asia Minor contributed to the cultural developments taking place in Greece. Great thinkers like Heraclitus and Ephesus came from Greece during this age. The early Persian rulers like Darius and Xerxes were prolific builders of palaces, temples and tombs with giant reliefs and figures. For the construction of new palaces, they used stone from Elam, cedar timber from Lebanon, gold from Lydia and Bactria, silver and ebony from Egypt, dye from Ionia and Ivory from Nubia and India.

The political system of the Persians was a strong centralised monarchy with provincial administration. The administration was run by the king and the provincial governors. The satrapy system was a group administrative system. A satrapy was placed under a governor who was responsible to the king directly and was held responsible for the developments in his satrap. In some areas, the governor was appointed by the king himself, while in some other areas, the governors were the existing rulers of the conquered areas. The general was in charge of the army and a government secretary kept the official records. Both the secretary and the general reported directly to the central government. The Persian empire had 23 Satrapies and a common currency of silver and gold coins was in vogue in all the provinces.

2.6.1.1 Persian Architecture

The Persians achieved great progress in the field of architecture. They copied the structures of raised platforms and terraced buildings from the Assyrians and the Babylonians. They also adapted the image of winged bull, coloured and glazed bricks and other decorative motifs. However, the arch and the vault were not used by them. Because they found the Egyptian style of

column and colonnade more convenient, perhaps. The base of the columns was decorated with palm and lotus designs, which also show the Egyptian influence. Their own constructions were secular in nature. They constructed palaces rather than temples. Darius and Xerxes lived in magnificent palaces at Persepolis. Darius constructed a temple with a central hall having a hundred columns and surrounded by innumerable rooms which were used as offices and as quarters for the eunuchs and the members of the royal harem.

2.6.2 Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrian religion was the most influential cultural vestige left by the Persians. Their religion was very old when they had conquered the region of modern Iran. Zoroastrian religion spread all over West Asia along with the conquests of Persians. It replaced many other local beliefs which were in existence till then. The founder of this religion was Zoroaster or Zarathustra who is believed to have lived in the fifth century BCE. However, the roots of this religion can be traced back to the fifteenth century BCE. He is credited with the formation of a completely developed system of religion. He is also hailed as the first real theologian in History. He was against polytheism, animal sacrifice and magic and wanted people to keep themselves away from all these and inculcate more spiritual and ethical practices. Yet, his new ideals were combined with the existing ones and made a fusion of both, later on.

The religious philosophy of Zoroastrians differed from its preceding religions of Samaria and Babylonia. According to the principles of Zoroastrianism, two forces ruled the universe; one was Ahura-Mazda and the other was Ahriman. Ahura-Mazda

represented the good and the moral force which embodied the principles of light, truth and righteousness. Ahriman was representing the treacherous and malignant force of darkness and evil. According to the Zoroastrian thought, both forces engage in mutual warfare for supremacy over the world at the end of which the good force becomes victorious over the evil. On the last great day Ahura-Mazda would finally defeat Ahriman and cast him away into a deep abyss forever. The dead would be raised from the dead to be judged according to the deeds done by them during their lifetime. The righteous will be awarded with eternal bliss, while the evil-doers will be thrown to the flames of hell. However, the punishment in hell, as in Christian philosophy, shall not last unendingly. Ultimately, everyone will be saved.



Ahura Mazda, The Rock-Cut Tombs of Qizqapan
Sulaymaniyah Museum (Copyright)

Ahura Mazda The Rock-Cut Tombs of Qizqapan
Sulaymaniyah Museum(Copyright)

Zoroastrian religion was ethical in character. It gave humans the liberty to sin or not to sin. They would be judged according to their worldly actions in the afterlife. The moral code of Ahura-Mazda specified that people should love one another and be truthful in dealings. Everyone should accept the poor with compassion and love and show mercy

for the afflicted. Their list of vices was pretty long, later adopted by Medieval Christianity. It included gluttony, sloth, pride, covetousness, wrathfulness, lust, adultery, abortion, slander and waste were some of the listed vices. Exacting interest for loaned money was counted as the worst of all sins and amassing of wealth was also condemned.

The noble ideas and body of Zoroastrian philosophy, however, did not last long in its original form. It became corrupted by the primitive superstitions of magic and priest craft. Later on, the faith of Chaldeans also influenced the Zoroastrian ideas. Thus, there was a fusion of the dualism of Zoroastrianism with the pessimism and fatalism of the Chaldeans. Soon the faith witnessed the emergence of cults similar to the basic dogmas of Zoroastrianism. Later on, from the changed version of this religion emerged Mithraism, Manicheism and Gnosticism which were profoundly influenced by dualism of Zoroastrians. The name Mithraism was derived from Mithra, the lieutenant of Ahura-Mazda. Mithra earned recognition from many and emerged as a major deity of worship. They accepted Sunday as the most sacred of the week days, and twenty-fifth December as the most sacred day of the year. Twenty fifth of December also marked the winter solstice when the sun would return south from north. It was in a sense the birthday of the sun. In the fourth century BCE, it was spread in Rome and received converts from the lower class, soldiers, foreigners and slaves by 100 BCE. Gradually it rose as the most important religion of Rome and chief opponent of Christianity and other pagan religions of Rome. It is possible that Christianity being the younger, received some of the externals of Mithraism preserving its own philosophy.

Persia became a hub of diverse cultural practices and art forms down through the ages. Iranian culture and traditions have a history deep rooted in the Persian culture of early centuries, which was a conglomeration of different cultures.

Recap

- ◆ Rise and fall of the Achaemenid empire
- ◆ Features of Persian society - conglomeration of cultures
- ◆ Agricultural practices and the Persian economy
- ◆ Trading activities of Achaemenid rulers- domestic and international trade
- ◆ Artistic and intellectual achievements of the Persians
- ◆ Influence of other cultures
- ◆ The political system of the Persians - Satrapy system
- ◆ Art and architecture in Persia- Temples and Ziggurats
- ◆ Zoroastrianism and its influence on successive religions

Objective Questions

1. Which Babylonian ruler had destroyed the temple at Jerusalem?
2. What was the name of the underground water channel constructed by the Persians to irrigate the Iran region?
3. Which material was brought from India and Nubia to decorate the palaces of the Persian kings?
4. Who was the head of a satrapy?
5. Who founded Zoroastrianism?
6. Who represented the good force in Zoroastrianism?
7. Who represented the evil force in Zoroastrian religion?

8. According to Mithraism, who was the lieutenant of Ahura-Mazda?
9. Which were the heretical movements born out of Zoroastrianism?
10. What was the group administrative system of the Persian empire known as?

Answers

1. Nebuchadnezzar
2. Qanat
3. Ivory
4. Governor
5. Zoroaster
6. Ahura-Mazda
7. Ahriman
8. Mithra
9. Mithraism, Manicheism and Gnosticism.
10. Satrapy system

Assignments

1. Elucidate the growth and development of the Zoroastrian faith under Persian empire and its legacy.
2. Analyze the culture achievements of the Persians during the Achaemenid Empire. How were their artistic and intellectual pursuits influenced by preceding cultures?
3. Describe the political system of the Achaemenid Empire, including its centralized monarchy, provincial administration, and satrapy system.



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CHINESE CIVILIZATION



UNIT

Formative Phase

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- ◆ identify major geographic conditions of ancient Chinese Civilization
- ◆ describe the origin of ancient Chinese civilization
- ◆ describe the Peking man in China
- ◆ analyze the Neolithic age in China

Prerequisites

Imagine standing on the banks of the mighty Yangtze and Yellow rivers, watching the water flow by at a steady pace. For thousands of years, these two rivers have nourished the land and provided a foundation for one of the world's most remarkable civilizations to emerge. The Civilization in China took its form much later than that of Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus valley. The Chinese civilization is considered the World's oldest civilization with a written history that began 3,500 years ago. It is noted that China yielded a civilization that was both independent in origin and unmatched in durability.

For centuries, the Chinese people lived in small, traditional agricultural societies along the banks of these rivers. As time passed, they learned to harness the power of these rivers for irrigation and transportation, allowing their societies to grow and prosper. The fertile land along the rivers supported the growth of crops, and with an abundance of food, people were free to pursue other interests.

As society became more complex, so did the culture. The Chinese developed a system of writing, which allowed them to record their history and pass down their traditions to future generations. They created art, literature, and music that still resonate with people today. And they developed technologies like gunpowder, paper, and the compass that changed the course of human history.

Despite wars, famine, and natural disasters, the Chinese civilization has endured and thrived. Today, as we stand on the banks of these ancient rivers, we can still see the legacy of this remarkable civilization all around us. From the towering skyscrapers of Shanghai to the tranquil gardens of Suzhou, the Chinese people continue to draw on the lessons of their past as they shape the future. In this unit, we discuss the formative phase of Chinese civilization. The focus is on the origin of human society in North China.

Keywords

Peking Man, Yangshao culture, The Yangtze River, Longshan Culture

Discussion

3.1.1 Geography

The home of early East Asian Civilization in North China was much more isolated than other early civilizations; on the one side boundless pacific and on the other side, the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. North of this massif lies the vast desert and on the south the rugged mountains and jungles.

3.1.1.1 Major Rivers

Yellow River Valley

The great rivers of China were the major centers of habitation which lie within the mountain ranges. The Yellow river otherwise known as Huang Ho is 2700 miles in length. It flows through the Yellow plain. In the summer flood season

the waters from the mountain ranges to the west bring with them a heavy deposit of yellow silt which gives the river its name. From the earliest times Chinese administrators have had to construct dikes to keep it within its channel. The farmers cut and burned this brush to extend their lands for planting. It moves across the plain within these dikes above the level of the surrounding land. Meanwhile famine will have followed upon the flood.

The presence of loess in Shensi and Shansi provinces has had an immensely important influence on life in North China. The word loess comes from the German verb 'losen', which means to dissolve or to loosen. The loose soil is highly fertile and easily eroded. Picked up by the yellow river, the light soil is carried for miles before it is deposited in the river's bed.



The Yangtze River

The Yangtze was known as the Jiang (river) and by Han times as Chang Jiang (long river). The Yangtze river is a larger river than the Yellow valley. It is 3200 miles in length and flows through the rich, alluvial soil of its delta. It is the longest river in Asia and the third longest river in the world. It gradually extended its floodplain into the Yellow sea, but the continuing subsidence of the Lower Yangtze plain slowed to the extent of the delta's buildup. This intensely farmed and irrigated area is the most populous in all China. It includes Shanghai which has ten million people and it is the largest Chinese city. It is also navigable as the Yellow river is not. Joined by a great network of tributaries, the Yangtze itself carries an enormous volume of silt into the China sea.



3.1.1.2 Climatic Conditions

Climate is an important factor that contributed to East Asia's cultural distinctiveness. The climate of East Asia is determined largely by the great landmass of Asia. In winter, the air over Central Asia becomes very cold and heavy, flowing outward and bringing cool, dry weather to the southern and eastern fringes of the continent. In the summer, the reverse takes place. The air over Central Asia warms up

and rises and moist oceanic air rushes in to take its place, dropping a heavy load of water on the continental fringes. This distinctive climate gave East Asia an agricultural pattern of life. The people in this area cultivated many of the principal crops notably rice, the soybean, etc. They domesticated animals like the water buffalo, pig, and sheep. The chief cereal of the west has been wheat while that of most of East Asia has been rice. Producing a much larger yield per acre than wheat, rice supports a heavier population on the land. There seems to have been a significant difference in the ratio between people and land in East Asia on the one hand and in West Asia on the other.

The inhabitants of Neolithic China were able to expand their settlement range and develop their cultures during the Holocene Climatic optimum. After that period, the climate underwent fluctuations, a gradual drying and cooling has continued until modern times. In the northeast, the climate had been both drier and colder by some 6° C. The climate grew considerably warmer by 6000 to 5000 B.C.E. However, in the period that followed (3000- 1000 B.C.E) mean annual temperature remained relatively constant. (standing at 2°- 4° C).

In the central plain, the climate had also grown wetter and warmer at 6000 B.C. The remains of herbivores, like cattle, deer and sheep were generally found. But during the Yangshao stage (5000 B.C. to 3000 B.C.E), the presence of carnivores like the tiger, black bear and leopard generally seems to have appeared. The remains of subtropical animals like the Sumatran rhinoceros, Asian elephant, Macaque monkey, musk deer were generally found in the Yangtze Valley. The presence of these animals clearly reveals that the climate was warmer than it had earlier.

3.1.2 Evolution of Early Man

The earliest evolution of primates took place on the continent of Africa and hominoid fossils began to appear in eastern Europe and Asia as far as China by the middle Miocene 17-11 million years ago. In the late Miocene period (11 and 7 million years ago) there was at least one genus of big ape in the area of China, the Lufengpithecus, found in Lufeng Yunnan.

The earliest primates were so tightly adapted to the tropical forest of East and South Africa that they were unable to migrate out of this, their original habitat. The first humans to achieve worldwide distribution are the members of a new species, Homo Erectus. They populated the Eastern part of Asia and the rest of Eurasia as well as Africa. The first fossils of Homo Erectus were discovered in 1890 by a Dutch military Doctor Eugene Dubois in Java.

3.1.2.1 Peking Man

Thirty years later, Swedish geologist John Gunnar Andersson, located the fossiliferous locality at Zhoukoudian cave, South-west of Beijing (Peking) in 1927. Since 1927, continuous excavations have taken place in Zhoukoudian's locality. These excavations resulted in the recovery of several skulls and postcranial skeletons. These fossils were studied by Davidson Black and Franz Weidenreich. Davidson Black gave the population represented by the fossils a new Latin name, Sinanthropus Pekinensis, the Chinese man at Peking. Later researchers came to the conclusion that these fossils represent humans in various parts of the world. All of them belong to the category of Homo Erectus. Both Java Man and Peking Man were the descendants of African ancestors.

Fossil data from the area of China is playing an important role in the study of human evolution. By the end of the Pleistocene, China had been occupied by people of great technological skill in the making of lithic and microlithic varieties of blades.



Skull of Peking man

3.1.3 Beginning of the Agricultural Way of Life

Both before and after the Pleistocene-Holocene boundary, the climate throughout East Asia was warm and moist. The vegetation cover was much heavier than it is at present. In the river Valleys and lowlands of North China, there were dense forests and many bogs, marshes and lakes. This was an environment very rich in food resources. The Palaeolithic people who lived on them had been familiar with the nature, the character and the properties of each animal and each plant. Thus, man learned to plant before he knew crops by seeding. The major purpose of seeding crops is to grow food.

Around 10,000 years ago agriculture in the form of seed cultivation began both in South and North China. In the north, the earliest cultivated millets have been unearthed from a number of sites, especially from Cishan or Peiligang culture. Several radiocarbon dates from charcoal samples place the site very close to 10,000 years ago.

In the south, remains of rice were discovered in the 1970's from the Hemudu site in Hangzhou, Zhejiang were dated to the early sixth millennium B.C. The most recent investigations of rice and related flora have been undertaken by a Sino-American team headed by Yan Wenming and MacNeish.

One determining influence on East Asian civilization has been its relative isolation from the other great civilizations of humankind. Separated by great distances, it developed its own distinctive cultural patterns. For example, only in East Asia, there is a writing system that is Chinese, which is based on entirely different principles.

The home of early East Asian Civilization in North China was very much more isolated than were other early civilizations on the one side boundless pacific and on the other side the Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau. North of this massif lies the vast desert and on the south the rugged mountains and jungles.

3.1.3.1 The Prehistoric Period

The period of transition from hunting to farming is not yet adequately known. Both in North and south China, agriculture, pottery and stone polishing occurred approximately at the same time, some 10,000 years ago. The pre-historic people in China produced rice and its cultivation was well-established in the

Yangtze valley. They also cultivated Silk. They domesticated animals of different derivations- pigs, chickens and dogs for food and the water buffalo for rice cultivation. Their basic agricultural tool is hoe.

The Yellow river was the main cradle of Chinese Civilization. The people settled around the yellow river and other rivers like Huai and the Yangtze cultivated a number of crops, especially grains.

3.1.3.2. Neolithic Culture

Numerous archaeological discoveries were made in all regions of China as well as on its borders. They have particularly enriched our knowledge of most ancient history. These discoveries have drastically modified the traditional image of the origin of Chinese Civilization. A Primitive agricultural economy replaced that of populations that lived exclusively by hunting, gathering and fishing. The oldest ceramic fragments have been discovered from Southern China. These multiple remains furnish proof of the existence of a great southern Neolithic tradition largely anterior to 5,000. The recent discoveries have brought to light several great, distinct cultures spread over vast geographical groupings. These newly emerging cultures include Xinglongwa, Xinle, Hongshan Cultures, Yangshao Culture, Dawenkou Culture, Majiabang and Hemudu cultures, Lungshan Culture, Daxi Culture, and Dapenkeng Culture.

Xinglongwa, Xinle, Hongshan Cultures

In the early Holocene period, a succession of three cultures occupied this area. Many outstanding art objects have been brought to light here. Foremost among these are jade objects and the dragon motifs. The most characteristic

pottery wares are rocker stamped flat bottomed vessels and red striped red bowls and tubes.

Yangshao Culture (5000- 3000 B.C.E)

The Yangshao culture was a first Neolithic culture that was known from several hundred sites (Carbon 14 dates from 5,150 to 2,960) stretched from Kansu to the central plain and comprised the southern regions of Shansi and Hopei. This is the zone of loess, a fine dust deposited probably in the Pleistocene period. The Yangshao culture was characterised by an agricultural economy, combined nevertheless with hunting, fishing and gathering, stone tools including hoes, spades, knives, and wheels. The Yangshao people kept pigs, dogs and bovines. Ceramic works present a large regional diversity of production techniques. The most attractive pottery is ornamented with geometric designs and highly stylized drawings of fish in black or red. This culture was discovered by Swedish geologist J.G. Andersson in 1920 at Yangshao village in Mianchi.

The Yangshao was a culture of millet farmers. They have already planted both *Setaria* and *Panicum* millets. One major feature of Yangshao culture is that it has yielded many remains that are indicative of shamanistic beliefs and practices. These include a skeletal style of art, bisexuality in ceramic art and the tomb of a figure etc.

Dawenkou Culture (5000-3000 B.C.E)

This is another millet farming culture located on the low hills and lake shores of the Shandong highland. Its economy was based on the cultivation of millet. The form of their vessels is more elaborate and

the decoration is made up of openwork, applique or impressions from basket making.

As the different cultures of the middle Neolithic developed and spread, contacts and exchanges between them multiplied. Thus, homogeneous groupings came into being. There is proof of significant progress during the fourth and third millennia elaborate working in jade, handicrafts in bamboo, silk weaving and hemp in the lower Yangtze, improvements in stone, shell, bone and wooden implements, greater use of the potter's wheel.

Majiabang and Hemudu cultures (5000- 3500 B.C.E)

Majiabang and Hemudu cultures are rice growing cultures. In addition to rice, the people of these cultures made extensive use of the areas freshwater plants, such as the water caltrop, fox nut, lotus seed and stem, arrowhead, water chestnut, wild rice, water dropwort, water shield, water spinach, cattail, and rush. Their dwellings were built with timber. The pottery is predominantly brown in Majiabang culture and black in Hemudu culture.

Daxi Culture (5000-3000 B.C.E)

This is another rice growing culture. Its main features were abundant storage facilities, highly polished stones, perforated slate sickles and even occasional village walls and advanced degree of agriculture. The characteristic ceramics are tall, thin stemmed and painted with black and brown zoned bands.



Dapenkeng Culture (5000 -2500 B.C.E)

This is another well-defined regional culture, excavated in 1964. This was a coastal culture that depended on farming, hunting, fishing, watercraft, and multiple use of plants. In many ways this culture reminds us of the hearth of early plant domestication. This culture is important in Pacific prehistory.

Lungshan Culture (The Black Pottery Culture)

Lungshan culture was a late Neolithic culture in the middle and lower valley of the Yellow river. There are a number of reasons for connecting the Bronze age civilization with the Lungshan culture. They possess certain characteristics in common.

1. The process of ramming earth in successive layers
2. The fortification of the urban sites by thick walls
3. Divination by means of animal bones subjected to the action of fire
4. Very typical shapes which appear in close relation to each other.

A nucleus of civilization had grown up in the lower valley of the Yangtze by the end of Neolithic age. They possessed their own original characteristics. The Black Pottery culture also known as Lung-shan extended into Shantung and the middle and lower Yangtze valley. The people made very thin and shiny black pottery. It is also noticed that new influences from West Asia, such as domesticated sheep, horses and the potter's wheel had reached

North China. There was a strong cultural continuity with the following bronze age.

3.1.3.3. The Bronze Age in China

In Ancient China, Bronze objects were produced and utilized for ritual and other purposes. The bronze objects include vessels and weapons. Several distinct Bronze age cultures co-existed simultaneously over wide areas of China and interacted among themselves. The main features of bronze age civilization in China were bronze metallurgy, urban settlements and logographic script.

A bronze casting method, different from the method used in ancient West Asia, made its appearance in China by the middle of the second millennium B.C.E. The first known sites of bronze objects and of bronze casting were found in the Erlitou site in the Honan province of North China. The Erlitou culture was first explored from 1959- 1978. This culture is considered as the dawn of the Bronze Age Civilization in China.

Erligang Culture (1600-1400 BCE) was another extensive bronze casting industry developed to the east of the Erlitou site. At the site, a huge number of bronze objects were found. Erligang Culture is considered as the largest urban bronze age settlement in China.

A famous archaeological site near Anyang in the Yellow river valley is another bronze age settlement in China. It was discovered by Chinese scholars in 1899. They discovered 'dragon bones' and traced that they bore the earliest known form of Chinese writing and corroborated much of the early historical tradition. This writing enables us to identify bronze age culture in China.

Recap

- ◆ The origin of Chinese civilization and the discovery of Peking Man
- ◆ Geographical features of ancient China
- ◆ Climatic conditions
- ◆ Neolithic China- agriculture, pottery, and settled communities
- ◆ Neolithic cultures of ancient China
- ◆ Yangshao culture- painted pottery and agriculture
- ◆ Lungshan culture- advanced pottery-making techniques
- ◆ Bronze Age in China

Objective Questions

1. Who discovered Peking man?
2. When was the Peking man found in the Zhoukoudian cave?
3. Which is the largest river in China?
4. When did archeologists discover the first fossils of Homo Erectus?
5. When was China occupied by people of great technological skill in the making of lithic and microlithic varieties of blades?
6. What was the basic agricultural tool of the Chou people?
7. From where did the 'dragon bones' were discovered?
8. Which was the first Neolithic culture in China?
9. Who discovered Yangshao culture?
10. When was the earliest known form of Chinese writing discovered?



Answers

1. John Gunnar Andersson
2. 1927
3. Yangtze
4. 1890
5. By the end of Pleistocene period
6. Hoe
7. A site near An-yang in the Yellow river
8. The Yangshao Culture
9. J.G. Andersson in 1920
10. 1899

Assignments

1. Discuss the significance of the discovery of "Peking Man" in understanding human evolution in China.
2. Discuss the impact of geography and climatic conditions on the development of early Chinese civilization.
3. Elucidate the technological innovations during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages in China.
4. Compare and contrast the development of early Chinese civilization with other contemporary civilizations around the world.

Suggested Readings

1. Chilli, *The Beginning of Chinese Civilization*, Foreign Language Teaching and Research Publishing, 2020.
2. Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1982.
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2. David.N.Keightley, *Origin of Chinese Civilization*, University of California, Press, 1983.
3. Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1982.
4. Marcel Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, Meridian Books, New York, 1958.
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UNIT

Chang Culture

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ explain the features of Chang culture
- ◆ describe the economy of Chang dynasty
- ◆ discuss various aspects of Chang culture

Prerequisites

The past is shrouded in mystery, but every now and then, archaeologists uncover clues that shed new light on the early history of humanity. China is no exception. With a rich and complex culture that spans thousands of years, it's no surprise that the country has yielded a wealth of archaeological treasures.

One of the most fascinating aspects of China's history is the Bronze Age, which began around 2000 BCE. Like other civilizations around the world, the Chinese people learned to work with metals like copper, tin, and bronze, creating intricate tools and weapons that revolutionized their society. Archaeological excavations in Northern China have revealed a wealth of information about this period.

One of the most remarkable finds from this period is the Chang Dynasty, which reached its zenith around 1400 BCE. Excavations have uncovered elaborate tombs and artifacts that offer a window into the lives of the people who lived during this time. But it's not just the physical artifacts that have been unearthed – inscriptions and other forms of writing have been deciphered, offering a complete picture of the formative period of Chang culture.

From these inscriptions, we can learn about the political structure of the Chang Dynasty, the religious beliefs of its people, and even their daily routines. We can see how they used bronze tools to farm and craft objects, how they celebrated festivals and mourned the dead, and how they interacted with neighboring societies. In this unit, we discuss the early historical phase of Chinese civilization. The focus is on the Chang culture.

Keywords

Xia dynasty, Chang Culture, Ancestor worship, Phonetic symbols

Discussion

3.2.1 Early Dynastic Rule in China

The earliest Chinese historical period began with three dynasties. They are the Xia, Shang and Chou(Zhou) dynasties. These dynasties arose from the Longshan base to a higher social level. They controlled a vast territory around the yellow river.

3.2.1.1 Xia Dynasty

According to traditional legends of Yu, the first dynasty called the Xia ruled China around 2205-1766 B.C.E. According to Chinese legends, Yu was famed as a hero who drained the flood waters to the north China plain and divided the empire into nine provinces. He opened drainage channels, allowing the water a controlled flow to the seas. The rulers of Xia are credited with a reign of reasonable length. The last Xia emperor was so depraved that people revolted under the leadership of a man who founded a new dynasty named Chang.

3.2.2 The Chang(Shang) Dynasty and its Political Structure

The Chang (Shang) dynasty ruled China during its bronze age period is generally considered China's first historical dynasty. It was with the Chang dynasty that the history of China began.

The Chang Dynasty was inaugurated by the conquest of a military chieftain. The construction of fortified cities, the use of horse-drawn chariots in warfare, the use of bronze metallurgy, and an elaborate system of writing were the distinctive features of Chang culture.

The Chang society was composed of an aristocracy, craftsmen and farmers. The last of these were obliged not only to labor but to render military service. The Chang kingdom located the plain surrounding the middle Yellow river valley but its influence extended over a wide area. They carried on trade with neighboring regions, including Yangtze valley to the south. They had to protect themselves against



nomadic tribes from the north and west. A city located at the northern tip of Honan Province (the site of Modern An-yang) was the last capital of the Chang dynasty.

In addition to military services, the King probably supervised public works. He was important as chief religious functionary. He was assisted by an educated class of priests, who served as astrologers, performed the divination rites and supervised the calendar. According to the evidence, the Chang priest had made considerable achievements in mathematics and astronomy. They recorded eclipses and already conceived the decimal system.

3.2.2.1 Social Classes

The family was the basic social unit. The king or a great aristocrat might have several wives, but monogamy seems to have been the more usual practice even in the royal family. Slavery existed in Chang society. There was gradation in the ranks of society, but there is no evidence of feudal system during this period.

The Chang people commonly lived in pits hollowed out of the loess. Rural villagers apparently also occupied pit dwellings. But the city residents built more comfortable houses. On a rectangular foundation, they erected a gabled -roof structure, with wooden poles. Thatching was used for the roof. This style of dwelling is closer in design to the European houses.

3.2.2.2 Religion

The Chang people worshiped many natural objects and forces- the earth, rivers, the winds, even the cardinal directions. They performed sacrifices in temples to please these gods. Human sacrifices were found in Chang cities. Burnt offerings of animals and wine made from millet were

also considered acceptable. Apparently, the victims were usually war captives. The principal deity seems to have been a god concerned primarily with rainfall, the crops and war. There is no sufficient evidence that the Chang religion was essentially spiritual or ethical. The king became an object of worship after his death. Sacrifices were conducted to the departed spirits of both Kings and queens. A large pit with a wooden tomb chamber was excavated. The royal corpse was surrounded with magnificent furnishings, including figured bronze and pottery, marble statuary and richly adorned implements and jewels.

An important religious concept of Chang is called Ti, a supreme Being. They also believed that Ti was the creator and ruler of the universe. They thought that he dwelled in their kings. Chinese monarchs claimed to be the sons of heaven. Many of them placed the word Ti after their names. But they never considered their kings as gods.



Map of Chang

3.2.2.3. Ancestor worship and Oracle Bones

The typical Chinese institution of

ancestor worship was already in existence. This is the most popular practice of ancient China. The Chang people believed that ancestral spirits were believed to possess the power of helping or hurting their descendants. The dead person was wrapped in matting for burial in a grave. Furniture, pottery, bronze vessels and other objects were placed with the dead body. The tomb chamber was of finely carved wood. They followed the burial practice of Egyptians. They worshiped forces of nature.

The oracle bones are important sources of evidence about the Chang dynasty. These oracle bones provide the bulk of the Chang writings. The King or professional diviners carved the name of the King and dates onto the bones.

The Chang society developed the practice of consulting oracles. The questioner used to ask the oracle a number of questions. They raise questions such as “will we win the upcoming battle?”. The question was inscribed in the tortoise shells or bones of cattle and made small holes in them. When fire was applied to the hole, the bone cracked and the answers were inferred from the nature of the cracks. The oracles naturally gained great prestige in society. Divination by means of the oracle bone was a by-product of the cult of ancestor worship.

3.2.2.4 The Economy

The Chinese economy was primarily based on farming. Agriculture was the chief source of livelihood. Their tools for cultivating the soil were still primitive. Grains were the principal crop. Wheat, barley and millet were grown. They started hunting and herding for food supply. They domesticated animals, including dogs,

pigs, goats, sheep, ox, horses, chicken, buffalo, monkeys and elephants. They included dog flesh and pork as part of their diet.

3.2.2.5 Technology and Arts

The most important technology of Chang was bronze casting. Their metal work was truly remarkable, especially the superb bronze castings of intricate design. They used bronze articles, including weapons and chariots. The most impressive articles among them were the objects intended for religious and ceremonial functions- tripods, libation bowls, drinking cups, etc.

The bronze objects were buried in the tombs of Chang elites. They also used bronze for making military weapon which helped them to excel at war and win battles over their enemies.

3.2.2.6 Crafts

Archaeologists have revealed a high degree of skill and versatility of the Chang people. The Chang people were very much aware of metals. They made objects of stone- knives, axes, and even dishes-as well as of bone, shell and horn. Carved piece of ivory was produced in abundance. Cowrie shells were used for making jewellery and also served as money. The most formidable weapon for hunting constituted bows and arrows. Two -horse chariots with spoked wheels were probably the exclusive example of the aristocracy. They used leather for making arms. They were fond of music. They employed drums, stone chimes and a small pipe of hollow bone with five finger -holes as musical instruments.

3.2.2.7 System of Writing

The Chang people possessed a system of writing of their own. Writing materials, i.e, brush and ink made of soot had been invented by them. Silk cloth and wood were used for this purpose. The books were compiled from narrow strips of bamboo joined together by a thong. They inscribed on pieces of animal bone, horn, and tortoise shell and pottery. They used the flat, bottom shells of tortoises as writing materials. The Chang Kings hired men to bring the turtles to them and oracles marked on the shells. The writing on the oracle bones shows that written language had been around for a long time before the first evidence of it appeared. Although the inscriptions on oracle bones are brief in content, they throw light upon the social life of Chang people.

Chinese writing has been greatly elaborated over more than 3000 years of development. The Chang symbols are the earliest known examples of writing in the Far East. The phonetic principles were also applied. A character having one meaning might be used to indicate a word of different meaning but pronounced the same way. The phonetic symbols are combined with a conceptual symbol in the same character.

3.2.3 Decline of Chang Dynasty

According to tradition, a state by the name of Chou, in Shensi put an end to the Chang dynasty around 1050 or 1025 B.C.E. The Chou, more warlike than the Chang, made wider use of the chariot. The city of Chang was captured by the Chou rulers and the dynasty was overthrown. The new rulers established their control over the region. The Chou dynasty is considered the longest dynasty in Chinese history.

3.2.4 Significance of the Chang Dynasty

The Chang civilization is considered the earliest genuine civilization of Eastern Asia. It laid the foundation for the distinctive Chinese cultural pattern. Their contributions to the method of agriculture, handicrafts, artistic and architectural forms are remarkable in the history of China. About 1027 B.C.E, the city of Chang was captured and overthrown by new rulers (Chou).

Recap

- ◆ Xia dynasty- Flood control and irrigation
- ◆ Chang dynasty- Hierarchical political structure
- ◆ Society under Chang dynasty- Class division

- ◆ Ancestor worship
- ◆ Bronze technology
- ◆ Decline of Chang dynasty
- ◆ Written records of Chang dynasty
- ◆ Inscriptions on oracle bones
- ◆ Military prowess of Chang dynasty - Chariots and cavalry in warfare
- ◆ Advances in agriculture, technology, and the arts

Objective Questions

1. Which is the most popular religious practice of China?
2. Which is considered the longest dynasty in Chinese history?
3. In which year the Chang dynasty came to an end?
4. When did the Chang Culture reach its zenith?
5. Which is considered the earliest genuine civilization of Eastern Asia?
6. Who was Ti?
7. Which is considered the basic social unit of Chang Kingdom?
8. When was the city of Chang captured?
9. Which is regarded as a by-product of the cult of ancestor worship?
10. What is the purpose of using Cowrie shells?

Answers

1. Ancestor worship
2. Chou Dynasty
3. 1027 BCE
4. 1400 BCE
5. The Chang civilization
6. A supreme Being
7. The family
8. 1027 BCE
9. Divination by means of the oracle bone
10. For making jewellery

Assignments

1. Analyze the significance of ancestor worship in the society and culture of the Chang Dynasty.
2. Explain the technological and artistic achievements of the Chang Dynasty.

Suggested Readings

1. Arthur Cotterell, *Eyewitness Ancient China*, DK Publishing, New York, 2005.
2. Jacques Gernet, *A History of Chinese Civilization*, Second Edition, Cambridge University Press, 1982.

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UNIT

Chou Dynasty

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be :

- ◆ familiarised with the nature of Chou culture
- ◆ exposed to the the classic age in China
- ◆ made aware of the contributions of Chou culture

Prerequisites

Have you heard of the battle of Muye, one of the most pivotal moments in China's early history? According to Confucian tradition, it was here that the Chou dynasty defeated the Shang through sheer force of arms.

As the dust settles, the last Shang King, Chou-hsin, is beheaded, and the Chou emerge victorious. It's a moment of triumph for the Chou, who are honored as liberators by the former subjects of the Shang and the barbarian peoples who had suffered under the tyranny of Chou-hsin.

But victory comes at a cost. The Chou must now consolidate their power and establish a new dynasty. They do so by colonizing territories formerly dominated by the Shang and its allies. The rulers of Chou delegate power to local leaders, creating a network of vassals and alliances that will allow them to maintain control over their vast empire.

Over time, the Chou dynasty became one of the most influential in China's history,

leaving a lasting impact on the country's culture and traditions. New sources from the period, including thousands of bronze inscriptions and other archaeological artifacts, provide a wealth of information about this era, offering a glimpse into the lives of the people who lived during this time. In this unit, we discuss the later phase of the Chinese Civilization. The focus is on the Chou culture.

Keywords

Eastern Chou Culture, Classic Age, Warring States

Discussion

3.3.1 The Chou Dynasty

The Chang dynasty was succeeded by the Chou. According to the inscriptions discovered since 1950, it certainly seems that the beginning of the first millennium BCE was a period of expansion. King Cheng and his successors made efforts to penetrate towards the north-west. The Chou's efforts then reached the region of present day Peking and the plains of lower Yangtze.

The Chou dynasty brought no profound change in the character of the society. The Chou people, were located west of the Chang frontier. They possessed a culture similar to that of the Chang. They maintained their capital near modern Sian (Shensi Province) in the Wei Valley. Cultural developments continued uninterrupted under the Chou and eventually completed the pattern of Chinese civilization for centuries to come.

The new dynasty wanted to convince the people that it was a legitimate succession rather than a usurpation. For this the divine powers had used the Chou as an instrument for their removal. Members of the Chou family became powerful enough

to marry the Chang's women. According to the Chinese historians, the Chou people decided to attack the Chang because of the corruption and cruelty of the king of Chang, Chou Hsin.



The Chou Dynasty

The Chou Dynasty

3.3.1.1 The Chou Government

The Chou ruler maintained large standing armies, which were used to suppress rebellions. They expanded their authority notably southward in the middle Yangtze valley. The King exercised

direct rule over the area surrounding his capital. But he administered the outlying area indirectly through appointed officials. These officials were given almost complete jurisdiction within their own districts. The Chou administrative system was roughly similar to that which developed in Europe some 2000 years later. Originally the members of the royal family were appointed as governors. They were the King's vassals and also great territorial lords. They exercised wide military and judicial powers. They gradually transformed their position from that of appointive officials to hereditary rulers.

3.3.1.2 Military Development

In the fourth and third centuries, all the principal states were under the control of the Chou ruler. Warfare became much larger in scale and more ruthless. Conquered states were turned into centrally controlled provinces. Chariots continued in use until the later phase of Chou. Cheap iron weapons were used on a large scale. Peasant foot soldiers were replaced by aristocratic charioteers. They also started to use expensive bronze weapons.

Another important military innovation was the use of cavalry. The Chinese were very much influenced by the innovations of central and West Asia. Horse riding is a good example. Horse riding first developed by the pastoral people of Central and Western Asia.

3.3.1.3 The End of the Western Chou Period

By the 8th century, the Chou dynasty began to decline to the point where it was no longer able to protect the western

frontier effectively against the attacks of the barbarians. The dynasty reached its lowest point in 771 BCE when a worthless king almost duplicated the villainies that had been unjustifiably attributed to the last of the Chang rulers. The King Yu, through his extravagant efforts to amuse his favourite concubine, angered the nobles beyond endurance. The King Yu was killed and his palace was looted. This event marks the end of the Western Chou period. The royal seat of government was now moved to the east (near Modern city of Honan) and the ensuing period is known as the Eastern Chou.

3.3.2 The Eastern Chou Dynasty (771-250 BCE): Spring and Autumn Period

During the 500 years of the Chou Dynasty, China witnessed political disunity and internal conflict. The king actually ruled over a domain much smaller than that of great hereditary princes. His powers were limited to religious and ceremonial functions. During this period, the hereditary nobles enjoyed social prominence, wealth, power and rank. They became lords and vassals, held fiefs for which they owed military service. They were supported by the labor of the peasants on their lands. It is not quite accurate to describe the Eastern Chou age as an age of feudalism. The warrior aristocrats raised armies and collected revenues from their dominions. Severe penalties, including fines, mutilation and death were inflicted upon offenders.

Towns were developed throughout the Chou period. The merchants attained economic self sufficiency through trade. They introduced a regular system of taxation based on agriculture. They developed their own administrative

bureaucracies and recruited trained officials.

3.3.2.1 The Search for Political Stability

The eastern Chou made many efforts to minimize fighting and stabilize the political situation. Numerous interstate conferences were held with considerable frequency with disarmament proposals discussed and treaties were signed. Marriage between princely lines was held and this was considered an important means of strengthening alliances.

3.3.2.2 Expansion of Frontiers

During the Eastern Chou period, China was divided into a number of principalities with shifting boundaries and frequent wars. A few of the larger states held the balance of power and four of them were located on the outer frontiers to the north, west and south. The boundaries of the Chinese civilization were extended by the rulers of frontier states. The total area was much larger than the old Chang dynasty. The southern part of Manchuria was also occupied by them. The first stages of the famous Great Wall of China were constructed both in the south and north of the Yellow River for protection against the nomads of Mongolia.

3.3.2.3 Cultural Progress under the Chou

During the years of Chou dynasty, in spite of internal conflicts, cultural progress was attained. This period is also considered as the classical age of the Chinese Civilization. Their contributions were remarkable in the history of China.

The culture of the Chou was based upon the foundations that had been laid by their predecessors.

Handicrafts techniques improved under the Chou. They introduced smelting of iron, although iron did not entirely displace bronze. The majority of the population lived in rural villages. In towns, the merchant class assumed importance. It became possible to develop caravan trade routes across Central Asia with the introduction of the donkey and camel. They transported grain, salt, silk and other commodities. Coined copper money which was issued before the close of 5th century BCE. Silk and natural fibres were used in the manufacture of textiles.

Farming was improved under the Chou. They constructed canals and reservoirs and the draining of swamps. They fully utilized the rice producing lands of the Yangtze valley. The soya bean was added to the list of crops for restoring fertility to the soil. The method of cultivation during the Chang and Chou periods remained essentially the same.

3.3.2.4 Vegetable Civilization

The Chinese techniques were admirably adapted to the terrain and to the objectives of Chinese society. While they were primitive, they embodied a great deal of experience and foresight. China has been said to possess a 'vegetable civilization' because its people adapted themselves so completely to the potentialities of their environment. A Chinese farming village appears almost as if it were part of the natural landscape instead of being an effort on man's part to manipulate nature for his own benefits. The bulk of labor was done by hand with simple tools to produce the greatest possible yield. They implemented crop rotation to avoid soil



exhaustion. Hillsides were terraced to conserve moisture and prevent erosion.

The Chinese have subsisted largely on a vegetable diet because of the practical reasons of the economy. For meat, they depended on chickens, ducks and especially pigs. The methods of agriculture in China were intensive rather than extensive.

3.3.2.5 Class Divisions

Society during the Chou period was aristocratic in nature. The peasants comprised the vast majority of the people. There was a tremendous gulf between the great landowner and the peasants. Chinese society was never stratified by a caste system like that of India. There were only two classes, the commoners or serfs and the nobles. When the numbers of the aristocracy tended to increase, many of them consequently possessed little or no landed property. They were forced to seek administrative employment, or to engage in trade or even to undertake menial occupations. Before the close of the Chou period, a considerable number of peasants had become landowners and raised to a higher level. Others were actually slaves and most of the commoners became serfs. The serfs were attached to the soil and compelled to give the lord a large share of the produce.

3.3.2.6 The Family

The family is always a basic social unit and also an organised institution. It preserves the welfare of its members against any outside agency, official or unofficial. Typically, the Chinese family was large because it embraced several generations. Authority was vested in the father or grandfather. The utmost

emphasis was placed upon respect for elders. The grown men were bound by their parent's wishes. Such a custom led to extreme conservatism. Sometimes they inflicted hardships upon youth. This also helped the youth to develop qualities of patience, loyalty and consideration for the helpless aged.

3.3.2.7 Position of Women

Women became definitely subordinate to men in the patriarchal Chinese society, although their position was not utterly intolerable. Marriages were arranged by the parents of the respective parties with the help of a matchmaker. Only the husband could have recourse to divorce. Actually, however, divorces were very rare especially among people of humble circumstances. The practices of polygamy and concubinage (permitting a man to have more than one consort) existed among them. Even though the position of woman was inferior in Chinese society, she had definite rights and privileges. On the whole, their position was much better off than in the caste-ridden society of India.

The Chinese family was not only an economic and social institution but a religious and political one as well. The servile peasants were not permitted the dignity of having surnames during the Chou period. They had no share in the cult of ancestor worship. As a political unit, the family enforced discipline and inflicted punishment for minor offences. They considered misconduct on the part of one of its members as a collective disgrace.

3.3.2.8 Religion

During the Chou period, many deities were worshiped, including local spirits and nature gods. The practice of human

sacrifice finally disappeared. Animals, agricultural produce and liquor were offered upon the altars. Ti'en was considered as a prominent deity during the Chou period (Ti'en translated as "Heaven"). Ti'en was not a personal god but collectively represented the spiritual powers. The worship of earth was also prevalent among them.

They believed that the spirits of their ancestors could bring prosperity to their family. They also performed traditional ceremonies in everyday life. They believed in witchcraft, in good and evil omens, in divination and spirit messages conveyed through mediums.

3.3.2.9 Literature and Philosophy of Chou Period

The most important contributions of the Chou period were in the field of literature and philosophy. The Shang system of writing was continued with slight modification. The Chinese sometimes recorded important transactions in lengthy inscriptions on bronze vessels. But they frequently wrote more with the brush on wood or cloth or silk. Books composed of thin strips of bamboo produced by them. The Chou aristocrats were versed in literature and kept full records of their properties and sometimes of their personal activities. The king or the head of every feudal state, maintained archives to preserve the family traditions.

It is noticed that most of the tremendous output of Chou literature, only a few authentic portions have survived. Some of them are from a date earlier than 600 BCE. The most important ancient work is the 'Book of Changes'. It contains a bunch of hexagrams formed of straight and broken lines arranged in different combinations,

with accompanying text. The book was originally hardly more than a sorcerer's manual, but came to be venerated as a work of mystic and occult wisdom.

Another important document is 'Classic' (less accurately called Book of History). It is a collection of official documents, proclamations and speeches. 'The Book of Etiquette', dealing with ceremonial behaviour, formal occasions and preparation for adult responsibilities. This was intended to assist in the education of the lesser aristocracy. Most interesting of all is the 'Book of Poetry', an anthology of about 300 poems, some of which are religious in nature. The book is composed of prayers or hymns to accompany the rites of sacrifice, other poems celebrate the exploits of heroes, still others are lyrical in quality, voicing the laments of a discharged official, a soldier's homesickness, delight in the beauties of nature and frustration of young lovers.

In the realm of philosophy, the Chou reached a brilliant climax between the sixth and third centuries BCE. Philosophical activity of high order was carried at the same time in three widely separated regions of the ancient world. While the Greeks were inquiring into the nature of the physical universe, and Indian thinkers were pondering the relationship of the soul to absolute being, Chinese sages were attempting to discover the basis of human society and the underlying principles of good government. The Chinese thinkers are not at all interested in physical science or metaphysics. They attempted to prescribe rules for the stabilizing of society and the betterment of the individual.



3.3.3 The Period of Warring States

By the middle of the fifth century BCE, internal conditions became extremely chaotic. There began a bloody period called “the warring States”. There started a struggle for supremacy among the seven major Chinese states and there was constant competition held during this period. The rulers of several states assumed the title of ‘King’(wang) previously reserved for the prince of Chou. During this period, warfare became larger and larger in scale and this led to nearly 250 years of inconclusive warfare. This period is also considered a very significant period in the history of China. The widespread use of iron tools was another peculiarity of this period. The Warring state period is also considered as the iron age period of China.



The Warring States of China

In the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE, the state of Ch'in gained ascendancy over the others. They developed a centralized form of government in China. They annexed the fertile regions lying south of the Wei valley and constructed a splendid irrigation system which has lasted until the present day. They seized the remaining portion of the royal domain and ended the

Chou dynasty. After that, the Ch'in prince had brought all the Chinese territories under his control and assumed the title of Emperor. The Ch'in dynasty abolished the remnants of feudalism in China. The Ch'in emperor established a highly centralized government.

3.3.4. Classical Age (10th -6th Century BCE)

The oldest documents transmitted by written and oral tradition come from the circles of scribes and annalists of the royal court the Chou. They date from the ninth to sixth centuries, and are the pieces of a political, religious or ritual character. The majority of these documents seem to come from the royal court. They include deeds of investiture or donation, decisions arising out of legal proceedings. There are also fragments of the scenarios of ritual dances. These texts were assembled in a collection called the Shu (Writings) or Shang-shu of which half regarded as authentic. Speeches, harangues and the text of oaths have been incorporated in the Shang-shu.

Shih (poems or odes) was another collection of hymns and ritual ceremonies such as banquets. These poems consisted of regular stanzas sung at the court of the Kings of Chou to the accompaniment of dancing and of music. These love songs are composed of themes and popular refrains which combine with sentiments expressed by the opposing choirs the various moments in the life of nature and of the village groups. These are more supple and more free in form than the old religious hymns.

The Annals are also one of the original forms of the most ancient written traditions. These are the records of events

which seem to have been announced in their temple day by day, month by month, season by season and year by year to the ancestors of the royal or princely lines. They may be described as ritual documents. The most ancient Annals seem to go back to the ninth century.

The Annals of the Kingdom of Lu in Shantung was a single set of state annals that has been preserved. It appears in headings to paragraphs, as the spring to Autumn (Chun-chiu). The Annals of Chin and Chu had disappeared by the end of antiquity. The Chin were incorporated in the Historical Records of Ssu-ma Chien.

The discovery of the tomb of a prince of Wei in 279 CE made it possible to recover the Annals of the kingdom in Shansi. These documents are on thin sheets of bamboo called Chu-shu chi-nien or The Bamboo Annales.

3.3.5.The Imperial Era of China : The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BCE)



The Qin Dynasty

The historic task of uniting the warring states of China fell to the state of Qin.

