

# Role of urbanization in the aegean

Countries



The Aegean civilizations, the Assyrians, and the Israelites, though in the same hemisphere, were three distinct kingdoms. Each developed into its own kingdom with its own set of rules, beliefs, religion, and political concepts. Ultimately, each had its own culture. Yet, there was something that underlied these three cultures that connected them in a subtle manner. All three of these civilizations underwent urbanization. Though the specific cultures of each civilization developed differently, the role of urbanization affected each in roughly the same way.

During this period of the Late Bronze Age, commerce and communication boomed exponentially. No longer would kingdoms maintain their isolationist beliefs. They had to trade and interact with other cultures in order to maximize opportunity cost and obtain as many foreign goods as possible. This inevitably resulted in shared cultures and assimilated beliefs. Along the Aegean Sea, the Minoans had widespread connections to Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Similarly, Mycenaean Greece traded with many civilizations, including its neighbor the Minoans.

The early Greeks were most likely influenced by Minoan architecture and pottery. Its sudden wealth also came from trade with Minoan. In the Assyrian kingdom, they also developed trade centers. They imported goods like metals, fine textiles, dyes, gems, ivory, and silver. Because of trade centers, specialization arose, creating jobs like artisans and merchants. In the Israel kingdom, King Solomon created alliances with the Phoenicians and thus developed a trading partner. Together, the Phoenicians and the Israelites explored the Red Sea to find any hidden treasures.

The creation of urban centers helped facilitate this trade, and thus, expanded the perspectives of these cultures. Through interaction with other civilizations, cultures were shared and ideas, along with goods, were traded. Because of an influx of commerce and communication, a powerful military must also be kept. Urban centers helped control the military in order to facilitate trade. The Minoans and Mycenaeans developed strong seafaring skills and created wooden vessels to help them trade around the Mediterranean.

They exported wine, olive oil, and textiles, and in return imported amber, ivory, and most importantly, metals. In the Assyrian kingdom, there was a superior military organization with professional soldiers. The Assyrians developed iron weapons, dug tunnels, and built mobile towers for archers. Not only did they develop military tactics for conquest, but they also used terror tactics to discourage resistance and rebellion and ultimately maintain control. As for the Israelites, David became the first king and he united the tribes into a monarchy.

These urban centers established stronger royal authority and led to an army in order to expand borders in search of natural resources. Stronger militaries meant stronger civilizations, so urbanization helped strengthen the power of nobility and expand borders. Last but not least, urbanization helped develop societal structures, religious ideals, and art and technology. Unlike other civilizations, Minoans did not have strong, aristocratic leaders. In Mycenaean Greece, an elite class did develop.

Shaft graves, burial sites for the elite, were filled with gold, weapons, and utensils, revealing that the ancient Greeks believed in some form of afterlife.

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The cities also had fortification walls and palaces filled with paintings from war and daily life. In contrast, the Assyrians used terror to maintain order in society. The king was the center of the Assyrian universe. Everything he did was mandated by the god Ashur. Through government propaganda, royal inscriptions, and ruthless punishments, the king maintained power in the kingdom.

The Library of Ashurbanipal gives insight into official documents and literary texts to help portray the daily life of the elite members of Assyrian society. As for the Israelites, monotheism became the crux of Israelite society. They built temples as sanctuaries in order to link religious and political power. Priests became a wealthy class, thus creating a gap between the urban and the rural, the rich and the poor. In families, there were also gender gaps. Male heirs were critical. While women were respected, they could not own property. As society urbanized, their roles became more and more limited and specialized.

While these little bits and pieces of everyday life in these ancient civilizations may seem insignificant, they are like pieces of an infinitely large puzzle. If we can uncover as many pieces as we can and put them together, we can approximate a picture of what life was like in these ancient civilizations. We can figure out how urbanization was important to the development of these kingdoms, and use these cultural artifacts to uncover what daily life was like. After all, artifacts are the key to our past. Without them, our past would be an elusive enigma.