

# World civilization notes

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HUM 1000: WORLD CIVILIZATIONS NOTES THE NATURE AND ORIGIN OF CIVILIZATION IN AFRICA Definition of key terms As we begin this course, it is crucial to first discuss our understanding of the concept 'civilization'. This is a comparative term which is usually applied in comparison to such words as 'barbarian' 'savage' and 'primitive'. In classical antiquity the Europeans used the word 'barbarian' to refer to a foreigner who was regarded as inferior (Ogotu and Kenyanchui, An Introduction To African History, 1991 p33). Do you think this is still the way we use the word barbarian?

The Latin speakers referred to hunters, food-gatherers as savage. In the 17th century this term 'savage' referred to a person without art, literacy, or society who lived in fear of existence and death. 'Primitive' on the other hand, in Latin meant 'the first or original'. Europeans used these words interchangeably when referring to non-Europeans while the word civilization was preserved to describe historical developments of European people (ibid). Now the term civilization is no longer confined to the above development but also extends reference to non-European communities.

Attributes of civilization includes observance to law, belonging to an organized society, having a society of literate people with advanced developments in urbanization, agriculture, commerce, arts and technology. The French thinkers of the 18th century referred to a person of the arts and literature as cultured. But at the present the term is used to cover more fields than just the arts and literature. Sometimes, therefore the words 'civilization' and 'culture' are interchangeably applied. In this unit, however, more use is confined to the word 'civilization' especially in reference to human developments over time and in all continents.

Another term that requires discussion at this stage is ' prehistory'. Just like ' civilization', 'prehistory' is used in comparative terms especially in relation to history. Both terms refer to the past human activities. But whereas history as used by historians refers to the inquiry, investigation or research into a totality of human past experience, prehistory is rather confined to an inquiry or research into a totality of human past experience before the invention of writing. In our course-text (Anthony Esler, The Human Venture vol 1, 2004) this prehistoric period stretches between 5000 and 3500 BC.

This period is also known as Stone Age period. Archeology plays a vital part in enabling us learn more about this prehistoric period. Through excavation and dating , a lot of prehistoric information is obtained. The Prehistoric or Stone Age Period There are two versions which explain the origins of human species. These are creation and biological explanation. The creation version exists in the Judaeo-Christian: Old Testament and its African counterpart. This Judaeo-Christian Old Testament is captured in the book of Genesis 2: 6-7 in which it is written ' But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. There is more detail about the whole sequence of creation in Genesis 1. Indeed it is written that human beings were the last to be created specific in God's own image. This is best explained in Genesis 1: 27: ' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them'. This creation story is vividly portrayed by Michelangelo on the ceiling of Sistine chapel in the Vatican at Rome .

The pictures showing muscled, hugely bearded figure of Jehovah dividing light from darkness with a gesture rolling the sun and the moon into being, extending his powerful right hand to bestow upon Adam the ultimate gift of life attracts numerous tourists to the Vatican. There are various aspects of creation explanations in Africa. However we use the version in The Human Venture vol. 1 (p 7). According to this version, Doondari made humankind out of the five elements; fire, water, air, iron, and stone.

The oldest of all creation stories, that of the Minnite Theology carved in stone at Memphis on the Nile almost five thousand years ago, calls the creator Ptah and says that he made the first sentient beings with weapons in their hands. Similar creation myths are found among other communities. This is because human beings are always concerned with understanding 'first things' and how they led to more complex ones. Such myths are reinforced by science which intimates that our earth developed from 'a ring of glowing gases cooled and solidified into planets.

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Around the planet earth was water which spread over much of the world and above the earth was the atmosphere. From these basic settings, life emerged from single-celled bacteria and gradually evolved into bigger creatures in the sea. And even continued evolving outside the sea. Such creatures outside the sea include birds and other beasts. Besides vegetations also developed from the moss and horsetails to such bigger plants like trees. All this took place before the hominids emerged. Herein lies the biological or evolution explanation.

The evolution process which continued resulted in great geographical features such as grassland, forest, desert among others. More than two thirds of the earth was covered with water. The protruded expanse of dry land formed the seven continents. They included Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, North and South America and Antarctica. Each continent and the islands that lay between them had a range of climate and topography which provided a variety of human beings. Human Development Through the

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excavations of Mary and Louis Leakey at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania, it was established that Africa is the origin of human species.