Because it was threatened by the nomadic tribes of the Asian steppes. Qin had developed a mighty army. It was brutally disciplined. The armies of Qin slowly brought under their control the lands of the Wei Valley. Qin was the “wild beast” of China. Prince Cheng, at the age thirteen, became king. He was schooled in the arts of slaughter. He conquered all of central and eastern China.

3.3.5.1 Qin Shih Huang-ti :The First Emperor of China

The King Ying Cheng laid the foundations of the great Chinese empire. He took the name Qin Shih Huang-ti, who is considered as the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty. His rule lasted for a period of 11 years. He decisively altered the course of Chinese history. He created a nation of 42 administrative units. Over these units, he appointed administrators, who seized the weapons of the feudal barons. He ended feudalism with one stroke. By 221 BCE, he had created what he believed was a universal and everlasting empire.

Qin Shih Huang-ti standardized weights, measure and wagon wheel gauges. He also applied the Qin system of equal, impersonal laws and taxation to the whole land. He confiscated the arms of the states he had conquered and collected their hereditary aristocracies at his capital in the Wei valley. Here he built a great palace and erected a mausoleum within a veritable man made mountains.

Qin Shih Huang-ti also standardised written language. He eliminated other provincial styles of script and had thousands of volumes burned. Moreover, he ordered the construction of an efficient transportation system. His soldiers and engineers built tree-lined roads, fifty

paces broad that linked regions previously isolated. His skilled engineers were put to work completing the famous Great wall. Thousands of laborers toiled to build this broad bulwark, intended to hold back the Huns of the north. The wall extended to an incredible 1,500 miles across the country from the sea to the mountains, linking old feudal castles in its path. Guard towers were constructed at intervals along it and a wide roadway ran down the center of the wall over which troops could be rushed to points threatened by invaders. Qin Shih Huang-ti lived in fear of assassination and searched for some means to gain immortality. His huge castle in Shensi had secret passages to escape any attempt on his life.

The Qin rulers looked upon the writings of the philosophers and the histories of other princely states as subversive to their own system. Therefore, they tried to wipe them out. Li Ssu started a literary inquisition called “Burning of the Books” in 213 BCE. All books of agriculture, medicine, divination as well as collections in the hands of the central government were destroyed and recalcitrant scholars were banished. Reportedly, several hundred were actually buried alive. For this desecration of the written word, Li Ssu has won the opprobrium of later ages. His policies helped to put an end to the golden age of the Chinese thought.

3.3.5.2 The Failure of Qin

The upper classes of the states that Qin Shih Huang-ti had conquered were still pulled by loyalties to the old royal lines. The best educated groups throughout the country were repelled by his effort to suppress the old philosophies. The common people felt heavily burdened by his drafting of men for campaigns abroad

and unprecedented building programmes at home like palaces, roads, canals and the Great Wall. The Qin government ultimately depended upon the tacit consent of the governed. The Chinese people simply deserted Qin and the invincible empire collapsed.

The first Emperor had overcentralised the government and a failure of leadership at the top immediately affected the whole. He seems to have been a megalomaniac and obsessed with the idea of achieving physical immortality through magical practices. He visited magicians along the Shantung Coast and dispatched expeditions to seek the “island of the immortals” in the Eastern sea. When he died, Li Ssu and others enthroned a young and inexperienced son of the former ruler as Second Emperor. Li Ssu himself soon fell prey to court intrigues and the second Emperor was destroyed in turn. By 206 BCE the Qin dynasty disappeared entirely.

3.3.6 The Founding of the Han Dynasty (206 BCE -220 CE)

After the death of Qin Shih Huang-ti, a revolt broke out in the old Ch’u area and rebellions followed in quick succession throughout the empire. Hsiang Yu was a leading rebel and he was a descendant of Ch’u generals. He finally wiped out the last of the Qin armies in 206 BCE. He enthroned a Ch’u prince as emperor and divided the land among supporters of the other royal lines. He declared himself as Hegemon King. Another rebel general, Liu Pang seized the Wei Valley in 207 BCE. He challenged Hsiang Yu and destroyed him in 202 BCE. He set himself up as emperor. He established his capital at Ch’ang-an, the area near Wei Valley and

took his dynastic name Han, derived from a major tributary of the Yangtze River.



Han Dynasty

Liu Pang succeeded in creating a lasting dynasty. His descendants reigned for more than two centuries until 8 CE. After a brief usurpation, the resurrected dynasty (Later Han) which lasted from 25 until 220 CE. Liu Pang is best-known not by his personal name but by his posthumous title “Kao Tsu. During this period, barbarian Huns (the Hsuing -nu) were raiding the empire of Mongolia. They penetrated as far as Shensi where Liu Pang had established his capital. Liu Pang’s loyal army, unable to resist the Huns and the Huns, laid siege to the Capital. The emperor barely escaped. Wounded by Huns, Liu Pang, who hated doctors, refused medical treatment. He died at the age of 52.

After the death of Liu Pang, the power passed to the hands of his widow Lu. She was appointed as empress in 188 BCE. She controlled China for 8 years. She was succeeded by Wen Ti, a Taoist who ruled from 180 to 157 BCE. Wen Ti was followed by Ching Ti, who was a follower of Legalist ideas and he tried to strengthen the Central government. After him, the empire was under the control of his famous successor, the Great Wu Ti.

3.3.6.1 Reign of Wu Ti

Wu Ti was an important seventh emperor of the Han Dynasty. Wu Ti broke down the power of the feudal barons. His chief goal was to compel them to divide their lands equally among their children. He ruled over a period of forty-seven years. During his period, the larger estates were steadily split up. Wu Ti was a dedicated Confucianist and appointed educated commoners rather than nobles to high posts of the government. His government strengthened the civil service system, basing appointments on recommendations from local officials and written examinations testing knowledge of Confucianism.



Shih Huang -ti

Shih Huang -ti had begun his conquest of South China but after his death, his generals had set up their own southern state with its capital at Canton. Wu Ti’s reign was marked by important military victories which added Annam and the five states of South China as well as Sinkiang and Korea to the empire. During these campaigns, his emissaries made contact with peoples of distant lands. In 138 BCE, Wu Ti sent Chang Ch’ien to make an alliance against the Huns with the

Yueh-Chi, a tribe of Central Asia. Chang Ch'ien did not succeed in negotiating the alliance. But his journey helped to establish a trade route to the Middle East over which Chinese silk could be sent in exchange for western products. Wu Ti's war steadily drained the resources of the empire. The empire was founded and after Wu Ti's death, corrupt and depraved court nobles seized power.

3.3.6.2 Triumph of Confucianism under Wu Ti

Wu Ti was a legalist monarch and during his period, Confucianism became the predominant philosophy of the Chinese court. The triumph of Confucianism was a slow process and continued over the whole Han period. Confucianism was very specifically a philosophy for bureaucrats and educated men. Therefore, Han scholars adopted Confucius as their ideal prototype.

During the time of Wu Ti, there was enough of a Confucian bias in the central government for the ruler to ban students of Legalist philosophy from the court. Kung-sun Hung and his contemporary Tung Chung-shu were the two important Confucian scholars who rose to considerable influence under Wu Ti. Both of them were chiefly noted for their ability to interpret omens and for their analysis of the 'Spring and Autumn Annals' as a book which supposedly indicated the moral judgments of Confucius through its choice of words.

Wu Ti set up at court five Erudites of the Five Classics in 136 BCE. They were identified with the Confucian tradition. In 124 BCE, Wu Ti assigned fifty official students to these five Erudites and thus created a sort of state university. This

school is said to have grown to three thousand students in the second half of the first century BCE. By 1 CE, a hundred men a year were entering government service through the examinations administered by the official scholars. During the period of Wu Ti, a considerable portion of the lower bureaucracy was produced through a Confucianist education at government expense.

Confucianism also began to be recognised as the official philosophy of the state. Great conferences of scholars were held under imperial auspices in 51 BCE; again in 79 CE, to determine the true interpretation of the Confucian Classics. The government had the approved version of the Classics carved on large stone tablets which were erected at the capital in 175 CE. In 58 CE, all government schools were ordered to make sacrifices to Confucius.

3.3.7 Later Dynasties

The Sui Dynasty

The Sui Dynasty ruled only for a brief period of time. It reunited northern and southern China. The Sui emperors rebuilt the Great Wall and dug the Grand Canal.

The Tang Dynasty

After the fall of the Sui dynasty, the Tang dynasty came to power. Under the Tang dynasty, the Chinese empire expanded further and its prosperity reached its peak. During this period, art and trade flourished well.

The Five Dynasties

During the Five Dynasties' period, China was again divided into north and south. Northern China fell into the hands

of foreign powers and southern China was divided into numerous small states. Under these five states or dynasties, Southern China flourished economically and culturally.

The Song Dynasty

Under the Song Dynasty, China became once again united. During this period China reached its greatest heights of civilization. With the patronage of Song rulers technology and science advanced further and it produced a minor industrial revolution. Thus the world's first mechanised industry was developed. Iron and salt were produced on an industrial scale. The Song Emperors highly patronised art and poetry.

The Yuan Dynasty

During the 13th century, China was conquered by Mongols and they established their own Dynasty named Yuan Dynasty. The Mongols banned Chinese scholars from the civil service. They also controlled the entire length of the silk road. Thus international trade thrived.

The Ming Dynasty

The Ming dynasty is considered as the last Chinese dynasty. The Ming dynasty established its new capital at Beijing. The Ming Emperors also strengthened the Great Wall and improved the Grand Canal. They wholeheartedly supported Chinese art and culture and it flourished under them.

The Qing Dynasty

The Qing dynasty or Manchu Dynasty was a foreign dynasty and the Chinese empire collapsed during this period. The

Chinese overthrew the weakened Qing government in 1911 and formed a republic.

3.3.8 Chinese Polity

The emperor of China directly governed the provinces under him and he was the benevolent authority of his subjects. The common people offered tribute to the imperial court. The main duty of the emperor was to maintain social and political order. He was also considered as the supreme civil and military head. He was also the supreme head of law and final court of appeal. His rule was despotic and authoritative in nature. The officials in the court were experts in the management of human affairs in general. The majority of officials were recruited through examinations.

3.3.9 Chinese Social Hierarchy

Ancient Chinese society had a strict social hierarchy. At the top are the wealthy and privileged sections of society like the emperor and imperial family, who ruled China almost 4000 years. Another important social class was the officials and Civil scholars. They ran the day to day administration of the empire. They keep records and write histories of Ancient China. Another social class was peasants and farmers. They provide food to the whole Community. This section is considered as the most important section of the society. Next in line were the artisans and craftsmen. They were the honoured section for their skills and products. They were the manufacturers of silk, paper and other goods. The last and the most important section was the merchants. The Merchant class included traders and moneylenders.

Recap

- ◆ The Chou Government
- ◆ Classical Age of China - Developments in philosophy, literature, and art
- ◆ Qin Dynasty - Centralization of power under Qin Shi Huang ti
- ◆ The period of Warring states
- ◆ Unification of China under the Qin Dynasty
- ◆ Han Dynasty - Developments in science, technology, and the arts
- ◆ Reign of Wu Ti
- ◆ Later Dynasties - Tang, Song, and Ming
- ◆ Chinese Polity
- ◆ Chinese Social Hierarchy

Objective Questions

1. When did Wu Ti set up at court Five Erudites of the Five Classics ?
2. Which period is considered as the classical age of Chinese Civilization?
3. Why did the Chou people decide to attack the Chang?
4. Who is the founder of Han dynasty?
5. When did the Chou conquer the Chang Kingdom?
6. Who started a literary inquisition called “Burning of the Books” in 213 BCE?
7. Who set up at court Five Erudite of the Five Classics in 136 BCE?
8. What is Classic?

9. Who was considered as a prominent deity during the Chou period?
10. Who broke down the power of the feudal barons?

Answers

1. 136 BCE
2. Chou Period
3. The corruption and cruelty of the king of Chang, Chou Hsin.
4. Liu Pang
5. in the battle of Muye in 1045 BCE
6. Li Ssu
7. Wu Ti
8. It is a collection of official documents, proclamations and speeches
9. Ti'en
10. Wu Ti

Assignments

1. Analyze the Classical Age in China and its impact on Chinese thought, literature, and art. How did Confucianism, Taoism, and other schools of thought emerge during this period and influence Chinese culture and society?
2. Explain the contributions of Chou culture to Chinese civilization, including their advances in bronze casting, literature, and philosophy.
3. Compare and contrast the Qin, Han, and later dynasties with the Chou Dynasty. What were some of the key political, social, and cultural developments that emerged during these periods?



Suggested Readings

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1. Conrad Schirokaur, et.al, *A Brief History of Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*, Wadsworth Publishing, 2012.
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UNIT

Religion and Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ describe the essence of Chinese philosophy
- ◆ analyse the spread and development of their religious philosophies
- ◆ assess the impact of these philosophies on Chinese society

Prerequisites

Picture yourself in ancient China, where the world was filled with mysterious spirits and deities. The Bronze Age Chinese were no exception, worshipping a pantheon of gods and spirits who they believed controlled everything from the weather to the harvest.

At the center of this complex spiritual world was a deity named Ti, known as "the Lord on High." Ti was seen as the ruler of all the gods and spirits. But Ti was not the only deity worshipped by the Chinese. They also held a deep reverence for their ancestors, who they believed continued to play a role in the lives of the living. The priests in ancient China acted as intermediaries between the divine and human worlds. Their primary duty was to read prayers and conduct sacrifices or funerals. They were highly respected members of society.

But Chinese philosophy was not just about the gods and spirits. It was also deeply humanistic in nature, with a focus on society and politics. The emphasis was more on society than on the individual.

This philosophy is reflected in the writings of influential thinkers like Confucius and Lao Tzu, who emphasized the importance of duty, responsibility, and respect for authority. They believed that by adhering to these principles, individuals could contribute to a more harmonious and prosperous society.

As we look back on the beliefs and practices of ancient China, we can see how they were shaped by a deep reverence for the natural and supernatural worlds, as well as a profound understanding of the importance of social harmony. These ideas continue to influence Chinese culture and society today, reminding us of the enduring power of ancient wisdom. In this unit, we will discuss various philosophical teachings of China i.e. Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

Keywords

Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism

Discussion

The late Chou period was a time notable for the number and quality of its philosophers. Most of these teachers came from the Chi and Lu region above the delta of the Yellow River Valley. The greatest philosopher - teacher of the Chou period and of all time in China was Confucius.

3.4.1 Confucius (551-479 BCE)

Confucius was one of the most influential men in all history. He was born in 551 BCE. He spent his life advocating reforms that were not adopted. He was a native of the state of Lu (in modern Shantung province). He was reputed to have been the child of an aged father, a gentleman soldier named K'ung (Confucius is the Latinized form of the name K'ung Fu-tzu or master K'ung). His family was of the lesser aristocracy, respectable but poor.

3.4.1.1 Confucius as a Teacher

Confucius made his real contribution as a teacher. At the age of 21, he opened a school and began to informally teach a group of young friends, who were attracted by his deep knowledge of traditional forms and usages. He was a descendent of a Chang King and is said to have been minister of Justice. He aspired to high political office and wandered in vain from state to state in search of appointment. As a politician, he was a failure. In his incidental occupation as a teacher, he proved an unparalleled success. He said: "Everyone has a place in society. To know this place with regard to family, nature and government, is to be wise and good." Like Gautama Buddha, he earnestly believed that knowledge was the key to happiness and successful conduct.



Statue of Confucius

The Confucian tradition consists of a number of texts varying considerably in nature and content which include the Classics, the most ancient commentaries on them, the Analects of Confucius, and works of the third century BCE. The term Confucianism was coined by Westerners. Confucius links up with the traditional circles of scribes and annalists.

3.4.1.2 Five Classics

The Chinese have believed in the five Classics which described Confucianism. These books are:

1. I Ching (Book of Changes or Book of Divination)

This is the work of mixed age. This book is said to contain the thinking of pre-historic oracles. The appendices or wings are said to have been written by Confucius. In other words, it is a diviner's handbook.

2. Shu Ching (Book of History or the Classic of Documents)

This book contains semi-historical documents and speeches. This book is said to include the statements of rulers and ministers from the days of Yao to Chou. Many statements seem to have been added long after Confucius died.

3. Shih Ching (Book of Odes)

This is an anthology of 305 poems, folk songs and ceremonial lyrics dating from the Shang to early Chou periods.

4. Li Chi (The Record of Rituals or Book of Rites)

This is a compilation made in the second century BCE. This is said to contain a group of texts, the best known of which is the 'Book of Rites.' The book offers a practical guide for living in the way of Confucius. These were key elements in the whole Confucian concept of social order and this classic clearly stems from the Confucian tradition.

5. Chun-Chiu (Spring and Autumn Annals)

This is a brief chronicle of events that occurred in the state of Lu during 722 - 481 BCE and compiled by Confucius from official records. It became known as the "spring and Autumn period". The text is entirely factual and terse.

3.4.1.3 The Essence of Confucianism

The essence of Confucianism was allegiance to human values rather than to any religious rites. This was more a system of ethics than a religious movement. Confucianism attracted more followers than any of the religions of the world. It offered a way to world peace through the extension of family love.

3.4.1.4 Four Sacred Books

In addition to five classics, the Four Sacred Books were recorded by followers of Confucius. These books urged the improvement of the masses rather than

the enrichment of a few rulers. These four books included two chapters taken from the Record of Rituals: The Great Learning (Ta Hsueh) and the Doctrine of the Mean (Chung Yung). The other two books were the Analects (Lun-yu), literally meaning conversations, of Confucius himself and the book of his greatest successor, the Mencius. The Analects and Mencius together with the Five Classics and a few other early works are also commonly classified as the Thirteen Classics. In the Analects, the followers of Confucius noted the words of Confucius as:

“Those who are born with the possession of knowledge are the highest class. Those who learn and readily get possession of knowledge are next. Those who are dull and stupid and yet do not learn they are the lowest of men.”

3.4.1.5 Confucian Philosophy

Confucius was a professional teacher and philosopher in China who has been recognised in East Asia as the greatest of all teachers and philosophers. What we know of him from the Analects is as follows:

To an inquiry about death, he replied “Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death.” To return to the ancient way, He felt, men must play their assigned roles in a fixed society of authority. He said: “Let the ruler be a ruler and the subject a subject, let the father be a father and so be son”. Later this concept was expressed by the term “the recitation of names” (cheng ming).

Confucius was a great innovator in which his basic concept was that good government is fundamentally a matter of ethics. He did not question the hereditary right of the kings to rule, but he insisted that their first and foremost duty was to set a proper example of sound ethical conduct.

Confucius was China's first great moralist, the founder of a great ethical tradition in a civilization. He had a great deal to say about the virtues that the aristocrats or gentleman should possess. These were uprightness (chib), righteousness (yi), conscientiousness (chung) towards others, altruism or reciprocity (shu) and above all, love or human heartedness (jen).

The ideas of Confucius were similar to the teachings of Jesus Christ. He felt, if all men know their place and respect the authority of their superiors, the world is serene. Confucianism reminded China of the ancient principle which held that man stands in five basic relationships to the world: to parents, brothers, mates, friends and government. In each, there are no quarrels, provided that all men should respect the established authorities. The son does not quarrel with his father, the father is always right. The children do not quarrel among themselves, they abide by the father and the eldest brother. The husband rules the wife and the older friend the younger one, in the hierarchy of Confucian society. The emperor is the ultimate authority, even though the people do not follow him blindly. They have the obligation to disobey him when he breaks the ancient law.

Confucian Principles
◆ Li - Rite, Rules (Binding force of an enduring stable society) ◆ Ren - Humaneness, benevolence, humanity ◆ Shu - Reciprocity, empathy ◆ Yi - Righteousness ◆ Xiao - Filial Piety (respect your elders)

Confucianism pervades a strong authoritarianism. Authority is based on ideals and behaviour rather than on physical power. Confucius hoped to put his ideals into practice, but the ruler thought his teachings were impractical, although he gained wide respect for his wisdom and virtue.

3.4.1.6 Apostles of Confucianism

After the death of the master, two men were chiefly responsible for the spreading of Confucianism. The first of them, Mencius (371-289) popularly known as the Chinese Saint Paul. In China, he is known as the 'Second Sage' - second, that is, to Confucius. Mencius elaborated Confucian doctrines of government. He said that the King ruled through a "mandate of Heaven." But the king must respect that mandate or be deposed. He urged the people to rise up and overthrow tyrants. "When a ruler treats his subjects like grass and dirt, then it is right for his subject to treat him as an enemy". Like Confucius, Mencius envisioned society as resting on a bond between the people and the ruler. Confucius stressed that every human being should possess four great virtues. They are human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety and wisdom.

Hsun Tzu was the second great apostle of Confucianism. He differed from Confucius and Mencius. He advocated stricter government control over the population. He also considered the nature of man to be evil. Hence, he argued that education be used to correct humans. He was purely a rationalist philosopher. He thought that we should control the evil power that existed everywhere.

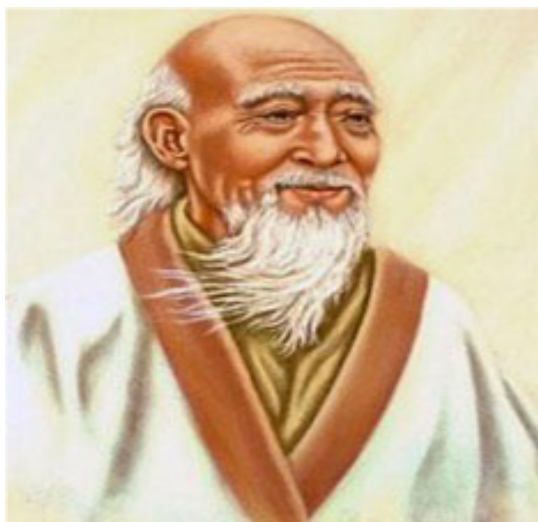
3.4.2 Lao tzu and Taoism

About sixty years after Confucius, Mo-tzu became the leader of a sect of preaching brothers. Unlike the humble school of Confucius, he enjoyed tremendous success in the fourth and third centuries. Mo-tzu wanted to create a new egalitarian society based on a sense of mutual aid and devotion to the common good (chien-li). He condemns lust for profit, luxury, the accumulation of wealth, the development of military power and war. This strange sect cultivated rhetoric for preaching purposes. Its largest contribution was to the art of oratory.

Another important stream in Chinese thought is Taoism. The great philosopher-teacher who lived during the Chou period and little was known of his life. Tradition set the date of his birth at 605 or 604 BCE. He lived in a time of fierce conflict and of sudden death by fire and sword. The three

chieftains of Chin, Han, Chao and Wei had divided among themselves lands that were far from the capital of Chou Dynasty. This region was at the border of the empire and was under the constant threat of barbarian invasion.

Lao-tzu was in the service of Wei court. He inherited noble blood from his father. The Wei government was at war, and he witnessed the continuing bloodshed. He left the court to preach peace. By the end of the 5th century BCE, his teachings were widely accepted among intellectuals. His doctrines had been collected into a book. He expressed his ideas on how to achieve an end to political strife and how to find peace of mind.



Lao-tzu

The book of Lao-tzu's teachings was given the name Tao-te ching (pronounced dao de jing), which means "Classic of the Way and Values". It is a composite text, dating from the 3rd century BCE attributed to Lao-tzu. The work is in terse and cryptic style. It has given itself to diverse interpretations by later Chinese thinkers and a startling variety of translations into western languages. The word "tao" has

long been used in Chinese society to mean right conduct. In their classic book, the Taoist urged men to renounce his brutal ambitions, aggressive desires and to strive to regain the inner balance, harmony and wise passivity which exist in nature.

The second text is the Chuang-tzu, also probably of the third century BCE, but attributed to a man of this name in the late fourth century. It consisted of delightful parables, metaphors, and poetic passages. It is a work of high literary merit.

The third work, the Lieh-tzu which in content and style is much like the Chung tzu, is variously attributed to the same period or to the third century CE.

Lao-tzu reasserts the importance of personal values, pleasures and happiness. Taoism constituted the protest of common men against the growing despotism of rulers. Tao literally means the Road or Way, a term used by Confucius to describe the social system he advocated but given a metaphysical interpretation in Taoism. Taoism also expressed the rebellion of the very uncommon man of intellect against the growing rigidity of the moralist.

The followers of Taoism designed to reject the practical attitudes of Confucianism. They viewed the world as made up of two balancing forces, 'yin and yang'. In human life, yin represented the female and passive elements in nature and was symbolized by the earth, or darkness, broken line, or even numbers. Yang embodied the male and active elements and was symbolized by heaven, light, odd numbers or an unbroken line. All human experience includes elements of the two categories, each modified by the other.

Lao -tzu urged their pupils to proceed in as neutral a way as possible, to strive to balance the differing forces of yin and

yang, to be at peace with themselves and the world. Taoism affirmed that a man should act spontaneously, prompted by his intuitions rather than rational thought. One should not study how to do something, but instead think about it and so become one with it.

The Taoists found it difficult to express their basic ideas in words. They said, “the one who knows does not speak, and the one who speaks does not know”. The Tao is founded on a nameless, formless “non-being”.

3.4.3 The Advent of Buddhism

During the later Han period, Buddhism was introduced in China. The philosophy of Buddhism first flourished in India, where it gained a large following. Under the Han ruler Ming Ti (58- 75 BCE), two Buddhist monks were permitted to enter China. After the fall of the Han Dynasty, Buddhism gained a great number of converts in China. Twelve Indian Monks translated 350 Buddhist texts into Chinese. These translations were widely circulated throughout China.



Statue of Buddha

3.4.3.1 Indian Buddhism

Indian Buddhism was based on a series of premises that the ancient Chinese would never have understood. It assumed that life was essentially painful. Buddhism is the chief cultural link between the peoples of East and South Asia. The Buddhist canon, known as the Tripitaka or three baskets, is traditionally divided into Vinaya, Abhidharma and Sutras. The Chinese Tripitaka consists of more than sixteen hundred works in over five thousand sections.

3.4.3.2 Spread of Buddhism

Buddhism is a universal religion like Christianity and Islam. Buddhism spread widely throughout Southeast Asia and South China. The greatest monarch of the Kushan Empire, the Yueh-chih, who ruled around 100 CE from North India to the Tarim Basin, was also an ardent follower of Buddhism. He championed the faith in Central Asia and from there, it spread into North China. A third wave of Buddhist propagation rolled through Tibet and Mongolia.

The purer forms of Buddhism are divided into two major trends. They are known as Mahayana or the Greater Vehicle and Hinayana or the lesser Vehicle. Buddhism of China, Korea, Japan and Vietnam stems largely from Mahayana. Hinayana Buddhism is the religion of Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia.

3.4.3.3 The Introduction of Buddhism to China

The Mahayana Buddhists developed a new type of deity, the Bodhisattva or Enlightened Existence. Naturally Bodhisattvas became the great popular

gods of Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana provided compassionate and comforting gods for every human need. Many of these developments in Mahayana took place after Buddhism reached China.

According to tradition, Buddhism was first introduced to China in 64 CE by the emperor of the later Han, Ming Ti. Buddhist stupas were being erected by converts in various parts of China. These stupas developed into stone, brick or wooden pagodas that have become so typical part of the scenery of East Asia.

The first transmitters of Buddhism may have been traders but it was propagated by missionaries. A Parthian Prince, named 'An Shih-kao' was active as a missionary and translator of scriptures at Loyang during the latter part of the second century. Another transmitter, Kumarajiva, was captured by a Chinese expedition around 382 and brought to China, where he headed a great translation project. About ninety-eight scriptures were translated under his supervision.



Fa-hsien

Fa-hsien

Chinese converts became more important than the missionaries in transmitting Buddhism to China. There were several monks such as Hui-chang, Chin hsing, and Hui-pien who had left for India but never returned. Fa-hsien, who left for India through Central Asia in 399 and returned by sea in 414.

Fa-hsien was the first to visit a large part of India. He studied Buddhism in India and brought many Buddhist texts to China. The Indians carefully dated accounts of Fa-hsien and other Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, who proved invaluable in establishing Indian and Central Asian chronology. He had already grasped the thoughts and doctrines of the Indian religion. He undertook the journey to India in search of complete copies of Vinaya pitaka.

Fa-hsien visited a large part of Central India and offered worship at the holy places of Buddhist religion. He stayed in Pataliputra for a long time, as his original object had been to search for the book of Vinaya Pitaka. Here, in a monastery, he found a copy of Vinaya containing an account of the first Buddhist council. Fa-hsien stayed in India for 3 years, learning the Sanskrit text and the Sanskrit language and copying out the Vinaya rules.

In China, Buddhism was taken up by the rich before it spread downward to the poor. At first it made rapid progress in the "barbarian" North rather than in South China. It is perhaps because no-Chinese rulers of this area felt no prejudice against it as a foreign religion. The Emperors of the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) were the greatest patrons of the new religion. Two groups of Buddhist Cave temples at Yun-kang and Lung-men were the finest artistic examples of early Chinese

Buddhism. South China was thoroughly permeated by Buddhism as the North by the sixth century.

There has been a strong tendency among the Chinese to synthesize the three religions, i.e. Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism or to maintain them side by side. However, Buddhism was definitely the dominant member of the trio. A great proportion of the higher intellectual and artistic genius of the Chinese was devoted to the translation of its scriptures. They interpreted its scriptures and beautified its temples and monasteries.

The whole epoch from the fourth to the ninth century is considered the 'Buddhist age' of both Chinese and Asian history. During this period, Buddhism blanketed the whole of the Asian continent except for Siberia and West Asia. A degree of cultural unity was developed.

3.4.3.4 The Absorption of Buddhism

In the fourth century, North China, the heartland of the empire, was completely overrun by the 'barbarians'. South China was incapable of restoring imperial dignity and unity. The whole land was being swept by a foreign religion that cut at the roots of Chinese philosophy and the family-centred social system. The Chinese empire was reconstituted. Thus, they incorporated the barbarians into a new and greater Chinese Empire. Gradually, they absorbed Buddhism. Buddhism flourished economically and intellectually under the patronage of Northern Wei and early Tang dynasties. Under the zealous patronage of the Empress Wu, Buddhism reached its apogee in China around 700 CE. Buddhism was being steadily reshaped into a set of ideas from the fifth

to the eighth centuries and fitted easily into the Chinese system.

3.4.3.5 The Development of Sects

Tien-tai School

There emerged numerous schools of thought in China during this period. These schools developed into different sects. Some sects were direct philosophic transplant from India. One of these was Tien-tai founded by Chih-I (538-597). This was the most prospered sect and stressed the elements that were native to Chinese thinking. Chekiang was the headquarters of the Tien-tai sect. It was based on Chinese eclecticism, love of compromise and skill at classification. It became a leading sect in the eighth and ninth century. It helped to establish the Lotus sutra as the most popular scripture of East Asian Buddhism.

Chen -yen Sect

Another important sect was Chen-yen, the 'true-word'. This was an esoteric or secret doctrine that was strongly influenced by the Tantric cult of Hinduism. It taught that the ultimate reality could be suggested by magic signs and symbols. The Chen-yen emphasised incarnations, magic formulas and ceremonials. These were steadily appreciated by the Chinese. Chen-yen became extremely popular and they believed in ancestor worship. Their schematic cosmological drawings known as mandalas had great influence on later Chinese Buddhist art.

School of Pure Land

Another important sectarian movement known as 'Pure land.' They believed in the Mahayana concept of salvation through faith. This sect stressed the simple act of



faith calling on the Buddha's name. These ideas were entrenched in China by the 5th century onwards. This sect appealed to the common man and became numerically the greatest force in East Asian Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism

Meditation sect was another sectarian movement that proved ultimately the most significant one. It appeared in China in the early Tang period. But it did not become prominent until the ninth century. It is a kind of Buddhism that was brought from India by Bodhidharma in about 527 CE. His school was known as Dhyana Buddhism pronounced Ch'an in Chinese and Zen in Japanese, which means immediate insight into the nature of reality. Bodhidharma wrote no books himself but taught that true knowledge is gained in meditation by intuition and communicated by transference of thought.

Zen stressed on meditation and intuitive insight or enlightenment. It taught that the only true reality was the Buddha nature within each person's heart. This mysticism was applied in typically Chinese fashion to the mundane life of the individual. Zen was merely the old Taoistic tradition in a new guise. They believed in love of nature and rustic simplicity. It also became a major inspiration for artistic and poetic creativeness. Zen never formed a well organised church in China, its discipline of meditation and emphasis on self-reliance gave it much greater strength than the other sects. Only Zen continued a vigorous intellectual life after the Tang. Buddhism was absorbed by Zen and Pure Land sects and they lost their distinctiveness, and merged with the superstitions. Thus, Chinese Buddhism eventually degenerated.

3.4.3.6. Role of Buddhism in Chinese Society

The Chinese modified Buddhist ideas to better fit the Chinese society. Buddhist monasteries began to take on social functions as inns, public baths and even primitive banking institutions. Monasteries were built and endowed by rulers or prosperous individuals. They also expanded their holdings through usury and the various other legal or illegal methods. They constituted in the eyes of the rulers a fiscal menace to the state, removing land and men from the tax registers. But the number of monasteries and monks and the size of their holdings should be limited.

The southern dynasties could no more control the Buddhist monasteries than they could the great families. But in the North a regulatory system did develop. The rulers appointed bishops to control the church. The Northern Wei fixed limits on monasteries and their lands. The Tang government itself was issuing ordination permits to limit the number of new monks. But the attempt to control the number of monasteries and monks always failed in the long run. The rulers and government officials constantly broke their own regulations. Secret ordinations were common during that period.

3.4.3.7. Persecution of Buddhism

Sometimes the efforts to regulate the Buddhist church escalated into harsh persecution. Many Chinese resented Buddhism as a foreign religion. The jealousy of Taoist priests was also sometimes a contributing factor. But the chief reason for Buddhist persecutions was the financial need of the government.

The government forced them to return the lands and monks of the monasteries to the tax registers and seized their wealth to the imperial treasury.

Taoism prospered under the Wei dynasty, and the capital was shifted to Lo-yang. A Taoist temple was established there and numerous Taoist preachers appeared there. The rivalry of Buddhism and Taoism was the cause of persecutions which fell equally upon both religions.

There was a persecution of Buddhism under the Northern Wei in 446 and under the Northern Chou in 574. Another significant persecution occurred in 841-845 under a half-insane Tang emperor who had become a fanatic Taoist. There were 4600 monasteries and 40,000 shrines which were destroyed and 260,000 monks and nuns and their 150,000 slaves were returned to the tax registers during this persecution. This proved a crippling blow to Buddhism. Because Buddhism in India was already losing its inner vitality. The examination system had again focused attention on the classics and Confucian ideas. As a result, they were losing interest in Buddhism. Zen continued its growth for a few more centuries, but other forms of Buddhism rapidly fell into decay. A rock-hewn temple known as “Caves of the Thousand Buddhas” was sealed shut around 1035 to save it from the raiding Tibetans and it was not opened until 1900. This was considered as one of the unique repositories of the Buddhist age in China.

3.4.3.8. Restoration of Buddhism

Wen Chen Ti succeeded to the throne of Wei Dynasty when he was only twelve years old. A year after his succession, he issued an edit restoring and re-establishing

Buddhism and allowing his people to become Buddhist monks. He also constructed certain caves in the rocky wall of a mountain now known as grottoes of Yun-kang in the northern Shanxi province. There is a Buddha image in each cave.

3.4.3.9 Golden Age of Buddhism

The period of Tang Dynasty, when Kao-tsu came to power, is considered as the golden age of Buddhism. Kao-tsu constructed Buddhist monasteries of Wei-chang, Hsin-yet, Tze Pei and Chin-ku at Chang'an, the monastery of Li-san at Tai-yuan and the monastery Ye hsin at Pien-chow.

Hsuan-Tsang (596-664 CE)



Statue of Hsuan -Tsang

Hsuan-Tsang was the most famous Buddhist pilgrim and translator who made the round trip to India between 629 CE and 645 CE by way of Central Asia. His lay surname was Che'n and was a native of Kou-shih. At the age of thirteen, he entered the Buddhist temple.

After a hazardous journey through the desert and mountains of Central Asia, he arrived in India in 633 CE. There he spent the next ten years travelling and studying. As a translator, he was primarily interested in introducing to China that particular form of Buddhism that had been developed by Vasubandhu and Dharmapala.

Hsuan-Tsang's account, the Record of the Western Regions, is the most important work of its sort. His writings are more Indian than Chinese in spirit. By the time of his death, he had completed the translation of no less than seventy-five works.

Recap

- ◆ The Four Sacred Books and the Five Classics of Confucianism
- ◆ Confucian Philosophy
- ◆ The Apostles of Confucianism
- ◆ Lao-tzu and Taoism
- ◆ Rise of Buddhism in China
- ◆ Persecution and restoration of Buddhism
- ◆ Development of sects within Buddhism and the rise of different schools of thought
- ◆ Prominent figures in the spread and study of Buddhism - Fa-hsien's and Hsuen-tsang's visit to India

Objective Questions

1. Who was the founder of Tien-tai Sect?
2. When did Hsuan Tsang arrive in India?
3. When did Bodhidharma bring Buddhism to China?
4. Which Buddhist sect stressed the simple act of faith by calling on the Buddha's name?

5. How many years Fa- hsien stayed in India?
6. Who was popularly known as Chinese Saint Paul?
7. What was the chief reason for Buddhist persecutions?
8. Which period is considered the Buddhist age of both Chinese and Asian History?
9. Who was the great philosopher-teacher who lived during the Chou period?
10. When was Buddhism first introduced to China?

Answers

1. Chih-I
2. 633 CE
3. 527 CE
4. The School of Pure Land
5. Three years
6. Mencius
7. The financial need of the government
8. From the fourth to the ninth century
9. Lao - tzu
10. 64 CE

Assignments

1. Discuss the key principles and teachings of Confucianism as expounded by Confucius. How did his ideas shape Chinese society and culture during his time?
2. Explain how Buddhism evolved and adapted to Chinese culture and what impact it had on the social and political landscape of the country?
3. Analyze the development of Taoism as a religious and philosophical movement in ancient China. How did Lao-tzu's teachings differ from those of Confucius, and what were some of the key tenets of his philosophy?
4. Compare and contrast the Four Sacred Books and the Five Classics of ancient China. What role did they play in shaping Chinese philosophy and literature?
5. Investigate the life and work of Fa-hsien and Hsuen-tsang, two prominent figures in ancient Chinese religion and philosophy. What were their contributions to the spread and development of Buddhism and other religious philosophies in China?

Suggested Readings

1. Arthur Cotterell, *Eyewitness Ancient China*, DK Publishing, New York, 2005.
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UNIT

Script and Literature

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be :

- ◆ introduced to the origin of Chinese writing system
- ◆ explained to the contributions of Ssu-ma Ch'ien
- ◆ exposed to the evolution of Chinese literary styles

Prerequisites

Language is an essential part of any culture, and in China, it is no different. The evolution of sounds, words, and the structure of language is a fascinating subject of study for linguists and scholars alike. But it is the Chinese writing system that truly sets it apart. The Chinese writing system, with its intricate characters and strokes, is a testament to the richness and complexity of Chinese culture.

The Chinese writing system is one of the oldest and most complex writing systems in the world. Its origins can be traced back to the oracle bone inscriptions found at Anyang, the site of the last Shang capital. These inscriptions were made on animal bones and tortoise shells, and they were used for divination and fortune-telling.

Over time, the Chinese writing system evolved to include more than 50,000 characters, each with its own meaning and pronunciation. These characters are written in a unique script that combines intricate strokes and curves, creating a visual language that is both beautiful and complex.

But the Chinese writing system is more than just a means of communication. It is also an essential part of Chinese culture, reflecting the values and traditions of the Chinese people. Each character tells a story, and each stroke carries with it a wealth of meaning and symbolism. As you explore the Chinese language and writing system, you will discover a rich and fascinating world that is full of surprises and wonders. In this unit, we will focus on the origin of the Chinese script and its development as a writing system.

Keywords

Oracles, Chinese script, Ssu-ma Ch'ien

Discussion

3.5.1 The Birth of the Chinese Alphabets

Written Chinese consists of numerous symbols and the earliest form of their writing is pictographic in form. The first alphabet that was introduced appears to have been one of fourteen symbols. It is called Hsi Yu Hu Shu or foreign writing of the western countries. The Indian Buddhist who had come to China assisted in forming, on the model of the Sanskrit alphabet, a system of thirty- six initial letters and described the vocal organs by which they were formed. They also contributed certain tables which were helpful in the spelling of words.

3.5.1.1 Origin of Chinese Writing

Chinese writing begins sometimes around the seventeenth century BCE. During the late Shang period, the Chinese script appears as a fully developed writing system. We have got a number of texts inscribed on tortoise shells or bones, the script known as jiaguwen (oracle bone script).

The Chinese have always felt a complete cultural and racial identity with the ancient inhabitants of their land. The Sinitic languages are a group of East Asian languages that constitute the major branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Chinese is a Sinitic language. The Chinese and other Sinitic languages' relatively high percentage of words are monosyllabic. Another important feature of Sinitic language is the absence of inflections. For example, the Chinese word 'shan' can mean "mountains" as well as "mountain". There are no variations like "go", "went", "gone". Another feature of most Sinitic languages is their tonal character.

3.5.1.2 Chinese Characters

The Chinese language is originated from pictographs, unlike hieroglyphics. Each monosyllabic word should have its unique symbol or character. The Chinese writing system encountered in the An-yang had already undergone a long development and had progressed far beyond simple pictographs.

Antecedents for this writing seem



to exist in sites of the fifth millennium BCE. The writing usually ran from top to bottom and had more than two thousand characters.



Chang oracle Bone

Many pictographs were very stylized and more recognisable as pictures. Some pictographs were quite complicated as for example, one of the words for “sacrifice” which showed two hands holding a bird upside down over a symbol that meant “the spirits”.

3.5.1.3 The Chinese Script

It is generally thought that the Chinese script was originally derived from Sumerian. It started as a pictographic script. The pictographic means a picture standing for a word. But it was independently developed as an ideographic script in which a sign represents an idea. It is noticed that the Chinese script has changed very little since the earliest times. Writing became an art and the same techniques were followed everywhere. They wrote on silk or bamboo slips with a brush. The script also helps us to understand early civilizations. After the unification of the

script imposed by Chin in the Chinese lands at the end of the 3rd century BCE the Chinese writing system became one of the most effective instruments of political unification.

People whose languages were Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese (different from Chinese language) adopted Chinese writing. They used to read, in their own way and in accordance with their own linguistic habits. Written Chinese remained the cultural and administrative language of Vietnam until the French conquest. In east Asia, Chinese writing inspired the creation of scripts of the same type and its cursive forms served as the foundation of the Japanese syllabaries and the Korean alphabet.

3.5.1.4 Early Chinese Writing

The history of Chang rule is derived from vast numbers of bones and tortoise shells discovered in Anyang, one of the Chang King’s Capital. The bone and shells are inscribed with questions asked by the kings and answers given by specialists. These specialists interpret the cracks and markings in the bones and shells that were produced by heating them. This practice is known as divination. In addition to the bones and shells, official accounts are also derived from writings on bamboo and wood.

3.5.1.5 The Chinese Solar -Lunar Calendar

In Ancient China, most families lived on farms. It was essential for a farmer to know when to begin planting his crops. It was the duty of the emperor to inform farmers of the proper time to begin planting. Under Shang dynasty, the

development of a calendar was already underway. During the Han dynasty, the four seasons were known to them.

The Chinese Calendar was a combination of solar and lunar calculations. The months were lunar and consisted of 29 or 30 days, but the length of the year was correctly calculated as 365 1/4 days. The Chinese scholars also made a unique advance in astronomy. They could correctly foretell lunar eclipses.

3.5.1.6. Education System

In ancient China, many farmers taught their sons farming and mothers taught their daughters household skills. Formal education was limited to those in wealthy families who could afford tutors. It was not until the age of Confucius that mass education began in ancient China. In 124 BCE an imperial academy was created for the study of Confucian texts. About fifty students attended the academy. Under the Han Dynasty, the system of government sponsored academies was greatly expanded. In these academies students memorised the texts of books written on wooden tablets, thin sheets of bamboo or lengths of silk. The students studied medicine and warfare, poetry and philosophy. There were no gym classes. Discipline was strict in those academies. Successful students were enrolled in government services.

Several educational institutions were established during the Sung, Ming and Chung dynasties. Shu- Yan was an educational institution run by a scholar, who collected around him a large number of pupils. This seems to have the same system of Gurukula or Ashram that existed in ancient India. The teachings of Shu Yan emphasised moral discipline as well as intellectual training.

3.5.1.7 Literature and Scholarship

During the Buddhist period a large proportion of the best literary and scholarly talent was naturally devoted to Buddhist works. Literary writing for the most part continued to be an essentially aristocratic art. The 'fu' poetic form remained in fashion during this period. An elaborate balanced style that featured carefully paired verbal patterns commonly in four and six syllable phrases was used by them.

Works of literary criticism began to appear as early as the third century. Hsiao Tung (501-531) compiled the 'Literary Selections' (Wen hsuan). This is the most famous anthology in China.

During this period, there appeared histories and commentaries on the classics. The 'Thousand Character Classic' summarizes Chinese history and Confucian philosophical views in a thousand characters.

During the later periods, there were different types of works compiled in an encyclopedic nature. But usually called local gazetteers, concerned the history, natural features and political and social institutions of a single local administrative unit, such as a district or prefecture. Under the Tang, new literary and scholarly trends grew out of the earlier Chinese traditions. It was continued and expanded under them.

3.5.1.8 The Writing of History

The greatest literary achievement of Han times was in the field of historical writing. The Chinese emphasised the record of the past and they have made



history one of the four main categories of literature. The others being the classics and their commentaries, philosophical writings and belles-lettres.

3.5.2 The Historical Records of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Shi chi)

Shi chi represents a great step forward in Chinese historical scholarship. Ssu-ma Ch'ien, a court astrologer, claimed to be simply completing a history started by his father. This is the record of the past in proper form. Ssu-ma Ch'ien was a man of great daring as well as prodigious learning. He came to the defence of a prominent Chinese general in 99 BCE. He was forced to surrender to the Hsiung-nu, Wu ti repaid him for his audacity by having him castrated.



Ssu- ma -Chien

Ssu-ma Ch'ien set the pattern for most later Chinese historical works. He also determined their style and scholarly approach. He limited himself to a concise and straightforward statement of the facts as he knew them, quoting with a minimum of alterations, those sources which he felt were the most reliable. His book is for the most part a complicated patchwork

of passages and paraphrases from earlier books and documents. He set a standard for historical scholarship in China.

Ssu-ma Ch'ien was attempting to write universal history and came as close to succeeding as any man has. 'The Historical Records' is (130 solid chapters) a text of over 700,000 characters. The first twelve chapters are "Basic annals" which contain the main record of events from the time of the "cultural heroes" through the kings of the three dynasties and the emperors of the Ch'in and Han dynasties up to Wu Ti. The next ten chapters are chronological tables of Chou princely houses and princes and high officials of the Han. Then follow eight essays on subjects that do not lend themselves to chronological treatment, such as rituals, music, the calendar, astrology, rivers, canals and economic matters. The following thirty chapters are devoted to the records of the various states of Chou times. The last seventy chapters consist of biographies of important men and a few brief essays on other peoples and lands.

Many later Chinese historians followed the styles of Ssu-ma Ch'ien. Pan Ku (died 92 CE) compiled the second great history of this type with his father and sister. His work "The History of Han" consisted of one hundred chapters and it differed from the pattern of the Historical Records. Pan Ku added very useful essays on literature and geography. "The History of the Han" became the prototype for all the later dynastic histories.

3.5.3 Transformation of Chinese Literary styles

With the advent of Chinese Buddhist classics, the literary style of Chinese became more systematised and consequently more lucid and logical. Indian Hetuvidya

and methodology ushered in a new era in the art of writing. During this period, the Buddhist translations were being written in both prose and verse. It created a new field for Chinese literature. All the Buddhist literature were simple in style. Because the main object of Buddhist

translations was to emphasize original meanings and not to make fine literature. During this period, the poets wrote several poems containing Buddhist thought.

Recap

- ◆ Evolution of the Chinese writing system - Oracles
- ◆ Origin of Chinese alphabets
- ◆ Education in ancient China
- ◆ Development of the Chinese solar-lunar calendar
- ◆ Ssu-ma Ch'ien and 'The Historical Records'
- ◆ Development of Chinese script in late Chang period
- ◆ Categories of Chinese literature
- ◆ Divination practice in ancient China
- ◆ Discovery of bones and tortoise shells
- ◆ 'Literary Selections' by Hsiao Tung
- ◆ Transformation of Chinese literary styles

Objective Questions

1. Who wrote the book "The History of Han"?
2. Who compiled the 'Literary Selections' (Wen hsuan)?
3. What do you mean by the word "pictographic"?
4. What was the writing material of the Chinese?



5. Who was Ssu-ma Ch'ien?
6. What is the meaning of the Chinese word 'shan'?
7. What do you mean by Sinitic languages?
8. Where did Chinese writing come from?
9. Which were the main categories of literature in ancient China?
10. What was Shu- yan?

Answers

1. Pan Ku
2. Hsiao Tung
3. A picture standing for a word
4. Silk or bamboo slips
5. A court astrologer
6. Mountains
7. A group of East Asian languages that constitute the major branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family
8. From the oracle bone inscriptions found at Anyang, the site of the last Shang capital
9. Classics and their commentaries, philosophical writings, historical writings and belles-lettres
10. An educational institution that emphasized moral discipline as well as intellectual training

Assignments

1. Trace the origin and development of the Chinese writing system. What role did the Chinese writing system play in the cultural and political history of China?
2. Examine the educational system of ancient China, including the role of scholarship, literature, and historical writing.
3. Explore the significance of the Chinese solar-lunar calendar, including its origins, development, and influence on Chinese culture and society.
4. Analyze the contribution of Ssu-ma Ch'ien to the writing of history in ancient China. How did his work, 'The Historical Records,' shape our understanding of Chinese history and culture?

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UNIT

Chinese Legacy

Learning Outcomes

After reading this unit, the learner will be familiarized with :

- ◆ the features of Chinese art
- ◆ the legacy of Chinese Civilization
- ◆ the Chinese Painting

Prerequisites

The art and architecture of a culture are like windows into its soul. They reflect its history, its values, and its aspirations. In China, the emergence of new art and architectural forms during the Chang and Chou period marked a profound transformation in the country's cultural landscape. From ornate palaces to intricate temples, the architectural forms that emerged during this period were both powerful and symbolic. They served as a visual reminder of the country's rich cultural heritage and represented the evolving social and political climate of the time.

The dominant artistic genre during the Chang and Chou period continued to flourish, but it was also transformed by the emergence of new styles and forms. From bronze vessels to jade carvings, the art of this period was characterized by a rich diversity of materials and techniques.

As archaeologists excavate the ancient sites of China, they uncover traces of earlier inhabitation, revealing its rich history and cultural heritage. From the majestic palaces of the Chang and Chou dynasties to the humble dwellings of

the common people, these archaeological sites provide a glimpse into a world that is both ancient and timeless. In this unit, we discuss the art and architecture of the Chinese civilization.

Keywords

Pictorial Art, Great Wall of China, Calligraphy of Wang Hsi-Chih

Discussion

3.6.1.Chinese Art through Ages

The ancient Chinese did not build monumental structures out of non-perishable materials like stone. The Chinese had their own beliefs about the afterlife and furnished their tombs with objects that would be useful to their dead in their next life. They buried the human body with jades, weapons, tomb guardians and musical instruments, bronze ritual vessels, textiles and ceramic architectural figures.

The Neolithic people of China were prolific potters. The most common pottery was a coarse, grey ware made by the coiling process. During the Neolithic period, they painted pottery of extremely high quality. There is a wide variety of shapes and wares. In general, the painted pottery is made of a fine, close textured clay ranging from a dark red to pale buff. These wares were painted in black and white, black alone or red and black on a white ground. Large urns from Pan Shan in Kansu are among the most striking one. The people who made black pottery had a number of distinctive elements in their culture. This culture is sometimes known as 'Black Pottery Culture.' The

type site is Lung Shan, in Shantung. The potters of Black Pottery apparently had no form of writing. Sites of this culture have been identified in Manchuria, Shantung, Northern Honan, Southern Shansi etc.,

The Shang people were great workers of Jade which were built with pounded earth. Shang bronze vessels were painted in simple colours on leather or matting for use in burials.

During the Late Neolithic period, the people placed objects in tombs to reflect the high status of the tomb's occupant. They produced jade objects including personal ornaments, such as bracelets, earring, and pendants and other objects designed for ceremonial use, such as axe heads and knives. The Liangzhu culture made jade objects shaped like silk and tubes in large numbers.

During the Shang period, Bronze played an important role in both the religious and the military life of the Shang. Religious rites, like offering of wine and food presented in decorated bronze vessels. Wine vessels were one of the most popular bronze objects of the Shang dynasty. It is noticed that wine played an important role in Shang religious rituals. Even Shang military forces were equipped with bronze

weapons and chariots that had bronze fixtures. During this period, jade objects were made largely for ritual functions in the Shang. They also produced many jades for personal ornamentation.

The Chou people performed similar religious rituals and used bronze vessels as by the Shang people. The Chou used Shang bronze design as a foundation of their own decorative bronze work but they introduced new motifs and shapes.

The Eastern Chou was a period of great cultural and artistic development. The weakening of Central Chou authority is reflected in the bronze objects of the period. The state ruler purchased bronze objects to represent their status and wealth. They also introduced new decorative techniques that increased the variety and intricacy of these bronzes. The jade objects were larger in number and made in a wider variety of styles.

During the Han Dynasty, bronze and jade objects were used for grand festivities and personal consumption. Bronze mirror is a luxury item popular in the Han period. The depiction of deities from Taoist belief on the bronze mirror illustrates the growing popularity of religious Taoism during the Han period.

3.6.1.1 Features of Chinese Art

One of the most significant features of Chinese art during the reign of Eastern Chou dynasty was the emergence of pictorial art. Pictorial bronzes appeared during the sixth century and lasted for about a century. Various techniques including, casting, incising and laying were employed on bronze vessels. There appeared three major compositional styles. One type of composition consists of inlaid copper images and combat

scenes repeated in a series of rectangular frames. The orderly quality of this design disappears in the second composition, in which a jumbled array of images, animals, birds and men fight against one another in composition. The third and last composition represent large scale social activities in well-defined pictorial representation and frequent scenes in this composition, such as shooting contests, the picking of mulberry leaves, sacrificial offerings, musical and dance performance probably represent some of the prevailing rituals at that time.

3.6.1.2 Influence of Buddhist Art

Buddhism had a profound influence on Chinese art and painting. During this period, the music and instruments of Central Asia virtually displaced the older musical traditions in China. In sculpture, foreign Buddhist influence was also strong. This is also considered the greatest age of Chinese sculpture.

Chinese Buddhist sculptures preserved in the rock temples of Yun-Kang, Lung-men, and Tun Huang were examples of diverse artistic strains. India was also directly influenced by China. But the most important artistic traditions in North China had been derived in turn from the strongly Hellenistic Buddhist art of Gandhara and surrounding areas in northwest Pakistan and Afghanistan. The early Buddhist sculpture of China, quite different from the Greek in spirit, as was to be expected, was deeply religious art. The human figures, far from being naturalist, were stiff, austere abstractions of deity, and Greek realism was limited to such superficial elements as the folds of their clothing. By the Tang dynasty, Chinese humanistic interests had made the Buddhist concept of deity more intimate. Images became

much plumper and more lifelike. It was closely approximating the Tang concept of human beauty. There was also a great secular sculpture belongs to this period. Large number of beautiful pottery figures of dancing girls, camels, horses, Central Asian grooms and the like were made for burial in tombs.

3.6.1.3 Painting

The paintings of the most ancient period of China have disappeared. Some of the early records informed us that there was painting before the Han dynasty. Under the Han dynasty, Tomb paintings show scenes depicting human figures and landscapes. When Confucius visited Lo-yang in about 526 BCE he saw a picture of the Duke of Chou holding his young nephew Ch'eng on his knees. Painting mostly on silk was highly developed and its main subjects included humans and landscapes. Most of the painters did landscapes.

Artists used brushes, ink and watercolour washes. During the period of Song Dynasty, Chinese painting reached its peak. Zhang Zeduan, a Song artist painted on horizontal scrolls. He depicted performers, streets, boats, restaurants and life along the river.

3.6.1.4 Calligraphy of Wang Hsi-Chih

The Buddhist influence on Chinese painting was tremendous. Except for the murals of the Tun Huang caves, there were very few remains of the Buddhist paintings of the six dynasties and Tang periods. Most of the artistic genius of China was probably devoted to religious art. Secular painting also flourished during this period. South China saw the beginnings of artistic trends which

grew into the great painting traditions of the late Tang and following periods. Ku Kai-Chih, who flourished around 400 CE is honoured as the first great figure in Chinese painting and considered as the greatest name in calligraphy. Buddhist temples built in the Chinese style in Japan during the 7th and 8th centuries give some idea of the classic simplicity and balance of Chinese architectural forms of the Tang period.



Wang-Hsi-Chih

3.6.2 Ancient Chinese Architecture: Cities, Palaces, Royal shrines and Tombs

Throughout the pre-imperial and early imperial times, the greater majority of the population dwelled in the countryside, dependent for their living on the fruits of earth and an unpredictable climate. It was from the cities that arose some of the more significant and permanent features of Chinese culture. Distinctions of occupation and social status were present in these Chinese cities. In time, the cities became the centres where wealth could be easily acquired without the intensive effort. Linci, in eastern China forms an excellent example of the continuity of

ancient urban settlement. Other examples are seen in the old city of Zheng.

Ancient China was dotted with walled towns and cities. Towns and cities were built on a grid system. These cities were divided into sections called wards. Each ward was surrounded by walls with gates that were locked every evening. In general, government officials and wealthy people lived at one end of a town and the poor at the other.

Traditional Chinese buildings were raised above the damp ground on platforms of rammed earth, brick or stone. These buildings were protected by a heavy, overhanging tile roof. Roof tiles were decorated with symbols and inscription. The roofs were supported by a structure of sturdy wooden beams, which allowed for movement in an earthquake. Official buildings and the houses of wealthy people were often highly ornamented with decorated tiles and pottery figures.

3.6.2.1 Graves and Graveyards

The Zhou li (Rites of Zhou) states that two kinds of graveyards coexisted during the Chou dynasty. The first called gongmu(royal cemetery) was a burial site of kings and their descendants. The second bangmu(public cemetery) belonged to a clan or lineage.

3.6.2.2 Construction of Buddhist Temples

In China, there were several new innovations, such as Buddhist temples, stupas and stone caves. Among them the temples were visited by common people for worship and by the monks for meditation. According to tradition, these temples were built either by individuals

or by prominent monks in ancient times. The ancient construction of the monastery of White Horse of Lo-yang was copied from the architectural style of Anathapindadarama in Kosala state. A better source of information in this matter is the Records of the Lo-yang Temples, where details are available on the construction of the monastery of eternal peace which was built by an Empress of the Wei dynasty in 516 CE This temple was constructed in Indian style.

3.6.2.3 Construction of Stupas

The purpose of the stupa was not only for keeping a saint's relics and Buddhist sutras but also as a memorial to prominent personalities. The earliest Chinese tower was built at the Monastery of White Horse of Lo-yang during the Han Dynasty. But during the time of the Sui dynasty it became a common constructional operation. The ruler of the Sui dynasty also supported the construction of towers in different districts of the country. The Chinese Shen-tao pillar (spiritual path pillar) was also copied from the Indian Asokan pillar.

3.6.2.4 Sculpture of Caves



Tung-Huang caves

In Ancient times, Chinese had carvings on stone but there was no never sculpture found in three dimensions. Modern research identifies that stone sculpture began with the Wei dynasty, as the King Wen chen, who was in favour of Buddhism. Thereupon, later Emperors and Empresses wished to have a stone cave in the hills with Buddha's statues and sculptures for religious practices. There were also several records of famous sculptures being executed during the Tang dynasties. The great figures of Yun-kang (clouds Hills) and Ta-t'ung (Great Commonwealth) were the finest examples of cave-sculpture. The Buddhist art of sculpture during the time of Wei dynasty is best represented in the grottos of Yun-kang and Lung-men. The statues are seated in a cross legged posture in front of each other. I-Ch'ueh caves were constructed by the emperor Hsiao wen of Wei dynasty. These caves were being executed during the period extending from the Wei to the Tang dynasty. The third great seat of Buddhist sculpture in China is better known as "Crottos of the Thousand Buddhas". There are a thousand Buddha images in them.

3.6.2.5 The Great Wall of China



Great Wall of China

The Great Wall is considered one of the best examples of Chinese architecture.

This is the only monumental structures from ancient China. The Great Wall was designed to be a permanent barrier separating the agricultural Chinese from the nomadic "barbarians". After 214 BCE Emperor Shi Huangdi of the Qin dynasty tried an effort to protect the northern border of China. He tried to connect and restore older walls creating the Great Wall of China. About ten thousand people were being forced to work on the wall. The soldiers, convicts and conscripted labourers were included among them. One of the shocking facts is that many of them died in the process.

To build the Great Wall, workers used a variety of materials including stone. Bricks were not used as building materials on the Great wall until the Ming dynasty. Beacon towers were added to the walls. This is considered as the world's longest structure built by people.

3.6.2.6 The Grand Canal



Building the Grand Canal in China

The Grand Canal was built by Sui emperor Yang Di to transport grain tax and soldiers around his empire. It ran from the Yangtze river in the south to Beijing in the north. It also covered a distance of 1500 miles. In 1411, Ming engineer Song Li perfected this great water way. The yellow and Yangzi rivers were linked

by the Grand Canal. The canal was also used to transport rice from the Yangzi to northern China, where the imperial capital was situated.

This is considered the longest waterway in the world. The canal's oldest section known as the Southern Grand Canal may have been built as early as 600. BCE

3.6.3 Pottery

Pottery was one of the oldest forms of art that existed in Ancient China. Pottery has been found in many archaeological sites. Terracotta potteries with designs or paintings were made during this period. Ancient Chinese craftsmen used a potter's wheel which made sculpting much faster.

3.6.4 Music in Ancient China

During the period of Chou, art and music flourished well. Evidences like musical instruments, models of performers, depictions of Musicians and dancers on vessels, are also available.

'The Book of Poetry'(Shijing) contains poems and songs of court and common people during the Chou dynasty, but it was lost.



'The Book of Poetry'(Shijing)

Music played an important role in the Chou dynasty for all social classes. Music was a part of their day to day life. It was part of religious and court rituals, banquets

and other important events. Singing and dancing were an integral part of a musical performance.

One of the most important pieces of music of the Chou dynasty is from the tomb of Marquis Yi Zeng (433 B.C.E). This tomb was uncovered in Hubei province and it contained the most well-preserved set of musical instruments.

3.6.4.1 Musical Instruments

There were many types of musical instruments including the zither, stone chimes and pan pipes used during this period. Zither is a stringed instrument with a hollow wooden base that is played by plucking or strumming. The stone chimes are different in sizes in order to create different tones. They are hung from a frame and played with a wooden mallet. Pan Pipes are a wind instrument made of several bamboo pipes. Pan pipe emits a sound when a player blows into the pipes.

3.6.5 Science and Technology

Throughout Chinese imperial history, emperors encouraged science and technology. China made the greatest inventions in science and technology. Ancient Chinese astronomers used a circular device held up to the night sky called a circumpolar constellation template. The positions of the constellations could be used to determine the time.

3.6.5.1 Paper and Printing

Paper and Printing were the most important Chinese inventions. Paper and printing dramatically improved their communications. The first paper was made from silk rags. Later other

fibrous materials like bamboo, hemp, and mulberry bark were used. Papermaking was invented in China by Cai Lun in 105 CE and it was presented to Emperor Ho Ti.

Ancient Chinese developed the technology to print on paper. This helped them to produce multiple copies of works relatively easily. Even they used seals to stamp impressions on paper. They also made ink rubbings from inscriptions on carved stone. The Chinese used wood block printing on paper and silk.

3.6.5.2 Weather Cock

Weather Cock was an instrument used for monitoring earthquakes. Weather Cock was invented in 130 CE by Zhang Heng, director of astrology in the late Han court. It can detect an earthquake and indicate its direction from the capital, Louyang.

3.6.5.3 Magnetic Compass

They also invented the magnetic compass. Compasses were first used in town planning to make sure that new houses faced in a direction that was deemed to be in harmony with nature. Later Compasses were used for navigation.

3.6.5.4 Sternpost Rudder

They also invented the sternpost rudder. It made the steering of large vessels possible for the first time. It was invented between 205 BCE and 220 CE.

3.6.5.5 Medicine

Ancient Chinese people used medicine based on the use of herbs, acupuncture and a balanced diet. From the Tang dynasty onward, Chinese doctors regularly examined on their medical expertise. They also compiled a vast encyclopedia which

contained the entire knowledge of the medical profession. This great work listed all diseases with their symptoms, diagnosis and treatments. The medical practitioners believed that the body was made of the five elements: fire, water, metal, wood and earth. These five elements must be balanced for full health. In ancient China herbs were usually used not just to treat ailments, but also in cooking to ensure the good health of the family. Herbs are cooked in nutritious soups.

3.6.5.6 Agricultural Technology

Ancient Chinese scientific and technological advancement also improved Chinese agriculture. During Neolithic times, they used ox-drawn wooden ploughs. Cast iron technology was developed by the Chinese during 300 BCE. They melted and moulded iron to make various agricultural weapons.

Ancient Chinese also developed wheelbarrows, which became a major means of transportation on China's narrow footpaths. They invented wheelbarrows between 221 BCE and 265 BCE. The invention of the wheelbarrow helped them in transportation of heavy loads.

3.6.5.7 Military Technology

Ancient Chinese developed new weapons and military technology with the support of their scientific knowledge. Gunpowder was first discovered in the 8th century. By the 10th century, gunpowder was being used to make fireworks and weapons. This also helped to make changes in the way battles were fought. During the 13th century, the Song army used guns against the invading Mongols.

Ancient Chinese developed the

crossbow during 300 BCE. It was used as a weapon to hunt animals. Qin Shihuangdi's tomb contained triggers and lines of terracotta soldiers holding crossbows. The Chinese sword makers used bronze to make swords with sharp edges. The Chinese warriors also used reels in warfare. They threw javelins attached to cords. They wanted to reuse them and so reeled them back in for later use.

3.6.6 Trade in Ancient China

During the Mongols or Yuan dynasty, trade flourished well. The Mongols permitted merchants to trade freely throughout the vast empire. They fully controlled the Silk road. The Silk Road was a series of trade routes that ran from northern China across Asia. The merchants of imperial China exported luxury goods like silk, spices, tea, porcelain, and lacquerware. They carried only luxury goods because transport was expensive and difficult.

From the Chang empire onward, the Chinese exported silk to Asia and Europe. China was popularly known as 'Land of Silk'. The merchants used silver money shaped like knives or spades. A round bronze coin known as cash was introduced by the first emperor. According to Chinese legend, the wife of Emperor Huangdi developed a method for weaving silk around 2700 BCE. Chinese emperors used silk robes with embroidered symbols such as dragons. China traded silk with Persia.

3.6.7 Impact of the Chinese Civilization

The Silk Road, built by the Chinese, also helped ancient China to share its ideas with many western societies like

Rome. Ancient China also developed its Civil Service Examination for those seeking government posts. Today many modern governments still require such examinations. Most of the Chinese scientific inventions like the Compass and seismograph were later used by western world. Most modern versions of these early inventions are still used today. Chinese system of unified currency, standardised weights, measures and writing is used even today.

3.6.8 The Legacy of Ancient Chinese Civilization

The ancient Chinese are remembered for their contributions to science, art, philosophy and literature. Modern historians were very much impressed by the ancient Chinese efforts to centralize the government and military. Chinese philosophies were mainly focused on the best ways to live a prosperous life. Modern culture is still influenced by ancient China. The custom of tea drinking originated in China and it spread to North America.

China was pervaded by a spirit of cultural tolerance. Buddhism was a vehicle for close cultural contacts with distant areas and international trade by sea and by land was growing far beyond. The early Tang Empire brought the Chinese into direct contact with the great centers of Civilization in India and West Asia. China has positively responded to foreign influences.

Foreign contacts brought many new changes in China, especially in agriculture. For example, Tea was introduced from Southeast Asia. Tea became the world's most popular drink during the late Han period. The chair was also introduced from the West and over the centuries gradually replaced sitting pads and mats.



Recap

- ◆ Features of Chinese art
- ◆ Features of Chinese architecture
- ◆ Influence of religion and philosophy
- ◆ Construction of Buddhist temples
- ◆ The Great Wall of China
- ◆ Chinese painting and calligraphy
- ◆ Trade - Export of luxury goods and usage of silver money and bronze coin
- ◆ Construction of Silk Road
- ◆ Chinese scientific inventions - Compass, seismograph, unified currency, standardised weights, measures, and writing
- ◆ Role of science and technology in Chinese art and culture- Paper-making to medicine
- ◆ Music in Ancient China
- ◆ Impact of the Chinese Civilization
- ◆ Legacy of Ancient Chinese Civilization

Objective Questions

1. What is the most significant feature of Chinese art during the reign of Eastern Chou dynasty?
2. Who is honoured as the first great figure in Chinese painting?
3. Which is the third great seat of Buddhist sculpture in China?
4. What is Ziter?
5. Who constructed the caves of I-Ch'ueh?

6. Which luxury item was popular in the Han period?
7. Where did the earliest Chinese tower was built?
8. When did the Great Wall take its present form?
9. From Where was the tomb of Marquis Yi Zeng (433 BCE) uncovered?
10. What is the main purpose of constructing 'The Great Wall'?

Answers

1. The emergence of pictorial art
2. Wang-His-Chih (321-379)
3. Tung-Huang caves
4. A stringed instrument
5. Hsiao- wen of Wei dynasty
6. Bronze mirror
7. At the Monastery of White Horse of Lo-yang during the Han Dynasty
8. During the 16th century
9. Hubei province
10. The 'Great Wall' was designed to be a permanent barrier separating the agricultural Chinese from the nomadic "barbarians."

Assignments

1. Discuss the unique features of Chinese art and architecture, including the use of symbolism, materials, and techniques. Provide examples of how these features are reflected in specific works of art or buildings.

2. Explore the legacy of Chinese civilization, including its contributions to science, technology, and culture.
3. Analyze the themes and subjects most commonly depicted in Chinese paintings and calligraphy. How do they reflect the values and beliefs of Chinese society?
4. Investigate the construction of Buddhist temples in ancient China, including their architectural features and symbolic significance. How did the construction of these temples reflect the spread of Buddhism in China, and what impact did Buddhism have on Chinese art and culture?

Suggested Readings

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BLOCK

GREEK CIVILIZATION



1 UNIT

Homeric Age

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit,

- ◆ the learner will be familiarised with the Greek epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
- ◆ the learner will be able to explain the early Greek religion
- ◆ the learner will be made aware of the Homeric Age

Prerequisites

Homer was a great Greek poet who composed the two great epic poems “Iliad” and “Odyssey”, narrating the Trojan war and the heroic adventures of the great warrior Odysseus. The poems undoubtedly give a picture of Greek life from 12th to 9th century BC. This period in Greek history is known as the Greek Age. Homeric poems give an insight into the socio-cultural and religious life of people in that time period. Moreover, two civilizations, namely the Minoan and the Cretan, are assumed to have existed in this period based on the descriptions provided over by Homer himself. There are also some corroborative evidences substantiating the same. In this unit, we will explore more about the period described by Homer through his works *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Keywords

Iliad, Odyssey, Homer, Oracles, Minoan, Cretans, Axian, Delphi

Discussion

From the Homeric poems we understand that the Greeks of this period were tall and fair. They were not the only one alive in this Peninsula. Between 1200 and 1000 BC, they spread to the region of Troy and other parts of Asia Minor. Later on they founded cities on the shores of the Black sea in the north, on the Mediterranean shores of Africa in the south and the countries of Italy, France and Spain in the west, and Greek city states like Athens, Sparta, Corinth, Thebes, Samos and Milectus were the most important of them

4.1.1 Iliad and Odyssey

The main theme of “Iliad” is the war of the coalition of Greek states against the state of Troy. According to the story narrated in the epic, this war known as the Trojan war, lasted for almost ten years. Odyssey accounts the adventures encountered by Odysseus, one of the heroes of the war, on his homeward journey after the conclusion of the campaign. These epics give us some idea about various aspects of contemporary religion, mythology, beliefs, food habits and dress.

The early Greek civilizations would be discussed in three parts. They were the Minoan Civilization, Mycenaean Civilization and the Dark Age respectively.

The Minoan Civilization was a Bronze Age Civilization on the Island of Crete and other Aegean Islands. In deciding the chronology of ancient Greece, the Minoan Civilization can be considered the first Bronze Age Civilization of the region. The Civilization emerged towards the end of the third millennium BC and flourished till around 1400 BC.

4.1.2 Cretan Civilization

The Civilization came to light in the early 20th century through the efforts of Sir Arthur Evans who conducted the archaeological excavations in the region. This was named after the legendary king Minos from the Cretan mythology. The ruins were available in a number of towns. The most important among the towns were Knossos, Phaistos and Mallia. It seems that palaces were the most prominent structures in these centres. Besides being centres of political authority, the palaces were also centres of economic activity.

Sheep rearing and wool production were the main products of the rural economy. Wheat, Grapes and Olives were the main agricultural products. The goods were brought from rural areas to the cities for redistribution and trade. It seems that the Minoans had trading links with Egypt, Anatolia, the Lebanese coast, Cyprus and Aegean through the sea routes. The Minoans had developed writing. The script remains undeciphered until now. It has been named Linear “A”. It seems to have been used for trade and exchange purposes.

Cretan art was the most important contribution to this Civilization. It was the reflection of freedom and vitality of the people. It was free from tradition and was characterised by spontaneity and naturalness. It was not harnessed to the needs of glorifying monarchs or propagating the doctrines of religion. It touched even the humblest objects of ordinary use.

The Cretan painters invented the new designs and colour combinations. The royal palaces and the mansions of rich traders were adorned with wall paintings

depicting feasts, religious ceremonies, athletic contests, houses, servants, animals, flowers etc.

The sculpture of the Cretans was different from that of any other people in the ancient world of the orient. They performed a sculpture in miniature, as contrasted with the sculpture in gigantic proportions of the Egyptians and Babylonians. Their ceramic and gem-carving also reflected this tendency. Their delicately painted pottery, skillfully engraved daggers and knives, gems and seals with infinite variation of designs illustrate their respect for the form and beauty of nature.

4.1.3 Government

The Cretan government was a theocracy like the Egyptian. But it was a liberal government. The king was not a warlord and his professional army was small. Though there was a large and efficient navy, it was only used for purposes of defence against foreign invasion and for the protection of trade and not for suppressing the citizens at home and in public sphere. The administration was carried on with a large staff of officials and clerks. The king had also a force of mechanics, artists and labourers. In the palace store rooms, there were huge jars stored with olive oil, wine and grain. The taxes were paid in kind to the king.

4.1.4 Social life

Industry had reached a high level of development under the Cretans. They excelled in metal work and pottery. They manufactured fine swords, daggers and other articles of bronze. Industry was under strict state control. The king was the chief capitalist and factories for the

production of pottery, textiles and metals were attached to the palace. The social life of the people was very much happy and satisfied with the administration. Women enjoyed perfect equality with men. All occupations and public activities were open to them as well in the public domain.

4.1.5 Early Greek Religion

The religion of the early Greeks was Polytheism. They worshipped many Gods, who were, as H.G Wells pointed out, only “glorified human beings”, with human bodies and human weaknesses and wants. The chief among these Gods was Zeus, the Sky God, and the God of Thunder, Apollo, the Sun God, Athena the Goddess of War and the patroness of Handicrafts and Hades, the God of Underworld and deceased souls. The only difference between men and Gods was that the latter were immortal. The Greeks of the Homeric Age did not care for life after death. Dead bodies were cremated and not buried. The chief form of worship was sacrifice. Offerings were given to Gods to seek favours from them. There was no belief in reward for good deeds or punishment for sins. There was no professional priesthood since the simple religious rites could be performed by any man.

There was no system of temple worship and temples were looked upon merely as shrines for the occasional visits of Gods. The Greeks during this Age believed in “Oracles”. One of the most popular among them being the “Delphic Oracle”, that is the Oracle of Apollo in a place called Delphi in Greece. It was believed that Gods would make revelations to their worshippers through inspired persons. The place at which such revelations were made was called “Oracle”. The name was applied to the revelations made by



Gods. The belief in the Oracles of Delphi continued even in later times. Not only the Greeks, but The Romans and Axian monarchs consulted the Delphi Oracle before undertaking any serious decisions or tasks.

There was no intimate connection between religion and morality among the Greeks of the Homeric Age. The Gods

were not expected to combat evil and uphold virtue. The essential foundation of Homeric morality was military, bravery, self-control, patriotism, wisdom, love of one's friends, hatred of one's enemies and hospitality to the stranger were considered to be the virtues of the Homeric period.

Recap

- ◆ Iliad and Odyssey
- ◆ Cretan Civilization
- ◆ Political life
- ◆ Social life
- ◆ Economic life
- ◆ Art and Architecture
- ◆ Early Greek Religion
- ◆ belief in the Oracles of Delphi

Objective Questions

1. Name the two Epics of the Greeks ?
2. What was the form of the Government of Cretans ?
3. The most popular Greek Oracle ?
4. What was the main theme of *Iliad*?
5. What was the main theme of *Odyssey*?
6. How many parts are there in early Greek civilizations?
7. What were the two main areas of excellence in Cretan civilisation?
8. What was the chief form of worship in Homeric age?

Answers

1. *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
2. Theocracy
3. Delphic Oracle
4. The war of the coalition of Greek states against the state of Troy.
5. Accounts the adventures encountered by Odysseus,
6. Three parts
7. Metal work and Pottery
8. Sacrifice

Assignments

1. Discuss the features of the Minoan Civilization.
2. Write a report on the theme of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

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UNIT

City States

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit:

- ◆ the learner will be familiarised with the features of City- States
- ◆ the learner will be able to explain the contribution of Athens to democracy
- ◆ the learner will be made aware of the Spartan System and its military character

Prerequisites

A City state is a small state with an independent city as its centre and a few miles of dependent agricultural villages around it. The largest city state was Sparta with more than 3000 square miles and Athens with 1000 square miles. The average area of other city states was only about 100 square miles. Athens contributed greatly to democracy. On the other hand, Sparta contributed practically nothing to Greek art or Greek Civilization, because of its innate military character.

These City states were considered as the foundation for various types of Government administrations like democracy, oligarchy, monarchy etc. It was a system where an independent city was given complete sovereignty over its territorial limits having complete control over political, economic, religious and cultural life of people. Each of these city states were unique in its own way. For example, City states like Athens promoted Greek Art, Culture, Literature etc. While Sparta was keen on developing their military might through wars and conquests. Besides these there were also other City states like Thebes and Corinth who concentrated more on trade unlike their other counterparts. In this unit we will study more about the features of City states through Athens and Sparta.

Keywords

Athens, Sparta, Military law, Greek Art, Polis, School of Hellas, Ostracism, Draconian

Discussion

4.2.1 Features of City States

In Greece the city-state emerged as a result of the transition from village communities to larger political units from about 800 BC. A city-state is a small state with an independent city as its centre and a few miles of dependent agricultural villages around it. The Civilization of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and India began in such city-states. But in course of time by a process of expansion and integration, city-states developed into Kingdoms and Empires.

In Greece, however, throughout its independent history it remained a land of city-states. This was mostly due to the peculiar geographical condition of the country. Greece is full of mountain-ranges which cut across one another and thus a number of isolated valleys were formed in the process. In each of these valleys developed a city-state. As each city-state was surrounded by mountains on all sides, inter-communication between one city-state and another was difficult in those days.

This became more so because the arms of the sea stretched into the Greek peninsula at several points and created isolated pockets of land between these arms. Further, several Greek city-states were on islands and many were scattered among the sea coasts of distant lands. Thus union among city-states was not easy. The Greek city-states were small in size and

most of them had an area of only a few square miles. Sparta was the largest city-state with more than 3000 square miles and Athens with 1000 square miles. The average area of other city-states was only about 100 square miles.

At first Greeks lived in villages. Cities were then considered as merely places of safety in times of war. Gradually, the people of the different villages in each valley joined together to form a single political community for common defence along with the government and a common religion. The community formed in this manner was called in Greek a **Polis**, which means a city-state. The centre of the city-state was some hill-top in the middle of the valley. The hill-top served as a fortress and a capital.

The forms of government of various Polis ranged from purely oligarchical on the one hand, to the mature democracy of Athens on the other. The concept of citizenship was a restricted one. Only the indigenous, native, residents of a **Polis** were recognized as citizens. Citizenship rights was not extend to all of the inhabitants in there. Firstly, women were excluded. Only male adults enjoyed the privilege of being citizens in the political scene. Secondly, all those who were not original residents of the Polis, or were considered outsiders did not form part of the citizen body.

All free adult males of the community were expected to render compulsory

military service. In other words, the citizens were simultaneously soldiers. The backbone of the Greek armies was the **hoplite infantry** (foot soldiers). The overwhelming majority of the hoplites were small and middle farmers. The Greek armies were essentially armies of peasant-citizens.

The citizens of the Greek Polis could exercise their right to participate and vote in the assembly. They exercised their voting rights by personally attending the meetings of the assembly. The actual task of governance was carried out through a smaller body, named 'the council.'

There was no spirit of unity among the Greek City-States. They were often quarrelling among themselves and the larger and the more powerful cities were trying to conquer the smaller and the weaker ones. The main reason for the disunion of the city-states was the peculiar geographical conditions of Greece. However, the citizens in each city-state developed an intense thorough narrow patriotism for their own city. He was even ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his state.

Though the tendency for separatism was strong among the Greek city-states, there were also some unifying influences. The religious councils, which controlled the national temples of Greece, were bodies to which all the city-states sent representations.

Another unifying force was the religious festivals which attracted people from all the city-states. The great national games like the olympic games were yet another important force.

The poems of Homer were looked upon as a common heritage of the Greeks. This created a sense of oneness among them.

Lastly, the Greeks looked down on all foreigners as inferior people. This sense of superiority was another strong force of unity among the Greeks. But these forces were not strong enough to avert strife between one city-state and another kingdom of similar nature and position.

4.2.2 Athens and Democracy

Athens was a chief of a dozen city-states in the province of Attica in the Greek Peninsula. The land of Attica, about 10,000 square miles in area, was rich in minerals and had splendid harbours. Hence it developed a prosperous trade and urban culture under the leadership of Athens. The union of all the city-states in Attica under the domination of Athens was completed before 700 BC. Thereafter, a man who lived in any part of Attica was regarded as an Athenian citizen.

At first, Athens, like most other cities, was ruled by a king. But by the 7th century BC, monarchy gave way to aristocracy when the government became the monopoly of a capitalist class of big farmers. During this time, governmental power was vested in the council of Areopagus, a body which consisted of the most powerful nobles. The government of this council was oppressive and denied even elementary rights to the farmers and working men. So there was general discontent among the common men who clamoured for reforms.

The laws of Athens were unwritten customs until a man named Draco drew up a Code of Law in 621 BC. for the knowledge of all the people. But his laws were very severe. For instance, the punishment prescribed for stealing an apple was death. It was from Draco, that the word "Draconian" came into use, meaning



harsh or rigorous. The laws of Draco did not give any relief to the peasants or landless farmers. Still, the Draconian code was a step forward democracy, since it enabled the common people to know what the laws were.

Solon was another reformer who greatly remedied the political and economic evils of Athens. He had won popularity as a military leader. In 594 BC, he was appointed a magistrate with absolute power to carry out reforms. Though he was himself a rich man, he sympathised with the poor and desired to redress their grievances. His laws were just and humane. He gave freedom to the Athenians, who had been enslaved for debt.

He set a limit to the amount of land that a noble could hold. He also introduced reforms to promote the interest of the middle classes. Severe penalties were imposed for idleness. Every man was to teach his son a trade or profession. Athenian citizenship was thrown open to foreigners, who were skilled craftsmen, if they were willing to settle permanently in Athens. This was with a view to encourage trade and industry.

Solon introduced important constitutional reforms. The Council of Four Hundred was established, whose members were chosen for life, and membership was thrown open to the middle class. The council was to scrutinise and approve the law before being submitted to the Assembly consisting of all citizens.

The poor classes were made eligible for the service in the Assembly. A Supreme Court was created which was open to all citizens. Its members were elected by universal manhood suffrage. It had power to hear appeals from the decisions of the magistrates. By the reforms of Solon, limited political rights were conferred on the common man. But the substance

of the power was vested with the rich and highborn men. Solon was neither a democrat nor a socialist. But his laws paved the way for democracy.

The rule of Cleisthenes, a nephew of Solon, was another landmark in Athens. He enlisted the support of the masses and then made his position secure. He introduced remarkable reforms which entitled him to be called “The Father of Greek Democracy”.

- ◆ Cleisthenes conferred citizenship upon many poor people of Athens who were till now excluded on account of law birth.
- ◆ He transformed Solon’s aristocratic council of 400 into a democratic council of 500. The council has supreme control over the executive.
- ◆ He introduced the committee system . As the council was too large, its members were grouped into 10 committees of 50 members each.
- ◆ The army was also re-organized dividing it into 10 regiments each under the command of an elected General.
- ◆ He also introduced a curious custom called “Ostracism”. According to this custom, a political leader will be sent into exile for a ten year period, if in the opinion of the Assembly of citizens expressed through vote, that something dangerous happened to the state through him.

The Age of Pericles (461-429 BC) witnessed the highest stage of development of democracy in Athens. In Athens, under Pericles, citizens took

direct part in the government of the state. There was an assembly of which all citizens were members. It had the power of final decision on war and peace. It could remove an official from office or sentence him to death. Athenian courts were Juries without lawyers and judges.

Pericles also introduced the system of state pay for citizens attending the Assembly. This enabled the poor citizens to devote their time to public duties. Under Pericles, Athens became the “School of Hellas”. Children of Athens were educated in good citizenship from an early age. Citizens from other states came to Athens to see and learn their expertise in various aspects of life. We find the best expression of the Athenian ideal in the famous oration of Pericles about the year 430 BC in honour of the Athenian soldiers who had fallen in war. He said, “We regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs as a useless character”. Pericles taught both by word and deed that an individual has no life apart from the state and that patriotism to the state is the greatest virtue.

4.2.3 Spartan Militarism

The history of Sparta is a sharp contrast to the history of the other city-state in Greece. As the Greek city-states were small in area, they suffered from the problem of over-population. Many of them solved this problem by colonial and commercial expansion in non-Greek lands. Sparta, on the other hand, resorted to militarism and landlordism among the Greek themselves which ultimately brought about its downfall.

In the Southernmost part of the Greek peninsula, there was a fertile valley watered by The River Eurotas, and surrounded by snow-capped mountain ranges which gave the valley the picture

of a walled garden. This land was called Laconia or Lacedaemon. After the Trojan war, a branch of the Greek invaders, called the Dorians, invaded this land and settled as conquerors making the natives their servants and serfs. Their capital was Sparta (meaning the “scattered”) which was a union of five villages on the River Eurotas in the heart of the plain.

The problem of over population which confronted the Spartan aristocracy induced them in the 8th century BC to invade the neighbouring land of Messinia in Greece. Despite the brave resistance of the Messinians, which continued for about 20 years, finally the Spartans won and Messinia became part of the Spartan Kingdom. However, in the next century, there was a terrible revolt of the Messinian serfs and peasants against their Spartan masters, supported by neighbouring states.

But thanks to the heroism of the Spartan Aristocrats, they repelled their enemies and crushed the revolt. To safeguard their position against future revolts, Spartans established militarism by a series of laws. The most important of these laws were said to be the work of a wise law-giver Lycurgus, though some historians doubt his existence in this historical timeline.

4.2.4 Spartan Discipline

Those who were born in the aristocratic class were subject to severest discipline. In fact, they were doomed to a respectable slavery. When a baby was born, it was brought before a council of state officials who decided whether it should live or die. If it was weak or deformed, it was exposed to death on a mountain. At the age of seven, boys were taken from their homes and brought up and trained in camps. In the camps, they had to lead a rough and strenuous life and once a year they were



flogged to the point of bleeding to test their ability to endure pain.

Their education was confined mostly to military training. It gave more importance to character than intellect. Between the ages of 20 and 30 they devoted themselves entirely to the service of the state. War was to be only a profession and they were forbidden to be engaged in trade or industry. Though a soldier could marry, he could rarely see his wife as he had to spend most of his time in camps or barracks. Girls were also given hard physical training so that their children would be robust and healthy. Infact, Sparta became an “armed camp”.

The essence of the Spartan civilization was militarism, rigid discipline and physical strength. There were hardly any features of the life of the Spartan which were not offspring of their military enterprises. Their stubbornness, conservatism, iron

discipline, Spartan collectivism which embraced every branch of social and economic life of the Spartan aristocracy; the strict subordination of the individual to the state – all these were characteristics of Spartan life based on militarism.

It is said that in subduing and enslaving their enemies, the Spartans enslaved themselves. While other states enjoyed luxuries and pleasures as the result of their trade, industry and arts, the Spartans led a life of self-imposed discipline and austerity, hardening their bodies not only against luxury, but against art and against primary feelings of love and family affection. Hence, Sparta has contributed practically nothing to Greek art or Greek civilization. In the history of Sparta, we hear of no poets, sculptors or builders worth mentioning. Ultimately, the Spartan system led to the stagnation and decay of the Spartan Society.

Recap

- ◆ Features of Greek City States
- ◆ Athens and Democracy
- ◆ Draconian Reforms
- ◆ Reforms of Solon
- ◆ Cleisthenes
- ◆ Age of Pericles
- ◆ Spartan militarism
- ◆ Spartan Discipline

Objective Questions

1. What is the word meaning of “Polis”?
2. Who wrote ‘Code of Law’ in 621 BC?
3. Who introduced the 'Committee System' in Athens?
4. Who was considered as “The Father of Greek Democracy”?
5. Which period witnessed the highest stage of development in Athenian democracy?
6. Who introduced “Ostracism” as a custom in Greece ?
7. Who remedied the political and economic evils of Athens?
8. Name the class who were subjected to severest discipline under Spartan law?

Answers

1. City State
2. Draco
3. Cleisthenes
4. Cleisthenes
5. The Age of Pericles (461-429 BC)
6. Cleisthenes
7. Solon
8. Aristocratic class

Assignments

1. Analyse how the city state system influenced the Greek Civilization
2. Write a report on the rise of Democracy in Athens.

Suggested Readings

1. A R Burn, *Pericles and Athens*, Collier Books, Newyork, 1962.
2. Livingstone, RW (ed), *The Legacy of Greece*, Kessinger Publishing Co, 2007.
3. Earnest Barker, *Greek Political Theory*, Barnes and Nobles, NewYork, 1960.
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UNIT

End of Greek Culture

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit,

- ◆ the learner will be able to explain Persian wars
- ◆ the learner will be familiarised with the consequences of the Persian war
- ◆ the learner will be able to describe about the Pelopponnesian wars

Prerequisites

The Greeks had a great tradition of culture. In the war with Greek and Persians, the Persians were defeated and with this began the decline of the Persian Empire. Subsequently in the Pelopponnesian war between Athens and Sparta, Athens had been defeated by Sparta and its navy was destroyed. The Persians were one of the most powerful kingdoms that existed during the time period of Greek Citystates. Emperors like Darius and Xerxes followed expansionist policies to extent their kingdom further. As a result of the same, they came in conflict with other kingdoms where they emerged victorious. However in the battle with Greece they ended upon the losing side. This eventually led to Greek supremacy over Mediterranean regions and the control of Citystates went in to the hands of Athens. Later, the Athenian imperialism faced a death blow from Delian League headed by Sparta. In this unit we will discuss more about the Greco-Persian wars and the consequences of Athenian imperialism after Pelopponnesian wars.

Keywords

Darius, Xerxes, Persian, Pelopponnesian, Thermopylae, Delian League, Satraps

Discussion

4.3.1 Persian Wars

The Persians belonged to the Indo-European race. They lived in the northern plateau of Iran. At first, they were the vassals of the medes, who were their kinsmen. But a great conqueror arose among the Persians, called Cyrus. About 550 BC, he defeated and conquered the medes. After the conquest of the Media, King Cyrus conquered all Asian Minor and in 539 BC Babylon came under his control. Thus his empire extended all over the regions of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Cyrus is known in history as one of the greatest conquerors of all time. He died in 529 BC. Analysing his contributions, Will Durant says that, "Like Alexander he conquered an Empire, but did not live to organize it".

The great King of the Persians was Darius I (521-485 BC). In his time, the Persian Empire became the most extensive empire that the world has known. In the north, it reached the Caspian and Black seas. To the east, it stretched to the borders of India. In the West, it included Syria and extended to the Mediterranean. Africa, Egypt, Libya and part of Ethiopia were included in his Empire. In Europe, it included Thrace.

Darius divided the Empire into provinces called Satrapis, each ruled by a Satrap or Governor. He built a magnificent system of roads stretching over the length and breadth of the Empire. He also instituted a postal system of swift messengers travelling on horseback. It was a system more efficient than any postal service previously known. Darius encouraged navigation and built up a big fleet of warships.

During his reign, the great conflict between the Greeks and the Persian Empire began. However, the real struggle began after 500 BC. It started as a revolt of the Ionian cities of Asia Minor against Persian domination. It was aided by Athens and other Greek city-states. A mighty army of the Persians marched against Athens to wreak vengeance on the city-state. In the village of Marathon in Greece, one of the decisive battles of history was fought in 1090 BC, between the Persian and Athenian armies; the Persians were defeated and had to retreat. In the midst of vast preparations for another attack against Greece, Darius died.

Darius was succeeded by his son Xerxes who continued the war against Greeks. The city-states of Athens and Sparta organised a League against the Persians and most of the Greek city-states joined the League. A small force of 10,000 Greeks under the leadership of Leonidas, king of Sparta, blocked the Persian advance at a pass called Thermopylae, but a Greek traitor showed the Persians a secret path through which the Persians could enter and attack the Greeks from behind. The Greeks defended heroically but were overpowered and defeated. The Persians overran a large part of Greece and occupied Athens. However, their victory was short-lived. In the naval battle that followed, the Persians were defeated and with this began the decline of the Persian Empire. After the death of Xerxes, the Empire was torn by internal disunion and naturally fell an easy prey to the invasion of Alexander the Great in 330 BC.

The final victory of the Greeks led to two things- the establishment of Greek

supremacy over the Mediterranean and Athenian supremacy over the rest of the Greek city-states. The Athenians rebuilt their destroyed city followed by an era of Athenian progress and expansion.

4.3.2 Pelopponnesian wars

The Athenian victory over Persia was followed by an era of Athenian imperialism. During the close of the war with Persia, Athens entered into alliance with other Greek city-states for the purposes of offence and defence. All of them joined together into a League known as the Delian League. When the Persian war ended, the League was not dissolved for fear of recurrence of the Persian menace. Athens attempted to transform the League into a naval Empire supporting their interests, by making the other states her vassals.

One of the states rebelled against this but the rebellion was ruthlessly suppressed. Such imperialistic tendency alarmed Sparta, which feared that the whole of Greece would be brought under

the hegemony of Athens.

Hostility between Athens and Sparta was also the result of social and cultural differences between the two city-states. While Sparta was aristocratic, conservative, agrarian and culturally backward, Athens was democratic, progressive, urban and culturally advanced.

The enmity of Sparta against Athens was aggravated by the ambition of the latter to dominate the Gulf of Corinth which provided access for trade with Sicily and Southern Italy. War broke out between Athens and Sparta in 431 BC and continued until 404 BC. This war is known as the Pelopponnesian war, because Athens had to fight this war against a League of Greek city-state called Pelopponnesians League under the military leadership of Sparta. By 404 BC, Athens had been defeated by Sparta and its navy was destroyed. For several decades after that, Sparta remained the major Greek Power though it was subsequently challenged by Thebes.

Recap

- ◆ The Greek culture
- ◆ Persian wars
- ◆ Military exploits of Darius and Xerxes
- ◆ Battle of Thermopylae
- ◆ Athenian Imperialism
- ◆ Delian League
- ◆ Pelopponnesian War
- ◆ Final victory of Sparta



Objective Questions

1. Which race did the Persians belong to?
2. What was the name of the Persian Province?
3. Who was the successor of Darius I?
4. Who was known as 'the great conqueror' among the Persians?
5. Who was the great King among the Persians?
6. What was the name of the league formed by Athens and other City states against external invasions?
7. Who blocked Persian advances against Greece at Thermopylae pass?
8. Name the war that broke out between Athens and Sparta in 431BC?

Answers

1. Indo-European
2. Satrapies
3. Xerxes
4. Cyrus
5. Darius I
6. Delian League
7. Leonidas
8. Peloponnesian War

Assignments

1. Ancient Greek Culture was a springboard for western Civilization. Discuss
2. Discuss the role of Cyrus in Persian wars.