The skeleton of Don Johansson's Lucy found scattered over a hillside in Ethiopia pushed prehuman origin back several years. Hominids or hominid like bones from more recent times include those of Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal type first found in France and Germany and their kin Peking Man and Java Man discovered in Asia. Together with these finds were also crude stone tools, later pots, pictures and bits of clothing were unearthed. The discovery of the 'ice man' an intact human corpse, discovered frozen in the alpine ice in 1991 came complete with deerskin coat, fur hat, stone dagger, bow and arrows and a crude copper axe.

The biological evolution of human beings dates back to tens of millions of years when small furry creatures with huge eyes and long tail lived in forests, balanced on high branches and snatched at insects. From these there developed primates from who emerged as long as five million years ago the line of development known as hominids of which the humans are the only surviving descendants. There were various changes that the human ancestors underwent to adapt to the environment. For instance eyes of the tree dwellers changed and developed stereoscopic (depth) vision and color sightedness, very useful capacities for leaping from branch to branch.

When these ancestors moved from forests to open grassland five million years ago more changes followed. Their legs and feet changed to permit erect bipedal walking on the African savanna. The posture in turn freed the hands for carrying game and foraged nuts and berries back to the family circle. The hands developed producing the most efficient thumb for



the manipulation of any primate's. The hominid brain grew, doubling and tripling in size and evolving a capacity that enabled human beings develop culture. Gradually, a number of hominid species developed, flourished for a time then died out.

The Australopithecines of three and a half million years ago were perhaps four feet tall and had brain about a third of modern human's. Hominids of the Neanderthal line were closer to us. Hominids who survived made stone tools, buried their dead with ceremony and decorated the walls of their caves with paintings of the animals they hunted. These survivors who emerged approximately thirty-five thousand years ago were the Cro-Magnon people, a subspecies of the hominid family called Homo sapiens (wise people). They were the last of the hominid line and biologically indistinguishable from us.

#### Prehistoric Migrations

As is established the homeland of human beings is in Africa. Around two million years ago, the ancestors began migrating to other continents of Europe and Asia. A skull found in China indicates that these ancestors reached East Asia two hundred thousand years ago. Between 70, 000 and 40, 000 BC human beings reached Australia between 40, 000 and 20, 000 BC they reached the Americas. Thus in about half a million years, prehistoric ancestors spread around the world. They evolved various cultures and ways of life which kept improving through the various ages. It is to these civilizations that we now turn. The Ancient Civilization of Egypt

In this topic we will look at the factors behind the rise of the ancient Egyptian civilization, the growth of the Egyptian Kingdom and its contribution to the ancient world. The Factors for the Rise of Ancient Egyptian Civilization Its

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appropriate to state that ancient Egypt was directly linked to the rest of Africa. Unlike at present, the Sahara desert had not developed. Hence movement between the northern and the southern parts of Africa were possible. This fact is true because some African communities in both East and West Africa argue that their ancestral homelands were in Misri which roughly refers to Egypt. 1) Egyptian civilization owes its origin and development largely to the water from River Nile whose Source is in the South especially in Lake Victoria. In addition, the Blue Nile which is a tributary of the White Nile flows from the Ethiopian Highlands. The heart of the land was that part of the river from the first cataract at Aswan to the fan shaped delta where it flowed into the Mediterranean Sea. The river winds six hundred miles from the cataracts to the delta. The Nile Valley is hardly more than a few miles wide, but for the last hundred miles the valley opens up into the flat triangular delta spread along the sea.

It is because of this river that Egypt was described as ' the gift of the Nile'. The river's annual rise and fall were crucial for the life of Egypt. On its way from the south, the Nile on reaching Upper Egypt overflowed its banks and deposited over the narrow valley a layer of rich black mud, alluvium picked up along its way from the south. (2) The human resource was yet another factor. Perhaps as early as the fifth millennium BC the hunters and nomadic pastoralists who had moved to the Nile Valley realized the agricultural potential of the fertile valley. They settled into agricultural villages and planted wheat and flax for clothing.