Suggested Readings

1. Livingstone, R.W (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece*, Kessinger publishing Co, 2007
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3. Hammond M, *The City in the Ancient World*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1972.
4. Lawrence A Tritle, *A New History of Peloponnesian War*, wiley Blackwell, 2010.
5. Jack Cassin-Scott, *The Greek and Persian Wars 500 - 323 BC*, Osprey Publishing, 1977.





UNIT

Alexander's Empire

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit,

- ◆ the learner will be familiarised with the Macedonian Empire and its accomplishments
- ◆ the learner will be able to explain the qualities of Alexander as a conqueror
- ◆ the learner will be aware of Macedonian conquests

Prerequisites

In history we come across many personalities who were often referred as “Great” due to various attributes. which they possess in their related fields making them unique among others. This can be in monarchs, aristocrats, military leaders religious figures, political leaders or social reformers belonging to different locations and ethnicity.

The name of Alexander is memorable as one of the greatest military conquerors in the history of the world. He also had great ambition to spread Greek culture and build up a world state based on Greek ideas.

When we speak about the monarchs popular names that come in to our mind quite often are Ahoka-The Great, Peter- The Great, Pompey –The Great, Wilhelm- The Great, Alexander- The Great, Akbar-The Great etc. These monarchs are referred as such due to their invaluable contributions in their respective domains. In this unit we are discussing about Alexander and his “greatness” as a military commander conqueror, strategist and as an efficient emperor who played a predominant in spreading Greek culture in different parts of the world which came to be known as the Hellenistic culture having its own unique identity differentiating it from other cultures.

Keywords

Philip, Alexander, Aristotle, Military Conquest, Alexandria, Macedonia, King Porus, Arrian

Discussion

4.4.1 Alexander the Great

The period of Alexander is well-attested by an umpteen number of sources. At first instance, these sources seem impressive and remarkable. There are full length histories of the reign by Arrian and Curtius Rufus, a formal biography of Plutarch, a whole book of Diodorus Siculus "*Bibliotheca Historica*", and substantial passages in the later books of Strabo's "*Geography*".

However, despite giving an impression of being substantial, their value as primary sources is put to question as they are all late. For instance, Diodorus's works are dated to the third quarter of the first century BCE; Plutarch and Arrian in the second century CE. Thus there is a gap of two to three centuries between Alexander's death and the first connected narratives of his reign. Some of these works are accused of being imaginatively fictitious, preoccupied with rhetoric, full of trivial details, ghostly exaggerated and are without checks to test their authenticity.

Despite all these handicaps, scholars have been able to give significant information that is both credible and useful in the context of India. Arrian's account is the most sober rendition of Alexander's reign. Arrian was a simple soldier who paid his tribute to the memory of Alexander by selecting the best possible sources and reproducing them faithfully. His book "*History of Alexander*" was based on the accounts of Ptolemy, Aristobulus, Nearchus and Eratosthenes.

Ptolemy, Aristobulus and Nearchus were all eyewitnesses to the campaigns of Alexander and were sometimes active participants. The companion work "*Indike*" deals with India and the voyage of Alexander's fleet in the southern ocean and is based on the sources such as Eratosthenes, Megasthenes and Nearchus.

Philip was succeeded by his son Alexander. He was born in 356 BC. He was handsome, daring, gifted and a romantic youngman, who had no peer in his time for valour and strength. He was a swift runner, excellent horseman, an expert bowman and a fearless hunter. Though he was Macedonian by ancestry, he had been Hellenised by education. He had a passion for learning and was the pupil of none other than Aristotle. He was so fond of knowledge that after a day of marching or fighting, he was delighted in spending half the night conversing with scholars and scientists. His dominating quality was ambition- ambition to dominate the world. He was also not able to control his passions. "He could lead many thousands of men, could conquer and rule millions, but he could not control his own temper". He was sometimes ruthlessly cruel.

The name of Alexander is memorable as one of the greatest military conquerors in the history of the world. Apart from being a military genius, he proved himself to be an extraordinary man of ideas. His ambition was to spread Greek Culture and build up a world state based on Greek ideas.



Although he was cruel as a conqueror, he had respect for religion as well as for the greatness of enemies. This is illustrated by the fact that while he was suppressing the rebellion of the city-states of Thebes, he spared its temples and the house of the poet Pindar, though he destroyed the city and sold its people as slaves. The greatest service he rendered was to spread Greek Culture in the lands of his conquest and to bring about a union of East and West.

He founded more than seventy centres of Greek civilization and he did much for the spread of Greek temples, Greek theatres, Greek art and literature alongside Greek commerce within his empire. By his contact with the East, he adopted oriental customs and manners and became an oriental despot. He married the daughter of Darius III and persuaded many of his officers and soldiers to marry Asiatic women and this helped the cultural contact between East and West. To Alexander, the world was a melting-pot in which he was blending Greek culture, Macedonian militarism and Asiatic manpower into one great empire.

Alexander is known in history as '**Alexander the Great.**' As a military leader and conqueror, he was truly great. However as a man, he does not deserve to be called great as Buddha, Christ or Asoka was. He was a cruel and blood-thirsty warrior and tyrant. He was extremely egoistic as is shown by his desire to be worshipped as the son of Amon, the Egyptian God, after his conquest of Egypt. He was a slave of his passions. Heavy drinking was one of his major weaknesses. He did not do anything constructive to make his empire

permanent. Hence, after his death, his empire fell to pieces or collapsed without further progression.

4.4.2 Macedonian Empire

In 334 BC, soon after Alexander became the king of Macedonia, he started a career of world conquest. He made his astonishing conquests within a period of 11 years. At first, he defeated the Persian king Darius III and then turned to Syria where he conquered the Phoenician seaports. Soon after he became the master of all Syria and Palastine.

From Syria, he marched to Egypt. He conquered Egypt and was crowned as the Pharaoh on the banks of the Nile. Alexander founded the great city of Alexandria named after him. Then his army marched towards Euphrates and Tigris. He inflicted utter defeat on the Persian King Darius III at a place called Arbela. This was followed by the conquest of Babylon and the neighbouring kingdoms. Then across Iran, Alexander marched to North-West India in 329 BC. There he defeated and received the homage of Indian Princes in the Punjab: the most prominent among them was king Porus.

His ambition was to march further eastwards and conquer the Ganges Valley. But due to the discontent of his home-sick followers, he returned through Baluchistan to Babylon. There he fell sick due to the rigours of his long marches and the effects of heavy drinking. He died in 323 BC in his 33rd year.

Recap

- ◆ Macedonian Empire
- ◆ Philip of Macedonia
- ◆ Early life of Alaxander
- ◆ Aristotle
- ◆ Alaxander and his conquests
- ◆ Alexander and Porus of India
- ◆ Hellenistic culture
- ◆ Alexander The Great

Objective Questions

1. Who was the author of the book “ History of Alexander”?
2. When was Alexander born?
3. Who was the teacher of Alexander?
4. Who was the Indian ruler defeated by Alexander?
5. What is the name of the Great City founded by Alexander?
6. What is the greatest service rendered by Alexander?
7. Who was the first Persian king defeted by Alexander?
8. Name the culture that spred across the globe as a result of the conquests of Alexander?

Answers

1. Arians
2. 356 BC
3. Aristotle
4. King Porus
5. City of Alexandria
6. Spread the Greek Culture in the lands of his conquest
7. Darius III
8. Hellenistic culture

Assignments

1. Discuss the contributions of Alexander to Greek culture
2. Draw an outline of the conquest of Alexander

Suggested Readings

1. Bosworth B, *The Legacy of Alexander*, Oxford University Press , 2002
2. Worthington, Ian (ed.), *Alexander the Great : A Reader*, Routledge , 2003
3. Narain A.K, *Alexander and India*, Greece and Rome, Volume 12, Cambridge University Press, 1965.

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1. Bill Yenne, *World Generals*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
2. David. J.Lonsdale, *Strategy and History*, Routledge, 2007.
3. Jacob Abbott, *Makers of History*, Yesterday's Classics, 2009.
4. R.Stone Man, *Lancaster Pamphlets in Ancient History*, Routledge, 1997.



UNIT

Greek Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be:

- ◆ familiarised with the characteristics of Greek Philosophy.
- ◆ able to explain Sophism
- ◆ able to identify the features of Greek Philosophy and philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Prerequisites

Philosophy is open considered as a discipline the tents to study about the fundamental nature of knowledge existences of living and nonliving things the reality of life and other unanswered metaphysical aspects of life. A well developed philosophy acts as a guiding principle for a certain type of behavior or aid in one's character formation. When we speak about the Philosophies most of them are associated with ancient religions and their cultures like Greek and Roman cultures, Ancient Hindu culture Buddhism, Jainism etc. Each Philosophies were formulated with a particular objective. Which varied from culture to culture.

For example, in ancient India most of the Philosophies were founded to explore more about human life, souls and their connections with the Supreme being or the source so that they could vividly explain about 'Atman' and 'Paramatman' concept (Soul and Supreme soul / God). Meanwhile in other cultures like Greek, Roman and Chinese concentrated more on the human life and their attitude towards the same. Sophists represented an intellectual tradition which began in Greece in the 5th century BC. The Sophists claimed to be teachers of wisdom (Sophia). As a reaction against sophism, there arose a new intellectual movement in Greece and the three leaders of the movement were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. They believed that such strong Philosophies could change ones' perceptions towards life, so that they

could handle any life situation with ease, happiness and satisfaction. In this unit we will discuss in detail about Greek Philosophers and Philosophies as 'Greece is considered as the cradle of ancient Philosophy'.

Keywords

Sophists, Non-existence, Truth, Knowledge, Socrates, Aristotle, Lyceum, Ethics, Plato, Republic

Discussion

4.5.1 Sophists

Sophists represented an intellectual revolution which began in Greece in the 5th century BC. This revolution relegated the study of the physical universe to the background and concentrated on the study of subjects intimately related to man. The Sophists were so called because they claimed to be teachers of wisdom (Sophia). Later on, the term developed a contemptuous meaning and came to be applied to persons who use ingenious arguments to prove assertions which are really false.

The early Greek Sophists do not, however, deserve this odium. The greatest among them was Protagoras. The underlying idea of his philosophy is conveyed by his famous dictum "man is the measure of all things". According to him, morality is related to time and place where there are no absolute truths or standards of right and justice. Protagoras has the distinction of having founded European grammar and philology. He was the first to distinguish the three genders of nouns and certain senses and moods of verbs.

Another distinguished Philosopher of the School of Sophists was Georgias who united philosophy and statesmanship. He put forward the startling theory that "nothing exists". The significance of his philosophy was that he protested against the artificiality and degeneration of city life, contrasted nature with law and denounced law as a tyrant over mankind.

There is much that is valuable in the teachings of the Sophists, who invented grammar and logic for Europe. They taught men how to detect and practise fallacies. They promoted clarity and precision of thought. They denounced slavery and the racial exclusiveness of the Greeks. They were the champions of liberty and the rights of the underdogs in society. They realised the futility of war. They were the first professional teachers of Political and Social Science, who brought philosophy down from heaven to the dwellings of men. They stimulated the pursuit of knowledge and made thinking a fashion.

The Sophists also contributed to the deterioration of Greek morals. They defined morality and human worth in terms of knowledge. This stimulated



thought, but was a blow to character. It led to unscrupulous individualism which greatly undermined the spirit of patriotism and fostered the spirit of commercialism. The Sophists criticized traditions and were the instruments to re-examine old ways which must yield place to new. But they failed to build where they were destroyed.

As a reaction against Sophism, there arose a new philosophic movement in Greece based upon the theory that truth is real and that absolute standards actually did exist. The three great leaders of this movement were Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

4.5.2 Socrates (469-399 Bc)

Socrates was born in a humble family. His father was a sculptor and his mother a mid- wife. He was himself a sculptor. He was not attractive in appearance ,being stout and bald with protruding eyes and snub nose. He led a simple life and felt himself rich in poverty, a model of moderation and self control . Plato was his great disciple who speaks of him as “ truly the wisest, and justiest and best of all the men” he had ever known.Socrates was not a professional teacher. He became a philosopher on his own account and was unsparing in his criticism of the Sophists. He gathered around him a circle of admirers among whom were such distinguished men as Plato and Xenophon .

He was a seeker after truth. Day after day, he went and taught in the Athenian marketplace. He was primarily a teacher of ethics. He wanted to know not only how, but also why things happened. He believed that man could possess universally valid knowledge only if they

pursued the right method. This method consisted in the exchange and analysis of opinions from which the essence of truth could be distilled out.

Knowledge is the highest virtue and all ignorance is vice. Right action is impossible without proper knowledge and conversely proper knowledge inevitably leads to right action.

Socrates rejected tradition and subjected every rule to this test of reason. He argued that morality is rooted in individual conscience. His revolutionary doctrines shocked the conservative mind of the majority of Athenians who branded him as a dangerous Sophist and condemned him as irreligious. In 399 BC, he was charged with “ corrupting the youth and introducing new Gods “ and was condemned to death . Socrates calmly drank the cup of hemlock poison.which eventually ended his life . Thus he became a martyr and saint in Greek history.

The influence of Socrates on succeeding generations was profound . Through his pupils many of his ideas became the substance of all the important philosophers of the next two centuries. His emphasis on conscience as above law became one of the fundamental tenets of Christianity. His ideal of simple living and brave thinking became a beacon light of human civilization.

4.5.3 Plato (427-347 BC)

Plato was the most distinguished of Socrates’ pupils. He was born in Athens and both his father and mother belonged to distinguished aristocratic families. His real name was Aristocles. “Plato” was a nickname given by one of his teachers because of his broad frame.

He was handsome and he distinguished

himself in almost every field. He excelled in the study of music, mathematics, rhetoric and poetry. At the age of 20, he joined the circle of Socrates pupils and continued to be so till the tragic death of his master.

His writings were voluminous, The most famous of them being the “Republic”. About 387 BC he founded a University on the outskirts of Athens which was destined to become the intellectual center of Greece for nine hundred years. It was called the Academy, a name derived from the name of the recreation grove where the University was founded. Students from all over Greece flocked to the Academy to learn at the feet of Plato and carried back to their native regions the influence of their great master.

Plato’s philosophy, as that of his teacher Socrates, was a reaction against the sophistic doctrines of reality and scepticism as against the sophistic theory of reality, he developed the basics of his ideas. He contended that beyond the world of physical things, there is a spiritual world which can be seen only through the mind and not through the senses. The center and sum of the spiritual world, according to Plato, is perfect goodness, that is God.

Like Socrates, Plato believed that the basis of true virtue is knowledge i.e., the rational apprehension of the eternal ideas of goodness and justice.

As a practical philosopher, Plato in his Republic conceived a society in which there shall be no corruption, no poverty, no tyranny and no war. In this ideal society the rulers as well as soldiers shall form a communistic aristocracy with no property, no money, no families. According to Plato “until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have spirit and power of philosophy, cities will never

cease from ill, nor the human race”

4.5.4 Aristotle (384-322BC)

A native of the city of Stagira in Macedonia and the son of a physician, Aristotle came to Athens at the age of 18 and entered Plato’s academy where he remained as a pupil and teacher for 20 years. In 343 BC he was invited by king Philip of Macedon as tutor to his son Alexander. Seven years later, he returned to Athens where he formed a school of his own known as “Lyceum”, where he taught a variety of subjects until his death in 322 BC.

So great and vast was his knowledge that he has been called “A walking university”. He worked and taught on a wide range of subjects which included astronomy, medicine, mathematics, rhetoric, oratory, logic, politics, poetry, psychology and art. He worked out the rules of logic, the science of correct thinking, so that he can aptly be called the father of logic.

As a philosopher, he not only had a reputation in his own time but was venerated as the philosopher more than a thousand years afterwards. Like Plato, he said that ideas (or the form) are real but unlike Plato he asserted that form and matter are equally important and that the universe derives its essential character from a union of the two. It form, says Aristotle, shapes the world of matter into the infinite variety of objects and organisms in the universe.

Aristotle’s ethical philosophy is continued in his famous work called “Ethics”. The highest good of man, he taught, lies in self realisation that is the exercise of that part of man’s nature which



distinguished him as human being. Self-realisation is attained by a life of reason, which in its turn is possible only by a life of reason, which in its turn is possible only by a proper combination of physical and mental conditions, i.e., by keeping the body in good health and emotions under proper control. The method to attain this, is the golden mean, i.e., the avoidance of excessive self-indulgence and excessive self-denial,

Aristotle's political philosophy, which finds expression in his "politics", is one of his greatest contributions. It is Aristotle who remarked that "man is by nature a political animal". He said that the state came into existence to make life possible and continues to exist to make life good.

He applied the principle of "golden mean" to politics and considered the best state to be neither monarchy, nor aristocracy or democracy, but "Polity" which according to him, is a combination of aristocracy and democracy, a government which is under the control of the middle class.

Few men have exercised so much influence on human thought as Aristotle, "Never before so far as we know" says Will Durant "had anyone dared so impressively an edifice of thought". His treatise on ethics and politics have no rival in fame and influence and he deserves the tribute that he still remains "The master of those who know"

Recap

- ◆ Sophists represented intellectual revolution from 5th century BCE in Greece
- ◆ Protagoras was a pre-Socratic Greek Philosopher and a Sophist
- ◆ Georgios was another Sophist and is considered as one of the founders of Sophism
- ◆ Socrates was a Greek Philosopher from Athens who is considered as a founder of western philosophy.
- ◆ Aristotle was a Greek Philosopher and teacher of Alexander the Great who contributed to every aspect of human knowledge
- ◆ Plato was the student of Socrates who believed that true virtue is knowledge
- ◆ Aristotle's political philosophy finds expression in his politics
- ◆ The famous work of Aristotle was Nicomachean Ethics

Objective Questions

1. What is the meaning of the word “Sophia”?
2. Who was the disciple of Socrates?
3. Which is the most important writing of Plato?
4. What was the name of the school founded by Aristotle?
5. Who remarked that “man is by nature a political animal”?
6. Who has been called “A walking university”?
7. Who were Sophists?
8. Who put forward the startling theory that “nothing exists”?
9. Whose dictum was “man is the measure of all things”?
10. Who applied the principle of “golden mean” to politics?

Answers

1. Wisdom
2. Plato
3. Republic
4. Lyceum
5. Aristotle
6. Aristotle
7. The teachers of wisdom (Sophia)
8. Georgias
9. Protagoras
10. Aristotle



Assignments

1. Describe the role of Sophists in Classical Greek Philosophy
2. Analyse the major pathways through which ancient Greece became the birthplace of western philosophical ethics.

Suggested Readings

1. Ernest Barker, *Greek Political Theory*, Barnes & Nobles, New York, 1960.
2. Livingston (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece*, Kessinger Publishing co, 2007.
3. Trierer. A.A, *History of ancient Civilizations*, Harcourt Brace & co, 1937.

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UNIT

Greek Legacy

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able:

- ◆ to familiarise with Greek culture
- ◆ describe Greek contribution to science and medicine
- ◆ to explain the legacy of Greek to mankind

Prerequisites

When we think of Ancient Greece, we often think of its towering achievements in philosophy, art, and democracy. However, the Greeks also made significant contributions to the fields of science, medicine, literature, and history.

The Greeks were among the first to systematically study the natural world, making groundbreaking discoveries in mathematics, physics, and astronomy. Pythagoras, for example, formulated his famous theorem on right triangles, while Archimedes made significant contributions to the understanding of buoyancy and mechanics.

In medicine, the Greeks made important advancements by emphasizing the importance of observation and the scientific method. Hippocrates, often referred to as the father of medicine, established a code of ethics for physicians and emphasized the importance of careful observation and diagnosis.

Literature was also a significant area of Greek achievement, with the age of Pericles being considered the golden age of Greek drama, poetry, and prose. Greek plays, such as those by Sophocles and Euripides, are still performed today and continue to influence modern theater.

Finally, the Greeks are also known for their contributions to the field of

history, with Herodotus considered the father of history for his meticulous research and recording of events, including the Persian Wars. In this unit we will discuss on invaluable Greek legacy and its contributions to the world.

Keywords

Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Herodotus, Aristotle, Thucydides, Homer, Histories

Discussion

4.6.1 Science and Medicine

It is impossible to differentiate between the early origins of Greek science and of Greek Philosophy, as they are the same thing. until the fifth century B.C. ancient Greek medicine was an aspect of religion.

Pythagoras

In the field of astronomy specifically, Pythagoras was credited with figuring out the order of the then known heavenly bodies: Earth, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. In terms of mathematics, he was said to have discovered the Pythagorean Theorem ($a^2+b^2=c^2$), although this attribution was probably a later invention. Pythagorians introduced the idea that cosmos incarnated in a rational order and divine harmony. Pythagorus also suggested that unlike the body, the soul was immortal and it passed into different bodies over the course of several lifetimes.

Democritus

Democritus is considered the father of modern atomic (a=not, tomos=cut apart) theory. He was also a fan of anthropology. He wrote on such topics as the origin of

religion and nature of language.

Eudoxos of Knidos

Eudoxos of Knidos was the first Greek astronomer to construct a mathematical system to explain the apparent movements of the heavenly bodies. He believed that all heavenly movements were caused by the interactions of twenty- seven intertwined concentric spheres, with the Earth at the center. All the stars existed on the single, outermost sphere and each planet made use of no fewer than four concentric spheres.

Aristarcus of Samos

Aristarcus of Samos derived a semi heliocentric theory of astral movements. He suggested that the stars and sun were fixed in space and that the Earth revolved around the sun in a circle.

Eratosthenes of Cyrene

He was best remembered for his work in mathematics, especially on the subject of prime numbers. He was famous in astronomy and geometry for his extremely accurate measurement of the Earth's surface. He compared the noon

shadows in midsummer between Aswan and Alexandria in Egypt. He measured the tilt of the Earth's axis and compiled a catalogue of 675 stars.

Hipparchus of Nicaea

Hipparchus lived in Egypt in the mid-second century C.E. He was the first Greek to construct a full theory of the motion of the sun and moon that was properly based on observational data. He studied the problem of parallax and came to devise the first practical method for determining the sizes of and distances to the sun and the moon.

Claudius Ptolemy

Ptolemy compiled a list of stars giving their ecliptic coordinates and magnitudes. He constructed a theory of motion for the five known planets, for which he used the established theories of eccentric and epicycle. He argued that the heavenly bodies did not move in perfect circles, but in ellipses.

Hippocrates of Cos

Hippocrates of Cos was considered the father of Medicine. The Hippocratic Corpus was attributed to him and it consisted of some sixty or seventy treatises on various aspects of the nature and treatment of the human body. He was influenced by the theories of Empedocles. He believed that health of the human body was dependent on the proper balance of the humors. As a result, remedial techniques such as bloodletting, purgations and diet were common in his repertoire. The books of Epidemics are like a journal consisting of his own observations and thoughts. Through the end of the classical period, Cos was the center of medical studies in ancient Greece.

Aristotle

Aristotle contributed to the growth of medical knowledge who was himself the son of a physician. He did not study medicine as such, but his strict categorization of the natural world and his work on comparative anatomies and embryology greatly influenced the study of Hellenic medicine.

Herophilos of Chalden

Herophilos was considered the father of modern neurology. He studied the nervous system and the brain. He was the first to determine that the nervous system and brain were actually related.

4.6.2 Literature and History

The development of literature depends upon the development of writing. The alphabet

was introduced into Greek by the Phoenicians in the 14th century BC. But the Greeks improved upon the alphabet. One great defect of the Phoenician alphabet was that it had no vowels. The Greeks were the first to invent vowel sounds.

Homer

Poetry developed in Greece even before the development of the art of writing. The First Greek poet was Homer. His famous epics the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were poems of supreme literary merit and their style and language inspired emotional poetry of the 6th century BC.

During the period succeeding the Homeric age developed new forms of literature of which the first was the elegy. The themes of the elegy were misty lamentations or melancholy reflections on the disillusionment of life. The most



prominent among the authors of elegy were Solon, the legislator, Mimnermos and Theognis.

This age was better known as the 'golden age of literature'. During this age, elegy gradually yielded place to the lyric which came to be called because it came to be sung to the music of lyre. Greatest among the lyric poets was Pindar of Thabes, who wrote during the first half of the 5th century BC.

His poems took the form of Odes extolling the victories of athletes and the glories of Hellenic civilization

The most sublime literary achievement of the Greeks was the tragic drama. This form of literature had its roots in religion. Public choral sign and presentation of dramas were a feature of some of the public religious festivals of Greece. The tragic drama in Greek literature originated in this way. The true drama took definite shape about the beginning of the 5th century BC. The purpose of Greek tragedies was, among other things, to purify the emotions of the audience by depicting the triumph of justice. The founder of Greek tragedy was Aeschylus (525-456BC) and the popular theme of his dramas was guilt and punishment.

Sophocles(496-406BC)

Sophocles(496-406BC) is considered the greatest of the Greek dramatists. He was the author of more than a hundred plays which reflect the love of harmony, respect for democracy and sympathy for human weakness.

Euripides (480-406BC)

The last of the great Greek tragedians was Euripides (480-406BC). He was

an individualist and a humanist. He was interested in the actual characters and feelings of human beings. Less majestic than Aeschylus and Sophocles, he was more human and more modern. His dramas reflect his sympathy for the slave, his hatred of war and his indignation against the exclusion of women from social and intellectual life.

Aristophanes (444-380BC)

Greek comedy was not as superb in quality as the Greek tragedies. It attained full development later in the 5th century BC. The greatest Greek comedian was Aristophanes (444-380BC) In his comic plays, he mocked and satirised the political and intellectual ideals of radical democracy. He was a master of subtle humour and Imaginative skill but his ideas were vitiated by prejudice.

Herodotus

In prose literature, History held the first place in the age of Pericles. Herodotus (484-425BC) known as “ the father of history” was a foreigner who came from Asia Minor and lived in Athens. His famous account of the war between the Greek and Persians was a masterpiece of history.

Thucydides

Another great historian was Thucydides, who was a native of Athens. He deserves to be called the father of scientific history. He wrote the history of the war between Sparta and Athens and he wrote passionately and scientifically.

Aristotle

The best writer of scientific literature was the great Philosopher Aristotle. The Greeks also specialized in oratory or the art of public speaking.

Demosthenes

The greatest orator was Demosthenes, who lived in the 4th century BC. Perhaps he stands unrivalled among the greatest orators in all history.

4.6.3 Greek Art

Greek art was even a more faithful image of the Hellenistic civilization than literature. The Greeks were essentially humanistic in their outlook and so Greek art symbolized humanism, the glorification of man as the most important being in the universe. No doubt Greek sculpture depicted gods. But the Greek Gods were intensely human and therefore by glorifying gods the Greeks were glorifying themselves. The ideals of harmony, balance and moderation were carefully reflected in both architecture and sculpture.

Simplicity and restraint were characteristics of Greek art. Further, the purpose of Greek art was not only aesthetic but also political and ethical. Art was an expression of national life and bore the hallmark of patriotism and unity. The ethical purpose was no less significant. It was not art for art's sake, but was to be a medium to make man noble. For the Athenians, especially "good" and "beautiful" were identical terms. In their eyes, what was beautiful was good.

Further, the Greek art was universal in appeal. The human beings who figured in Greek art were generally types, not individuals.

The important periods are noticed in the history of Greek art. The first period covered the 6th and the 7th century BC. The sculpture of this period bears the imprint of distinctive Egyptian influence. The Second period, which covered the 5th century BC, saw the perfection of both architecture and sculpture. Idealism was the hallmark of Greek art during this age. The 4th century BC marked the last period when sculpture assumed new characteristics and architecture declined. During this period Greek art came to reflect more of realism than idealism.

It is truly said that Greek art was the greatest of Greek products. The form and spirit of the masterpieces of Greek art have survived to the modern day as guide and stimulus to many arts in many lands. The glorious achievement of Greek art is that it created the classic style. In the words of Will Durant, "The essence of that style is order and form: moderation in design, expression and decoration, proportion in the parts and unity in whole; the supremacy of reason without the extinction of feeling; a quiet perfection that is content with simplicity, and a sublimity that owes nothing to science."

Recap

- ◆ Greece made considerable contributions to Literature and history
- ◆ Iliad and Odyssey written by Homer were considered as the two major ethics of Greece



- ◆ Age of Pericles was remarkable due to political hegemony economic growth and flourishing cultural
- ◆ Herodotus is considered as the ‘father of history’
- ◆ Greek art personified the developments during Hellenistic civilisation
- ◆ The Greek art symbolised humanism and glorification of man
- ◆ Simplicity and restraint were the characteristics of Greek art
- ◆ Sophocles is considered as the greatest of the Greek dramatist
- ◆ The last of the Greek tragedians was Euripides

Objective Questions

1. Which period is considered as the golden age of Greek literature?
2. Who was the founder of Greek tragedy?
3. Who was the greatest Greek comedian?
4. What was the great defect of the Phoenician alphabets?
5. What were the themes of the elegy?
6. Who was Sophocles(496-406BCE)?
7. Who is considered as “ the father of history”?
8. Who is considered as the father of scientific history?
9. Who was the greatest orator, that lived in the 4th century BCE?
10. What were the characteristics of Greek art?

Answers

1. Age of Pericles
2. Aeschylus
3. Aristophanes
4. It had no vowels
5. Mourning, loss and reflection
6. The greatest of the Greek dramatists
7. Herodotus (484-425BCE)
8. Thucydides
9. Demosthenes
10. Simplicity and restraint

Assignments

1. Write an assignment on the topic, “The glorious achievement of Greek art”.
2. Write a detailed report on the contributions of ancient Greece to the world.
3. Write an assignment on ‘Ancient Greek Tragedies’.

Suggested Readings

1. Livingstone (ed.), *The Legacy of Greece*, Kessinger Publishing Co, 2007.
2. Trierer A.A, *History of Ancient Civilisations*, Hecourt Brace & co., 1939.
3. Fowler H.N, *A History of Greek Literature*, Kessinger Publishing Co, 2010.



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BLOCK

ROMAN CIVILIZATION



UNIT

Early Rome

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able :

1. to discern the geographical backdrop of the Roman Empire
2. to analyse and evaluate the factors that led to the emergence of Rome
3. to distinguish the factors that helped Rome to establish control over the other ethnic tribes.

Prerequisites

Rome, a name that echoes through time, stands as a symbol of classical civilization. The world has been enchanted by Rome's legacy of law, philosophy, art, architecture, engineering, and lifestyle. The very mention of Rome conjures up images of grandeur, power, and magnificence. The roads that lead to Rome are not just physical roads, but they also represent a journey of discovery into the heart of Western civilization.

William Shakespeare, one of the greatest writers in the English language, captured the essence of Rome in his plays. He brought to life the political drama, romance, and intrigue of the Roman Empire in works such as Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Titus Andronicus. Shakespeare's fascination with Rome is not surprising, as the Romans have left an indelible mark on Western culture.

The Roman civilization was not built in a day; it was a gradual process of growth and development over a thousand years. Rome was once a small village, but it grew into a great empire that exercised its influence over different communities all over the world. The Roman Empire's legal system, philosophy, art and architecture, engineering, and lifestyle have influenced many later civilizations.

However, Rome's journey to becoming an empire was not without problems. It underwent turbulent times and an anarchical phase before developing into a well-knit empire. Rome's early settlers and the Geography of the Italian Peninsula played a crucial role in its growth. Understanding the history of Rome's growth will help us appreciate its culture and legacy.

Keywords

Neanderthal Man, Latins, Sabines, Umbrians, Villanovans, Etruscans, Sarcophagi, Celtic Tribes, Neopolis

Discussion

5.1.1 Geographical Background

The growth and development of the Roman culture in the Italian Peninsula were promoted by the geographical features and its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. The Italian peninsula was protected by the Alps and the Apennines in the north and north-west, surrounded by the Adriatic Sea, the Ionian Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea on all other sides, Italy had Rome in its central part. Italy extends over seven hundred miles from the Alps to southern Italy. The geography of Rome was featured by the seven hills and the river Tiber. The city of Rome was located on the eastern bank of the Tiber River., flowing 252 miles, is the third-longest in Italy. Most of the early settlements were located in hilly areas rather than the river valleys. Due to its proximity to the Mediterranean, Rome experienced a moderate climate, receiving moderate rainfall throughout the year. During April, May, October, and November, Rome experienced a pleasant climate. There was heavy rainfall in the peninsula, during the months from October to January. In

the north of the peninsula lies the fertile Po River valley. Creating a barrier to Europe from the south, there existed the Alps, beyond the Po River valley. It was hard to cross the Alps to the north from Italy because the mountains are sharp and steep. Italy faced the intruders to the south through the northern slopes as they were easy to climb. Rome was called the 'City of Seven Hills' as the hills like Viminal, Quirinal, Palatine, Esquiline, Capitoline, Caelian and Aventine were separated by marshy land and the Tiber River valley.

Italy could dominate the Mediterranean due to the central position that it possessed. Controlling the western coast, she was able to exercise full control over the western Mediterranean and Roman culture could permeate the Western Mediterranean world. Rome controlled the western plain and it enabled her to extend her sway all over the peninsula.

5.1.2 Founding of Rome

The mainland of Italy is famous for the prehistoric settlements of the Neanderthal Man*. The initial settlements of Homo-



sapiens ousted the Neanderthal man before they settled in Italy. Before the rise of Rome, Italy was a patchwork of different cultures having cultural and ethnic diversity. Northern Italy, North-western Italy, North-eastern Italy, Central Italy and southern Italy were inhabited by several tribes who spoke Indo-European languages and had diverse cultural pursuits. However, only little is known about them due to the absence of source materials. let us know something about these early settlers of Rome when analysed along with the archaeological sources. Before the Roman conquest of Italy, some invasions had a diverse effect on the previous cultures. In 334 BCE, Italy was invaded by Alexander I of Epirus followed by the invasion of Pyrrhus of Epirus in 280 BCE. During the II Punic War Italy was ransacked by Hannibal of Carthage between 218-and 203BCE. Rome was a major city-state of Italy during this period. Till the period of Etruscans; the land was inhabited by Latins, Sabines and Umbrians. The Etruscans commanded Bologna, Milan and the whole of Northern Italy and extended their sway over Apennine Peninsula**

According to archaeologists, Rome was home to its early settlers called Villanovans, who seem to have introduced iron to Italy. They practised the cremation of the dead and urn burials, too. Gradually they were subdued by the new cultures who moved to Italy. Northern Italy was controlled by the Etruscans. They were the most influential people in Rome before the rise of Rome and they seem to have emerged from the Villanovans. Their early history is obscure as their language is hard to read. Unlike in the other parts of Italy, they did not speak the Indo-European language. Etruscans left behind a rich literature, thousands of inscriptions on monuments, and coins that attest that they were an advanced culture. However, their language also disappeared by 100 BCE and the scholars are unable to read the inscriptions left behind by them. However, we come to know about the Etruscan from the funerary monuments left behind by them. They pictured banquet scenes with dancing merry making figures on the graves. An Etruscan sarcophagus** is one of the greatest remnants of their surviving artwork.



*Fig. 5.1. 1. Italian Peninsula
Apennine Range | [mountains, Italy |](#)
[Britannica](#)*



*Fig. 5.1.2 Etruscan Sarcophagi
[Conservation in Action: Etruscan Sarcophagi | Museum of Fine Arts, Boston \(mfa.org\)](#)*

The basic political unit of the Etruscan period was city-states. Etruscans expanded from the Po River in the north to Campania in the south. City-states were controlled by a central government but shared the same culture. They also imbibed the local culture. Around 400 BCE, there were raids by the Celts from Gaul who brought immense casualties to the Etruscans. Simultaneously, the Romans were also against the Etruscans and they were finally successful in recapturing an Etruscan city in the North. The Etruscans could not tackle the attack from the sides of the Romans and the Etruscans at the same time. Slowly most of the Etruscan states were incorporated into the Italian confederacy and they were given citizenship, too. The Etruscan culture had a profound influence on Roman culture and the Etruscan elite became powerful members of the Roman community.

Celtic Tribes were ethnic groups who had settled in Italy, north of the Etruscans. They had originally migrated from Gaul (modern France). Insubres, Boii, the Cenomani and the Senones were the major Celtic tribes. Celtic tribes posed a permanent threat to the Romans and a major hindrance to their expansion. Their mutual rivalry resulted in a battle between the Celts and the Roman Confederacy, called the Battle of Telamon in 225 BCE and once again in 222 BCE at the Battle of Clastidium in which the Romans emerged victorious under their able leader Marcus Claudius Marcellus. The battle brought great name and fame for the latter and the Celts fell under the Roman spell and gradually merged with Roman culture. Latin replaced the Celtic languages.

There was another ethnic group called Ligurians settled in Northwestern Italy greatly influenced by the Celts. Ligurians included several smaller tribes like Apuani, whose original home could

not be traced. The Ligurians spoke Indo-European languages and they were warriors. During the attack of Hannibal, they supported Hannibal against Rome. After inflicting a crushing defeat on Hannibal, Romans chased Ligurians out of Rome in 181 BCE. They massacred 15000 Ligurians and deported the rest. Liguria was annexed to the possessions of the Italian confederacy.

Veneti was another tribal group who inhabited northeastern Italy and spoke Latin and Oscan with a tinge of Celtic languages. Later it was replaced by Latin. Unlike the Celts and the Ligurians, the Veneti supported Rome during the invasion of Hannibal. The Romans gradually colonized the region of Veneti. It was in the region of Veneti, where Venice came up by the fifth century CE.

Latium, inhabited by Latins, was located in west-central Italy. The Latins lived in Independent city-states and shared the common language of Latin. Latin city-states were bound together by the Latin League. The Latin League was led by the city of Alba Longa. By the mid-seventh century BCE, Rome defeated Alba Longa and took the leadership of the League. Gradually, Rome utilised the League for her expansion. Though the Romans tried to shake off the shackle of Rome, they defeated the League and disbanded it in 338 BCE. The Latin League lost their autonomy to Rome in return for the citizenship of Rome. During the invasion of Hannibal, Latins remained loyal to Rome. They were given citizenship and voting rights. Later on, Latin states became prominent during the republican period and several Roman leaders came from these states. There were also other tribes like Sabines, the Volsci, the Aequi, the Hernici, and the Aurunci. They also spoke Indo-European languages.



In the South-central city, there was another ethnic group called the Companies. This region which was located to the south of Latium was inhabited by the natives who spoke the Oscan language. Their land was also colonized by the Greeks and the Etruscans. There were also other neighbouring city-states next to Latium like the Picentes on the northeast coast, and the Umbrians in north-central Italy. There were also several tribes that were at war with Rome.

The coastal region of Southern Italy was colonized by the Greeks and the region was called 'Greater Greece'. Neopolis (Modern Naples), Tarentum (Taras), Croton, Sybaris and Bari were also important city-states of Italy. Syracuse, in Sicily, was another major city-state in the South and was famous for cruel tyrants. The Greeks had coastal cities and with their armies, they controlled the hinterland too. The pastoral natives in the interior were not able to oppose the military strength of the Greeks. In the South, there were other groups of people like the Lucanians, the Oscans, the Samnites, the Bruttians, the Appulians and the Messapians. In southern Italy, there grew up Sicily as a strong city-state that was controlled both by the Greeks and the Carthaginians. Both of them fought constantly for control over Sicily. Rome and Syracuse allied against the Carthaginians in the First Punic War.

Many of the inhabitants of Southern Sicily and adopted Greek Culture. However, after the First Punic War (264-241 BCE) people from Sicily were subsumed by Roman Culture.

Excavated Etruscan tombs attest that they were skilled people. They were experts in metalwork and pottery. They had trade relations with the Greeks and they assimilated many of the cultural aspects of the Greeks. They fortified the city and drained the water from the lowland and cultivated it. Their war tactics were adopted by the Romans. Around 500 BCE, Etruscans were driven out and the Romans set up a government of their own.

1. **Apennine Peninsula:** The Italian Peninsula, extending from the Alps Mountains in the north to the Mediterranean Sea in the south, is also known as Apennine Peninsula.
2. **Neanderthal Man:** Early man of Europe whose details are reconstructed by the examination of fossils found in the Neanderthal valley of Germany.
3. **Sarcophagus:** A sculptured and adorned stone/terracotta coffin associated with early civilizations and the Iron Age.

Recap

- ◆ Geographical features played a vital role in shaping the unique culture of Rome.
- ◆ The Mediterranean provided for the international trade networks of the Roman world.

- ◆ Italy was a patchwork of different ethnic groups before the rise of the Romans.
- ◆ Southern Italy which was inhabited by Greek people was known as Greater Greece.
- ◆ Geographical features played a vital role in shaping the unique culture of Rome.
- ◆ The Mediterranean provided for the international trade networks of the Roman world.
- ◆ Italy was a patchwork of different ethnic groups before the rise of the Romans.
- ◆ Southern Italy which was inhabited by Greek people was known as Greater Greece.
- ◆ Etruscans were a major group in the peninsula with a strong state.
- ◆ From the examination of the archaeological evidence from the burials, we come to know about the skill of Etruscans in metalwork and pottery.
- ◆ Several conflicts were staged in the peninsula before it was placed under the Romans.
- ◆ By around 500 BCE, the Romans overpowered all the other groups and became the single power in the Italian world.

Objective Questions

1. Name the river flowing through Italy on the bank of which Rome is situated.
2. What were the prehistoric settlers of Europe known as?
3. Name the major river that flowed through northern Italy.
4. Name the early settlers of Italy who practised cremation of the dead and the urn burial system.
5. Which tribe controlled northern Italy with a strong central state?
6. What are the material remains that help historians reconstruct the history to Etruscans?



7. Name the basic political unit of the Etruscan period.
8. What was the early name of the region of France?
9. Name the battle that took place between the Roman Confederacy and the Celtic tribes in 222 BCE
10. What was the name of the southern coastal region inhabited by the Greeks?

Answers

1. The Tiber
2. Neanderthal Man
3. Po River
4. Villanovans.
5. Etruscans.
6. Burial monuments
7. City-states.
8. Gaul
9. Battle of Telamon
10. Greater Greece

Assignments

1. Make a comparative analysis on features of early Rome and Greece.
2. provide a detailed description about the geographical background of Rome

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970.
2. <https://www.unrv.com>

References

1. *Legacy of the Ancient Romans* - World History Encyclopedia
2. Henry A. Sanders, *The Chronology of Early Rome*, 1908, pp. 316-329
Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261793>



UNIT

War And Conflict

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able :

- ◆ to compare and contrast the features of modern democracy with those of ancient Rome.
- ◆ to compare and contrast the democratic practices in Rome and Greece.
- ◆ to assess the growth and development of Roman Culture.
- ◆ to analyse critically the features of Roman governance.

Prerequisites

In the early days of Rome, the City of Seven Hills was just a small settlement in a land full of ethnic groups, constantly at war with each other. But Rome's strategic position gave it an edge over its neighbours. The city sat at the center of the Italian peninsula, making it an ideal spot for trade and military defense. As Rome grew, it began to assert its power over the surrounding regions. Its military prowess and political cunning allowed it to gradually gain control over the mainland of Italy and eventually the entire Western Mediterranean region.

The early Roman republic was forged in the crucible of war and conflict. Its political system was an experiment in democracy, with elected officials and a complex system of checks and balances. Roman culture was unique, blending elements of Etruscan, Greek, and Latin traditions. And the Roman people were known for their courage, strength, and discipline.

But Rome's rise to power was not without challenges. There were political intrigues, assassinations, and power struggles. There were wars with foreign powers

and rebellions within its own borders. And yet, Rome persevered, growing in strength and influence until it became one of the greatest empires the world has ever known.

In the following unit of study, we will explore the fascinating history of the early Roman republic. We will delve into the evolution of Roman politics and society, examine the richness and complexity of Roman culture, and marvel at the valour and resilience of the Roman people. Through it all, we will gain a deeper understanding of what made Rome such a legendary and enduring civilization.

Keywords

Tribunes, Senate, Assembly, Veto, Twelve Tables, Patricians, Republic, Rome, Carthage, Punic War,

Discussion

5.2.1 Early Republic

The new government set up by the Romans was an aristocratic republic in which the officials were elected. The aristocratic class was called the Patricians, who were eligible to hold public offices. The other section of the society consisted of the farmers, who were called the plebs or the plebeians who had no say in the government. Annually two patricians were elected to be the chief magistrates called the consuls. They were in charge of leading the army, proposing the laws to the Assembly. They also judged some cases and executed the laws. The earliest example of checks and balances existed between the two consuls. The Assembly was constituted by the weapon-bearing men. However, in case of an emergency, a dictator was entrusted with the duty of leading the army.

The Senate was the most important organ of the government. The Patricians were the members of the senate and their membership was permanent. The appointments to the office and the laws

were to be approved by the Senate. It also exercised control over foreign policy, taxation and many other affairs. The Assembly had very little power compared to the senate. All weapon bearing citizens were members of the assembly but the votes of the Plebs were not as valid as those of patricians.

5.2.2 Patricians and Plebeians

The Plebeians were dissatisfied with the government which unequally distributed the right to vote between them and the patricians. The government also refused them the right to marry from the patrician class. Soon after the establishment of the republic, the plebs threatened to secede from the republic and establish another city along the banks of the river Tiber. The plebs were good fighters and they had formed the military of Rome which prompted the patricians to accept their demands. The plebeians were thus given more rights. They were



permitted to elect magistrates known as the tribunes, who had the right to veto. 'Veto was the power to forbid' any actions of the magistrates against the interest of the plebs. The introduction of veto power was the first step toward the breakdown of barriers between the two classes of the Roman Society. However, the plebeians had to fight for another century and a half to acquire equal rights. In 450 BCE, the Roman laws were written down and were adopted as a code of laws. These laws were engraved upon twelve tables of bronze that were called Twelve Tables. These were prepared by ten commissioners and brought forth certain rights for the plebeians, too. Till the formation of the Twelve Tables, the judgements were given on the basis of the unwritten customs and practices that existed among a small circle of the patricians. The codification of these customs into laws enabled the plebeians to become familiar with the laws and to protect themselves against the domination of the patricians.

Gradually, the plebes were given a fair share of the public land and they were allowed to marry from the patrician class. They were also permitted to hold public office and after a specific tenure, they were also allowed to enter the Senate. In the early third century BCE, the Assembly was given legislative powers. Thus, the disparities between the patricians and the plebeians disappeared and the nature of the Roman republic was changed from Aristocracy to Democracy. The Roman democratic practices were different from that of Athenians. The Athenian democracy was direct whereas Romans practised indirect democracy, suitable for larger populations. In Rome, the representatives of the people participated in decision-making and law-making as practised by the modern democracies.

Masters of Italy

The growth of Rome as a strong political power in central Italy was of great concern for the neighbouring states. To protect themselves, Rome developed what may be called the first citizen-soldiers in history. Farmers were recruited as soldiers. They were strong and well-disciplined and avowed to protect their homeland and to have more lands. Therefore, they fought with great vigour and valour. Within the next two centuries, Rome turned to be an aggressive state that overpowered its neighbours. They followed a humanitarian approach towards the conquered people and demanded only troops and financial aid from them. The conquered areas and were permitted to reign themselves and the Roman protectorate was extended over them. This diplomacy of Rome made her the leading state of the peninsula.

For the next two centuries, Rome was preoccupied with consolidating her position in the peninsula and she did not care much about the external powers. After conquering southern Italy from the Greeks, Rome wanted to conquer Carthage, a North African city founded by the seafaring traders and was a flourishing commercial empire. It resulted in the famous Punic Wars.

5.2.3 Punic Wars

Carthage was a commercial city that ruled the entire Mediterranean world. She had overseas colonies, too. The army of Carthage consisted of mercenaries and hired soldiers. It was a wealthy Hellenistic city with magnificent harbours, beautiful buildings, and carefully laid out avenues with great elegance and luxury. Carthage was far better than Rome in the case of town planning and other facilities. Carthage was an oligarchy with several merchant princes forming the inner council

of the senate. Religiously, they followed blood sacrifices. Rome had a systematic government and her army was made up of patriotic farmer soldiers. Wealthy and magnificent Carthage was jealous of poor but ambitious Rome. The hostilities began when Carthage denied other cities accessibility to the ports under her control. Rome who was trying to build up her trade was infuriated by this measure of Carthage. A series of wars known as Punic wars began with the occupation

These wars lasted up to 146 BCE.

5.2.3.1 I Punic War (264–241 BCE)

The outbreak of First Punic war was caused by the crisis in Messina on the question of overloading ships over the straits between Sicily and Italy. It lasted for twenty-three years and it was a prolonged war. It was the first experience of the Romans fighting at sea. In 260 BCE, Rome built its first large fleet of battleships. Many times Rome seemed to be defeated. However, they were able to defeat Carthage in a decisive naval battle. The able commander of Rome Gaius Duilius defeated Carthaginians and landed on Corsica. In 256 BCE a large Roman ship sailed out and expelled the Carthaginians and landed on African soil. Carthaginians pleaded for peace and the hostilities came to an end. After negotiations, they agreed to pay 3600 talents as war indemnity and cede Sicily and Lipary islands to Rome. Rome won the island of Sicily through which she was able to control the Strait of Messina, too.

5.2.3.2 II Punic War (218 - 201 BCE)

The Second Punic War was fought between Carthage and Rome. The war

which was also called as Hannibalic War involved confrontations in Spain, Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and North Africa. The Romans considered the attempts of the Carthaginians to rebuild their empire in Spain as a threat to their interests. The Carthaginians were led by Hannibal and the Romans by general Africanus. The war broke out when Rome's demand to expel Hannibal was denied by Carthage. The war prolonged for sixteen years and Hannibal ravaged Italy. However, Rome was successful in driving out the Carthaginians from Italy and the latter was humbled more than before.

5.2.3.3 III Punic War (149-146 BCE)

The rivalry between Rome and Carthage was renewed again in the middle of the second century BCE. By this period, Carthage had recovered mildly from the repercussions of the earlier wars. The senate members in Rome now wanted the complete subjugation of Carthage and ceded an ultimatum to the Carthaginians asking them for an evacuation from the coastal belt. As expected, Carthage refused to do so as its commerce was dependent on oceanic trade. It resulted in the Third Punic war which was all the more brutal. The Romans devastated and burned the city of Carthage. A few citizens who surrendered were taken as slaves. Carthage became a Roman province.

Effects of Punic Wars:

The Punic wars had tremendous effects on Rome. The success in the first and second Punic wars enabled Roman domination over Spain and assured the flow of Spanish silver to Rome. It inaugurated the westward expansion of

Rome. Through the defeat of the allies of Carthage, Macedonia and Egypt, Rome occupied Asia Minor and Greece and also assumed control over Egypt. Before the end of the second century BC, the entire Mediterranean was brought under the control of Romans. The conquest of Greek territories led to the introduction of Greek ideas and customs into the Roman society. In the long run, they played a vital role in the social formation of Rome. The wars led to a socio-economic revolution in the Roman world. Prisoners of war were taken as slaves which led to the system of slavery. Small scale farmers faced a tough situation due to the establishment of large estates in the conquered areas and the inflow of cheap grains in the Roman markets. A new middle class, consisting of merchants and government contractors who operated mines, the building of roads and collecting of taxes emerged in society. The newly rich class was now immersed in luxury and sensual life with the unexpected amassing of wealth received from the war spoils.

These changes eventually led to the composition of a complex social system in Rome. A society of new habits of luxury and vulgar display and indulgences survived a society of farmers. There was a wide gulf between the rich and the poor. The property was not evenly distributed. The lofty ideals and devotion to service gave way to a pleasurable and duty-free life. Some of the aristocrats like Cato the Elder vehemently criticised these tendencies. He set an example before the

people through his exemplary life against the new riches and vanity life. He took up hard labour and opted to live in a small hut-like an ordinary farmer. However, such efforts were all in vain and society continued to stick to pompous ways of life.

5.2.4 Slavery in Rome

The post-Punic war period brought immense wealth and prosperity along with great prestige to the Romans. Along with prosperity, there came class conflicts, assassinations, struggles between dictators, unrest and insurrections. The slaves in Rome were generally prisoners of war and had a tough time under their Roman masters. In 104 BCE, they ransacked Sicily and added to the existing disorder in Rome. There was also the rise of slaves against their masters under the leadership of Spartacus in 73 CE. Spartacus and his associates were defeated and they were crucified along the road. The material life of Rome was built upon the sweat and blood of slaves and soon Rome was to fall into a civil war. The slaves were utilised for agriculture, mines, military, workshops, construction and domestic services. Slavery was considered a necessity by the Romans and the Slaves were acquired through war, trade and piracy. The children born to a slave mother were also considered slaves. Even the freed criminals had certain rights while the slaves never had hardly any.

Recap

- ◆ The state of Rome overpowered other tribes and conquered Italy and the surrounding regions through wars and conflicts.
- ◆ Due to its peculiar geographical features, Rome was called The City of Seven Hills.
- ◆ Early Rome had the features of an Aristocratic Republic.
- ◆ Roman society was broadly divided into two classes called the Patricians and the Plebs.
- ◆ The Plebs had fewer rights when compared to the Patricians.
- ◆ The most important organ of the government was the Senate.
- ◆ On demand from the Plebeians, they were given the right to elect the magistrates called the Tribune.
- ◆ The state of Rome overpowered other tribes and conquered Italy and the surrounding regions through wars and conflicts.
- ◆ Due to its peculiar geographical features, Rome was called The City of Seven Hills.
- ◆ Early Rome had the features of an Aristocratic Republic.
- ◆ Roman society was broadly divided into two classes called the Patricians and the Plebs.
- ◆ The Plebs had fewer rights when compared to the Patricians.
- ◆ The most important organ of the government was the Senate.
- ◆ On demand from the Plebeians, they were given the right to elect the magistrates called the Tribune.
- ◆ Magistrates had the 'power to forbid' or veto the decisions taken by the other magistrates.
- ◆ Several of the democratic tenets followed by modern democracies were taken from the Roman democratic experiments.
- ◆ Through the Punic Wars Rome became the unquestioned master of the Mediterranean world.

Objective Questions

1. What was the nature of the government set up by early Romans?
2. What was the name of the aristocratic class?
3. What was the most important organ of the early Roman Government?
4. Which social class was dissatisfied with the functioning of Roman Government?
5. Roman Code of Jews were formulated in which year?
6. Who were the two parties involved in Punic wars?
7. What was the major cause for First Punic War?
8. Name the island captured by Rome from Carthage in the First Punic War?
9. The 'Second Punic War' is otherwise known as ?
10. Who were the slaves of Rome?

Answers

1. Aristocratic Republic
2. Patricians
3. Senate
4. Plebians
5. 450 BCE
6. Roman and Carthage
7. Crissis in Messina
8. Island of Sicily

9. Hannibalic war
10. Prisoners of war

Assignments

1. Enlist the results of the three Punic wars
2. Write an assignment on the basic features of 'Early Republic' established by Romans
3. Describe the functionalities of Patricians and Plebeians in Roman

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970.
2. Bradley, Keith "*Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control*", OUP, New York, 1987
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1. *Legacy of the Ancient Romans* - World History Encyclopedia
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UNIT

Rise of Roman Empire

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit the learner will be able :

- ◆ to make the learners understand the historical context of the rise of the Roman empire.
- ◆ to enable the learners to list factors that promote the formation of an empire
- ◆ to Compare, contrast and explain differences between the Roman empire and other contemporary civilizations.
- ◆ to critically evaluate the socio-economic and political condition called Pax Romana.

Prerequisites

Rome's rise to becoming an empire was a gradual process. The Roman Republic, which had emerged out of wars and conflicts, had now established itself as a powerful political unit. The Romans had extended their dominion over vast areas and had brought diverse ethnic groups under their control. But the expansion had come at a cost. Rome's success in war and trade had made it prosperous, and the wealth had led to the emergence of a lavish lifestyle among the elite. Despite this, Rome's spirit of determination and willpower continued to drive it forward.

Rome's transformation from a republic to an empire is a fascinating story. The unit will delve deeper into the factors that led to Rome's transformation. The Roman legions, the administrative machinery, the infrastructure, the legal system, the philosophy, the art and architecture, and the lifestyle of the Romans were all contributing factors to Rome's evolution into a full-fledged empire. The unit will

explore these aspects of Roman life and analyze how they impacted the development of Rome as an empire.

The Roman Empire left a lasting impact on the world. The legal and political systems of many modern nations owe their origins to the Romans. The architecture and engineering feats of the Romans still amaze us today. The literature and art of the Romans continue to inspire us. By studying Rome's transformation into an empire, we can gain a deeper understanding of how civilizations evolve and how they impact the world around them.

Keywords

Class struggle, Tiberius, Triumvirates, Crossing of Rubicon, Julius Ceaesar, Julian Calendar, Cleopatra, Augustus Ceaesar, Pax Romana

Discussion

Quest for Reforms and Class Struggle

Not much later, Rome witnessed a conflict between the different classes of citizens. The leaders of the liberal and pro-Greek elements, the Gracchi brothers, revolted. Their revolt aimed to reduce the evils of the system prevailing in Rome. They alleged that the degradation of the system was due to the decline of peasants' liberty, and proposed the redistribution of land among the landless as a remedy. Tiberius was elected tribune in 133 BCE and he proposed a law which restricted the current landholding to a maximum of 640 acres. The remaining land was to be assessed and distributed to the landless in small plots. Following this move, a veto was applied by Octavius in the tribune. However, Tiberius was successful in removing Octavius. It gave an excuse for the conservatives to use violence. There was total violence in which Tiberius along

with his 300 associates were killed. After a few years, Gaius, brother of Tiberius attempted to bring about the same reforms. By then, the land law proposed by the latter had been passed. For more reforms, Gaius tried his level best. He wanted to better the lot of the unprivileged through more legislation. As a result, public granaries were made to stabilize the grain price. Besides, the franchise was extended to non-Latin citizens and provided rights to the middle class to appoint juries to try corrupt governors. These measures created hostility among the elite classes and civil war broke out in Rome. Finally, Gaius committed suicide and his men were scattered or killed.

These revolts were not without consequences. It revealed the weakness of the administrative system and spread awareness about the need for reforms for popular welfare. It set an example that any politician could use force to attain their ends. It also revealed the narrow

mindfulness of the upper classes. They viewed reform as evil and suppressed all voices for reforms. Thereafter two military leaders became rulers of the country, followed by a group of aristocracy under Sulla. After his voluntary retirement, the slot was left to Pompey and Julius Caesar to lead Rome.

5.3.1 Julius and Augustus Caesar

5.3.1.1 Julius Caesar

Among the several leaders who wielded power, Pompey and Julius Caesar were outstanding due to their military genius and popularity. They tactfully utilized the situation and gained an upper hand over the others and rose to power. They formed a political alliance along with Crassus. This political arrangement was approved by the senate as the Triumvirate. Under the First Triumvirate, they pooled the state resources to stabilize the power and gain control over the government. However, their collective leadership did not last long. Crassus was sidelined and the other two became more powerful. Soon they parted ways and began to engage in intrigues and mutual conflict. While Pompey successfully conquered Syria and Palestine, Julius Caesar added Belgium, Germany west of the Rhine and France to the Roman territories. Finally, in 52 BCE, Pompey was elected the sole consul and Caesar was branded as an enemy of the state. However, in 49 BCE, Caesar decided to cross the Rubicon (River Rubicon was the boundary between the Roman territories and Gaul. Caesar crossing the Rubicon meant that there would be no return now. Ever since then, Crossing of Rubicon became an idiom which means that one is passing a point of no return or making a final decision).

and attack Rome. He marched on Rome and Pompey fled from Italy in the hope of retaliating later. Soon there was a battle between Caesar and Pompey in which Pompey faced a crushing defeat and later, he was murdered.

Caesar soon undertook a campaign against Egypt and had relations with Cleopatra of Egypt. He intervened in the internal affairs of politics and then turned his attention toward Asia Minor. At the easy victory over Asia Minor, he is said to have acclaimed 'I came, I saw and I conquered' At Rome, he was without any opponent and was declared dictator for the next ten years in 46 BCE. The power to make war and peace rested in him. The Senate empowered him with unlimited powers. He did not have respect for the constitution and his high-handed actions resulted in a senatorial plot against him. Finally, he was assassinated in 44 BCE. The plot and execution of Julius Caesar's assassination later constituted the central theme of the Shakespearean play *Julius Caesar*.

Though Caesar was not the best statesman of his age and did little respect for the Republic, some of his measures had far-reaching implications. With the help of a Greek astronomer, he revised the calendar in which a year lasted for 365 days with an extra day added after every four years. The calendar which is being followed all over the world is based on this Julian Calendar (The calendar prepared by Julius Caesar was revised by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. The seventh month of the year is named after Julius as July.). He extended citizenship to the Spaniards and the Gauls and reduced the disparity between the Italians and the conquered regions. He took measures to allocate unused land to the landless and the poor. More than conquering, he invested in north-western Europe, brought

great agricultural wealth, and promoted an urban culture in Rome.

5.3.1.2 Augustus Caesar (27 BCE- 14 AD)

The death of Julius Caesar created a political disorder in Rome for the short period during which the rule was taken up by the Second Triumvirate consisting of Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus. Before the formation of the alliance, Octavian and Mark Antony hunted down the conspirators of Julius Caesar's assassination. The major conspirators, Brutus and Cassius fled from Rome. Though they tried to make a comeback in 42 BCE, they were defeated by Octavius Caesar. The well-known orator and scholar Cicero was critical of the actions of the Second Triumvirate and openly attacked it several times publically. He was declared the enemy of the state and was killed by Mark Antony's men. Lepidus was a nominal entity in the Second Triumvirate and the real powers were exercised by the other two. Octavius was the nephew of Julius Caesar and Mark Antony was a close associate of him. Mark Antony was entrusted with the African possessions of Rome, including Egypt, where Antony too was taken by the charm of Cleopatra.

The defects of the first triumvirate haunted the second too. A power struggle broke out between Octavian and Mark Antony. Antony's alliance with Egypt created a strong resistance against Octavian's army. Octavian won the support of the Greek and the hostilities resulted in the battle of Actium in 31 BCE in which the forces of Antony and Cleopatra were defeated. Both Cleopatra and Antony later committed suicide. The victorious Octavian assumed the title Augustus and began to rule Rome as the Roman Emperor. The period of Augustus Caesar

was one of popular reforms, constitutional government, international trade and commerce and the development of a full-fledged Roman Culture. The period of Augustus was a period of expansion too. The policy of territorial acquisition started by him was continued by his followers till the rule of Trajan. Under the leadership of Augustus, modern day Switzerland, Austria and Bulgaria were annexed to the Roman territories. In 43 CE, Claudius conquered Britain and Trajan occupied the area of modern Rumania. He extended the Roman territories up to the Mesopotamian region.

Rome under Augustus

After the fall of Antony, Octavius became the ruler of Rome and he was conferred the title, Augustus and emperor of Rome by the Senate and the army. Unlike his predecessors, Augustus was careful not to upset the Senate and the existing Republic. He enjoyed more powers and sustained the basic structure of the constitutional government. He held the post of Proconsul and the tribune permanently, and denied being called a dictator. He often asserted that the supreme power vested with the people and the senate and that he was only the first citizen of the state or princeps. Thus, during his period and after Rome was called the Principate of Rome or Early Empire Augustus was very keen on introducing popular reforms. He introduced the civil service and a postal system and a system of coinage. He also created a centralized judicial system and introduced local self-government in provinces and cities. He was particular in appointing intelligent and veteran office bearers in the administrative system. He severely punished the corrupt provincial governors. He cleansed the tax collection system of all the corrupt practices that crept into it. He abolished



the tax collection by agents appointed by the provincial governors and appointed salaried representatives for the same. He conducted a census throughout the empire to assess the tax scientifically. He also initiated legislation to chain the social and moral evils of the Roman society. He set up the world's first fire fighting service. To make the transport and communication easier he constructed a network of roads throughout the empire. He revitalized the religion and encouraged the celebration of Roman festivals to build up loyalty to the state. He set on a project of renovating the public buildings including the temples and civic buildings.



Fig 5.3.1 Roman empire at the height of Pax Romana.

<https://www.ushistory.org/civ/6c.asp>.

He was also a patron of art. Men of letters like Horace, Livy, Virgil and Ovid lived during his period. He himself took to simple living so as to set an example and return to the ancient virtues. His tenure inaugurated what is known as Pax Romana in Roman history.

5.3.2 Later Emperors

The ruling years of Augustus Caesar were not without troubles and turbulence. However, his leadership and statesmanship strategically dealt with all disintegrating tendencies. The post-Augustinian period witnessed the restoration of such elements

in Roman politics. The major reason for this was the incapable rulers who had succeeded Augustus after his death from 14 CE onwards. Except for Claudius, who ruled from 41 to 54 CE, all the other rulers were highly corrupt and incapable of handling the vast empire knit under Augustus Caesar. Rulers like Caligula (41-54 CE) and Nero (54-68 CE) were infamous tyrants who were also ruthless in nature. Their administration saw the degradation of statecraft, squandering of public money and an increase in corrupt practices. However, from 94 CE, there was the period of 'Five Good Emperors' like Nerva (96-98CE), Trajan (98-117 CE), Hadrian (117-138 CE), Antonius Pius (138-161 CE) and Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE). These five rulers ruled as per the constitution and were in harmony with the senate.

5.3.3 Pax Romana

The term Pax Romana in Latin means 'Roman Peace'. It refers to the period between 27 BCE to 180 CE, when Rome experienced unprecedented peace and economic prosperity and cultural development. During this period Rome witnessed an increase in land area and population. Under a stable government, Roman citizens enjoyed considerable social security and the law and order situation was remarkable, too. International trade and commerce was now conducted without a single conflict at sea or land. The Mediterranean region was peacefully controlled by a single power. During this period each province could rule on its own, under Roman taxation system and military rule. The far flung areas like North Africa and Persia also experienced this period of tranquility.

5.3.3.1 Life and Culture

The cultural, intellectual and artistic achievements during the Principate (as the political arrangement of the period was termed) excelled other periods of Roman civilization. There are spectacular achievements in the fields of philosophy and thinking. Outstanding literary works along with art and architecture and distinctive growth in the field of engineering was also witnessed during the same period.

Stoicism

The most important view that grew up during this period was Stoicism. The early Roman habit of devotion to duty, self-discipline and subjection to the natural order of things and also their habit of conservation contributed much in the growth of this philosophy. The Stoic view of civic obligation doctrine of cosmopolitanism¹ would easily fit into the Roman view of the world empire. It replaced the old schools of political theories with a broader interest in politics and ethics. The tenets of Stoicism sounded more religious than philosophical.

Most important exponents of stoicism were Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius who was the emperor himself. According to stoics, true happiness can be achieved by surrendering to the order of the universe. The ultimate goal to be sought in life is the inner serenity of mind. They gave prime importance to the ideal of virtue and detested the sinful nature of human beings. Seneca and Epictetus developed the philosophy into a religion where they worshipped the cosmos as divine, which is governed by an omnipotent Providence. Marcus Aurelius' philosophy was centred around a thought in which

life is less hopeful and predetermined. He also believed that the worldly sufferings of the human beings could not be balanced with a blessed immortality. One has to live nobly, practice gross indulgence, abstain from anger, undergo suffering patiently, and embrace death.

Literature

Literary works of Rome often reflected their philosophy. Augustan age witnessed the flourishing of literature promoted by writers like Horace, who wrote the famous Odes which celebrated even the commonest events in life like proposing a drink of travelling. Another notable literary figure of the period was Virgil who was also influenced by the philosophical trends of his age. He is known for his famous work *Aenid*, which glorified Roman imperialism. Ovid and Livy were the other noted literary figures of the period. Ovid was famous for his witty and brilliant way of writing and Livy; the historian wrote the famous History of Rome. After the period of Augustus, Roman literature depicted intellectual and conflicting aspects of Roman life as evident in the works of Petronius, Apuleius and Martial. Juvenal, the satirist and Tacitus the well-known historian of Rome, carried more radical views. Among the works of Tacitus, the *Germania*, *Histories* and *The Annals* are remarkable.

Art and Architecture

Roman art was greatly influenced by Hellenistic art. The plundered articles like statues and marble columns brought from Greece and Asia Minor decorated the property of wealthy businessmen and there was high demand for the same fashion. Hundreds of replicas of them were prepared. However, art in Rome had

¹ *Cosmopolitanism*: A political theory, the belief that all people are entitled to equal respect and consideration, no matter their citizenship status or other affiliations.

certain indigenous features too. Yet the influence of Hellenistic art could be seen in Roman art.

Truly indigenous expression of Roman character could be seen in the architecture and sculpture designed to symbolize power and glory. The round arch, vaults and dome were the major features of Roman architecture. Brick, squared stone brick and concrete were used for the construction. Concrete was the contribution of the Romans. Roman architecture was visible in the government buildings, next line amphitheatres, baths, racecourses, and private houses. There were massive solid constructions like the pantheon. The distinctive features of Roman sculpture were individuality and naturalism. It conveyed qualities of simple human dignity as those exposed in stoicism.

Science

Roman engineering and public service also were well advanced. The bridges, roads and aqueducts have survived to this day. During the period of Trajan, eleven aqueducts were made to carry water from the nearby hills to Rome and there also existed a well-planned sewage system. Water was carried to the houses of the rich and the gardens, public baths and other public places cleverly. It was Romans who built the first hospitals and government medical system for the poor. Pliny the Elder was the most famous historian of the Romans who prepared the encyclopaedia of science, Natural History. He discussed subjects from cosmology to economics in his work.

Romans did not achieve much in scientific knowledge that they received from Greeks, but astronomical knowledge

progressed much under the renowned astronomer Ptolemy of Alexandria. Galen, the famous physician, also contributed to medicinal knowledge, through his medical encyclopaedia. His experiments brought him closer to the discovery of the circulation of blood by proving that arteries carry blood.

Society

Historians point out that society under the principate was male, essentially male chauvinistic in nature. Women had no good status in society. They were confined to domestic work and taking care of children. They did not have independent names; instead, they earned the name from their family names like Julia from Julius, Claudia from Claudius etc. They were expected to be submissive to their fathers and husbands and were expected to stay back at home.

The society of Rome was famous for its desire for cruelty. The people from the well-to-do families and even common people used to go for watching combats between the prisoners of war, slaves and gladiators². These combats often became bloody beyond limits. While the Colosseum and other amphitheatres attest to the Romans' social sense and public life, they also exhibit the bloody side of the aesthetic sense that the elite and the middle-class Romans possessed. There were combats between slaves, slaves and animals and similar shows. Mithraism was the prominent belief of the principate period. Christianity entered Rome around 40 CE. It replaced Mithraism and swept the mass belief.

There was immense development of international and overseas exchanges during this period. International trade

2. *Gladiator*: They were Professional combatants in ancient Rome. Right from the period of Etruscans, they used to perform at the funerals. Later on, slaves and prisoners of war were forced to fight in the amphitheatres against the gladiators.

was extended to Arabia, India and China. There was rapid growth in the production of materials like pottery, textiles, metal products and glass. There were variations in the prosperity level of the people. The process of production depended on the supply of slaves. The Romans imported luxurious materials from overseas lands and they did not have ample production to meet the increasing demand for export. It seems that many a time, they depended on precious metals to pay off the cargoes from abroad. It gradually drained the wealth. It led to the collapse of the Roman economy by the 3rd century.

Law

Roman Law was the result of the gradual evolution of the Twelve Tables which was published around 450 BCE. However, the coming of new precedents and principles led to the modification of the Twelve Tables and the development of a new legal system. The new legal system emanated from different sources

like changes in customs, teachings of the Stoics, judges' decisions and the edicts of the praetors³. The decisions taken by the jury became the precedents. Under the principate, Roman law reached the heights of its development. During the principate, certain judges were given authority to give opinions on legal issues. These were men who had great reputations as writers on legal matters and lawyers. Their responses and opinions were accepted as the science and philosophy of law and formed the base of the Roman legal system.

The death of Marcus Aurelianus marked the end of the benevolent rulers. His successors were highly inefficient and were engaged in sensual pleasures, and ruled sidelining the Senate. The provinces reacted and civil war broke out. The civil war proved fatal for the empire and most of the succeeding rulers met with a violent death. The prolonged civil war resulted in political chaos and led to a disaster in the economy.

3. Praetors were judges who were authorities to interpret and explain the laws in specific cases.



Recap

- ◆ By the first century BCE, there were signs of civil unrest in Rome led by the Gracchi Brothers.
- ◆ Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus formed the First Triumvirate of Rome in 60 BCE.
- ◆ The power struggle in the empire led to the decline of the First Triumvirate assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE by his own senators.
- ◆ The First Triumvirate was succeeded by the Second Triumvirate by Octavian, Mark Antony and Lepidus in 43 BCE.
- ◆ The internal strife and power play between Mark Antony and Octavian led to the liquidation of the Second Triumvirate.
- ◆ Octavian became the First Roman Emperor as Augustus Caesar in 27 BCE and ruled up to 14 CE.
- ◆ The period of Augustus Caesar saw unprecedented development of overseas trade and commerce and Rome became prosperous.
- ◆ Pax Romana is a term given to that period of Roman peace and prosperity which extended for a period of 150 years beginning with the administration of Augustus Caesar.
- ◆ The successors of Augustus were not capable enough to carry forward the government machinery or the economic and social prosperity enjoyed under Augustus.
- ◆ Stoicism was a major philosophy of the Roman empire
- ◆ World famous historians like Pliny, Tacitus, philosophers like Seneca and Cicero and literary figures like Virgil, Horace and Ovid flourished in ancient Rome.

Objective Questions

1. Who were the members of the First Triumvirate?
2. When was Julius Caesar assassinated?
3. Which Roman philosopher criticised the actions of the Second Triumvirate?
4. Which battle sealed the fate of Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BCE?
5. Who was known as the first Roman emperor?
6. Which term is used to describe the peace and security enjoyed by the Roman people?
7. What was the political arrangement of Rome under Augustus known as?
8. Whose poems celebrated even the commonest aspects of Roman life?
9. Which historian of Rome authored *Germania*, *Histories* and *The Annals*?
10. Whose rule marked the end of the benevolent rulers of Rome?

Answers

1. Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus
2. 44 BCE
3. Cicero
4. Battle of Actium
5. Augustus Caesar (Octavian)
6. Pax Romana
7. Principate
8. Horace

9. Publius Cornelius Tacitus

10. Marcus Aurelius

Assignments

1. Find out the circumstances that led to the nomenclature 'Pax Romana'
2. Enumerate the contributions and achievements of Romans during Pax Romana under later emperors of Rome
3. Provide detailed account of Juices Caesar and his military conquests with special reference to Egypt.

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth,1970.
2. Mary T. Boatwright, Daniel J. Gargola,Noel Lenski,Richard J. A. Talbert, *The Romans, From Village to Empire: A History of Rome from Earliest Times to the End of the Western Empire*,Oxford University Press,USA,2012.
3. Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reynold, *Roman Civilization: Selected Readings – The Republic and the Augustan Age, Volume 1*, Columbia University Press,USA,1990.
4. <https://www.unrv.com>

References

1. [Legacy of the Ancient Romans - World History Encyclopedia](#)
2. Henry A. Sanders, *The Chronology of Early Rome, 1908*), pp. 316-329
Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261793>



4

UNIT

Decline of Rome

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ to analyse the background of the decline of Roman Civilization
- ◆ to identify the factors leading to the decline of civilization
- ◆ to compare and contrast the notions of culture/civilization and Barbarism
- ◆ to discern the economic conditions in a state that sustain trade and commerce through understanding the decline of Roman Trade

Prerequisites

Imagine walking through the bustling streets of ancient Rome, watching the grandeur of its architecture and witnessing the power of its rulers. The plays of Shakespeare transport us to this era, where we see the glory and magnificence of Rome at its peak. But behind this facade of grandeur and prosperity, there were cracks that were slowly widening. As we delve deeper into the history of Rome, we realize that the decline of this great civilization was not sudden but a slow and gradual process. The Roman Empire had reached its peak by the end of the second century CE, but by the fifth century CE, it had collapsed. In this unit of study, we will explore the reasons behind the fall of the Roman Empire, from political instability to economic issues and social unrest. We will also see how this decline paved the way for the emergence of new civilizations in Europe.

Keywords

Barbarians, Conquest, Urban, Decline, Civil war, Trade, Battle of Adrianople, Split of Empire

Discussion

The Greeks influenced the world with their art and literature, whereas the Romans left their mark on the building techniques and the governing system for the succeeding generations. Right from the time of the establishment of the empire to the decline of the same, the Romans represented the world culture. The end of Roman Civilization, according to some historians, marks the end of the ancient world and the onset of the medieval period. Most scholars unanimously agree upon 476 CE as the year of the fall of the Roman empire, while they differ greatly upon the cause of the decline. Eighteenth-century English historian Edward Gibbon points out the rise of Christianity as the major cause for the fall of the Roman empire. Historians assign external aggression, growth of Christianity and internal decay as the causes for the decline. Still, debates are going on over the topic.

5.4.1 Civil War

Though the decline of Rome was due to a number of factors from within and from outside, a number of civil wars that happened in Rome added to it. Right from the period of Pompey and Julius Caesar the empire was prone to power struggles and civil wars that resulted in the decline of the large empire. The greatest of all civil wars was the one led by Julius Caesar against Pompey the Great. There was a difference of opinion regarding the use of Julius Caesar's legions by the Senate in 49 BCE. Caesar understood that obeying the

Senate would be like ending his political career and therefore he defied the orders of the Senate and led a war against Rome. In the struggles that followed Caesar was victorious.

5.4.2. The Barbarian Conquest

Among the external causes, the most taught and studied was the attack of the Barbarians. Though it is hard to believe that such a mighty power as Rome accepted defeat from the Barbarian tribes, the existence of other factors like inefficient administration, physical and moral decay of the city, reduction in tax payment, overpopulation, poor leadership, and inadequate defence would have assisted the Barbarians. The last ruler of Rome was dethroned by a Barbarian ruler unopposed. By this period Roman sway over Britain, Gaul, Spain and North Africa has already been lost to the Goths and Vandals.

5.4.2.1 The Battle of Adrianople (378 CE)

Among the invasions from outside the invasion of Goths was a major factor that contributed to the fall of the glorious Roman empire. The Goths, when threatened by the invasion of Huns, requested the emperor to settle in Rome. When the emperor was not able to respond immediately, there was no other way before them but to invade the empire. The battle of Adrianople was a decisive war that took place between the

Roman army and the Goths. The starved and impoverished Goth army won the war against the Roman army. Though the Roman army was more in number, the Goths managed to defeat them. At the end of a bloody war, even the emperor himself was slaughtered. The Roman army lost two-thirds of the entire army.

Later in the 5th century, Rome was again disturbed by the Alaric rebellion. Alaric was the leader of the Goths between 395-410 CE. He had served as the commander of the Goths in the Roman army under Theodosius I. But he was highly critical of the ill-treatment of the Goths by the emperor. The latter failed to provide the Goths with proper food and accommodation. Alaric was intelligent and determined. He demanded the land in the Balkans which was promised to them by the emperor. He also demanded grains and Roman citizenship for the Goths. With no other option left before him, he gathered an army and crossed the Alps to enter Italy. After a few days of blockade, he was able to enter the city with the help of the Goth slaves from within the city. Finally, the Roman senate yielded to the demands of Alaric.

5.4.3 Decline of Trade

Polybius, a second century writer and historian had already pointed out that the Republic was under decay before it actually started decaying. Many scholars believe that the fall was due to the change in the social and economic fabric of Roman culture. Edward Gibbon neglected the Barbarian invasion theory and gave importance to the rise of Christianity as the major factor leading to the fall of Rome. He held the view that the internal division sowed by Christianity and its ideals of condemnation of war and love

for peace were a reason for the decline of Rome. According to him, Christianity valued idle and unproductive people. However, scholars agree with the fact that there was a considerable decline in the values and morals of the Romans. Rulers like Nero and Caligula are famous for the squandering of money and sensuous lifestyle which the majority of their citizens aped. The rich class engaged in pompous living and excess drinking and merry-making.

There was deterioration in public health, too. It is said that there was a high death rate due to water poisoning among the elite class. People also suffered from poor memory, infertility and degenerated intelligence. Frequent gladiatorial fights and contact with dead bodies and bloodshed in the congested atmosphere of the coliseum also led to the spread of diseases. The consumption of alcohol was another reason for the degeneration.

The infrastructure and the paraphernalia of Rome largely depended on manual labour rendered by the slaves and animals. They did not have much technological advancement in Rome. After the reign of Marcus Aurelius Rome faced severe inflation. The conquests had stopped the flow of gold and costly materials, which also affected the state reserve. It also affected the mint of gold coins which were issued with less gold which in turn affected the value of the coins. The hike in prices led to the barter system which in turn affected the tax collection, too.

There was a wide gap between the rich and the poor in Rome. While the rich lived in marbled houses, the poor lived in congested small houses called islands which were ill-ventilated and too hot. The streets were infested with crimes and diseases which led to urban decay. Corruption crept into all walks of life

and political machinery was incapable of taking effective measures against it.

Split of the Empire

During the reign of Diocletian, the large empire was divided into the Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire. The decline was only for the western half and the eastern half known as the Byzantine Empire continued till the end of the middle of the medieval period. By the third century Common Era, the large empire of Rome extended from the British Isles to Africa had started declining. Rome lost its importance as the centre of the empire. As stated before, the empire was divided into the Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire. The capital of the Eastern empire was Rome and the capital of the western empire was Constantinople (old Byzantium), shifted by Constantine. Constantinople assumed the position held by old Rome and was now New Rome serving as the cultural and economic centre. Since the time of Julius Caesar, there were frequent clashes along the border regions with the barbarians. Some of the emperors tried to reconcile them by inviting them to settle in Rome and also to join the army. However, such

settlers never truly became the Romans. Such measures rendered Rome more vulnerable.

In the 4th century, the Goths wanted to settle in the empire, threatened by the Huns. However, the emperor took some time to respond to their request, which made them enter the empire. It led to a battle between Rome and the Goths. However, the Roman army which was completely unprepared faced defeat in the following battle of Adrianople (378 CE) .

Soon after the death of Alaric other barbarian tribes invaded Rome to complete the decline. Burgundians, Angles, Saxons, Lombards, and Magyars invaded the old empire. By 475 CE, Britain, France and Spain had lost the Germanic tribes, reducing Italy as the only piece of the old empire. The Vandals moved gradually from Spain to North Africa, occupying Carthage. It meant a heavy loss of revenue for Rome which further affected the maintenance of the army. However, Rome was able to retreat the Huns' attack under Attila. Gibbon had pointed out that the invasion of Attila had hastened the fall of Rome.



fig 5.4.1. Invasions of the Roman Empire: 100-500
<https://www.history.com>

Multiple views exist regarding the factors that led to the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The causes for the fall of the great empire did not emerge from a single source; it had a variety of sources. Loss of revenue and continuous warfare drained the treasury and disrupted the trade activities. Maintenance of the army was becoming more and more difficult. Agriculture was unattended

and technology was neglected. Often hit by the epidemic, the population perished. Unemployment was at its peak. The presence of the barbarians added to the existing crisis. The fall of the Western Roman Empire marked the end of the ancient world and marked the beginning of the medieval world. However, the civilization in the modern west owes a lot to the ancient Roman civilization.

Recap

1. The united Roman Empire was split into the Western Roman Empire and Roman Empire during the period of Diocletian.
2. Rome was the capital of the Western Roman Empire and it was subjected to frequent attacks by the barbarians.
3. It was Edward Gibbon, the English historian who pointed out that it was the spread of Christianity that contributed greatly to the fall of Rome.
4. The decline of Rome was contributed by different factors like urban decay, barbarian invasions, internal unrest, weak rulers and loss of revenue.
5. The loss of Spain and North Africa to the barbarians caused huge revenue loss for Rome.
6. The fall of the Roman empire was complete by fifth century CE.
7. Eastern Roman empire flourished till the fifteenth century as a major centre of culture.
8. Roman culture greatly influenced modern Western culture.

Objective Questions

1. Who led the Civil war against Rome in 49 CE?
2. Name the work of Gibbon that describes the downfall of the Roman Empire
3. Which leader of the Goths rose in rebellion against Rome in the 5th century CE?
4. Which historian pointed out that the Republic of Rome was decaying from the 2nd century itself?
5. Name the capital of Eastern Roman Empire?
6. According to Gibbon the advent of which tribe hastened the fall of the Roman Empire?
7. What was the early name of Constantinople?
8. Which English historian opined that the spread of Christianity led to the downfall of the Roman Empire?
9. During whose rule the Roman Empire was split into two?
10. When did the final fall of the Roman Empire happen?

Answers

1. Julius Caesar
2. The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire
3. Alaric
4. Polybius
5. Constantinople
6. The Huns under Attila
7. Byzantium

8. Edward Gibbon

9. Diocletian

10. 476 CE

Assignments

1. List out the internal causes that led to the decline of the Roman empire.
2. Explain the causes and course of Civil war that broke out in Rome
3. Enumerate the major reasons that were responsible for decline of Trade in Rome

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970.
2. <https://www.unrv.com>

References

1. [Legacy of the Ancient Romans - World History Encyclopedia](#)
2. Henry A. Sanders, *The Chronology of Early Rome*, (1908), pp. 316-329 Published by: The University of Chicago Press Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/261793>



UNIT

Roman Legacy

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of the unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ discern the salient features of Roman cultural and material life
- ◆ identify the specific parameters that make a culture
- ◆ analyse the contributing factors of Roman material life
- ◆ compare the features of Roman civilization with those of Greeks

Prerequisites

Have you come across movies like 'The Gladiator' (2000), Ben Hur (1959) or Quo Vadis (1951)? They are hailed as the best movies shot on themes from Roman Civilization. They were produced after prolonged research and discussions. When we think of Roman civilization, we think of grandeur, magnificence, and the glory of the ancient world. The Romans have left behind a rich legacy that has influenced the world in countless ways. From law and governance to engineering and architecture, the Romans were pioneers in several fields that have stood the test of time. But what was it about their culture that made it so significant?

Firstly, the Romans were great builders. They constructed massive structures such as the Colosseum and the Pantheon that still leave us in awe today. They were also pioneers in engineering, building vast networks of roads and aqueducts that allowed them to expand and maintain their empire.

Secondly, the Romans were masters of governance. They created a system of laws that has influenced the legal systems of many modern societies. They also had a complex political system that was instrumental in their ability to maintain such a vast empire for so long.

Thirdly, the Romans were great patrons of the arts. They produced literature, poetry, and art that was groundbreaking for their time. They also loved spectacle, and their games and festivals were unparalleled in their extravagance and spectacle.

All in all, Roman civilization was an incredible fusion of the best of Greek culture with the unique contributions of the Romans themselves. From their military might to their artistic and cultural achievements, the Romans have left an indelible mark on human civilization. This unit will delve into the nuances of Roman civilization and help us understand why it is considered one of the classical civilizations of the ancient world.

Keywords

Material culture, Pantheon, Republicanism, Urbanism, Roman army, Gaius Marius, Law, Trade

Discussion

Every civilization has its own unique features that distinguish it from its contemporaries. Material culture means the physical conditions and artefacts that help in the making of the civilization, including the infrastructure and basic amenities for public life. Material life helps in social life and economic prosperity and eventually contributes to cultural growth. The material culture includes farm tools, ceramic, houses, furniture, roads and bridges and other facilities that make public life easier, including the objects of daily life. The study of material culture includes knowledge about the belief systems like the values, ideas, attitudes, social behaviour, traditional practices and social precedents.

5.5.1 Republicanism

Basically, the Roman administrative system was based on a monarchical system from its inception onwards. After the period of the Etruscans, the system was shifted to the republican model. During

this period the Patrician-Plebeian struggle decided political development. Through a series of wars when Rome expanded to an empire the political system also underwent changes.

The Roman system of administration was based on a constitution. The Senate was the most powerful organ of administration. There were 30 members in it. The members were all senior citizens and veterans in the fields of administration and law who were elected for life. They regulated the Consuls and provided them with good advice. It also regulated foreign policy, income and expenditure, military affairs, provincial administration and defence of the country. They acted as the legislative assembly of the country and were respected by all.

To protect the Plebeians from the suspected tyranny of the Senators who were the nobles, the Tribune was formed later. Two persons were appointed tribunes and they were expected to be impartial. They



were bound to protect and safeguard the common people. The Tribune was avowed to protect the common people from the partial judgement and overlordship of the nobles.

The executive powers were vested with two consuls, who were entrusted with the civil and military administration. Their tenure was for one year and in case of a deadlock in their decisions, the Senate intervened. In case of an emergency situation, the consul would act as a dictator for six months. He was responsible for the law and order system.

Other than the consuls there was also another administrator who was called the Praetor. He assisted the consuls in discharging their administrative duties. He also acted as a commander during the war times. The war tactics, supply of war materials and other amenities were his responsibility. He acted as an advisor and took decisions on important matters. He was also elected for one year.

Financial affairs were managed by the Censor. Conducting the census was their duty. They made a list of the propertied class and levied a tax on people. Tax collection was their major duty. They were elected for five years. The treasury in charge was called the Questor. They looked after the income and expenditure of the empire. Verification of property and implementation of criminal laws were also their responsibilities. Their tenure was for one year. However, the maintenance of law and order was vested with another official called the Aedil who was also elected for one year. Supervision by the police, checking the crime rates and looking after the municipal administration were also part of his duties.

Modern democracies have adopted several concepts and institutions from

ancient Roman civilization in the realm of administration and governance. The organs of government like Legislature, Judiciary and Executive had their origin in Roman civilization in the form of the consuls, assemblies, the Senate and the Judiciary as early as the 4th century BCE. Though Greece is considered the birthplace of democracy, the concept was further developed by the Romans and was later adopted by the modern democratic representative republic like the USA. Though the credit for the first professional standing army goes to Assyrians it was the Romans who developed various aspects of militia even practised to this day. Basic discipline and training were compulsory for all. Roman legions provided an opportunity for everyone to come up in his career. The army had all the facilities to march on, including the medical facilities.

Roman Military

The Roman army was first constituted by Gaius Marius in 107 BCE. The Roman militia was instrumental in the territorial expansion of Rome. The Romans were able to conquer the tribes of the Italian peninsula, confederations, and empires due to their military superiority. The presence of a well-trained and equipped army was essential for trade and commerce activities. The long period of peace and security (Pax Romana) was ensured by the militia maintained by Augustus Caesar. The army also played a vital role in cultural assimilation. After serving for a period of 25 years a soldier could become a citizen of Rome. The Roman army was divided into legions, cohorts and centuries. Each legion consisted of 5000 legionaries and each legion was subdivided into cohorts and each cohort was subdivided into centuries under the centurions. Each century was divided into small groups to perform different jobs and assignments.

A Roman soldier was expected to be bold and physically vigorous. They had to undergo tough physical training every day. Valour and audacious activities were respected and rewarded. The concept of rewarding farmland in lieu of service was practised during the Republican period.

5.5.2 Roman law

Romans were the first developers of civil law. Scholars have identified three stages in the evolution of the Roman legal system. The code of law known as the Twelve Tables existed from 5 BCE to 2nd BCE. The next stage was the Formulary stage from 2nd BCE to the end of the classical period and the third stage was the period of 'Cognitio Extrordinaria' in the post-classical period. The legal procedure in Rome had several steps. Capital punishment and seizing of property were awarded as punishments. However, during the later Republic, the procedure became more complex and the complaint should be written down.

Our modern Judicial system has been very much influenced by the Roman legacy. The court proceedings of today owe much to the Roman legal procedure like the preliminary hearing, filing of a case, presentation of witnesses etc. Roman laws and their court system have served as the foundation for many countries' justice systems, such as the United States and much of Europe. Several terms used in the modern legal system have their origin in the Latin language. Writs like Certiorari, Mandamus, Prohibition, Quo Warranto, and Habeas Corpus can be cited as examples far the same. Roman law had branches like civil law, the law of the people and natural law. The first one was meant for Roman citizens, while the law of the people was meant for all people irrespective of their nationality

and natural laws were meant for the common purpose. They were produced from philosophical discourses rather than judicial proceedings. Justinian, the eastern Roman emperor had developed the code and prepared them into 50 books known as Roman Halos. The Twelve Tables and the Justinian Code served as guidelines in the formation of the modern legal system.

5.5.3 Urbanism and Trade

The urban character of Rome was well maintained by the existence of a slave community and also with the incoming of foreign exotic goods that promoted material life. Its growing population was fed by the exported corn and wheat from distant lands.

Romans had established trade links with the eastern countries like India and other east Asian countries. They imported goods from other countries to raise their standard of living. Their network of roads and waterways promoted inland trade between countries. They traded with Britain for silver which they used to make ornaments. They imported colours for dyeing purposes and spices for adding flavour to their food. Spices like pepper and cinnamon were imported from India, and silk from China. They also imported cotton from Egypt and wild animals from Africa. Roman goods and articles were exported to the Kushan Empire which was part of present-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. Hoards of Roman coins belonging to the period of Augustus Caesar have been found in South India and the Far East, However, Roman contact with China seems to be indirect. There was an exchange of goods and information and travellers between the Roman Empire and the Han empire in China. Roman geographer Ptolemy identifies the ports of the western coast of South India and the eastern coast as well. Roman amphorae have been excavated



from many parts of South India in recent years. It indicates that the Roman empire was the most important trading partner in Asian countries.

Recap

- ◆ The political arrangements of early Rome included offices like Consuls, Senate, Praetor, censor etc.
- ◆ Roman material culture was enriched by the exotic goods from overseas regions.
- ◆ Modern democracies have adopted several concepts and institutions from ancient Rome
- ◆ Roman militia was played a crucial role in the territorial expansion
- ◆ Roman legal system developed a code of law better known as ‘ Twelve Tables ‘
- ◆ Justinian Code and Twelve Tables served as guidelines for the formation of modern legal system
- ◆ Roman urban culture was supported by the income from the distance and overseas exchanges with far-flung regions like Far East, India, China, the Middle East and Africa.
- ◆ Legal practices of the Roman empire were adopted by countries like the USA.

Objective Questions

1. Roman administration was based on which type of system?
2. Who managed the financial affairs in Rome?
3. How many members were there in the Senate?
4. Who regulated the Consul and gave them good advice for better administration?
5. Who protected the Plebeians from the suspected tyranny of Senators?
6. Who assisted the Consuls in discharging their administrative duties?

7. What was the name of the treasury in charge of ancient Rome?
8. Maintenance of law and order vested with which individual?
9. Who constituted the first Roman army?
10. Who were the first developers of civil law?

Answers

1. Monarchical system
2. Censor
3. 30 members
4. Senate
5. Tribune
6. Proetor
7. Questor
8. Aedil
9. Gaius marius
10. Romans

Assignments

1. Make a comparative analysis of Roman republicanism and Athenian democracy.
2. Elucilate on the Characteristic features of Roman law and army

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970.
2. <https://www.unrv.com>

References

1. [Legacy of the Ancient Romans - World History Encyclopedia](#)
2. Henry A. Sanders, *The Chronology of Early Rome*, 1908), pp. 316-329
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UNIT

Roman Heritage

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to :

- ◆ to enable the students to distinguish the features of Roman culture that shaped modern civilization.
- ◆ to assess the contributions of the Roman Civilization
- ◆ to distinguish the salient features of the Roman Civilization.
- ◆ to have a critical view on those elements that perish the human culture.

Prerequisites

Imagine this - you're walking down a cobbled street, with ancient buildings towering above you. You see an arch in the distance, and as you get closer, you realize it's a magnificent aqueduct, still standing tall after centuries. You marvel at the engineering genius that created this structure, and wonder what other marvels the Romans have left for us.

The Romans have been called one of the greatest civilizations of the ancient world, and for good reason. They have contributed immensely to the fields of architecture, engineering, and transportation, to name just a few. Their legacy can still be seen in modern-day structures, such as bridges and roads, which were made possible by their advanced engineering techniques.

But the Romans didn't just leave behind physical structures; they also left behind a cultural legacy. Their art, literature, and philosophy have all had a profound impact on the modern world, and their language - Latin - still forms the basis of many modern languages.

So, the next time you come across a word like "villa" or "aqueduct", take a moment to appreciate the Roman legacy that has made it possible for us to use these words today. And if you're lucky enough to visit ancient Roman sites, take the time to soak in the atmosphere and marvel at the ingenuity and creativity of this great civilization.

Keywords

Renaissance, Colosseum, Philosophy, Hellenistic, Epicurean, Stoicism, Domus, Education, Roman cosmology

Discussion

Every civilization has its own unique features that distinguish it from its contemporaries. Material culture means the physical conditions and artefacts that help in the making of the civilization, including the infrastructure and basic amenities for public life. Material life helps in social life and economic prosperity which further contributes to cultural growth. The material culture includes farm tools, ceramic, houses, furniture, roads and bridges and other facilities that make public life easier including the objects of daily life. The study of material culture includes knowledge about the belief systems like the values, ideas, attitudes, social behaviour, traditional practices and social precedents.

5.6.1 Philosophy

Roman philosophy is gifted to a great extent by the Greek and Hellenistic schools. By the decline of Athens as a centre of excellence around 155 BCE, Alexandria and Rome emerged as new centres of Philosophy. The writing of philosophy in Rome occurred both in Latin Greek and Latin. Greek seems to

have been more popular as it was used by rulers like Marcus Aurelius. Some scholars of Rome adopted ideas from more than one school of philosophy. Major Roman philosophical schools that gained ground during this period were Stoicism and Epicureanism. Stoicism, a philosophy of personal ethics had its origin in Athens and found its expression in the Sabinian school while Epicureanism influenced Proculian School.