They organized themselves into clans having animal totems such as crocodile or the hippopotamus. Sometime between 3500BC and 3000BC

cooperative economic effort appeared as the Egyptians began to attempt at controlling the Nile with dikes and catch basins. Copper was used more widely. The population grew. (3) There was influence from outside, for instance, there were the Mesopotamian style cylinder seals found in Egypt. Besides Sumerian pictograms appear among the earliest Egyptian hieroglyphics. In the growth of the Egyptian civilization, there was an intermediate stage from the villages to the centralized Monarchical state. After the villages, there were the two lands of upper and Lower Egypt. The vulture of the goddess Nekhbet was sacred in Upper Egypt while the cobra of Wadjet sacred in Lower Egypt. The kings of the upper valley wore white crown while those of the delta a red one. People in the upper and Lower Egypt often fought each other. The Old Kingdom This area covered approximately ten thousand square miles. In 3000 BC, this Old Kingdom was the largest or most centralized state in the world. The Pharaoh was officially the king of upper and Lower Egypt. The Lord of the two lands' and as such was crowned and symbolically buried in each of the two lands. There were separate treasures for the two halves of his kingdom and much duplication of officials. The tendency toward fragmentation embodied in the nomes, the provinces of pharaonic Egypt posed challenge to the unity of the state. Independent totemic communities or clans prior to unification, the nomes could become centers of disunity under ambitious governors. To hold the nation together, the early pharaohs forged a powerful alliance with the temples and the priests.

This is because the pharaohs claimed that they themselves were incarnations of divinity. The pharaoh was believed to be the son of the sun

god Re. The reigning pharaoh was also Horus, the sky god-symbolized by falcon. On his death, the Falcon flew to the horizon, and the dead pharaoh became Osiris, King of the Underworld. Therefore the Pharaoh among the ancient Egyptians was semi-divine. Every year the pharaoh performed religious ceremonies that guaranteed the rising of the river. He and his officials ruled the land in the spirit of Ma'at, a combination of truth, justice and order that was for the Egyptians the highest of virtues.

In the underworld, the souls of the dead were weighed against Ma'at. In this world the pharaoh himself was its living embodiment and the guarantee that the land would be ruled in its spirit. The Egyptians developed an elaborate administrative system. The chief administrative officer under the pharaoh was the vizier whose roles included chief judge, superintendent of public works and right hand to the king. Under the vizier were such offices as those of treasuries, agriculture, officials in charge of irrigation systems and a secretariat. There was also a provincial administration charged with governing the nomes.

The rulers of these provinces, the nomarchs exercised considerable local authority. They controlled the local militia, the source of most of the military strength of the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt. The Egyptian bureaucracy was staffed by scribes . Scribes conducted census of land and people, estimated size of the harvest and calculated taxes in kind. They supervised the vital irrigation system, organized the care and feeding of the pharaohs and the building of the royal tombs. Old kingdom Egypt was an ordered state and the society was organized hierarchically .

At the top was the pharaoh while at the bottom were the slaves . See the diagram on the next page. Pharaoh v Pharaonic family, Relatives and Courtiers v The vizier (PM) and his circle v The Priests v The Scribes v Soldiers v Workers v Peasants v Foreigners v Slaves Source: Ogutu & Kenyanchui, An Introduction To African history, 1991 p. 35 The hierarchy was symbolized most massively by the pyramid tombs of the pharaohs of the fourth dynasty; the dynasty of Khufu (also known as Cheops) builder of the great pyramid at Giza, around 2550 B. C

### The Middle Kingdom

This period which stretches from around 2200 BC to the emergence of the New Kingdom about 1550 BC is considered as a transition period between the two worlds. The period was characterized by political turbulence, famine and the invasion of marauding desert Bedouin in the delta. Egyptians longed for a return to the immemorial order of past centuries. What they got, however, was not a return to the past but a dynamic new direction to national life . Ambitious dynasts from Thebes City in Upper Egypt snatched the kingdom from the last royal house to rule in Memphis.

During the twentieth and nineteenth centuries BC, the powerful 12th dynasty restored prosperity and order along the Nile. Pharaohs during this period expanded their kingdom and trade . Egyptian merchants traded with Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Minoan Crete. Egyptian military pushed south along the Nile into Nubia and on into The Sudan . Egypt for the first time became involved in a large scale with regions in North-East Africa and the Near East However the pharaohs who succeeded those in the 12th dynasty were weak and did not continue the firm hold on the expanded kingdom .