Stoicism had its roots in the teachings of Greek philosophers. It seems to have entered Rome around the Second century BCE. During the slave rebellion and the decay of the republic, the philosophy was taught by Poseidonius of Apamea. During the consociation of the empire, Cato was the major exponent of philosophy. He was the educator and advisor of Nero. Having failed to lead the latter on the path of virtue he had to commit suicide at the orders of Nero.

Epicureanism was another philosophical trend that gained popularity in the Roman Empire. The contemporary of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, Epicurus founded this school of thought. While Stoics taught that pleasure and pain have no importance

in a person's happiness, Epicurus taught that the ultimate happiness of a person lies in pleasure. According to him, God pays no attention to the individual's life and insists that simple pleasures make life happy. His Roman follower was Lucretius who composed the poem ' *On the Nature of Things* ' in praise of Epicurus.

Religion

Ancient Roman society was a polytheistic one worshipping numerous Gods and Goddesses. They assigned divinity to every aspect of individual life ranging from psychological abilities and material benefits. Intellect and wisdom agriculture and trade and seasons and landforms had their own Gods. The origin of Roman gods was based on the worship of unknown spirits. Romans allocated different responsibilities to each deity. The guiding spirit of men was 'Geni' and of women was 'Juni.' Some of the most important divinities of the Roman pantheon* were a continuation of Greek gods and the result of Etruscan culture. As Rome became an empire the simple religion became more complex with the incorporation of cultural traits from the conquered areas. The first temples of Rome were built during the Etruscan period. The first temple was built in honour of Jupiter, Juno and Minerva on Capitoline hill. Important gods worshipped by the Romans were Jupiter (Zeus), Juno (Hera) and Minerva (Athena).

Romans followed a family religious cult by worshipping their ancestors. It was widely believed that if the ancestors were not satisfied their spirit would haunt the families of the descendants. It was the reason behind the continuation of family names. Marriage was considered an important religious duty before which they sought the approval of the gods. Each clan

had its own rites which were considered important for the family and the state as well. With the evolution of Rome into an empire, the emperors themselves paused to be descendants of gods. Julius Caesar was the first to claim so. He claimed to be a direct descendant of Aeneas and the son of Venus. The divine aspects of the emperor demanded worship from the masses which became a source of strife in the public sphere at later stages of the empire. The question was a source of tension between the Christians and the Roman emperors and resulted in the persecution of early Christians.

Judaism was a major religion in Rome, which came from the conquered areas of Palestine and modern Israel. Later on, Christianity also entered Rome and had many followers from the backward sections of the society. Gradually Christianity subsumed all the other religions, reducing their importance. In the 4th century CE, Constantine is said to have converted to Christianity and accepted it in many parts of the empire. During the period of Theodosius, all the pagan religions were banned and Christianity was declared the official religion of the state. For Roman festivals, religious officials were employed to conduct the popular rites. It was observed as a public holiday.

5.6.2 Literature

Roman literary works had a profound influence on the literature of Europe especially during the Renaissance period. The contributions of poets like Virgil, Horace and Ovid had a positive impact on successive generations. They influenced renowned writers like Chaucer, Milton, Dante, and Shakespeare. Shakespeare, inspired by Roman culture, adopted themes from the history of Rome and wrote famous plays like *Antony* and *Cleopatra*



and *Julius Caesar*. These themes inspire people to this day. For example, the themes from Roman history have been adopted for the themes of a number of Hollywood movies in the twentieth century. *Ben Hur*, *Quo Vadis*, *Gladiator*, *Roman Holiday* etc.

The Roman empire witnessed a period of celebrated literature. Rome produced dramas, poetry, comedies, histories and philosophical tracts. Unlike the Greeks, Romans did not show much interest in tragedies. As in many other aspects, Roman literature was influenced by Athenian literature. Though Romans could not free themselves from the Hellenistic influence, they managed to develop a literature of their own later. However, literary figures like Horace often admitted the Greek influence on the Latin language. Historians have identified the 'Greco-Roman synthesis' in all fields, especially literature.

The earliest contribution of Roman literature was made by comic playwrights like *Plautus*, *Terrance* and *Ennius* in the 3rd century BCE. Their plays were staged during the festivals before the male audience. Ennius is considered the 'father of Roman poetry'. He wrote *Annals*, a history of Rome from the period of mythical Trajan to his day. The period of *Horace*, *Virgil*, *Catullus* and *Ovid* (First century BCE) is considered the golden age of Roman poetry. Virgil pictured the rural life of Rome and provided a more romanticized picture of Rome. His masterpiece was '*Aeneid*'. Horace's poems depicted love for nature and the joy of life. His Odes presents a picture of Roman life during the Augustinian era. The poets of the later period were Lucan and Statius.

Prose

The prose was made alive by the

orators in Rome. Marcus Tullius Cicero was one of the renowned orators of the period. Cicero was an author, orator and statesman, too. A wide variety of topics like corruption, nepotism, governance and moral life were subjects of his poetry. Seneca the stoic philosopher was an essayist and a playwright who wrote 124 essays and plays based on Oedipus and Hercules.

Pliny the Elder was a Roman administrator who authored *Natural History* in 37 volumes which tell about the universe, trees and animals, geography and topography. Pliny the Younger was his nephew and a consul and senator. He also wrote a series of letters on a variety of topics to the emperor. Juvenal was the most famous satirist of the period. Martialis, Apuleius and Petronius were the other prose writers of the period. The spread of Christianity during the later years of the Roman empire contributed much to the development of literature. St Ambrose, Ausonius and St Augustine were some of the later prose writers of Rome. St Augustin's work '*The City of God*' is considered one of the most important philosophical treatises of the period written just before the fall of the Western Roman Empire. Livy, Tacitus, Sullest and Suetonius were the most important historians of the period. Livy authored a detailed history of Rome in 142 volumes. Tacitus wrote *Germania* and *The Annals*. Another notable figure in prose writing was the emperor Marcus Aurelius himself.

Along with the literature, the Roman language experienced a profound influence on modern European languages. Latin has been the official language of countries like Hungary, Croatia and Poland. The English language has a number of words of Latin origin due to the Roman interlude in Britain. Words like school (schola), islands

(insula), and certain common usages like *bona fide* (in good faith), *Nota Bene* (note well) and *Vice versa* come from the Latin language. Modern languages like French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Catalan are commonly called 'Latin languages'. The name *villa* which is commonly used nowadays comes from the upper-class Roman nobles' country house.

5.6.3 Art

Roman art and architecture were greatly influenced by the Hellenistic and Greek styles. It was evident in the portrait and historical relief. The Roman expansion resulted in the spread of Greece-Roman art to many parts of Europe, North Africa and Asia. Roman architecture was directly influenced by Hellenistic planning. The introduction of new materials such as brick and concrete was seen in structures like amphitheatres and other buildings. Roman art was specific in making the sculpture of individuals of political and literary importance. There were also copies and adaptations from the Greek portraits as depicted in houses, baths, theatres and other public buildings. There were also commemorative arches and columns such as the Arch of Titus and Trojan's columns. The sculptors worked on limestones and sandstones. The peripheral regions also were largely influenced by Roman art and architecture. The interiors of Rome were painted and coated with plaster. The evidence about these structures has been lost due to the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 CE. The major styles followed by the Romans in the constructions were rendering panels for the coloured marble, opening up the wall to illusionistic or landscape painting.

Romans lived in single-storied and multi-storied buildings. There were differences between the houses of the

rich and the poor. Their houses were well equipped with all amenities, including indoor plumbing. Dwelling places of rich Romans were called *Domus*. It had a front room, bedroom, kitchen and corridor.

The Romans wore clothes made of wool, spun usually by women in the family. Clothes made of cotton, linen and silk could be bought from markets. Men wore a toga, draped around the body and pinned. A plain white toga was worn by all the male citizens. Toga with a purple border was worn by magistrates, while a toga with dark colour was worn as a sign of lamenting. However, the tunic was the general dress for all men right from slaves to rich men. Men were allowed to wear only one piece of ornament. They used to have their hair cut short and shaved.

Entertainment

The Colosseum was the most important and famous amphitheatre which had a seating capacity of 50000 viewers. They used to gather to watch the fight between gladiators, prisoners and wild animals. The animals to fight and prisoners were kept in the dungeon under the arena. There were also hippodromes where they watched chariot racing and horse races. The racing teams were marked with colours like red, blue, green and white. For dramas, the actors used to wear masks. Brown was used for men, white was assigned for women. Mean while, sad and happy masks were used for the respective roles. Women were not permitted to act. Children used to play a lot of games using toys like balls and figures of animals like horses, bats etc. The children also played with their pet animals like dogs, ducks, pigeons and monkeys.

Education

The educational system of the Romans was based on the Greek knowledge system,



adding Roman politics, cosmology and religious beliefs. Children of the slaves were not educated. Each classroom had a teacher and punishments were awarded to the defaulters. The teachers were responsible for the general discipline of the pupil and the class.

There are also other practices and customs which could be traced to Roman civilization like the throwing of rice on the bride and groom on the occasion of marriage. This could be the modern version of the Roman practice of throwing

nuts and sweets on guests who would throw them back the same. Similarly, the practice of carrying the bride to her home by the groom as practised by some of the sections of Christians in south Kerala also could be traced to the Roman practice that existed in ancient Rome. The international trade links of the Romans must have acted as a cultural link for the spread of Roman practices besides conquests. Though the Roman Empire declined, the Roman culture continued to exist affecting the life of people all over the world.

Recap

- ◆ Roman civilization had its own unique features that distinguished it from other cultures
- ◆ Roman philosophy was mostly contributed by Greek and Hellenistic schools
- ◆ Stoicism and Epicureanism pioneered Roman philosophical thoughts
- ◆ Ancient Roman Society believed in polytheistic religion
- ◆ They believed in spirits like Geni (men) and Juno (women)
- ◆ Romans followed family Religious cult by worshipping their ancestors
- ◆ Romans gave profound contribution to European literature
- ◆ Roman art and architecture were influenced by Hellenistic and Greek styles
- ◆ Roman education was based on Greek knowledge system
- ◆ They lived in single-storied and multi-storied buildings

Objective Questions

1. Name the guiding spirit of men and women accepted by the Romans before the evolution of the Roman Pantheon?
2. Where was the first temple for Jupiter, Juno and Minerva built?
3. Which were the two Roman schools of Philosophy influenced by Stoicism and Epicureanism?
4. Who was the founder of Stoicism?
5. Who was hailed as the 'Father of Roman Poetry'?
6. Who was the author of Natural History?
7. Name the two important works of Tacitus?
8. Which official was in charge of the finance department under the Roman administrative system?
9. Who constituted the Roman army?
10. Which department was controlled by the official called Questor?

Answers

1. Geni (men), Juno (women)
2. Capitoline Hill
3. Sabinian school and Proculean School.
4. Zeno
5. Ennius
6. Pliny the Elder
7. Germania and The Annales
8. Censor.



9. Gaius Marius

10. Questor

Assignments

1. Elucidate on the contributions of Roman literature to the world
2. Write a report on Roman Heritage and its uniqueness from other cultures

Suggested Readings

1. Dudley. D, *Roman Society*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1970.
2. <https://www.unrv.com>

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LATIN AMERICAN CULTURES



UNIT

Early Cultures

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able :

- ◆ to introduce the development early cultures in Latin America.
- ◆ to explain the origins of the social and cultural development of early Mesoamerican cultures.
- ◆ to familiarise with the importance of the influence of early cultures in later Latin American Civilizations.

Prerequisites

Latin America, with its rugged terrain and diverse ecosystems, is home to some of the world's most captivating cultures. While the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas are some of the well-known civilizations that emerged from this region, there were several early cultures that laid the foundation for their successors. The Olmecs, Teotihuacan, and Toltecs are among the most significant among them.

The Olmecs, who flourished between 1400 BCE and 400 BCE, are considered the “mother culture” of Mesoamerica. They were known for their colossal stone heads, which stand as a testament to their impressive stone-carving skills. The Teotihuacan civilization, which emerged around 200 BCE and reached its peak between 400 and 600 CE, was characterized by its impressive urban planning and architectural feats, including the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon. The Toltecs, who rose to prominence around 900 CE, were known for their martial skills and were said to have had a profound influence on the later civilizations of Mesoamerica.

Studying the development of these early cultures is essential to understanding the rich history of Latin America. Their legacy can be seen in the art, architecture,

and cultural practices of the later civilizations that emerged in the region. From the colossal stone heads of the Olmecs to the impressive urban planning of Teotihuacan, the contributions of these early cultures have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape of Latin America.

Keywords

Olmecs, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Tenochitillan, Zapotecs, La Venta, Chichen Itza, Mexico

Discussion

6.1.1 Olmec culture

The Olmec culture, considered the first advanced culture in the Americas began as early as 1000 B.C. The Olmecs had settled in the tropical Gulf coast of Mexico south of Vera Cruz and spread southward into Guatemala. Although Olmec civilization was gradually obliterated, some archaeologists believe it laid the foundation for all its successors in Meso-America (Mexico and South America). The Olmecs worshipped divinity that was half-man and half-jaguar, and they left as their principal monuments colossal heads chiselled from basalt weighing 15 tons or more with typically Mongoloid eyes, probably portraits of priest kings or Gods. Their artworks are particularly characterised by works in jade.

Several of their cultural centres have so far been discovered, the most important of which are San Lorenzo Tenochitillan(c.1200 BC-900 BC) and La Venta(c.900-300 BC). The 2 centers, where altars and the characteristic colossal heads are to be found, had been abandoned and destroyed. As early as 900 BC Olmecs developed a glyphic script, a precursor to the Aztec and Maya scripts

and they also possessed the knowledge of numbers. Olmec prosperity was initially based on exploiting the fertile and well-watered coastal areas of the Gulf of Mexico to grow such crops as corn and beans (often twice-yearly) which allowed for an agricultural surplus. They also, no doubt, gathered the plentiful local supply of plant food, palm nuts and sea-life, including turtles and clams. By c. 1200 BCE significant urban centres developed at San Lorenzo (the earliest), La Venta, Laguna de los Cerros, Tres Zapotecs and Las Limas. San Lorenzo reached its peak of prosperity and influence between 1200 and 900 BCE when its strategic position became safe from flooding allowed it to control local trade. Typical Olmec trade goods included obsidian, jade, serpentine, mica, rubber, pottery, feathers and polished mirrors of ilmenite and magnetite.

San Lorenzo's high culture includes the presence of mound structures, possibly an early ball court, carved basalt drains through one of the man-made mounds and the Red Palace structure with painted red floors and workshops. Around 900 BCE the site of San Lorenzo displays evidence of systematic destruction whilst La Venta, conversely, began to flourish, and

becoming the new capital, it eventually supported a population of some 18,000.

The three sites of San Lorenzo, La Venta and Laguna de los Cerros all had a bilateral symmetry in their planning and at La Venta the first pyramid in Mesoamerica was constructed. It is the premeditated architectural layout of the religious centres of these settlements that is most striking, for example, at La Venta the buildings are placed symmetrically along a north-south axis with four colossal heads facing outwards at key points, seemingly acting as guardians to the complex. A huge ceremonial step pyramid (now a shapeless mound), sunken plaza once lined with 2-metre high basalt columns, and two smaller pyramids/mounds provide features that would be copied time and again at the major sites of later Mesoamerican cultures with whom equal attention was paid to the precise alignment of buildings. La Venta, as with San Lorenzo, suffered systematic and deliberate destruction of its monuments sometime between 400 and 300 BCE.

The climate in the environment which they lived in allowed farmers to harvest crops twice a year. Wherever they moved in Mexico, the Olmecs affected the environment. They practiced a Slash and burn method of cultivation where the remains of old crops are cut down and burned to provide space and fertilization for a new crop which led to an effective increase in agricultural activity and the population also increased as compared to the previous culture of Tlatlco. The ideas and craftsmanship of Olmecs stood out from the earlier archaic life. They practiced large scale stone sculpture. Mirrors made of hematite were an innovation made by them. With such mirrors it was also possible to start fires or fire signals. Their priests may have used them to reflect

and enlarge images and may have used them for magic as well. Ceremonial axes intricately carved from jade with human-animal figures were introduced. Apart from being considered the originators of the glyph (the pictorial symbol) that led to the art of writing, there is also proof that they knew a considerable amount about agriculture and doubtlessly were the first North Americans to develop irrigation systems for watering the land.

The Olmecs seem to have had reverence for natural places which connected with the important junctions of sky, earth and the underworld. For example, caves could lead to the underworld and mountains which had both springs and caves could offer access to all three planes. Important Olmec mountain sites in this particular context were El Manatí, Chalcatzingo and Oxtotitlan.

The names of the gods of the Olmec are not known other than that they often represented phenomena, such as rain, the earth and especially maize. For this reason, identifiable gods from Olmec art have been given numbers instead of names (e.g. God VI). The Olmecs gave special significance to the animals present in their environment, especially those at the top of the food chain, such as jaguars, eagles, caimans, snakes and even sharks, identifying them with divine beings and perhaps also believing that powerful rulers could transform themselves at will into such fearsome creatures. The Olmecs also liked to mix animals to create weird and wonderful creatures such as the were-jaguar, a cross between a human and a jaguar, which may have been their supreme deity. We also know that they worshipped a sky-dragon and that they believed four dwarves held up the sky, possibly representing the four cardinal directions which, along with other Olmec



Gods, became so important in later Mesoamerican religions.

The jaguar figure they worshipped was considered the guardian spirit of the Olmecs. This association of humans with animal spirit was a common belief of ancient people on every continent. They also believed that they descended from the jaguar or from a super human earth mother who mated with the jaguar, which is revealed in sculptures and bas-reliefs. It was the most important of the pantheon of the Olmec Gods. The Olmecs have emerged as fantastically imaginative people whose art approaches the abstract yet tells a great deal about them. It shows that they combined the mystical with a logical approach to art.

The sacred city of the coastal Olmecs, La Venta was built on an island beyond a swamp in the province now called Tabasco. They made platforms as a base for the temples bringing priests closer to the skies. In their art, there is proof of their clashes, in the many stelae found huge slabs of stone with many scenes chipped out showing Olmec warriors battling their enemies with clubs, spears and axes. The sculpture may also prove that they were a rigorous people and their culture may have been spread with force.

Class distinctions were evident in La Venta, the temples were built for the priestly elite class who organized thousands of workers to transport the stones and construct it rock by rock and carving the statues. Due to a lack of archaeological evidence their ethnic origins and the location and extent of many of their settlements are not known. The Olmecs did, however, codify and record their gods and religious practices using symbols. The precise significance of this record is much debated but, at the very least, its complexity does suggest some sort of

organised religion involving priesthood. The Olmec religious practices of sacrifice, cave rituals, pilgrimages, offerings, ball-courts, pyramids and a seeming awe of mirrors, was also passed on to all subsequent civilizations in Mesoamerica until the Spanish Conquest in the 16th century CE.

The Olmecs influenced the civilizations they came into contact with across Mesoamerica, particularly in sculpture in ceramic and jade and objects featuring Olmec imagery have been found at Teopantecuanitlan, 650 km distant from the Olmec heartland. In addition, many deities featured in Olmec art and religion such as the sky-dragon (a sort of caiman creature with flaming eyebrows) and the feathered-snake god, would reappear in similar form in later religions. The snake-god especially, would be transformed into the major gods Kukulcan for the Maya and Quetzalcoatl for the Aztecs. This artistic and religious influence, along with the features of precisely aligned ceremonial precincts, monumental pyramids, sacrificial rituals and ball-courts, meant that all subsequent Mesoamerican cultures would owe a great deal to their mysterious forerunners, the Olmecs.

6.1.2 Teotihuacan civilization

Teotihuacan, located in the Basin of Central Mexico, was the largest, most influential, and most revered city in the history of the New World. It flourished in Mesoamerica's Golden Age, the Classic Period of the first millennium CE. Dominated by two gigantic pyramids and a huge sacred avenue, the city's architecture, art, and religion would influence all subsequent Mesoamerican cultures. At its height from 375 and 500

CE, the city controlled a large area of the Mexican central highlands of Mexico and likely exacted tribute from conquered territories. Around 600 CE, the major buildings of the city were destroyed by fire, artworks were smashed and the city went into decline. It is also a world heritage site recognised by the Unesco.

In relation to other Mesoamerican cultures Teotihuacan was contemporary with the early Classic Maya (250 - 900 CE) but earlier than the Toltec civilization (900-1150 CE). Located in the valley of the same name, the city first formed between 150 BCE and 200 CE and benefitted from a plentiful supply of spring water which was channelled through irrigation. The largest structures at the site were completed before the 3rd century CE, and the city reached its peak in the 4th century CE with a population as high as 200,000. Teotihuacan is actually the Aztec name for the city, meaning "Place of the Gods"; unfortunately, the original name is yet to be deciphered from surviving name glyphs at the site.

The city's prosperity was in part based on the control of the valuable obsidian deposits at nearby Pachuca, which were used to manufacture vast quantities of spear and dart heads and which were also a center of trade. Other goods flowing in and out of the city were included cotton, salt, cacao to make chocolate, exotic feathers, and shells. Irrigation and the natural attributes of local soil and climate resulted in the cultivation of crops such as corn, beans, squash, tomato, amaranth, avocado, prickly pear cactus, and chili peppers. These crops were typically cultivated via the chinampa system of raised, flooded fields which would later be used so effectively by the Aztecs. Turkey and dogs were husbanded for food, and wild game included deer, rabbits, and peccaries, whilst wild plants, insects,

frogs, and fish also supplemented a diverse diet. In addition, the city displays evidence of textile manufacturing and crafts production. Teotihuacan also had its own writing system which was similar to, but more rudimentary than, the Maya system and generally limited in use to dates and names, at least in terms of surviving examples.

At its peak between 375 and 500 CE, the city controlled a large area of the central highlands of Mexico and probably exacted tribute from conquered territories via the threat of military attack. Teotihuacan's fearsome warriors, as depicted on murals, carry atlas, dart-throwers and rectangular shields, and they wear impressive costumes of feather headdresses, shell goggles, and mirrors on their backs. Evidence of cultural contact in the form of Teotihuacan pottery and luxury goods is found in elite burials across Mexico and even as far south as the contemporary Maya centres of Tikal and Copan.

Mysteriously, around 600 CE, the major buildings of Teotihuacan were deliberately destroyed by fire, and artworks and religious sculptures were smashed in what must have been a complete change of the ruling elite. The destroyers may have been from the rising city of Xochicalco or from within in an uprising motivated by a scarcity in resources, perhaps exacerbated by extensive deforestation (wood was desperately needed to burn huge quantities of lime for use in plaster and stucco), soil erosion, and drought. Whatever the reason, after this climatic event, the wider city remained populated for another two centuries but its regional dominance became only a memory.

The most important deity at Teotihuacan seems to have been, unusually for Mesoamerica, a female. The Spider Goddess was a creator deity



and is represented in murals and sculpture and typically wears a fanged mask similar to a spider's mouth. Other gods, who would become familiar in subsequent Mesoamerican civilizations, included the Water Goddess, Chalchiuhtlicue, who is impressively represented in a three-metre high stone statue, and the rain and war god Tlaloc. Clearly, there was a preoccupation with life-giving water in such an arid climate. Other deities often represented in Teotihuacan art and architecture include the feathered-serpent god known to the Aztecs as Quetzalcoatl, Xipe Totec, who represented agricultural renewal (especially maize), and the creator God known as the Old Fire God. The positioning of temples and pyramids in alignment with the sun on the June solstice and the Pleiades suggest calendar dates were important in rituals, and the presence of buried offerings and sacrificial victims illustrates the belief in the necessity to appease various gods, especially those associated with climate and fertility.

The city, covering over 20 square kilometres, has a precise grid layout oriented 15.5 degrees east of true north. The city is dominated by the wide Avenue of the Dead (or Miccaotli as the Aztecs called it) which is 40 metres wide and 3.2 km long. The avenue begins in agricultural fields and passes the Great Compound or market place, Citadel, the Pyramid of the Sun, many other lesser temples and ceremonial precincts, and, culminating at the Pyramid of the Moon, points towards the sacred mountain Cerro Gordo. Archaeologists have discovered that the original avenue was much longer than is visible today and is dissected by another avenue which thus created a city of four quarters. The site is dominated by the two great pyramids of the sun and moon and the Temple of Quetzalcoatl, but most buildings were more modest and

take the form of small groups of buildings (over 2,000 of them) organised around a courtyard and the whole surrounded by a wall. It was here in the compound that daily cooking was done using clay braziers. Many compounds have one or two burial spaces suggesting that each was a family or kin group, and some cover several thousand square metres and so may be better described as palaces. Other compounds are more modest and use less fine building materials so that they may have been workshops for artisans. Many compounds also have large cisterns offering the possibility of independent water supply. The city had ethnic zones: Zapotecs in the western area and Maya in the eastern, for example. Typical features of the site's architecture include single-storey structures, flat roofs with occasional open portions, and decorative vertical rectangular panels set on a sloping support wall (talud-tablero) which was inset into the sloping facades of all types of religious buildings and which was much copied across Mesoamerica.

The five-level Pyramid of the Sun was actually built over a much earlier sacred tunnel-cave and natural spring. The structure, constructed c. 100 CE, has six platforms and measures 215 metres along the sides and towers 60 metres high, which made it one of the biggest structures ever built in the ancient Americas. The present exterior, which would have once had a facing of smooth lime plaster, covers a slightly smaller earlier pyramid built over a massive mud-brick and rubble interior. The top once had a small temple structure, reached by a flight of stone stairs climbing the entire pyramid and which split and rejoined higher up. Inside the pyramid is a 100 metre-long tunnel which leads from beneath the outside staircase to a four-winged chamber, unfortunately, looted in antiquity but probably once a burial

chamber or shrine.

The Pyramid of the Moon is very similar to, albeit slightly smaller than, it's neighbours the Pyramid of the Sun. The present exterior covers six progressively smaller pyramids. Constructed c. 150 CE there is no inner chamber as in the Sun pyramid, but the foundations did contain many dedicatory offerings, such as obsidian, greenstone felines, eagles and a single person. Offerings were also buried at each subsequent construction stage. And three males were buried just beneath the summit; the accompanying precious jade objects suggest they were important Maya nobles. There are also the remains of sacrificed animals including pumas, rattlesnakes, and birds of prey.

The art of Teotihuacan, as represented in sculpture, pottery, and murals, is highly stylized and minimalist. Stone masks were made using jade, basalt, greenstone, and andesite, often highly polished and with details, especially eyes, rendered using shell or obsidian. These masks were also made in clay, and both types would once have adorned statues and mummy bundles. A great many buildings at Teotihuacan were decorated with murals, most of which portray religious events, especially processions, but also scenes with details of landscape and architecture and especially watery scenes such as fountains and rivers. Scenes also include glyphs suggesting the existence of a writing system, even if much less varied and sophisticated than that used by the contemporary Maya. Painted using the true fresco technique, the work was then given a final polish. Bright colours were used and shades of red were especially popular and used to most often depict Gods, sacrifices, and warriors. In the more modest buildings, repeated patterns were also painted using stencils to create an effect much like modern wallpaper.

Typical Teotihuacan pottery vessels are the round dishes with three rectangular feet and a lid, and bulbous vases sparingly decorated with geometric designs. Other popular forms include intricate incense burners and dynamic figurines, both of which have mould-made additions and stamped decorations which suggest a degree of mass-production. The best Teotihuacan pottery was made with thin-walled orange clay, decorated with stucco, and was much in demand across Mesoamerica. Sculpture was made in all sizes but never captures individual likenesses. Rather, the focus is on generic forms and stylistic conventions, chiefly in the representation of gods such as the huge Great Goddess statue, from basaltic lava and standing 3.2 metres high, discovered near the Pyramid of the Moon and dating to before 300 CE. Imagery relating to the rain god Tlaloc was also popular in Teotihuacan sculpture which was made without the use of metal tools.

Aspects of Teotihuacan's religion, monumental architecture, urban planning, and various features of the city's art would influence both contemporary and subsequent civilizations across Mesoamerica, including the Zapotecs, Maya, Toltecs, and Aztecs. Imagery such as the feathered-serpent god and the owl representative of warfare are just two examples of Teotihuacan iconography that became ubiquitous across Mesoamerica. Teotihuacan cast a long cultural shadow through history and, 1,000 years after its peak, the last great Pre-Columbian civilization, the Aztecs, revered the city as the origin of civilization. They believed Teotihuacan was where the gods had created the present era, including the fifth and present sun. The Aztec king Montezuma, for example, made several pilgrimages to the site during his reign in homage to the gods and the early rulers

of Teotihuacan, who were “wise men, knowers of occult things, possessors of the traditions” and whose tombs were the site’s great pyramids, built for them, according to legend, by giants in the distant but not forgotten past.

6.1.3 Toltec culture

The Toltec civilization emerged in northern Mesoamerica, in the present-day state of Hidalgo, between 800 CE and 1100 CE. The toltecs were the forebears of the Aztecs. They were a Pre-Columbian civilization whose culture is suspected to have been an offset from the previous Teotihuacan culture (100 BCE – 8th century CE) that also resided in the Mesoamerican region.

The Toltecs used both trade and conquests to expand their territory. At their height of power and prosperity (c.950 CE), there were an estimated 40,000 Toltecs in Mesoamerica. The collapse of the Toltec Empire is mysterious. According to legends, the city of Tollan was abandoned because of a civil war; however, other possibilities include agricultural and commercial problems, and overcrowding due to continued immigration. In any case, by 1100 CE the Toltec Empire disintegrated. Geographically, the Toltec Empire was not very large; at its height it encompassed an area of 386 square miles (around 1000 square kilometres). The centre of the Toltec Empire was their capital, Tollan, now-a-days Tula, in the state of Hidalgo.

The term “Toltec” has several meanings. Originating in Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, it derived from the name “Tollan,” meaning “place of reeds” or “metropolis,” but it was also used to refer to “skilled artists.” The Toltec economy depended upon agriculture and trade. Their main crops were maize (corn), beans, and chilli

peppers. Toltec artisans used obsidian – volcanic glass similar to granite – to create weapons, which they exported to nearby civilizations. Other exports included textiles and ceramics. Their main imports were beans, cacao, and mushrooms.

All information about the Toltec Empire is fragmentary. Only a little is known about their social structure, apart from the fact that the Toltec society was militaristic in nature, with a warrior aristocracy. In fact, Aztec kings and aristocracy were “proud” of their Toltec blood, and they used their Toltec descent for their claim to power. Toltec theology and mythology were based on polytheism, centered on the deity Quetzalcoatl, “the feathered-serpent,” which later became the central figure of the Aztec pantheon. Their religious ceremonies included human sacrifices. The Toltecs interacted with most of the societies of Mesoamerica, and it is probable that their religious beliefs were influenced by, and in turn influenced, many other cultures. Toltec architecture was heavily influenced by religion and war. Their temples were flat roofed with square column halls and built using limestone. As expected of a militaristic society, the murals that adorned these temples depicted gruesome battle scenes, “bird warriors,” and representations of the god Tezcatlipoca, who was the patron of warriors that demanded human sacrifice. The best example of Toltec architecture is at the site of Chichen Itza, a blend of the architectural elements of the Toltec and Mayan cultures. Toltec stone sculpture was monumental (meaning massive/enormous), and depicted their religious beliefs and the militaristic society.

Their pottery included both ceremonial (i.e. ceremonial vessels) and practical (i.e. cooking pots, tableware, and storage jars) items, and it was one of their most important exports. The Toltecs used

several agricultural techniques, including irrigation and hill terracing to grow their crops, which were adapted by the Aztecs. The Toltec God, Quetzalcoatl, was adopted by the Mayas and the Aztecs. The Aztecs

credited the Toltecs as their “teachers” for herbal medicine. Culturally, they are said to have discovered pulque or octli, a traditional Mexican drink made from the fermented sap of the maguey plant.

Recap

- ◆ Emergence of early Latin America
- ◆ Development of art and architecture in Olmec culture
- ◆ Aspects of Teotihuacan’s religion, monumental architecture, urban planning
- ◆ Influence of Teotihuacan civilization on later civilizations
- ◆ Development of art, culture and economy of the Toltecs
- ◆ Fragmentary information is available about Toltec culture
- ◆ Their pottery included both ceremonial and practical items
- ◆ Aztecs considered Toltecs as their teachers for herbal medicines

Objective Questions

1. Which animal was most depicted in Olmec art?
2. Name two important cultural centres of Olmec culture.
3. What does the word ‘Teotihuacan’ mean?
4. Which was the famous Mexican drink developed by the Toltecs?
5. Name a perfect example of Toltec architecture?
6. what was the nature of Toltec theology and mythology?
7. which two aspects were depicted in Toltecs sculptures?
8. what happened to the buildings of Teotihuacan in 600 CE?

Answers

1. Jaguar
2. San Lorenzo Tenochtitlan and La Venta
3. Place of the Gods
4. Pulque or Octli
5. Chichen Itza
6. Polytheism
7. Religious beliefs and militarism
8. They were destroyed by fire

Assignments

1. Compare the different early cultures of MesoAmerica and analyse their features.
2. What were the basic features of Toltec culture – Elucidate.
3. Situate the relevance of Olmec culture as one of the ancient civilizations of Latin America

Suggested Readings

1. Bourdieu, P. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990.
2. Evans, S. T. *Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archaeology and Culture History* (Second ed.). London, UK: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2008.

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2. Pool, C. A. *Olmec Archaeology and Early Mesoamerica*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.



UNIT

Mayan Civilization

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able :

- ◆ to introduce the development of Mayan civilization
- ◆ to explain the artistic specialty of Chichen Itza
- ◆ to familiarise with the impact of Spanish invasion in the history of Latin America
- ◆ to identify the various kinds of architectural trends in ancient Mayan civilization

Prerequisites

Mesoamerica is the region from central Mexico through northern Central America. The Mayans emerged as a major force after the decline of the early Olmec culture, and their political landscape was always characterized by a series of powerful city-states, each governed locally. From about 400 BCE to 250 CE, the ancient Maya states first emerged, but around 250 CE, many of these states collapsed. However, some remained, and in some cases, new Maya states arose filling the space of earlier states.

After the second period of collapse around 800 CE, ancient Mayan civilization moved from the tropical southern lowlands of modern Guatemala and Belize into the more arid Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and reformed yet again, this time with significant influence from Aztec civilization. Despite this influence, the Maya states never became an empire. They maintained their distinct character and were known for their incredible architecture, with towering pyramids and intricate temples that still stand today as a testament to their mastery of building techniques.

Unfortunately, the Spanish Invasion had a devastating impact on the Mayan landscape. The conquistadors brought with them diseases that decimated the indigenous populations, and they also destroyed many of the Mayan cities and religious sites. However, the legacy of the ancient Mayans lives on, and in this unit, we explore the architectural marvels that emerged in the Mayan civilization, as well as the impact of the Spanish Invasion and its consequences on the Mayan landscape.

Keywords

Mayans, Chichen Itza, Terraced pyramids, Meso-America, Spanish invasion, Yucatan, Alvarados

Discussion

The ancient Mayans formed a complex civilization out of a series of city-states long before the arrival of the Spanish in the New World. Most of what anthropologists and historians know about the time before the arrival of the Spanish comes from a series of books called ‘codices’. These were written by the Maya in their own script. The Mayan text is the only complete writing system in the New World. This writing system was capable of conveying complex ideas and beliefs without an oral interpreter. Many of these books were destroyed by the Spanish, but a few remain and have important information about pre-Spanish life in the Maya world. After the Spanish arrived and established settlements in the New World, colonists, government officials, and priests maintained records and wrote personal letters and journals that described the society and people living in the New World. These documentary, or written, sources provide detailed information about the Maya, but they cannot tell us everything about the past. To help get a better picture of Maya life, archaeologists also rely on artifacts, or objects left behind by people in the past. These material

remains can include garbage, burials, buildings, or art that provide important information about the people who created and used them.

6.2.1 Chichen Itza

Chichen Itza is the second most visited Mexican archaeological site. Chichen Itza is located in the Peninsula of Yucatan in the Yucatan State. The name refers to “the mouth of the well of Itza” and is most famous for its El Castillo (Spanish for “the castle”), also known as the Kukulcan Step Pyramid or the Temple of Kukulcan. Built by the Maya between the 9th and 12th century, its pyramid is 24 m high while the temple at the top is 6 m high. Chichén Itzá, the ruined ancient Maya city occupies an area of 4 square miles (10 square km) in south-central Yucatán state, Mexico. It is thought to have been a religious, military, political, and commercial centre that at its peak would have been home to 35,000 people. The site first saw settlers in 550, probably drawn there because of the easy access to water in the region via caves and sinkholes in limestone formations, known as cenotes.



It is located some 90 miles (150 km) east-northeast of Uxmal and 75 miles (120 km) east-southeast of the modern city of Mérida. The only source of water in the arid region around the site is from the cenotes. Two big cenotes on the site made it a suitable place for the city and gave it its name, from *chi* (“mouths”), *chen* (“wells”), and *Itzá*, the name of the Mayan tribe that settled there. This was founded about the 6th century CE, presumably by Maya peoples of the Yucatán Peninsula who had occupied the region since the Pre-Classic, or Formative, Period (1500 BCE–300 CE). The principal early buildings are in an architectural style known as Puuc, which shows a number of divergences from the styles of the southern lowlands. These earliest structures are to the south of the Main Plaza and include the Akabtzib (“House of the Dark Writing”), the Chichanchob (“Red House”), the Iglesia (“Church”), the Casa de las Monjas (“Nunnery”), and the observatory El Caracol (“The Snail”). There is evidence that, in the 10th century, after the collapse of the Maya cities of the southern lowlands, Chichén was invaded by foreigners, probably Maya speakers who had been strongly influenced by—and perhaps were under the direction of—the Toltec of central Mexico. These invaders may have been the Itzá for whom the site is named; some authorities, however, believe the Itzá arrived 200 to 300 years later.

The invaders were responsible for the construction of such major buildings as El Castillo (“The Castle”), a pyramid that rises 79 feet (24 metres) above the Main Plaza. El Castillo has four sides, each with 91 stairs and facing a cardinal direction including the step on the top platform; these combine for a total of 365 steps—the number of days in the solar year. During the spring and autumnal equinoxes, shadows

cast by the setting sun give the appearance of a snake undulating down the stairways. A carving of a plumed serpent at the top of the pyramid is symbolic of Quetzalcoatl (known to the Maya as Kukulcán), one of the major deities of the ancient Mesoamerican pantheon. Excavations within the nine-platform pyramid revealed another, earlier structure containing a red jaguar throne studded with jade.

The ball court (for playing the game *tlachtli*, Mayan: *pok-ta-pok*) is 545 feet (166 metres) long and 223 feet (68 metres) wide, the largest such court in the Americas. Six sculpted reliefs run the length of the walls of the court, apparently depicting the victors of the game holding the severed head of a member of the losing team. On the upper platform at one end of the court stands the Temple of the Jaguars, inside of which is a mural showing warriors laying siege to a village. Standing on the platform of the temple to the north of the court, it is possible to hear a whisper from 150 feet (46 metres) away.

Other structures include the High Priest’s Grave and the Colonnade (Thousand Columns) and the adjoining Temple of the Warriors. Most of these buildings probably were completed in the Early Post-Classic Period (c. 900–1200). In the Late Post-Classic Period (c. 1200–1540), Chichén appears to have been eclipsed by the rise of the city of Maya. For a time Chichén Itzá joined Uxmal and Maya in a political confederacy known as the League of Mayapán. About 1450 the League and the political supremacy of Maya dissolved. When the Spanish entered the country in the 16th century, the Maya were living in many small towns, but the major cities, including Chichén, were largely abandoned. Long left to the jungle, Chichén Itzá remained sacred to the Maya. Excavation began in

the 19th century, and the site became one of Mexico's prime archaeological zones.

A legendary tradition at Chichén was the Cult of the Cenote, involving human sacrifice to the rain god, Chaac, in which victims were thrown into the city's major cenote (at the northernmost part of the ruin), along with gold and jade ornaments and other valuables. In 1904 Edward Herbert Thompson, an American who had bought the entire site, began dredging the cenote; his discovery of skeletons and sacrificial objects confirmed the legend. From its abandonment during the 15th century, Chichen-Itza underwent a process of gradual deterioration until the first excavations at the site began more than a century ago. Nevertheless, the excellent materials and building techniques used by the Maya in the construction of the buildings secured that the architectonic, sculptural and pictorial essence of Chichen-Itza would be conserved through the centuries.

6.2.2 Terraced pyramids

Mayan architecture is best characterized by the soaring pyramid temples and ornate palaces which were built in all Maya centres across Mesoamerica from El Tajin in the north to Copan in the south. The earliest monumental Mayan structures are from the Petén region, such as the 1st century CE pyramid at Uaxactun known as E-VII-sub, and are low pyramids with steps on all four sides rising to a top platform. Postholes in the platforms indicate superstructures of perishable material which once stood there. The pyramids also carry sculptural decoration, masks in the case of E-VII-sub. Even at this early stage buildings were constructed on precise plans according to such events as the winter and summer solstices and equinoxes. In addition, the outline of

structures when seen from above was also deliberate and could form or resemble Mayan glyphs for, for example, completion and time. Indeed, many structures were built to specifically commemorate the completion of important time periods such as the 20 year katun.

The Mayan pyramids were built in the jungles of Central America between 200 and 900 AD. Unlike the straight sides of the more commonly known Egyptian pyramids, the sides of Maya pyramids are stepped—sometimes for the purpose of enabling people to ascend to the top. Egyptian pyramids have sharper tips, while Mesoamerican (including Maya) pyramids tend to have flatter tops. These flatter tops accommodate certain ceremonies, such as sacrificial rituals, and temples for gods.

The pyramids served a variety of very important functions. Apart from the religious ceremonies, Maya pyramids were used as landmarks to aid in navigation. In the jungle where these pyramids were built, the pyramids were so tall that they could be seen above the trees. Inside some of the pyramids, there were burial chambers for the highest-ranking officials, just as in Egyptian pyramids. They were used not only as temples and focal points for Maya religious practices where offerings were made to the gods but also as gigantic tombs for deceased rulers, their partners, sacrificial victims, and precious goods. Pyramids were also periodically enlarged so that their interiors, when excavated, sometimes reveal a series of complete but diminishing pyramids, often still with their original coloured stucco decoration. In addition, individual shrines could be amalgamated into a single giant complex over time as Maya rulers attempted to impress their subjects and leave a lasting mark of their reign. A



good example of this development can be seen at the North Acropolis of Tikal. A whole complex of Maya pyramids can be found at the ruins of the ancient Maya city of Tikal. The pyramids at Tikal were the tallest structures in all of the Americas for around 1,000 years. There are a total of sixteen pyramids at Tikal, which is now a national park in Guatemala

Tikal was one of the largest urban centers of the pre-Columbian Maya civilization. Its population may have reached 90,000 people, which is surprising because the swampland at Tikal was unstable for habitation or agriculture. It is located in the tropical rainforests which today is northern Guatemala. The name Tikal comes from *tikal* which means “water hole”.

The pyramids at Tikal all face one another. The rooms at the top of the pyramids have depressions in the walls which amplify sound and project it in all directions. Because of this, the normal speaking voice of a person at the top of one pyramid can be heard by someone standing at the top of another pyramid a great distance away. Palenque’s Temple of the Inscriptions, built c. 700 CE, is a model example of a Maya temple structure. A single steep staircase climbs several levels to reach a top platform topped by a single structure with several chambers. The pyramid is rich in symbolic meaning with nine exterior levels representing the nine levels of Xibalba, the Maya underworld, and a 13-level secret passageway descending to the tomb of King Pakal in the interior representing the 13 levels of the Maya heavens. In contrast to this standard approach, the Pyramid of the Magician at Uxmal (after 600 CE) is distinctive for its rounded corners which make it almost oval in shape when seen from above, making the pyramid unique in Maya architecture.

Another two common Maya features of pyramids are a chamber or deep horizontal groove running around each platform and rounded inset corners. The overall effect of these huge monuments is of a mountain, a feature of the landscape which the Maya held as sacred.

The grandest building of the ancient Mayan city is known to us today as a castle pyramid. In Tulum, the castle overlooks the Caribbean Sea. Although Mayan pyramids are not always built alike, most of them have steep stairways with a low wall called an *alfarda* on each side—similar in use to a balustrade. Archaeologists call these large ceremonial structures Monumental Architecture. Modern architects may call these buildings Public Architecture, as they are places where the public gathers. In comparison, the well-known pyramids in Giza have smoother sides and were built as tombs. Astronomy and mathematics were important to Mayan civilization, linking them with the construction of the pyramids.

6.2.3 Spanish Invasion

The Spanish arrived in the Mayan area around 1519 and this led to the rapid decline of the Mayan cities. Shortly after the first expeditions to the region, the Spanish initiated a lot of attempts to subjugate the Mayas and to establish a colonial presence in the Mayan territories of the Yucatan peninsula and the Guatemalan highlands. This campaign is often termed as ‘The Spanish conquest of Yucatan’. This became a very lengthy and fraught exercise for the conquistadors from the beginning and it took about 170 years for the Spanish to establish substantial control over all the Maya lands. Unlike the other Latin American civilizations, the Mayas were not easy to conquer. It offered collective

resistance from the indigenous people in different Mayan centers. The Spanish had to subdue the numerous independent Mayan polities one by one, which offered stiff resistance from their part as well. The conquerors were motivated by prospects of great wealth to be had from the seizure of precious metal resources such as gold and silver but by their arrival the Mayan lands were themselves poor in these resources. This was an important factor that forestalled the Spanish conquest. The last Mayan state, the Itza polity of Tayasl at Lake Peten Itza was not subdued by the Spanish until 1697.

Many conquistadors viewed the Maya as infidels who needed to be forcefully converted and pacified, despite the achievements of their civilization. The first contact between the Maya and European explorers came in 1502, during the fourth voyage of Christopher Columbus, when his brother Bartholomew encountered a canoe. Several Spanish expeditions followed in 1517 and 1519, making landfall on various parts of the Yucatán coast. The Spanish conquest of the Maya was a prolonged affair; the Maya kingdoms resisted integration into the Spanish Empire with such tenacity that their defeat took almost two centuries. The Itza Maya and other lowland groups in the Petén Basin were first contacted by Hernán Cortés in 1525, but remained independent and hostile to the encroaching Spanish until 1697, when a concerted Spanish assault led by Martín de Urzúa y Arizmendi finally defeated the last independent Maya kingdom.

The conquest of the Mayan territory was hindered by their politically fragmented state. Spanish and native technology differed much putting the natives at a disadvantage. The Spanish tried the strategy of concentrating native populations in newly founded colonial

towns; they viewed the taking of prisoners as a hindrance to victory, whereas the Mayans prioritised the capture of live prisoners and of booty. Among the Mayas, ambush was a favoured tactic; in response to the use of Spanish cavalry, the highland Maya took to digging pits and lining them with wooden stakes. Native resistance to the new nuclear settlements took the form of the flight into inaccessible regions such as the forest or joining neighbouring Maya groups that had not yet submitted to the European conquerors. Spanish weaponry included advanced weaponry that was a major threat to the Mayans.

Mayan warriors fought with flint-tipped spears, bows and arrows, stones, and wooden swords and wore padded cotton armour to protect themselves. The Mayans lacked key elements of Old World technology such as a functional wheel, horses, iron, steel, and gunpowder: they were also extremely susceptible to Old World diseases, against which they had no resistance.

The shock of the Spanish conquest was followed by decades of heavy exploitation of the indigenous peoples, allies and foes alike. Over the two hundred years colonial rule gradually imposed Spanish cultural standards on the subjugated peoples. The Spanish *reducciones* created new nucleated settlements laid out in a grid pattern in the Spanish style, with a central plaza, a church and the town hall housing the civil government, known as the *ayuntamiento*. This style of settlement can be seen in the villages and towns of the area. The introduction of Catholicism was the main vehicle for cultural change, and resulted in religious syncretism. Old World cultural elements came to be thoroughly adopted by Maya groups. The greatest change was replacement of the pre-Columbian economic order by

European technology and livestock; this included the introduction of iron and steel tools to replace Neolithic tools, and of cattle, pigs and chickens. New crops were also introduced; however, sugarcane and coffee led to plantations that economically exploited native labour. Some indigenous elites such as the Xajil Kaqchikel noble family did manage to maintain a level of status into the colonial period. During the second half of the 18th century, adult male Indians were heavily taxed, often being forced into debt. Western Petén and neighbouring Chiapas remained sparsely populated, and the Maya inhabitants avoided contact with the Spanish.

The sources describing the Spanish conquest of Guatemala include those written by the Spanish themselves, among them two letters written by conquistador Pedro de Alvarado in 1524, describing the initial campaign to subjugate the Guatemalan Highlands. Gonzalo de Alvarado y Chávez wrote an account that mostly supports that of Pedro de Alvarado. Pedro de Alvarado's brother Jorge wrote another account to the king of Spain that explained it was his own campaign of 1527–1529 that established the Spanish colony. Bernal Díaz del Castillo wrote a lengthy account of the conquest of Mexico and neighbouring regions, the “ True History of the Conquest of New Spain”; his account of the conquest of Guatemala generally agrees with that of the Alvarados. He also included his own description of Cortes' expedition, and an account of the conquest of the Chiapas highlands. Conquistador Diego Godoy accompanied Luis Marín on his reconnaissance of Chiapas, and wrote an account of the battle against the inhabitants of Chamula. Hernán Cortés described his expedition to Honduras in the fifth letter of his *Cartas de Relación*. Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas wrote a highly critical account

of the Spanish conquest of the Americas and included accounts of some incidents in Guatemala.

The Tlaxcalan allies of the Spanish wrote their own accounts of the conquest; these included a letter to the Spanish king protesting at their poor treatment once the campaign was over. Other accounts were in the form of questionnaires answered before colonial magistrates to protest and register a claim for recompense. Two pictorial accounts painted in the stylised indigenous pictographic tradition have survived; these are the Lienzo de Quauhquechollan and the Lienzo de Tlaxcala. Accounts of the conquest as seen from the point of view of the defeated highland Maya kingdoms are included in a number of indigenous documents, including the Annals of the Kaqchikels. A letter from the defeated Tzutujil Maya nobility to the Spanish king, written in 1571 details the exploitation of the subjugated people. Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán was a colonial Guatemalan historian of Spanish descent who wrote *La Recordación Florida*. The book was written in 1690 and is regarded as one of the most important works of Guatemalan history. Field investigation has tended to support the estimates of indigenous population and army sizes given by Fuentes y Guzmán.

In 1688 colonial historian Diego López de Cogolludo detailed the expeditions of the Spanish missionaries in 1618 and 1619 in his *The three centuries of Spanish domination in Yucatán, or the history of this province*; he based it upon Fuensalida's report, which is now lost. Franciscan friar Andrés Avendaño y Loyola recorded his own account of his late 17th century journeys to Nojpetén. When the Spanish finally conquered Petén in 1697 they produced a huge quantity of documentation. Juan de Villagutierre

Soto-Mayor was a Spanish colonial official who wrote the “ History of the Conquest of the Province of the Itza, reduction, and advances in that of the Lacandon, and other nations of barbarous Indians,

and the intervention of the Kingdom of Guatemala, and the provinces of Yucatan in Northern America”. This detailed the history of Petén from 1525 to 1699.

Recap

- ◆ Importance of Chichen Itza as a mayan symbol
- ◆ Chichen Itza and the cult of the cenote
- ◆ Features of Mayan terraced pyramids
- ◆ The grandest building of ancient Mayan culture was Castle Pyramid
- ◆ Influence of Mayan architecture
- ◆ Spanish conquest and its various stages
- ◆ Collective resistance of Mayans
- ◆ Influence of Spanish conquest on Mayan civilization and its subsequent collapse

Objective Questions

1. In which country is Chichen Itza located?
2. When was Chichen Itza founded?
3. What does the word 'Tikal' mean?
4. Where can we find the earliest monumental Mayan structures?
5. What was the Spanish invasion of the Yucatan peninsula and the Guatemalan highlands called?
6. What initially hindered the Spanish conquest in Mayan territory?
7. What were the basic characteristic of Mayan architecture?
8. Name the historian who elaborated on expeditions by Spanish missionaries?



Answers

1. Mexico
2. 6th century C.E.
3. Waterhole
4. The earliest monumental Mayan structures are from the Petén region.
5. ‘The Spanish Conquest of Yucatan’
6. Politically fragmented state
7. Pyramid temples and Ornate Palaces
8. Diego Lopez De Cogolludo

Assignments

1. Prepare a map showing Chichen Itza and other important terraced pyramids in Mayan territory
2. Elaborate on the Spanish Invasion on Mayan territories and the collective resistance offered by the latter.

Suggested Readings

1. Evans, S. T. *Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archaeology and Culture History* (Second ed.). London, UK: Thames & Hudson Inc, 2008
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3. Sharer, R. J, “*Daily Life in Maya Civilization*”, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009



UNIT

Mayan Legacy

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit you will be able :

- ♦ to introduce the development of Calendar and writing system of the Mayans
- ♦ to explain the legacy of the Mayans left in the Latin America after its collapse
- ♦ to familiarise with the impact of religious developments of the May

Prerequisites

The Mayan civilization was truly remarkable in their contributions to science and culture, even long after their collapse. Their language, for example, was an incredible feat of human ingenuity, made up of a staggering 800 symbols. Imagine the complexity of communicating and expressing thoughts with such a vast array of characters! In addition to their language, the Mayans were pioneers in astronomy, agriculture, engineering, and communications. Their calendar system is still celebrated today for its precision and complexity, which allowed them to predict solar eclipses and aid in planting and harvesting.

The Mayan civilization also had a rich mythology that was deeply intertwined with their religion. Their creation story centered around nature gods, which became the foundation of their religious beliefs. This religion was so deeply ingrained in Mayan society that it even influenced their architecture and art.

It's truly incredible to think that a civilization that existed over a thousand years ago was able to make such significant contributions to human history. Their achievements in language, science, and religion have left a lasting impact not

only on Latin American civilizations, but on the world as a whole. In this unit, we will delve deeper into the legacy of the Mayan civilization, exploring their writing system, calendar, and religion to better understand the remarkable achievements of this ancient civilization.

Keywords

Mayans, Calendar, Script, Zapotecs, Epi-Olmec, Haab, Tzolkin, Long Count, Popol Vuh, Creation myth

Discussion

6.3.1 Calendar

The Mayan calendar is a system of three interlacing calendars and almanacs which was used by several cultures in Central America. The Mayan calendar dates back to at least the 5th century BCE. However, even though the Mayans contributed to the further development of the calendar, they did not actually invent it. The Maya calendar in its final form probably dates back to as early as the First century B.C., and may originate with the Olmec civilization. It is extremely accurate, and the calculations of Maya priests were so precise that their calendar correction is 10,000th of a day more exact than the standard calendar the world uses today. The same system was used by most cultures in pre-Columbian Central America—including those predating the Maya. The Mayan Calendar consists of three separate corresponding calendars: the Long Count, the Tzolkin (divine calendar), and the Haab (civil calendar). Each of them is cyclical, meaning that a certain number of days must occur before a new cycle can begin.

The three calendars are used simultaneously. The Tzolkin and the Haab

identify the days, but not the years. The Long Count date comes first, then the Tzolkin date, and last the Haab date. A typical Mayan date would read: 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Kumku, where 13.0.0.0.0 is the Long Count date, 4 Ahau is the Tzolkin date, and 8 Kumku is the Haab date. The Haab is a 365-day solar calendar which is divided into 18 months of 20 days each and one month which is only 5 days long (Uayeb). The calendar has an outer ring of Mayan glyphs (pictures) which represent each of the 19 months. Each day is represented by a number in the month followed by the name of the month. Each glyph represents a personality associated with the month. The Haab is somewhat inaccurate as it is exactly 365 days long. An actual tropical or solar year, the time it takes Earth to orbit the Sun, takes about 365.24219 days on average. In today's Gregorian calendar, we adjust for this discrepancy by making almost every fourth year a leap year, when an extra day—a leap day—is added on the 29th of February.

The Tzolkin, meaning “the distribution of the days,” is also called the Divine Calendar and the Sacred Round. It is a 260-day calendar with 20 periods of 13



days, and it is used to determine the time of religious and ceremonial events. The days in each period are numbered from 1 to 13. Each day is also given a name (glyph) from a sequence of 20 day names. The Long Count is an astronomical calendar which is used to track longer periods of time. The Maya called it the “universal cycle.” Each such cycle is calculated to be 2,880,000 days long (about 7885 solar years). The Mayans believed that the universe is destroyed and then recreated at the start of each universal cycle. This belief caused the 2012 phenomenon described above, and it still inspires a myriad of prophecies about the end of the world. The “creation date” for the current cycle is 4 Ahau, 8 Kumku. According to the most common conversion, this date is equivalent to August 11, 3114 BCE in the Gregorian calendar and September 6, 3114 BCE in the Julian calendar.

A date in the Mayan calendar is specified by its position in both the Tzolkin and the Haab calendars. This creates a total of 18,980 unique date combinations, which are used to identify each day within a cycle lasting about 52 years. This period is called the Calendar Round.

In practice, the date combinations are represented by two wheels rotating in different directions. The smallest wheel consists of 260 teeth with each one having the name of the days of the Tzolkin. The larger wheel consists of 365 teeth and has the name of each of the positions of the Haab year. As both wheels rotate, the name of the Tzolkin day corresponds to each Haab position. The date is further identified by counting the number of days from the “creation date”, using the Long Count calendar. A typical Long Count date has the following format: Baktun.Katun. Tun.Uinal.Kin. The kin, tun, and katun are numbered from 0 to 19; the uinal are numbered from 0 to 17; and the baktun are

numbered from 1 to 13. The Long Count has a cycle of 13 baktuns, which will be completed 1,872,000 days (13 baktuns) after 0.0.0.0.0. This period equals 5125.36 years and is referred to as the Great Cycle of the Long Count.

The 260-day calendar was used to determine important activities related to the gods and humans. It was used to name individuals, predict the future, decide on auspicious dates for battles, marriages, and so on. Each single day had its omens and associations, and the march of the 20 days was like a perpetual fortune-telling machine, guiding the destinies of the Mayans.

The Maya solar New Year is thought to have begun sometime in our present-day month of July, with the Maya month of ‘Pop’. The Mayan 20-day month always begins with the seating of the month, followed by days numbered 1 to 19, then the seating of the following month, and so on. This ties up with the Mayan notion that each month influences the next. The linking of the Tzolkin and the Haab resulted in a longer cycle of 18,980 days, or approximately 52 solar years. The end of this 52-year cycle was particularly feared, because it was believed to be a time when the world might come to an end and the sky might fall, if the gods were not satisfied with the way humanity had carried out its obligations.

An important role of the calendar was not to fix dates accurately in time, however, but to correlate the actions of Maya rulers to historic and mythological events. The acts of gods performed in the days of myth were reenacted by Maya rulers, often on the anniversary of the original event - a date which was carefully calculated by Maya priests. The calendar was also used to mark the time of past and future happenings. Some

Maya monuments, for example, record the dates of events 90 million years ago, while others predict events that will take place 3,000 years into the future. The calendar also predicted the future, as our astrological zodiac does. The Maya calendar was so complex because Maya priests made all decisions about dates for sacred events and the agricultural cycle. There was no need for the average person to understand the calendar, and it could be as elaborate as the priests wanted. The ancient Maya cycle survives in southern Mexico and the Mayan highlands under the care of calendar priests who still keep the 260-day count for divination and other shamanistic activities.

6.3.2 Writing System

Mayan writing was in use in the Maya area from about 300 BCE (when we see it in the murals of a site called San Bartolo in Guatemala) to the 16th century when the Spanish Conquistadors mention it in their reports. Although there are still nearly 30 Mayan languages spoken in the area today, by more than 6 million speakers in Maya communities, the writing system had already mostly fallen out of use by the time the Spanish colonisers arrived in the 16th century. The Christian priests and missionaries who arrived burned many 'idols' and 'heathen effigies' – together with unique bark-paper books used for recording calendrical, astronomical and ritual information – to ensure lasting conversion to Christianity.

The spoken languages survived and developed throughout the centuries, but as with many indigenous and smaller languages in the world, have been declining over time in favour of the majority languages, in this case Spanish. The loss of language was also exacerbated through colonialism and racism, as it was

often seen as advantageous to be as non-indigenous as possible. Schools were required to teach in Spanish only and often forbade the use of Mayan languages. Although information has been lost through time and the massive changes wrought by the conquest and colonialism, we have some idea of how the Maya elite lived during the Classic period (ca. CE 250 to 900/1000) from archaeological remains and courtly scenes painted on ceramics.

An important source for historical details is inscriptions, which are found on stone monuments (for example stelae), incised and coloured bone, incised jade and obsidian, carved wooden objects and ceramics. The earliest inscriptions in an identifiably Mayan script date back to 200-300 BCE. But this is preceded by several other writing systems which developed in MesoAmerica most notably that of the Zapotecs and possibly the Olmecs. There is a pre-mayan writing called 'Epi-Olmec script' (post Olmec) which few researchers have identified as representing the transitional script between the Olmec writing and Maya writing.

Most surviving texts come from stone and ceramics, in large part as these materials survive best in the tropical climate of the Mayan area. The Mayans also used bark paper at that time, folded into so-called codices, but only very few and late examples of these have survived the humidity and the environment. Both environmental degradation and looting of carved objects for the international art market can be a problem for the survival of Maya texts. Looting removes the objects from their contexts resulting in the loss of vital information for researchers and often makes them inaccessible to private collections. Nevertheless, particularly over the last 150 years, a large body of Maya writing has been collected gradually by scholars, who have made drawings,



casts, taken photographs, or through monuments deposited in museums.

The size of some of the monuments, together with the artistic nature of the writing, fascinated explorers from the beginning. But until the mid-20th century very little was known about how the writing system worked and a lot of the decipherment has only happened since the 1980s.

The Mayan writing system baffled many researchers for quite some time and the attempts at decipherment in the 18th and 19th centuries were unsuccessful (apart from gaining some understanding about the calendar). It was not until the 1950s that the system was understood well enough to start the wave of decipherment that dominated the 1980s and 1990s.

Ancient Maya script can now be read in most cases – although there are still about 15% of glyphs that are undeciphered and the meaning of a few of the deciphered ones are not well- understood. It is a beautiful script and many ancient Mayan artists seem to have focused not only on writing down content, but also making it aesthetically pleasing. Mayans had a sophisticated writing system – the only one in the Americas that can fully express both the spoken language and grammar.

The ancient Maya writing system is complicated. It is logo syllabic, i.e; some of the signs are logograms (a sign representing a whole word; for example, the image of a jaguar head means jaguar) and the others are syllabograms (a sign representing a syllable, for example ‘ba’ or ‘ku’; these syllabograms are then combined to form whole words – similar to how we combine four letters to make ‘word’). These word signs and syllable signs were then combined to spell words. The signs were mostly arranged in square

or rectangular blocks and these blocks were in turn arranged into double columns that were read from left to right and top to bottom. Overall there are over 1,000 different Maya signs – but luckily for the scribes, ‘only’ 300 to 500 of those were used at any point in time.

A large amount of the surviving ancient Maya texts, especially on stone monuments, deal with the lives of kings and queens – when they were born, whom they married, when they died and who followed them into kingship. Many texts contain a large amount of calendrical information, starting with a very detailed description of the date as well as details of astronomical events, followed by what happened at this point in time, followed by who was doing it or to whom it was being done to. The ancient Mayan script is mainly of interest to archaeologists, epigraphers, and linguists. The playfulness of ancient Maya scribes and the beauty and diversity of the signs have also inspired modern designers and artists. It is the only writing system in the Pre-Columbian New World which is known to fully represent the spoken language of its community.

Since its inception, the Mayan script was in use up to the arrival of the Europeans, peaking during the Mayan Classical Period (c. 200 - 900 CE). Although many Maya centers went into decline (or were completely abandoned) during or after this period, the skill and knowledge of Maya writing persisted amongst segments of the population and the early Spanish conquistadores knew of individuals who could still read and write the script. Unfortunately, the Spanish displayed little interest in it, and as a result of the dire impacts the conquest had on Maya societies, the knowledge was subsequently lost, probably within only a few generations. At a rough estimate,

around 10,000 individual texts have so far been recovered, mostly inscribed on stone monuments, lintels, stelae and ceramic pottery.

Maya civilization also produced numerous texts using the bark of certain trees in a “book-format”, called a codex. Shortly after the conquest, all of these latter which could be found were ordered to be burnt and destroyed by zealous Spanish priests, notably Bishop Diego de Landa. Out of these Maya codices, only three reasonably - intact examples are known to have survived through to the present day. These are now known as the Madrid, Dresden, and Paris codices. A few pages survived from a fourth, the Grolier codex, whose authenticity is sometimes disputed, but mostly is held to be genuine. Further archaeology conducted at Mayan sites often reveals other fragments, rectangular lumps of plaster and paint chips which formerly were codices; these tantalizing remains are, however, too severely damaged for any inscriptions to have survived, most of the organic material having decayed. The decipherment and recovery of the now - lost knowledge of Maya writing has been a long and laborious process. Some elements were first deciphered in the late 19th and early 20th century, mostly the parts having to do with numbers, the Maya calendar, and astronomy. Major breakthroughs came starting from 1950s to 1970s, and accelerated rapidly thereafter. By the end of the 20th century, scholars were able to read the majority of Maya texts to a large extent, and recent field work continues to further illuminate the content.

Although the archaeological record does not provide examples, Maya art shows that writing was done with brushes made with animal hair and quills. Codex - style writing was usually done in black

ink with red highlights, giving rise to the Aztec name for the Maya territory as the “land of red and black”. Scribes held a prominent position in Mayan courts. Mayan art often depicts rulers with trappings indicating that they were scribes or at least able to write such as having pen bundles in their head dresses. Also, many rulers have been found in conjunction with writing tools such as shells or clay inkpots. Although the number of logograms and syllabic symbols required to fully write the language numbered in the hundreds, literacy was not necessarily widespread beyond the elite classes. Graffiti uncovered in various contexts, including on fire bricks shows amateur attempts to imitate the writing system.

6.3.3 Religion

Religion was central and vital to Mayan culture. Every aspect of their lives held religious meaning. One of the most critical aspects of Maya religion is the notion of cyclical time. According to the Popol Vuh [poh pole voo] a book written in the early Colonial Period that records oral histories of highland Maya communities, there have been three periods of creation. Two of the creations have ended or, in other words, the creatures have been destroyed. There are many variations of the three creations. The first creation saw the people who were made of mud. The mud people were not the most productive as many were not able to think in the capacity that modern-day humans do and, according to Maya sacred texts, these men “spoke but had no mind.” They could not move because they were made of mud and they also were not technically mortal. The gods were not happy with their first creation, so they destroyed the mud people with water. For the second creation, the deities made men from wood and women from reeds. These people could function as humans do, but

had no souls and did not honour the gods. They were also immortal. When they died, they only remained dead for three days and would rise from the dead. The destruction of the tree men and reed women was caused by an inundation of boiling hot water. The few who may have survived this apocalypse are thought to have become the monkeys that exist today. The third creation saw the birth of modern-day humans. These humans are made of white and yellow maize dough and the blood of the gods. The first humans were four men and four women. These men and women were deemed too wise by the Gods. The Maya deities believed these intelligent humans were a threat to their authority and almost destroyed them as well. However, Heart of Heaven (also known as Huracán, but in the creation story he is the Heart of Heaven, Heart of Earth, or Heart of Sky) clouded their minds and eyes so that they would become less wise.

Different Maya groups believed in a variety of creation myths. The most important concept to understand about Maya religious belief is that time and the creation of humans are thought to be cyclical. This means that some Mayans believe that contemporary humans will be destroyed and another creation is imminent. However, this does not necessarily equate to the popularized notions that the Maya believed in an “end of the world” event. Belief in the end of humanity isn’t the end of the world, it is the end of an era and, perhaps, the beginning of a new epoch of the gods. The gods destroyed the different versions of “humans” because they either could not or would not worship their creators. This is a crucial consideration for the gods. They could not afford to have creations which were unworthy and incapable of providing sustenance to the gods.

Unlike the contemporary western ideas of heaven and hell, the Mayans believed in different levels of these realms. There are three main areas to distinguish from one another. The Mayan culture understand supernatural levels not as heaven and hell, but as the upper world, middle world, and underworld. The upper world consists of thirteen levels, the middle world is one level, and the underworld is nine levels. The Ceiba tree is believed to grow through all of the realms, from the highest level of the upper world to the lowest level of the underworld. The Ceiba tree proved vital to understanding the importance of the cardinal directions in the Maya world.

Mayan deities, in particular, are linked to the cardinal directions. While we are familiar with the four cardinal directions, the Mayans understood that there were five elements to the cardinal directions, the four directions and the center. Arguably, the most meaningful cardinal direction to the Maya is the east. The east is where the sun rises and it is associated with birth because of the Mayan belief that the sun is born daily from the east. These principles were also part of Mayan daily life. Homes were designed to reflect the cardinal directions and the Ceiba tree. The Maya even built hearths at the center of their homes in order to represent the Ceiba-tree center of the cardinal directions.

A belief in cyclical time is embedded in the famous Maya calendar system, which is possibly more accurate than our modern Gregorian calendar. There are two Maya calendars that work together like two wheels of a complex machine. The first was a ritual calendar, known as the Tzolkin [tzol KEEN], which was composed of 260 days. It contained 13 “months” of 20 days each. The months were named after 13 gods, while the twenty days were numbered from 0 to 19.

The second was a 365-day solar calendar called the Haab [hab]. This calendar consisted of 18 months, each one named after an agricultural or religious event. Each month again had 20 days (again numbered 0 to 19). There was one short “month” of only five days that was called the Wayeb. The Wayeb was considered as an unlucky period during which time the Maya did not wash, comb their hair, or do any hard work.

Very less information is known about the ancient Maya pantheon of gods. The Mayans were a polytheistic society and worshipped many Gods with diverse personalities or appearances. Sometimes, the important Gods shifted into lesser gods, which shared characteristics between the two divine identities. Itzamnaaj was the supreme deity among the ancient Maya. He is usually depicted as an old man. In one of his aspects, he is likely the sun god who travels into the underworld at night to become the jaguar god. Chahk the rain god, was one of the most important deities. He is depicted as only part human with a long animal-like nose. He is most often depicted holding a lightning bolt and painted blue.

The ritual life of the ancient Maya was directed by their calendrical system and was critical to daily Maya life. There were numerous kinds of ancient Maya rituals. Everyone from the king to the commoners made regular offerings to the gods. These offerings were necessary to feed the gods and assure that they were pleased with the people and would continue to provide for them. These offerings could be food, incense, or human blood. Perhaps the most important regular ritual for all members of society was bloodletting, or auto sacrifice. Blood was believed to contain the essence of life and was, therefore, the most precious offering made to the gods. Blood

was taken from different parts of the body with a specialized tool designed to produce more blood, which was typically made of toxic marine materials such as stingray barbs. They chose these tools because they inflicted more pain on the worshiper. Pain itself is an offering which emphasizes blood offering to the gods. They would cut themselves on the tongue, arms, and thighs, and the men would also pierce their genitalia. The Maya believed that blood obtained from the tongue and genitals was the most powerful. Bloodletting could signify special dates, such as births, anniversaries, and ascents to the throne.

In addition to bloodletting, human sacrifice was practiced as an especially important kind of blood sacrifice. Human sacrifice is first seen archaeologically in the Classic Period around 250 CE and continues into the Spanish Period. The most common kind of human sacrifice early on was the decapitation of captured high status enemy warriors during the dedications of buildings or rulers. Later heart extraction became more common. Both forms of human sacrifice are linked to Maya mythology. During times of drought or other climatic stresses, people were sometimes thrown into sacred cenotes (sinkholes) and drowned. Children were often offered this ritual. Another important ritual of Maya culture was the ballgame. The game had religious significance because it played out a scene from Maya mythology. The courts were usually located in the city’s sacred precinct. The court was flat with three stone markers down its length. Some of the stone markers have inscriptions that depict the underworld. Experts have speculated that the game symbolized the movement of the sun (the ball) through the underworld (the ball court) each night, or that it may have represented the moon

and the earth. The players themselves were either professionals or amateurs, but many of them were war captives who were forced to play after losing battles.

Mayan religious beliefs are formed on the notion that virtually everything in the world contains k'uh, or sacredness. K'uh and k'uhul, similar terms which are used to explain the spirituality of all inanimate and animate things, describe the most divine life force of existence. Mayan belief establishes the creation and sanctity of human beings, the earth, and all things sacred. This divine sanctity can be translated into Mayan creation myths as well.

For understanding the Mayan creation myths, it is important to know the difference between the two sources that the Maya creation stories have been found on. These sources include the Popol Vuh and the Books of Chilam Balam. The Popol Vuh is associated with the highland Maya of what is today Guatemala. It contains text about human creation, prophecies, and traditional myths and histories. The Books of Chilam Balam are normally associated with the lowland Maya of the Yucatán area of Mexico. There are several books of Chilam Balam which are named for the area in which they were written. The most famous and influential books include the books of *Chumayel*, *Tizimin*, *Mani*, *Kaua*, *Ixil*, *Tusik*, and *Codex Pérez*. The books are written by a Jaguar priest, a literal translation for Chilam Balam. These books dates back to colonial Spanish times, circa 1500s CE, which shows that there is a clear influence of Spanish colonialism on the creation stories of the Chilam Balam.

The Mayans and the creation of the earth is said to have been a deed of Huracán, the wind and sky god. The sky and earth connected, which left no space for any beings or vegetation to grow. In

order to make space, a Ceiba tree was planted. The tree grew roots in all the levels of the underworld and its branches grew into the upper world. The tree trunk grew to leave space on earth for animals, plants, and humans. According to Maya belief, animals and plants were extinct before humans. The gods were not satisfied with the animals because they could not speak to honour them. From there, humans were made in order to honour the gods.

While the most prevalent ritual associated with the ancient Maya is the practice of sacrifice, they also performed other kinds of rituals. The Mayans also participated in offering to the Gods precious items, such as jade, gold, masks, shells, carved human bone, and ceremonial or sacred tools. Marriage was another religious ritual and a cause for celebration among the Mayan culture. Maya marriages were typically arranged marriages within the same social class. Age at the time of marriage varied, but experts speculate that the marriage age was related to population growth and decline. When the Maya population declined, youths would marry at a younger age. Couples would be matched at a very young age, sometimes even when they were infants.

Marriages were performed by priests at the bridal home. Priests would burn incense to bring a fortuitous marriage and then a feast or other type of celebration would ensue. If the marriage was not deemed successful by either husband or wife, the couple could “divorce.” There is no known ritual for divorce, but it is intriguing that divorce was, more or less, an acceptable action.

Dance is another overlooked ritual. Dance rituals were performed to communicate with the gods. The dances would feature lavish costumes which depicted the visages of divinities. Often the

Mayans would wear or include ornaments such as staffs, spears, rattles, sceptres, and even live snakes as dance aids. The Mayans believed that by dressing and acting as a God, they would be overtaken by the God's spirit and therefore would be able to communicate with him or her. The ancient Mayan maintained a

complex religion. The multifaceted Gods and rituals have even persisted in today's Mayan culture, however syncretised they have become. Their ideologies of creation, sacrifice, sacredness, and multiplicity are important to understand about the Mayan religion.

Recap

- ◆ Mayan calendar system is divided based on ritual purposes
- ◆ The main functions of Mayan calendar were to co-relate the activities of their rulers with mythical and historical events
- ◆ Mayan writing system considered as one of the unique gifts of their legacy
- ◆ Ancient Mayan Writing system is complicated
- ◆ Mayan legacy's importance in Latin American civilization and history
- ◆ Mayan writing was done with brushes made out of animal's hair and quills
- ◆ Mayan religion and its various components
- ◆ Ritualistic life of Mayans was having direct connection with their calendrical system

Objective Questions

1. Which are the three separate corresponding calendars of the Mayans?
2. What was the most important Pre-Mayan script?
3. What is a Codex?
4. How many creation myths are there in the Mayan religion?
5. What was the purpose of 'dance culture' in Mayan civilisation?



6. What directed the ritualistic life of Mayans?
7. Where did the Mayan priests perform the marriage ceremonies?
8. The 'Mayan Solar New year ' is said to have begun in which month of present day?

Answers

1. The Long Count, the Tzolkin (divine calendar), and the Haab (civil calendar).
2. Epi-Olmec
3. Codex are the numerous texts using the bark of certain trees in a book-format used by the Mayans.
4. Three
5. To communicate with Gods
6. Mayan Calendrical System
7. Bridal Home
8. July

Assignments

1. Prepare a flowchart describing the features of different type of Mayan calendar.
2. Elucidate on the unique features of Mayan religion that distinguished it from other cultures
3. Explain about Mayan calendar and its functionalities

Suggested Readings

1. Evans, S. T. *Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archaeology and Culture History* (Second ed.), London, UK: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2008.
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2. Sharer, R. J. *“Daily Life in Maya Civilization.”* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009.



UNIT

Aztec Society

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able :

- ◆ to introduce the development of the Aztec civilization and its features
- ◆ to explain the nuances of Aztec's society
- ◆ to familiarise with the importance of Tenochtitlan as Aztec capital
- ◆ to describe the consequences of the Spanish invasion on the Aztec empire

Prerequisites

The Aztecs were a formidable civilization that rose to power at a time when the Mayan city-states were in decline. The Aztecs, also known as the Mexica, were a complex and sophisticated society that flourished in the highlands of central Mexico. They built their empire through conquest, tribute, and trade, similar to earlier states in the region. However, what set them apart was their state religion and the recognition of great military service and accomplishments with higher social ranks.

The Aztecs were masterful warriors who united a diverse group of central Mexican populations through military coercion. They eventually came to control vast agricultural resources and human labor, creating a sprawling empire that dominated the region. The Aztecs' grand capital city, Tenochtitlan, was a marvel of engineering and urban planning, with a complex system of canals, bridges, and causeways. Its fame spread all across Europe after the Spanish invasion.

The Aztecs were a society of warriors, but they also valued knowledge and technology. They had a highly developed calendar system, which was more accurate than the European calendar of the time. They also had a sophisticated system of

writing and used pictograms to record their history, mythology, and religious beliefs.

In this unit, we delve deep into the defining features of the Aztec civilization that give it a unique place in Latin American history. We will study their impressive military strategies, their awe-inspiring architectural achievements, and their religious and cultural beliefs. By understanding the Aztecs, we can gain a greater appreciation for the rich and diverse cultural heritage of Latin America.

Keywords

Aztecs, Tenochtitlan, Warriors, Mexicas, Hernán Cortés, Flower wars, Papalotl, Tlamaní

Discussion

The Aztec Empire was a vast civilization in ancient Mexico at the time of the Spanish conquest of the 'New World.' The intensity of Spanish presence among the Aztecs also means that we have numerous historical accounts describing life in the Aztec empire. A handful of Spanish explorers left accounts of the conquest of the Aztecs, and there were a few Spanish priests who worked with the native population and recorded the things that they learned by talking to people; much of what we know about the Aztec Empire comes from these sources. There were also a few Colonial Period codices, books written by the Aztec people in the Aztec pictographic text, after the Spanish conquest. Unlike the Maya hieroglyphic script, the Aztec pictographic texts required an oral interpreter. Many of these books were annotated in the Colonial Period and are essential sources of information about the Aztecs. The Aztecs wrote numerous books in this text before the Spanish landed in the New World; However, all but a few were burned by the Spanish in the early Colonial Period. There are some pre-colonial period codices that survived the Spanish burning of all native

books; and they are a precious source of information on the Aztecs. The final sources of information on the Aztecs are archaeological. These material remains can include garbage, burials, buildings, or art that provide important information about the people who created and used them. Archaeological information about the Aztecs is less plentiful than it is for the Maya because much of the center of the Aztec world is now underneath Mexico City, and therefore hard to access.

6.4.1 Society

Like the ancient Maya, the Aztec Empire was hierarchically structured. Aztec society was divided into different classes. Membership in these classes was based primarily on an individual's parent's status. In the Aztec society, in particular, there was little upward mobility between classes. At the top of the social pyramid were the king and the nobility, called the Huey Tlatoani and the Pipiltin. The emperor was considered the highest-ranking elite and was elected by a council of nobles, priests, and military leaders. The title Huey Tlatoani means "great speaker"



in the Nahuatl language, and the ability to speak eloquently and persuasively was a greatly respected skill among the Aztecs. The emperor's primary function was to lead military campaigns during wartime. The decision to declare or wage war rested solely with the emperor. The son of the emperor did not automatically become the next ruler. Instead, when the emperor died, a group of advisors would choose the new leader from among the emperor's family.

Aztec priests recorded history and law in pictographic texts written on codices. They also taught at schools, and studied astronomy, mathematics, and medicine. Astronomy was important to the Aztecs, and like the ancient Maya, they had two distinct calendars based on the movement of celestial bodies. The disappearance of constellations, while the sun was at its highest point in the sky, was observed and tracked to mark the beginning of the rainy season, and the dry season was denoted by the constellations' return. These astronomical observations directed the cultivation of agricultural fields. During times of war, rulers and priests went into battle as warriors but not as themselves. Aztec rulers would go into battle assuming the persona of two great and powerful Aztec entities. The ruler would take on the persona of the god of the sun, war, and human sacrifice. A high-ranking priest would assume the persona of the goddess of fertility and motherhood.

The elites were a select group of people of superior rank. Nobles were those with royal blood. The council of nobles was made up of high-ranking elites whose primary responsibility was to select a new emperor from the royal family after the death of a ruler. Council members served as officials, judges, and governors of conquered territories and provinces. The highest ranking nobles were the Tlatoani,

"he who speaks", or rulers of city-states. These men owned or controlled the land within that city-state. Nobles displayed their wealth by purchasing expensive garments, such as those made of cotton or decorated capes, and adorning accessories, such as fine jewellery. Although noble status was given at birth, failing to meet assigned responsibilities could result in a lowering of noble rank. The elite class includes all of the nobles as well as some warriors and traders.

Much of Aztec society was composed of commoners. This social group included some warriors and merchants, peasant farmers, and serfs. People of the commoner class were limited to wearing only coarse fibre clothing, while the nobles wore finer materials, such as cotton. Commoner merchants were responsible for trading goods with both neighbouring city states and distant empires. Domestic trade, trade handled within the empire, was conducted by merchant middlemen. In contrast with the *pochteca*, the middlemen traders dealt in far fewer luxury goods and mostly traded maize, seeds, chillies, baskets, turkey, salt, and especially regional variations of crops. The few luxury goods traded by these merchants included cacao (chocolate) beans and cotton. Peasant farmers were considered low ranking commoners. Approximately 30 percent of the Aztec population were peasant farmers.

The Aztecs had no standing army; they did have about 200,000 men they could mobilize at any time. Most warriors were upper-class commoners and only part time warriors. Nonetheless, they could rise to noble status by performing well on the battlefield. Warriors could increase their rank and become military leaders by capturing enemies in battle. Sons of nobility always had the best opportunity,

however, because they received the best military training and started off at a higher initial rank as a product of the status of their fathers. The military ranking of an individual was intimately tied to the overall social structure of Aztec society. The social ranking was bound to political offices, with the latter defining rights. To Aztec men, dying in battle was their duty and the highest honour in Aztec society. A well-trained warrior could be extremely accurate with an atlatl (spear thrower) and Tlacochitli (spear). These weapons allowed them to make killing blows while remaining at a safe distance. Military leaders commanded groups of soldiers and took part in war councils.

Their society placed great emphasis on war and conquest even though no official standing army was maintained. The primary purpose of warfare was to expand the Aztec empire through a combination of conquests and alliances. The *pochteca*, who were both spies and noble merchant traders, were sent out to neighbouring empires outside and around the Basin of Mexico. Information gathered during trading was relayed to rulers and briefed to military leaders and the Emperor. An Aztec ambassador would be employed to request that the targeted city-state or empires pay tribute to the Aztecs. If they agreed peacefully, the sitting ruler was left in place and tribute to the Basin of Mexico was established. If the ruler refused to comply, all elites and commoners that resisted Aztec rule were slain and a new Aztec ruler was appointed in its place. The Aztec also conducted some territorial warfare, which forced their ways of life and their religion upon those they conquered. As the empire's territory expanded a type of hegemonic empire, where conquered peoples would display loyalty to the conquering empire through a tribute system (kind of like taxation), was

established. Tribute often took the form of an act, statement, or gift that was intended to show gratitude, respect, or admiration. Tributes could include any number of subsistence or luxury goods.

In addition to wars of empire building, the Aztec also fought what they termed 'flower wars' against the neighbouring Tlaxcalans. Flower wars were wars fought for the purpose of taking prisoners to be used in ritual sacrifices and may have been fought at times of environmental or socio-political unrest. The Aztecs describe these wars as opportunities for their warriors to get proper practice and training with rival powers. The Tlaxcalans may not have seen the wars this way, indeed they remained staunchly opposed to the Aztecs when the Spanish arrived, suggesting that they considered the wars more territorial in nature. As Aztec warriors showed their courage and craftiness in battle and skill at capturing enemy soldiers for sacrifice, they gained in military rank. The Aztec emperors honoured the higher ranks with weapons and distinctive garb that reflected their status in the military.

Aztec warriors carried projectile weapons such as bow and arrows to attack the enemy from afar. They also carried weapons for the melee when armies came together. The lowest ranks of warriors carried a club and shield. Higher ranks were awarded finer weapons. Each rank in the army wore special clothing that denoted the honours they had won. Aztec warriors carried different types of clubs. The *macuahuitl* club was edged with obsidian blades. While the obsidian shattered easily, it was razor sharp. A *macuahuitl* could easily decapitate a man. A *macuauitzotli* was a long club made of hardwood with a knob on each side. A *huitzauhqui* was a baseball bat type club, although some of these were studded with obsidian or

flint. A cuahuatl was a club shaped like a baton, made of oak. A cuauololli was basically a mace, a club topped with a rock or copper sphere. Aztec warriors carried round shields made of wood that were either plain or decorated with their military insignia called a chimalli. The higher rank warriors had special chimalli with a mosaic of feathers denoting their society or rank.

Basic Aztec armour was quilted cotton of two to three thickness. The cotton was soaked in salt brine then hung to dry. The salt crystallized in the material, which gave it the ability to resist obsidian blades and spears. An extra layer of armour, a tunic, was worn by noble Aztec warriors. Warrior societies also wore a helmet made of hardwood, carved to represent their society or different animals like birds or coyotes. Tlahuiztli were special suits awarded to various ranks of the military. Each rank wore different coloured and decorated tlahuiztli to make them easily distinguished on the battlefield. Each rank also wore pamitl or military emblems.

The Aztec warrior was highly honoured in society, if he was successful. Success depended on bravery in battle, tactical skill, heroic deeds and most of all, in capturing enemy warriors. Since every boy and man received military training, all were called for battle when war was in the offing. Both commoners and nobles who captured enemy warriors moved up in military rank or became members of military orders. Many nobles joined the army professionally and functioned as the command core of the army.

While the Aztec economy depended on trade, tribute and agriculture, the real business of the empire was war. Through war, the Aztec Empire gained tribute from conquered enemies. People captured during war became slaves or sacrifices

in the Aztec's religious ceremonies. Expanding the empire through further conquests strengthened the empire and brought more riches in tribute. For this reason, the emperor rewarded successful warriors of both classes with honours, the right to wear certain garments in distinctive colours, nobility for the commoners and higher status for nobles and land. Every Aztec warrior could, if he captured enemy warriors, advance far in society.

Rank in the military required bravery and skill on the battlefield and capture of enemy soldiers. With each rank, came special clothing and weapons from the emperor, conveyed high honour. Warrior clothing, costumes and weaponry were instantly recognizable in Aztec society. The important warrior ranks were namely : (i) Tlamani: One captive warrior: Received an undecorated obsidian-edged club and shield, two distinctive capes and a bright red loincloth. (ii) Cuextecatli: Two captive warriors: This rank enabled the warrior to wear the distinguishing black and red suit called a tlahuiztli, sandals and a conical hat. (iii) Papalotli: Three captive warriors: Papalotli (butterfly) were awarded with a butterfly banner to wear on his back, conferring special honor. (iv) Cuauhocelotli: Four or more captive warriors: These Aztec warriors reached the high rank of Eagle and Jaguar knights.

Eagle and Jaguar warriors were the two main military societies, the highest rank open to commoners. In battle they carried atlatls, bows, spears and daggers. They received special battle costumes, representing eagles and jaguars with feathers and jaguar pelts. They became full-time warriors and commanders in the army. Great physical strength, battlefield bravery and captured enemy soldiers were necessary to obtain this rank.

Commoners who reached the vaunted

Eagle or **Jaguar** rank were awarded the rank of noble along with certain privileges: they were given land, could drink alcohol (pulque), wear expensive jewellery denied to commoners, were asked to dine at the palace and could keep concubines. They also wore their hair tied with a red cord with green and blue feathers. Eagle and jaguar knights travelled with the pochteca, protecting them, and guarded their city. While these two ranks were equal, the Eagle knights worshipped Huitzilopochtli, the war god and the Jaguars worshipped Tezcatlipocha.

The two highest military societies were the Otomies and the Shorn Ones. Otomies took their name from a fierce tribe of fighters. The Shorn Ones was the most prestigious rank. They shaved their heads except for a long braid of hair on the left side and wore yellow tlahuiztli. These two ranks were the shock troops of the empire, the special forces of the Aztec army, and were open only to the nobility. These warriors were greatly feared and went first into battle.

6.4.2 Tenochtitlan

Tenochtitlan was a beautiful capital city of the Aztecs now located in Mexico. A legend says that their God of the sun, Huitzilopochtli, guided them to find a new place to live. He told the Aztecs they would know they had arrived, when they saw an eagle standing on a nopal cactus with a snake in its beak. This would be the sign for them to start building their new home. They left Aztlán in the 12th century, settling in various places before finally, in the 13th Century, arriving in the Valley of Mexico. They fought some of the other peoples who occupied this territory, and were eventually taken prisoner by several tribes who had joined forces against them. Later, the Mexicas were freed and left to live in a poorly

populated area of marshland near a group of lakes, the largest of which was Texcoco. According to the legend, it was here that they witnessed the eagle with the snake in its beak, exactly as Huitzilopochtli had described it to them, so they settled on one of the islands. This eventually became the city of Tenochtitlan. It was an impressive sight to arrive in the city of Tenochtitlan and see the Great Temple towering over the surrounding buildings and houses. This pyramid had twin temples on the top. One of these temples was dedicated to the God of rain, Tlaloc, and the other to the God of the sun, Huitzilopochtli. Also in the central area of the city was a ball court, where spectators watched a game between two teams trying to propel a ball through a hoop. The skulls from sacrificial victims were strung on rows of wooden bars on a construction called the Tzompantli.

In the beginning, Tenochtitlán was under the sway of another city named Azcapotzalco, to which they had to pay tribute. Political instability at Azcapotzalco, combined with an alliance with the cities of Texcoco and Tlacopan, allowed the Tenochtitlán ruler Itzcoatl (reign 1428-1440) to break free from Azcapotzalco's control and assert the city's independence. Over the next 80 years, the territory controlled by Tenochtitlán and its allies grew, and the city became the center of a new empire. The tribute that flowed in made the inhabitants (at least the elite) wealthy. The city itself would come to boast an aqueduct that brought in potable water and a great temple dedicated to both Huitzilopochtli (the god who led the Mexica to the island) and Tlaloc, a god of rain and fertility.

The people of Tenochtitlán were divided into numerous clan groups called calpulli (which means "big house"), and these in turn consisted of smaller neighborhoods.

Usually, the *calpulli* was made up of a group of *macehualtin* (commoner) families led by *pipiltin* (nobles). King Motecuhzoma (or Montezuma) I, who reigned from 1440 to 1469, created an education system where every neighborhood had to have a school or temple to educate youth. Another feature of Tenochtitlán's society was that it had a strict class system, one that affected the clothes people wore and even the size of the houses they were allowed to build. Among the people considered to be in the lower classes were the porters the city relied on. The lack of wheeled vehicles and pack animals meant that the city's goods had to be brought in by canoe or human lifting. Surviving depictions show porters carrying loads on their backs with a strap secured to their forehead.

As Tenochtitlán's empire grew, so did its trade. Tlatelolco was a "trade city" and the union of these two cities made the site of Tenochtitlan-Tlatelolco the economic and political center of the Valley of Mexico. Instead of minted currency people bartered for goods using cacao beans for small transactions, cotton blankets for mid-range ones, and quills filled with gold dust for large business operations. Metallurgy played a major role in Tenochtitlán's economy and society. Metallurgy was well established for copper, silver, and gold; there was even enough metal to allow copper to be used for agriculture and industrial tools as well as for armaments and jewellery.

The writing used by the people of Tenochtitlán, and by other Aztec groups, was called "pictorial." This means that it is composed predominantly of figural images that bear some likeness to, or visual association with, the ideas, things, or actions they represent. This system of writing also contains abstractions and other marks that were arbitrarily assigned

certain meanings, and meanings unrelated to their likeness. The Aztecs used this writing system to create "codices" made from the bark of fig trees. Hundreds of manuscripts existed at the time of the Aztecs. All but eleven disappeared with the arrival of the Europeans. The majority of them were destroyed in a bonfire ordered by Juan de Zumárraga in 1535. The Spanish priests objected to the Aztec religious content in the codices.

At the heart of the city was a sacred area surrounded by a wall. Within the enclosure were more than seventy buildings, and these were surrounded by a wall decorated with images of serpents, called a *coatepantli*. The greatest structure was a place that the Spaniards called the "Templo Mayor" (main temple). It was dedicated to the gods Huitzilopochtli and Tlaloc. Standing about ninety feet [27 meters] high, the majestic structure consisted of two stepped pyramids rising side by side on a huge platform. It dominated both the Sacred Precinct and the entire city. Two long, broad, staircases led to the top of the monument where two temples stood. The temple structures on top of each pyramid were dedicated to and housed the images of the two important deities. It was a place where great, and gruesome, rituals were performed. There was human sacrifice at the top of the Templo Mayor, and also the scene of athletes and dancers moving gracefully in and around platforms and braziers.

When Hernán Cortés landed in Mexico in 1519 he was, initially, greeted with gifts of gold from Tenochtitlán's ruler Motecuhzoma (or Montezuma) II. The king may have been hoping that the gifts would appease the Spanish and make them go away, but it on the contrary had the opposite effect. The gold made the Spaniards more anxious than

ever to see the city. Gold was what they sought. Cortés pushed on to Tenochtitlán, where Motecuhzoma II again gave the conquistador a warm welcome. Cortes then repaid the ruler by taking him prisoner and trying to rule the city in his name. This arrangement quickly soured with dissident groups naming Cuitlahuac, the king's brother, to take over from the soon-to-be-killed Motecuhzoma. Cortés fled the city on June 30, 1520, but within several months started marching back with a great army to conquer it. Smith notes that this force was made up of 700 Spaniards and 70,000 native troops who had allied themselves with the Spanish. This army laid siege to Tenochtitlán, destroying the aqueduct and trying to cut off food supplies to the hundreds of thousands of people in the city. Making matters worse, for the inhabitants of the city who had recently been decimated by a smallpox plague to which they had no immunity.

In 1520, shortly after the first Mexican treasure and the letter of Hernan Cortés reached the Spanish court in Valladolid, descriptions of Tenochtitlan, a sophisticated city “comparable in size to Seville or Cordoba,” and its incredible

riches and wealth, drew much admiration throughout Europe. In England, the news arrived and Tenochtitlan, the Aztec centre of power, had been conquered by Spain and that, as a result, the Spanish crown was filling its coffers with treasures and increasing its power beyond Europe. By 1521, the year in which Cortés completed the Spanish conquest of Mexico, there was, in England among those aware of Spain's rising wealth and its maritime and geographical expansion towards the West, a growing feeling of discontent, frustration and lost opportunity with relation to the New World. Such feelings were only reinforced by news of the wealth and magnificence of Tenochtitlan. With the acquisition of lands and riches in the New World, Spain was consolidating its empire and becoming the most powerful European monarchical state. The sheer size of Cortés' force, their firepower and the plague ravaging Tenochtitlán made victory inevitable for the Spaniards. The city was theirs in August 1521. The Tlaxcallan soldiers that were in Cortés' force went on to massacre many of the remaining inhabitants of Tenochtitlán which proved to be the last nail on the coffin of the Aztec city.

Recap

- ◆ The emergence of Aztec empire
- ◆ Aztec empire was hierarchically structured
- ◆ Development of Aztec as a society of warriors
- ◆ Aztec warriors were highly honored in the society
- ◆ Tenochtitlan as the capital of Aztec and an important centre of the empire
- ◆ The writing used by people of Tenochtitlan was pictorial in nature
- ◆ Spanish conquest and its impact on the Aztecs and its downfall
- ◆ Spain consolidated their empire and became the most powerful European Monarchical structure

Objective Questions

1. Which is the capital of the Aztec empire?
2. Whom did Aztecs fight the flower wars against?
3. What was the most important temple in Tenochtitlan?
4. Name the Spanish conqueror who played a major role in the downfall of the Aztecs?
5. How did the Aztec priests recorded their history and law?
6. What was the real business of Aztec empire?
7. Who were the two military communities among Aztecs?
8. Name the famous trade city in Tenochtitlan empire?

Answers

1. Tenochtitlan
2. Tlaxcalans
3. Templo Mayor
4. Herna'n Cortés
5. Through pictographical texts written on codices
6. War
7. Eagle and Jaguar warriors
8. Tlatelolco

Assignments

1. Prepare a chart highlighting the important features of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan.
2. State the significance of war in Aztec empire and the way it controlled their social life.

Suggested Readings

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UNIT

Aztecs-Knowledge and Technology

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit the learner will be able to

- ◆ introduce the development of the Aztec technology
- ◆ explain the nuances of Aztec's focus on knowledge and education
- ◆ familiarise the importance of Aztec history in Latin American culture

Prerequisites

The Aztecs were not only warriors, but also great advocates of knowledge and education. They believed that education was essential to the growth and development of their empire. To ensure that all citizens had access to education, they made it mandatory and provided education in various fields, such as science, agriculture, art, and culture. This led to the development of a highly skilled and knowledgeable society.

One of the most remarkable examples of Aztec art and architecture is the city of Machu Picchu. Located in the Andes Mountains of Peru, it was built during the height of the Inca Empire, which was heavily influenced by Aztec culture. The intricate stonework and complex architecture of Machu Picchu are a testament to the Aztecs' artistic talent and their advanced knowledge of engineering.

The Aztecs were also adept at developing technology that aided in their agricultural pursuits. They built elaborate irrigation systems and terraced fields that allowed them to cultivate crops on otherwise unusable land. They were also skilled in metallurgy, pottery, and weaving, producing beautiful and intricate pieces of art that are still admired today.

In summary, the Aztecs were a civilization that valued education, art, and

technology. Their contributions to Latin American history are significant, and their focus on knowledge and development has left a lasting impact on the world. In this unit, we delve deeper into the unique features of the Aztec civilization and their legacy.

Keywords

Aztecs, Calendar, Chinampas, Xiuhmopolli, Tlamemes, Nahuatl, Telpochalli, Canoes

Discussion

6.5.1 Knowledge and Technology

Aztecs made several important advancements in the domains of education and science. They were among the first societies in the world to make education compulsory for all children. This education also included basic military training for all male students. Aztec children started their education at home, from the age of three onwards, with boys being educated by their father and girls by their mother. In Tenochtitlan, the sons of Aztec noblemen enrolled in a school called the Calmecac, at the age of 15. Here they were trained as priests or political administrators. They were taught medicine, astronomy, calendric calculations, writing, history, literature, philosophy, law, government, and military strategy. The sons of the middle class went to another school called Telpochcalli. In this school children learned how to make ornaments with feathers, work stones, sculpt, and trained to become warriors. Girls were trained to become priestesses, and learnt how to knit and work with feathers to make religious objects.

In the field of science, they made

considerable advancements in mathematics, medicine, and astronomy. Aztecs used maths to measure distances, lengths, and land area. Their technological advances focused on practical use, such as farming and building. Aztecs used obsidian and copper tools to build, carve, and sculpt using stone and wood. A dugout canoe was very useful for navigating the canals and lake surrounding Tenochtitlan. These canoes were made from hollowed-out logs burned by fire. Aztec carpenters also made a flat-bottomed boat similar to a raft, consisting of planks of wood tied together with tight fibers. From this knowledge, the Aztecs built an impressive array of tools, structures, and systems to help their society thrive.

The Aztecs practiced a number of arts, including poetry, music, dance, and sculpture. Poets wrote verses to sing the praises of the gods, to tell stories, and to celebrate the natural world. Aztec poets sung their poems or recited them to music. Music and dance were important parts of Aztec ceremonies and holidays. People dressed up for these special occasions. Women wore beautiful blouses over their skirts. Men painted their faces, greased their hair, and wore feathered

headdresses. The dancers formed large circles and moved to the beat of drums and the sound of rattle bells. The dances had religious meaning, and the dancers had to perform every step correctly. Sometimes thousands of people danced at one time. The Aztecs were also gifted painters and sculptors. Painters used brilliant colours to create scenes showing gods and religious ceremonies. Sculptors fashioned stone statues and relief sculptures on animals from rock and semiprecious stones such as jade.

Aztecs faced two crucial disadvantages in terms of Aztec technology for transportation: the absence of wheels and horses. On the land, travelling by foot was the most common way of transportation which naturally was very slow. Due to this reason, the Aztecs did not construct any roads. However, Aztecs have developed special boats called canoes which made transportation through streams and rivers much easier in those days. This mode of transportation was thus extensively used throughout the Aztec Empire. They dug many small canals for the transportation of canoes.

While the wheel was used only for toys and there were no beasts of burden, the Aztecs developed several ways to transport goods for long distances. The most common form of transporting goods was in a woven cane container strapped to a person's back on a carrying frame. Porters, called *tlamemes*, were specialized in this type of transport. Each *tlameme* could carry a little more than 50 pounds. Travelers navigated between cities along a system of roads. The most developed roads were located near cities. A main highway linked the major cities in the empire. Local peoples or authorities maintained the sections of road located near their towns. In Tenochtitlan, five great causeways

connected the city to the mainland. People could walk along the causeways over the lake to travel outside of the city. These 12-foot- (3.7 m) wide causeways consisted of wooden stakes driven into the lake bed and filled in with sand, dirt, and rocks. To allow the current to flow throughout the lake, parts of the causeways were cut away, creating canals. Over those gaps there were wooden bridges.

With tropical forests as their backyard, the Aztecs had a cornucopia of plants with which to experiment for their medicinal and healing properties. As a result, the Aztecs became expert herbalists, with remedies for many ailments—from a simple headache to a head wound. Aztec physicians were educated and very experienced. They made hundreds of prescriptions for different types of wounds, diseases, and other health issues. These physicians knew of the many herbs, stones, trees, and roots with healing properties that could be used to treat specific ailments. These expert herbalists had extensive knowledge about the medicinal uses of plants. In 1552, two Aztec scholars recorded a list of herbs used by their people in the *Badianus Manuscript*, which was written in Nahuatl and later translated into Latin. The Aztecs had specific medicinal mixtures to treat many kinds of ailments.

The Aztecs relied heavily on agriculture to meet their subsistence needs. Cultivation was carried out with a style of farming called the *chinampa*. The *chinampa* system is a type of raised field agriculture, where canals are dug out of the shallow lake bottom and the soil is piled into rows of man-made islands. The process creates fertile land where there was only a shallow lake previously, and makes use of the plant and animal life in the lake to replenish nutrients in the soil used for cultivation. This type of farming

worked well in the swampy areas around the basin's lake bed because it allowed them to control large amounts of water and maximize agricultural production from small areas of land. . To construct a chinampa, first a rectangular area was chosen and its four corners marked with wooden stakes extending into the lake bed. The size of the chinampas ranged from approximately 10 to 16 feet (3 to 5 m) wide and 20 to 98 feet (6 to 30 m) long. The rectangular area was then filled with layers of mud and vegetation. The finished chinampa extended approximately 3 feet (1 m) above the water. Willow trees were planted at each corner to help stabilize the chinampa. Sometimes farmers also built their homes on these plots.

The chinampas were typically run by the Aztec government and produced abundant amounts of crops at one time, which provided ample food to the large population of the empire. The Aztecs also built terraces and check dams to increase agricultural production on the hillsides surrounding the lake. The Aztecs were model organic farmers who did not let anything go to waste-even human excrement. They filled canoes with excrement from the dwellers of Tenochtitlan and sent the canoes to the chinampa fields. This human waste was then used as a rich fertilizer for the soil. Swampy land is not ideal for farming, but the Aztecs succeeded in making the area around the island city of Tenochtitlan agriculturally productive.

Maize was the principal staple food of the Aztec people; however, maize was not the only thing they ate. Other foods that were used to supplement the diet would have been grown in household gardens, hunted, or fished. The Aztec diet consisted mostly of fruits and vegetables with maize, beans, squash, and chili peppers taking up most of the plate. Wild-type

animals such as turkey, fish, and insects were also consumed as part of the Aztec diet. In addition to plants intended as food, the Aztecs also created botanical gardens to grow medicines and herbs for use by the ruling class. One of the most esteemed crops grown was cacao, or chocolate. As was the case among the ancient Maya, cacao beans were often ground up, and hot water was added to make a beverage mostly consumed by the elites. It was highly prized because, like coffee or tea, cacao beans contained caffeine. Cacao beans were so valuable that they were often used as currency in Aztec trade.

Even though they lived on a lake, the residents of Tenochtitlan needed clean drinking water and water to irrigate farms. Some of the water in the lake was saline, and therefore undrinkable. Aztec engineers devised an ingenious type of aqueduct to bring freshwater into the city. The Chapultepec aqueduct originated at the Chapultepec springs and ended in the city's center. It was built on a raised platform, running atop a causeway near the city. At its base were wood pilings, topped with a sand, lime, and rock foundation. This base supported two masonry water channels. While one channel was in use, the other could be cleaned and maintained. This ensured the water flow never stopped. The Chapultepec aqueduct was the most advanced aqueduct the Aztecs ever built, though they built many other aqueducts during their rule.

From houses to palaces, the Aztecs used a similar template for their construction. A standard design consisted of rectangular rooms built around a central courtyard. Outer walls were made from wood or stone, and roofs were straw thatch or flat stone. Inside, the walls were covered with wooden planks, latticework with adobe plaster, adobe bricks, or stone. The marshy conditions in Tenochtitlan also

caused buildings to sink, so builders raised many homes on stone platforms. Building on the urban styles of the earlier cities of Teotihuacan and Tula, Aztec city planners carefully thought out the design for the Aztec capital. Its design was so awe-inspiring that Spanish explorers called it the “Venice of the New World.” The city was divided into four quarters, each representing north, south, east, and west directions. The ceremonial center was considered the fifth direction; a religious symbol of what the Aztecs believed held the sky and earth together. Each quarter was further divided into four quadrants. These smaller neighbourhoods belonged to different *calpulli*, and each had its own central plaza. Canals crisscrossed the city as well, following a geometrical pattern using right angles. These many technological advancements made the Aztec capital an impressive sight admired and inspired the heart of the empire.

The Aztec calendar is very similar to that of the Maya. It is primarily a calendar of rituals, celebrations, and sacrifices based on two different calendars that come together like a complex machine. The first calendar consisted of 260 days and regulated the birthday celebrations of local neighbourhood patron deities across the

empire. The second calendar consisted of a 365-day year divided into 18 units with 20 days each. The Aztecs added an extra five unlucky days at the end of the year to complete the cycle. The combination of both of these calendars established a cycle that repeated every 52 years. This 52-year cycle was known as *Xiuhmolpilli*. The end of the 52-year cycle was celebrated with the New Fire Ceremony. In this celebration, priests climbed a sacred hill, where they watched for a celestial event that signalled a new 52-year cycle would begin the next day. As an offering to the Gods, the priests would start a fire on the chest of a sacrificial individual. When the flames reached their peak, the individual was sacrificed, and their heart was thrown into a fire. Prior to this sacrifice all flames in the city had been extinguished for five days in anticipation of the end of the world. Runners carried the flame into the city of Tenochtitlan to re-light all of the fires. Through this ritual, the temple Gods were renewed, and the new cycle began. One of the most famous Aztec artifacts is the calendar called the Sun Stone. Dedicated to the God of the sun, this beautifully carved stone is nearly 12 feet wide and weighs almost 25 tons. The center shows the face of the sun god.

Recap

- ◆ Aztec education system and its unique features
- ◆ Aztecs faced two disadvantages in terms of transportation and technology
- ◆ Aztec development of agricultural techniques
- ◆ They relied on agriculture for sustenance
- ◆ Contributions of Aztecs in technology



- ◆ Chinampas produced abundant amount of crops for Aztecs
- ◆ Aztec legacy in medicine, science and culture
- ◆ Aztecs followed similar templates for construction

Objective Questions

1. What is the most famous city of the Aztecs?
2. What was the school for the Aztec noblemen?
3. What was the name given for porters in the Aztec empire?
4. What name was given to the special type of farming practiced by the Aztecs?
5. What was the principal staple food of Aztec people?
6. What were the basic needs of Tenochtitlan people?
7. What was the standard design of construction of Aztecs?
8. Aztec calendar has similarities with which civilization?

Answers

1. Machu Picchu
2. Calmecac
3. Tlameme
4. Chinampas
5. Maize
6. Clean drinking water and water to irrigate farms
7. Rectangular rooms built around a central courtyard
8. Mayan Civilization

Assignments

1. Make a chart highlighting the contributions of Aztecs in art, architecture and technology.
2. Write an assignment on 'the knowledge - level 'of Aztecs and its practical use in their daily life.

Suggested Readings

1. Berdan, F. M. F. "Trade, tribute and market in the Aztec empire." Dissertation Abstracts International. A. The Humanities and Social Sciences, 37, no. 1 (1976).
2. Clendinnen, Inga. Aztecs: An Interpretation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
3. Evans, S. T. Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archaeology and Culture History (Second ed.). London, UK: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2008.

References

1. Reilly III, K. F., & Garber, J. F. "The Symbolic Representation of Warfare in Formative Period Mesoamerica". In Ancient Mesoamerican Warfare, edited by K.M. Brown and T.S. Stanton, 127. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003.
2. Smith, M. E. The Aztecs. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.
3. Townsend, R. F. The Aztecs (Third ed.). London, UK: Thames & Hudson, 2009.
4. Van Turenhout, Dirk and John Weeks. Aztecs: New Perspectives. Santa Barbara, CA: Abc-Clio Incorporated, 2005.



UNIT

Incas

Learning Outcomes

At the conclusion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- ◆ introduce the development of the Inca empire
- ◆ explain the unique features of the tribal system of the Incas
- ◆ familiarise the different agricultural methods and crafts practised by the Incas
- ◆ make the learner aware of the religious practices of the Incas

Prerequisites

The Incas were not only masters of engineering and agriculture, but also creators of a unique political system that allowed them to expand and dominate vast territories.

Their empire, Tawantinsuyu, was built on the foundation of a confederation of tribes, with the Inca at the center. They established their heartland in the Cuzco basin, a place where they could build on existing trade and exchange relationships and solidify their power base at home. With time, they pushed northward to incorporate more territory, eventually expanding across much of western South America, including modern-day Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

The Incas were able to achieve such a remarkable feat through their expertise in agriculture. They transformed steep slopes into terraced farms and constructed elaborate water management systems, allowing them to cultivate crops in the Andean mountains where it was previously thought to be impossible. They also developed craft forms such as weaving, metallurgy, and ceramics that were both functional and beautiful.

In addition to their practical skills, the Incas were also known for their religious traditions, which centered around the worship of the sun, *Inti*. The Inca believed that their rulers were direct descendants of the sun god, and they built temples and other structures to honor him.

Sadly, the Inca Empire was short-lived. In 1535 CE, they were conquered by the Spanish, who brought disease and destruction to the native populations. However, the legacy of the Incas lives on, and their remarkable achievements in agriculture, engineering, and politics continue to inspire and captivate people around the world.

In this unit, we will explore the fascinating world of the Inca Empire, delving into their history, culture, and unique way of life. Get ready to be transported to a world of wonder and discovery, where the past comes alive and the future is yet to be written.

Keywords

Incas, Tawantinsuyu, Sapa Inca, Pachacuti, Machu Picchu, Viracocha, Huayna Capac, Amaranth

Discussion

The Inca Empire was a vast and complex civilization in South America at the time of the Spanish conquest of the New World. There are still many living descendants of the Inca in South America, many of whom still speak the Inca language called **Quechua**. Like the Aztecs, however, as the regional seat of power during the Spanish conquest, Inca society suffered major challenging changes culturally and socially such that there is less direct continuity than there is among the Mayans. Additionally, because the Inca had only been around for about 100 years before the Spanish arrived, and had incorporated a great diversity of traditions into their empire, there was not a deep association with Inca culture for most people in the Andes.

Unlike the prehistoric Mesoamerican societies we have looked at, the Inca did not have a writing system. Their history

was passed down in stories rather than through books. Therefore, we have no written records before the Spanish to rely on for understanding the Inca peoples. The Spanish left detailed accounts of their travels in the Inca Empire, however, and some Spanish priests worked with the native population and recorded the things that they learned by talking to people; much of what we know comes from these sources. There were also a few noble Inca men in the Colonial Period who wrote books about their past, and these too are a vital source of information to know more about Incas. The final sources of information on the Inca are archaeological and there has been a lot of archaeological research done in this area. These material remains can include garbage, burials, buildings, or art that provide important information about the people who created and used them.



Society and life

The Inca Empire was the largest empire in Pre - Columbian America, and one of the largest empires in the world at the time of its collapse. The administrative, political and military center of the empire was located in Cuzco. It arose from the highlands of Peru in 1197; from 1438 to 1533, the Incas used conquest and peaceful assimilation to incorporate a large portion of western South America, centered on the Andean mountain ranges, including large parts of modern Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, and Chile. In 1533, Atahualpa, the last Inca emperor (Qhapaq Inka, also Sapa Inca) not being a puppet or freedom fighter, was killed on the orders of the conquistador Francisco Pizarro, marking the beginning of Spanish rule. The Inca Empire was organized in “señoríos” (dominions) with a stratified society, in which the ruler was the Inca. It was also supported by an economy based on the collective property of the land. In fact, the Inca Empire was conceived like an ambitious and audacious civilizing project, based on a mythical thought, in which the harmony of the relationships between the human being, nature and Gods was truly essential. The Quechua name was Tawantin Suyu which can be translated as ‘The Four Regions or The Four United Regions’. Before the Quechua spelling reform it was written in Spanish as Tahuantinsuyo. Tawantin is a group of four things (tawa “four” with the suffix -ntin which names a group); suyu means “region” or “province”. The empire was divided into four suyus, whose corners met at the capital, Cuzco (Qusqu), in modern - day Peru. The official language of the empire was Quechua, although over seven hundred local languages were spoken at that time.

The most powerful figure in the

empire was the Sapa Inca (‘the unique Inca’) . Only descendants of the original Inca tribe ever ascended to that level of Inca. Most young members of the Inca’s family attended Yachay Wasis (houses of knowledge) to obtain their education. The Tahuantinsuyu was a federalist system which consisted of a central government with the Inca at its head and four provinces : Chinchay Suyu (NW) , Anti Suyu (NE) , Kunti Suyu (SW) , and Qulla Suyu (SE). The four corners of these provinces met at the center, Cuzco . Each province had a governor who oversaw local officials, who in turn supervised agriculturally - productive river valleys, cities and mines. There were separate chains of command for both the military and religious institutions, which created a system of partial checks and balances on power. The local officials were responsible for settling disputes and keeping track of each family’s contribution to the mita (mandatory public service).

Unlike the military empires in Central America, the Incas ruled by proxy. After conquering a people, they would incorporate local rulers into their imperial system, generously reward anyone who fought for them, and treat all those conquered people who cooperated in the same. So, in reality, the Inca empire was not really an empire, but a confederation of tribes with powerful leaders, with the Incas more or less in control. A royal family and his closest advisers ruled the Incas. Inca society was made up of ayllus, which were clans of families who lived and worked together. Each ayllu was supervised by a chief. Families lived in thatched-roof houses built of stone and mud. Furnishings seemed to be non-existent, as families slept on the floor. Potatoes were the main crop for the Inca population. The Imperial Incas clothed themselves in garments made

from Alpaca and many of their religious ceremonies involved this animal. Even in cold temperatures, the Inca wore sandals.

In the beginning, the Inca had no plans to conquer every other tribe. However, in the mid-1400s a ruler named Pachacuti led the Inca to expand their territory. Under Pachacuti's leadership, the Inca empire was born. The Inca expanded their borders until their empire was one of the largest in the history. Pachacuti gained territory through agreements with other tribes and through conquest. After Pachacuti, other Inca leaders continued to expand the territory of the Inca empire.

The Inca did not need to expand the region in which they lived to protect themselves from other tribes living in the area. Natural barriers surrounded them. The Andes Mountains alone provided tremendous protection, but they also had the Amazon jungle and the coastal desert. They didn't need to expand to feed their population either. A larger population would only make more demands on farming communities, not less. Yet, in a mere 100 years, the Inca expanded their empire until it grew to be huge. By the early 1500s the Inca Empire was one of the largest in the world. It stretched for 2500 miles from what is now northern Ecuador to central Chile and included coastal deserts, snowy mountains, fertile valleys, and thick forests. Around 12 million people lived in the Inca Empire. To rule this empire, the Inca formed a strong central government of their own.

For the first two hundred years of Inca existence, there were some disagreements with neighbouring tribes. Life during that time, however, was mostly peaceful. However, a neighbouring tribe started a war with the Inca. This was very upsetting to the Inca ruler at the time. His army was losing badly. In those times in South

America, warring tribes usually killed the people they conquered. He convinced himself that if he accepted defeat, the warring tribe might spare the royal family. The Inca ruler knew that even if they did spare the royal family, however, they would still kill most of the common people. After the battle, Pachacuti crowned himself Inca and replaced his cowardly father as the new leader of the Inca people. Pachacuti turned out to be a great leader. The Inca were saved from total destruction when Pachacuti rebuilt the army, went into battle, and won the day. That was a turning point in Inca history. With that decisive win, the Inca began their transition from a small tribe whose power and reach was limited to the Cuzco Valley to an empire.

Of course, that first victory could not have been accomplished without both the strong leadership of Pachacuti and a strong army under his control. The Inca army uniforms were very colorful. They marched into battle accompanied by drums, flutes and trumpets. The army was organized, well fed, and well trained. They wore warm clothing and protective headgear. They had plenty of medicine. Their weapons were superior to other neighboring tribes. Their main weapon was a wooden club. They also had bows, spears, and boluses, which were Y-shaped cords with stones at three ends. They believed the Gods were on their side. As time went on, some tribes simply joined the Inca empire rather than be defeated in battle.

In the years that followed Pachacuti's first victory, he and his descendants defeated all the tribes in the basin of Lake Titicaca to the south. Military victory, however, was only the first step in Pachacuti's grand strategy of empire building. With each military victory, Inca officials set about establishing control of



their newly won provinces. If provinces resisted, Inca rulers shuffled their populations, moving unruly inhabitants to the Inca heartland and replacing them with loyal subjects. Residents of remote walled villages were moved to new Inca-controlled towns nearer to Inca roads. Placing unruly residents near the Inca roads meant that Inca troops could easily rush to the site of any potential uprising. Inca governors ordered the construction of roadside storehouses for those troops and commanded local communities to fill them with supplies. Such planning leads many to think of the Inca as organizational geniuses. Conquest led to power - and wealth - and the organization of their empire led to peace. Under Inca organization, Andean civilization blossomed.

With efficient control, Pachacuti did not always need to use warfare to expand his empire. Often, Pachacuti sent spies to regions he wanted to bring under his control. His spies would report back on the political organization, military might, and wealth of the area. Pachacuti would then send messages to the leaders of those lands explaining the benefits of joining his empire. Along with the messages, he sent them presents of luxury goods such as the finest Inca textiles and promised that they would be far richer as subjects of the Inca than if they stood alone in opposition to the Inca. Rather than go to war with the fierce Inca army, most leaders accepted the rule of the Inca and gave in peacefully.

In time, Pachacuti did not need to kill the people he conquered. Instead, he simply invited them to become part of the Inca Empire. In return for their joining the empire, he built schools, as well as fabulous cities and fortresses. He placed his royal relatives in positions of power in the government throughout the empire. The Inca rulers who followed him did

the same. At the height of their power, the Inca Empire was 2500 miles long, 500 miles wide, and home to 12 million people. These people called themselves “The Children of the Sun.” The land the Inca ruled their capital city, Cuzco came to be known as the “Land of the Four Quarters.” It was named thus, since the Inca empire was divided into four parts for ruling purposes.

The last uncontested Inca emperor was Huayna Capac. He is responsible for expanding the empire’s borders all the way to modern day Columbia and for quelling numerous uprising and rebellions by demonstrations of brute power. Huayna Capac died suddenly of smallpox in 1525 CE. The disease spread to the New World faster than the Spanish themselves did and because it was not previously known to the inhabitants of the region, they had no resistance whatsoever against it. When Huayna Capac died, he had not yet named a successor, resulting in two rival brothers contending for the throne: Atahualpa and Huascar. The result of this rivalry was a civil war that was only just ending when the Spanish arrived in 1531 CE.

6.6.1 Agriculture and Craft

The Incas relied primarily on agriculture for food; although both fishing and herding were also a significant part of their subsistence economy. In the highlands, households were largely self-sufficient and relied strongly on planting crops at different elevations to maximize the potential of the landscape. This involved extensive terracing. Inca terraces were very sophisticated feats of engineering that allowed them to manipulate landscapes and climate zones so as to maximize crop production. In the coastal area, communities were more

closely integrated due to the need for large irrigation networks for growing crops. Coastal irrigation systems were enormous and complex. These highland and coastal communities were also integrated with one another through exchange networks that broadened the diets of people across the Andes. Newly conquered lands were divided into three parts in terms of how production would be organized: one third of the land/herds would be used to support the state religion, one third to support the emperor, and one third to support the local population. The three parts were to be worked in that order. The state provided seed/animals and tools; the people provided labour.

Amaranth was one of the staple foodstuffs of the Incas, and it is known as kiwicha in the Andes today. An abundance of potato farming allowed the Incan community to flourish in trade as potatoes were a new thing to eastern civilization. The Inca empire was spread out over several extreme climates, requiring the use of a wide range of agricultural systems. Native Americans were responsible for some of the world's most prolific crops, including tomatoes, peppers, lima beans, ancient ancestors to modern squash and most importantly, the potato. Maize was also deeply integrated into Inca agriculture and daily life. However, the Inca Empire cultivated a large variety of distinctly Andean crops that were not appreciated or adapted by Pizarro or the Spanish. These crops included over a dozen different species of roots and tubers, several types of grain, three distinctive varieties of legume and many Andean fruits. Many of these crops were of great value to Inca society, like the grain called Quinoa, which was not only nutritionally superior to the grains of the western world, but thrived in cold, rugged terrain at high elevations. Other tubers, like Maca and Oca proved

very hardy and were important staples in the Inca diet.

The Inca Empire was quite ecologically diverse. The Empire started in the low coastal valleys along the Pacific Ocean and stretched over the second highest mountain range in the world, the Andes, all the way down into the cloud forests of the Amazon Rainforest. This vast environmental diversity was mainly responsible for the large variety of Inca crops as well as a continuous abundance of food. Inca farmers used this wide range of terrain to their advantage, planting crops at several different elevations, so if one harvest failed, another could very potentially flourish. This practice then helped different crops to adapt to a larger variety of environments. The Inca used this same concept on a larger scale throughout the whole Empire. By building an extensive and thorough road system, the Inca could grow different crops across the various climates and harvest them to feed the entire population.

The Incas were also good at assimilating other food sources into their agricultural system. They did this by not only forcibly instilling crops from conquered neighbours, but by also moving the farmers who had originally grown the crop to help with its incorporation. The Incas had several original and inventive ways of turning their harsh landscape into an agricultural cornucopia. The first was the terracing of fields in the Andes Mountains. While terraced fields were widely used around the world, pre - Inca people developed their own form of terracing that the Inca empire then expanded upon to create more stable, aerated soil and efficient growing conditions. The Incas used guano, or bird dung, as fertilizer to help create bigger harvests on these terraced fields. Another Andean agricultural technique



that made a huge difference in farming capacity was the waru waru, or raised fields. These fields were man - made platforms surrounded by canals, which provided a sophisticated irrigation effect, in which the canals provided water to plants' roots during drought, and acted as drainage during heavy rains. These canals also created nitrate rich sediment which could be used as fertilizer, on top of helping regulate the temperature of the fields. There are remnants of raised fields surrounding Lake Titicaca that are at least two thousand years old , and recent studies have shown that the raised fields were actually more productive than modern day, fertilized fields .

There were two reasons that the Inca Empire thrived agriculturally. The first was the aforementioned wide range of crops grown under resourceful agricultural systems, which consistently produced food for the Empire. The second reason the Inca never suffered from lack of food was their ability to preserve and store their crops. It is estimated that at any given time in Incan history, the Inca had three to seven years worth of food in storage. The Inca people had a unique way of freeze - drying root and tuber crops. In the high elevations of the Andes, setting these crops out in the dry days and cold nights would freeze or dry them in a matter of days. The farmers would help the process by covering the crops to protect them from dew, and by stomping on them to release the excess water quickly.

In addition to fruits, vegetables and roots, the Incas also preserved meat by drying and salting it, making for complete nutritional stores. These food preservation techniques, combined with their far - reaching road system, allowed the Inca Empire to easily withstand natural disasters such as droughts and El

Niño, as well as making the Inca capable of feeding a standing army. Cooking in the Inca Empire was simple and rather conservative. Because so much of the empire was in the high mountains and barren coastal plains, wood was saved as much as possible.

The Incas used several kinds of grain to make bread, and they raised ducks, dogs and guinea pigs as supplemental meat when there was no wild game. Governors ate venison, roast duck, fresh fish, and tropical fruits like bananas and guavas. Peasants ate squash, vegetable stew, and fish if available. They also ate maize, potatoes, cassava, and a highland plant called oca . Both peasants and nobles drank chichi, an alcoholic beverage made from maize. Nobles ate and drank from wooden plates and painted beakers called keros. Peasants drank and ate from gourds.

Their weaving and pottery were of a high quality. They did not develop a system of writing. However, there was an accounting system in place – the quipu, or cords upon which knots were made to indicate specific mathematical units. Incas wove a sort of code into these threads. Inca art is best seen in highly polished metalwork, ceramics, and, above all, textiles, which was considered the most prestigious of art forms by the Incas themselves. Cloth was the most important material goods in the Inca empire, and vast quantities were needed for ritual offerings and rewards. Indeed, cloth was both a status marker and an identifier of ethnicity in the Inca world. Because of its great importance, the Inca also had a special textile tax. The state would provide materials to communities with the expectation that those materials would be transformed into textiles for the state. The finest cloth was woven by the acllas, female specialists in regions known for cloth production, who were exempted

from all other responsibilities to the state.

Pottery and textiles were often produced for the state as a tax, and so artworks were representative of specific communities and their cultural heritage. Inca pottery decoration and textiles did not include representations of themselves, rituals, military conquests, or such common Andean images as monsters half-human and half-animal figures. The Incas almost always preferred colourful geometrical designs and abstract motifs representing animals and birds. Inca pottery used natural clay but added such materials as mica, sand, pulverised rock, and shell which prevented cracking during the firing process. There was no potter's wheel in the ancient Americas and so vessels were made by hand, first creating a base and then laying a coil of clay around it until the vessel reached the size required. Then the sides were smoothed using a flat stone. Smaller and medium-sized vessels were made using clay moulds. Before firing, a clay 'slip' was added and the vessel was painted, incised using stamps, or had reliefs added. In kilns, pits, or open fires, the vessel was then fired using the oxidising method by adding oxygen to the flames to create red, yellow and cream coloured pottery, or, via the reduction method, limiting the oxygen supply to produce black wares.

Objects using precious metals such as discs, jewellery, figurines, ceremonial knives (tumi), lime dippers, and everyday objects were made exclusively for Inca nobles. Gold was considered the 'sweat of the sun', and silver was considered the tears of the moon. Copper was another popular material, and these metals would have been inlaid with precious stones such as emeralds, polished semi-precious stones like lapis lazuli, polished bone, and spondylus shell. Alternatively,

gold and silver were inlaid into bronze. Metals were alloyed, cast, beaten, incised, embossed, beaded, and used as a gilding. Inca jewellery pieces made from precious metals included earrings, ear spools, pendants, bracelets, and dress pins.

Inca trade was based on the exchange of products between the different regions of the empire. The dried fish arrived from the coast to the Andes mountain range, through the Inca road network. In the same way, the inhabitants of the coast received agricultural products from the Andes. They set up roads running the length of the kingdom from Ecuador to the southern borders of Argentina and Chile making an extensive communication system. Each road had chasquis or messengers at certain posts along the way that carried messages from one end to the other with remarkable efficiency. The network of roads led to the great success of the Incas, simplifying the government's efforts to keep watch over the empire.

For the Incas, work was the main daily activity. It was divided into 3 types of activities: mita, minka and ayni. These activities were mainly agricultural work, although activities were also carried out in the homes of the communities.

a) The mita was a system of work in favor of the empire. It was shift work in the construction of roads, fortresses, bridges, urban centers, temples, irrigation canals, and mining. There were special tasks such as the freighters of the Inca, chasquis, dancers and musicians. The people forced to do this work were married adults between 18 and 50 years old, but not women.

b) The minka was the work done in favor of the ayllu, communal work for free and in shifts. Entire families participated in state buildings, such as irrigation canals,



home repair, etc. No person refused, if they did, they were banished and expelled from the ayllu and the empire.

c) The *ayni* was a reciprocal family work system among the *ayllu* members. They were carried out in agricultural work and house construction. It consisted of the help of a group of people to a family, which had to correspond in the same way.

Architecture was by far the most important of the Inca arts, with pottery and textiles reflecting motifs that were at their height in architecture. The stone temples constructed by the Inca used a mortar-less construction process first used on a large scale by the Tiwanaku. The Inca imported the stoneworkers of the Tiwanaku region to Cuzco when they conquered the lands south of Lake Titicaca. The rocks used in construction were sculpted to fit together exactly by repeatedly lowering a rock onto another and carving away any sections on the lower rock where the dust was compressed. The tight fit and the concavity on the lower rocks made them extraordinarily stable in the frequent earthquakes that hit the area. The Inca used straight walls except on important religious sites and constructed whole towns at once. Stone played a major role in the Inca creation story as well as in their daily lives. Not only was stone a primary building material for great structures, to the Inca rather it had a greater significance. Inside the stone was a spirit or power strong enough to turn it into men and vice versa. For this reason, the Inca worshipped stone and appreciated the actual substance instead of what could be built with it. This respect for the stone and its inner powers gave rise to their expertise in masonry. They used stones of unusual size and fitted them together without mortar to form walls so that; one could not insert a sheet of paper between these stones; they

were so carefully crafted together. The surfaces were smoothly carved and were not squared off to make them look almost alive.

The main example of their finesse of architecture and masonry is 'Machu Picchu' constructed by Incan engineers. The ancient city sits on top of a mountain 8,000 feet in elevation, virtually untouched since inhabited by the Incas. Because of its elevation and location, the Spanish conquistadors missed Machu Picchu and it turned into a refuge for the escaping Inca during the time of conquest. Amazingly preserved temples still stand with huge walls of artistically carved white granite that demonstrate an obvious expertise. Machu Picchu may be the best preserved and most beautiful example of masonry the Inca empire had to offer. Another example of the Inca's capability with stone is **Sacsahuaman**. The Inca described Cuzco as a puma or mountain lion with Sacsahuaman as its head. The ancient fortress in Cuzco was a storehouse containing such items as arms, clothing, and large amounts of jewels, gold, and silver. Probably taking several generations to finish, the immense building shows delicate stone work on its walls. The precision used to build and shape the stones for the structure shows the importance of the fortress.

The dedication shown towards stone masonry is also found in the Inca sculpture. They moulded and carved on a large scale producing buildings like the sacred Sun Temple in Cuzco, but they also worked on a smaller scale. At the time of conquest, chroniclers described extraordinary statues and sculptures made of silver and gold, but few remain because the Spanish melted most of them down. Some small figurines are left. Many of these were buried along with the deceased as offerings or used

in religious ceremonies like this llama. Made of silver or gold, these figurines were usually fully dressed covering the precious metal almost completely. Much like their beliefs about stone, the use of the metals was the most important factor.

6.6.2 Religion

The success of the Inca empire is rooted in their official system of religious tolerance. The Incas did not force conquered rival groups to abandon their local spiritual beliefs as long as they incorporated the official Inca pantheon into their worship practices. The result was a dualistic religious system. The official state religion is based on the worship of the Inca pantheon and adherence to the ritual calendar, and local level systems based on previous spiritual beliefs. The Inca worldview, or cosmology, was based on the principles of duality and reciprocity. They believed the world was balanced between opposing forces, for example, dark and light, heat and cold, male and female, or elite and commoner. They believed that the balance between these forces was maintained through a system of reciprocal exchanges. There were many local forms of worship, but the Inca leadership encouraged the worship of the 'Pachamama', or the Mother Earth. Because the sun was very important in Inca mythology and, there is a common misbelief that the foremost god was the **Inti** or sun god.

The Inca had three origin myths. In one, Ticei Viracocha of Colina de las Ventanas in Pacaritambo sent forth his four sons and four daughters to establish a village. Along the way, Sinchi Roca was born to Manco and Ocllo, and Sinchi Roca led them to the valley of Cuzco where they founded their new village. There Manco

became their leader and became known as Manco Capac. In another origin myth, the sun god Inti ordered Manco Capac and Mama Ocllo to emerge from the depths of Lake Titicaca and found the city of Cuzco. They travelled by means of underground caves until reaching Cuzco where they established Hurin Cuzco; or the first dynasty of the Kingdom of Cuzco. In the last origin myth, an Inca sun god told his wife that he was lonely. She proposed that he create a civilization to worship him and keep him company. He saw this as a wise plan and carried it out. The Inca were born from Lake Cuzco and populated the Andes and worshipped their sun god. The myths are transmitted via oral tradition, since the Incas did not believe in writing or keeping written records. There probably existed a Manco Capac who became the leader of his tribe. The archaeological evidence seems to indicate that the Incas were a relatively unimportant tribe until the time of Sinchi Roca, also called Cinchi Roca, who is the first figure in Inca mythology whose existence is supported by physical evidences.

The official religion of the Inca state was polytheistic in nature and included a diverse pantheon of Gods and Goddesses as well as stellar deities. The Inca believed that stellar bodies were the patrons of certain animals or activities. The principle creator deity of the Inca pantheon was called by a series of titles Ilya-Tiqsi **Viracocha** Pachayacachiq, which means "ancient foundation, lord, instructor of the world". Spanish chronicles of the Inca Empire typically refer to this God by one of his titles Viracocha. The Inca believed that he created humanity at Tiwanaku, an ancient city on the banks of Lake Titicaca on the border of modern Peru and Bolivia. Viracocha traveled through the Andes performing miracles and teaching the people to live.

After he taught the people what they needed to know, he relinquished power to the remainder of the Inca pantheon and the huacas or sacred places/objects. Inti, the sun God, and his wife Mamaquilla, the moon, protected crops and regulated the timing of certain festivals. Inti was represented by a gold disk with a human face. This sun idol was kept in temples of the sun across the empire. Mamaquilla is represented by a silver disk and was also kept in the temples of the sun. Unlike the Aztecs and the Maya, the Inca did not represent their deities in imagery. Inca imagery is characterized by geometric designs.

Ancestor veneration was an important ritual component of the Inca world. The ancestors were believed to remain with the living and be able to intercede with the gods on their behalf. The special ancestors were preserved as mummies, mallqui. After a Sapa Inca died, his body was taken to a royal estate outside Cusco for the process of mummification. This was a multi-step process that began with the removal of the intestines and heart. The heart was dried and added to a mass of hearts from previous Sapa Inca and stored inside the golden sun icon. After a year, the mummy returned to Cusco's great plaza to be reintroduced into society. They lived in a palace surrounded by prestige goods, or luxury goods that are not essential to life. The mummies of the Sapa Inca were important and venerated in a variety of ritual contexts. In exchange for food and care, the mummified ancestors helped to ensure bountiful crops and water supplies. Indeed, their most important function was to maintain the water supply. Caring for

the mallqui of previous emperors was the express duty of the royal panaque, or the royal kin groups.

In the Inca religious system, mountains represented powerful places on the landscape. The Inca made pilgrimages to the high peaks of the Andes Mountains to conduct rituals and rites with the intent of maintaining the balance between the worlds. The offerings they left were diverse and included gold and silver figurines, shell necklaces, high-quality fabric, pottery, and food. On special occasions, such as commemorating an event in the emperor's life or when faced with the effects of natural disasters, the Inca would prepare special human sacrifices. These rituals, called capacocha, were conducted on the highest altitudes of mountain peaks.

Archaeological evidence indicates that individuals were dressed in finery including feathered headdresses and their burials contained precious goods such as gold and silver figurines, food, and sometimes animals. There is some debate among archaeologists about how the sacrificial individuals were killed. The strongest evidence suggests that the sacrificed individuals were buried alive. This is supported by historical accounts that stated the Inca did not want to present the Gods with a broken body. Additional research indicates that child sacrifices were fed increasing amounts of cacao and alcohol in the weeks leading up to the sacrifice. The Incas believed that intoxicants allowed for communication with the spirit world, and the intoxication of sacrificial individuals possibly helped them to connect with the mountain huaca.

Recap

- ◆ The origin and development of the Incas
- ◆ The confederation of tribal units of the Incas
- ◆ Agricultural methods used by the Incas
- ◆ The last uncontested Inca Emperor was Huayna Capac
- ◆ Architecture and masonry in Machu Picchu
- ◆ Arts, Craft and Architectural contributions of the Incas
- ◆ Inca empire was ecologically diverse
- ◆ Religious life of the Incas

Objective Questions

1. Who was the most powerful figure in the Inca empire?
2. What was the Quechan name of the Inca empire?
3. Which is the best example of the magnificence of Inca architecture and masonry?
4. What name was given to Mother earth by the Incas?
5. What was Amaranth called by the Andes?
6. Who was the Sun God of the Incas?
7. What was the name of the rituals conducted by Incas in the high altitude mountains?
8. What was an important ritual component of Incan world?
9. Who is the first figure in Incan Mythology?
10. Name the two items which the Incas produced 'as a tax for the state'?

Answers

1. Sapa Inca
2. Tawantinsuyu
3. Machu Picchu
4. Pachamama
5. Kiwichu
6. Inti
7. Capacocha
8. Veneration of Ancestors
9. Cinchi Roca
10. Pottery and Textiles

Assignments

1. Make a comparative analysis about the differences in Inca and Aztec religion.
2. Write as assignment on Incas by detailing about their society, life, agriculture, craft and religion

Suggested Readings

1. Arkush, E., Stanish, C., Hastorf, C., Nielsen, A., Topic, T., Verano, J. "Interpreting Conflict in the Ancient Andes: Implications for the Archaeology of Warfare." *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 1 (2005): 3-28.
2. Bauer, B. *The Sacred Landscape of the Inca: The Cuzco Ceque System*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1997.
3. Ceruti, C. "Human Bodies as Objects of Dedication at Inca Mountain Shrines (North-western Argentina)." *World Archaeology*, 36 no.1 (2004): 103-122.
4. D'Altroy, T. N. *The Incas* (Second ed.). West Sussex, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2015
5. Ellis, E. G., & Esler, A. "The Americas (Prehistory-A.D. 1570)." *World History*:100-123. Boston, MA: Pearson Prentice Hall, 1999.

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1. Evans, S. T. *Ancient Mexico and Central America: Archaeology and Culture History* (Second ed.). London, UK: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2008.
2. Heaney, Christopher. "How to Make an Inca Mummy: Andean Embalming, Peruvian Science, and the Collection of the Empire." *Isis* 109(1): 1-27.
3. La Lone, D. E. "The Inca as a Non Market Economy: Supply on Command Versus Supply and Demand." In *Contexts for Prehistoric Exchange*, edited by J. Ericson and T. Earle, 291-316: Academic Press Inc., 1982.
4. McEwan, G. F. *The Incas: New Perspectives*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2006.
5. Moore, J. D. *A Prehistory of South America: Ancient Cultural Diversity on the Least Known Continent*. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Press, 2014.

Model Question Paper

Set - 1



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

Reg.No:

Name:

B. A. History Examination- Semester I
Discipline Core - 1- B21HS01DC- Ancient Civilizations
(CBCS - UG)
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section -A

Answer any ten questions of the following. Each question carries one mark.

1. Who introduced the concept of 'Second Intermediate Period'?
2. Which Egyptian trade centre was famous for gold mines?
3. Which is the oldest and most common string instrument used by the ancient Egyptians?
4. What is the land between two rivers called?
5. Which civilization is considered the first civilization of mankind?
6. Which was largest city in the world between c.1770-1670 BCE?
7. Which river is otherwise known as Huang Ho?
8. Who discovered the Zhoukoudian site?
9. Who was the first founding father of Greek Democracy?
10. Which city is known as the 'City of Seven Hills'?
11. When did the Roman laws were codified for the first time?



12. Where did the Olmecs originate from?
13. Who rediscovered the Cretan Civilization?
14. Where is Chichen Itza located?
15. Who was the supreme deity of the ancient Mayans?

Section -B

Answer any ten questions of the following. Each question carries two marks.

16. Why was Egypt called the 'gift of the Nile'?
17. What is Wafaa El-Nil?
18. Why has the period between 2181BC and 2055 BC been described as a "Dark period" in ancient Egyptian history?
19. The geographical area of ancient Mesopotamia is also called 'the Fertile Crescent'. Why?
20. What was the nature of Sumerian City-States?
21. What is Yangshao culture?
22. Mention the features of Chinese art.
23. What is the School of Pure Land?
24. What is the main theme of the Classical work 'Iliad'?
25. What is Polis?
26. Define "Delphic Oracle".
27. What do you mean by the term 'Pax Romana'?
28. Define Epicureanism.
29. Mention the reasons behind the agricultural prosperity of the Inca Empire.
30. Who were Toltecs?

Section -C

Write a short note on any five questions of the following. Each question carries four marks.

- 31. Solar Cult in ancient Egypt
- 32. Features of Hieroglyphic script
- 33. Chaldeans
- 34. Zoroastrianism
- 35. The Period of the warring States
- 36. The Toltec civilization
- 37. Mayan calendar
- 38. Slavery in Rome
- 39. Sophists
- 40. Aristotle

Section -D

Answer any two questions of the following. Each question carries ten marks.

- 41. Write an essay on Ancient Egyptian Architecture.
- 42. Explain the Chang culture in ancient China?
- 43. Assess the development of Classical Greek Philosophy.
- 44. Give an account of the causes that led to the decline of the Roman empire.



Model Question Paper

Set - 2



QP CODE:

Reg.

No:

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Name:

B. A. History Examination- Semester I
Discipline Core - 1- B21HS01DC- Ancient Civilizations
(CBCS - UG)
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

Section -A

Answer any ten questions of the following. Each question carries one mark.

1. Who is the foremost Egyptian Sun God, involved in creation and the afterlife?
2. Which was the World's earliest form of paper that was invented by the Egyptians?
3. Who was the ancient law giver who prepared his famous Code of Civil Laws?
4. Who is considered as the last great ruler of Assyrian dynasty?
5. Which Dynasty is generally considered China's first historical dynasty?
6. Who is considered as the first emperor of the Qin Dynasty?
7. Which Buddhist Sect believed in the Mahayana concept of salvation through faith?
8. Which city state was regarded as the school of Hellas?
9. Who is the author of the 'Bibliotheca historica'?



10. What was the real name of Plato?
11. Who was the famous Roman historian who prepared the 'Natural History'?
12. Which English historian pointed out that it was the spread of Christianity that contributed greatly to the fall of Rome?
13. Which was the capital of the western Roman empire?
14. Which was the most important temple in Tenochtitlan?
15. What was the main staple food of the Aztec people?

Section -B

Answer any ten questions of the following. Each question carries two marks

16. How did the river Nile play a critical part in the development of ancient Egypt?
17. What do you mean by Ziggurat?
18. Who was Osiris?
19. What was the basic maxim of the code of Hammurabi?
20. What do you mean by 'Babylonian Captivity'?
21. Which were common characteristics of Lungshan culture?
22. What is Tien-tai School?
23. Mention the important principles of Confucius.
24. What is the main theme of the Classical work 'Odyssey'?
25. Define "Ostracism"
26. Why was Cleisthenes considered as "The Father of Greek Democracy"?
27. Who were the most important exponents of stoicism?
28. Who was Marcus Tullius Cicero?
29. What is the importance of Chichen Itza?
30. Explain the significance of the ancient Maya city of Tikal.

Section -C

Write a short note on any five questions of the following. Each question carries four marks.

- 31. Features of Egyptian art
- 32. Code of Hammurabi
- 33. Persian system of Government
- 34. Peking man
- 35. Five Classics
- 36. Socrates
- 37. Effects of Punic wars
- 38. Tenochtitlan
- 39. Zoroastrianism
- 40. The Cretan civilization

Section -D

Answer any two questions of the following. Each question carries ten marks.

- 41. Analyse the architectural style of ancient Egypt.
- 42. Assess the development of Confucianism in China.
- 43. Compare the early cultures of MesoAmerica.
- 44. Explain the legacy of Roman civilization.



സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

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വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

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സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
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Ancient Civilizations

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