Before 1700 BC the Hyksos, an Asiatic speaking group seized power . Because they were less sophisticated than the ancient Egyptians , the Hyksos were culturally assimilated , adopted Egyptian names , worshipped Egyptian gods and followed other traditional royal rites.. The Hyksos introduced the use of bronze instead of softer copper . In addition they also introduced the two wheeled horse-drawn war chariot. After about one and a half centuries their rule was ended and more powerful pharaohs from Lower Egypt took over and established the New Kingdom. The New Kingdom

King Ahmose was hailed by posterity as the father of the new kingdom and the founder of the eighteenth dynasty (Abu Bakri, ' Pharaonic Egypt' in G . Mokhtar, ed General History of Africa vol 2(Abridged Edition) 1990, 73) Around 1550 BC Ahmose attacked, defeated and expelled the Hyksos from Egypt to Palestine . He even followed them there and destroyed their base . Back at home he put down the rebellious nobility and Nubian princess who collaborated with Hyksos. All the loot from Ahmose's victories, he heaped them at the feet of Amon, the sun god of Thebes .

The priesthood of Amon thus became the most powerful in Egypt and Thebes the new capital. Pharaoh Hatshepsut (1490-1468BC) who married each of her half brothers in turn was, however, in her fifth year powerful enough to declare herself supreme ruler of the country. She declared herself the child of Re; and the god's designated ruler, had herself crowned with double crown and seated herself on the golden throne of pharaohs. The two peaceful decades of her reign were prosperous for Egypt . She concentrated her attention upon the country's internal affairs and upon building enterprises, mainly her magnificent temple at Western Thebes .

The two achievements of which she was most proud were:- 1. The expedition to Punt where the Egyptian fleet obtained ebony and ivory perfumes and spices, apes, monkeys, leopard skins, slaves and thirty-one live myrrh trees which were ceremoniously replanted at the queen's temple at Deir el Bahari. 2. The raising of two great obelisks at the temple of Karnak. At her death/Thutmose the 3rd (1486-1436 BC) took over. He was a skilled archer and charioteer. The militaristic elements among the aristocracy who longed for more aggressive foreign policy loved him. He fought seventeen campaigns against a coalition of city states of Palestine-Syria-Lebanon/region. The coalition had been plotting at Megiddo to revolt against Egypt's domination. Consequently, the whole country as far as the southern Lebanon came under Egyptian control. Egypt was therefore firmly established as a world power with a far reaching empire (A. Abu Bakr/1990, 73). It stretched over much of the ancient Fertile Crescent, from the Euphrates to the fourth cataract of the Nile. Thutmose the 3rd had a well equipped army supplied with the latest swords, bows and armour of the late Bronze Age. The army also used well constructed chariots.

He established garrison towns, local governors and a sophisticated system of puppet kings to control what he had conquered. He raised obelisks as far south as the fourth cataract to signify his imperial expanse. These obelisks were looted and are found in Rome, Istanbul, London and New York's Central Park. Another outstanding pharaoh was Akhenaton (Amenhotep the 4th/1364-1347 BC) who was also described as heretic pharaoh, a religious visionary or the doom of his dynasty (Esler A, The Human Venture, 2004, 54).

He was physically weak with a frail effeminate body with hardly the makings of soldier or statesman.

He was mostly concerned with matters of the mind and spirit. In his youthful fascination, Akhenaton instituted a radical change of policy which led to the direct attack on the priesthood of Amon. Initially he continued to live at Thebes where he had a great temple to Aton (the sun disk erected east of Amon's temple at Karnak. Later, because of resistance to his reform in Thebes Akhenaton withdrew from the city. He founded a new residence at El-Amarna in Middle Egypt which he called Akhetaton (the horizon of Aton) where he lived until his death.

It was here that he changed his name from Amenhotep (Amon is satisfied to Akhenaton (He who is serviceable to Aton or spirit of Aton). Akhenaton proclaimed Aton as the sole true god to be worshipped throughout Egypt. He launched campaigns to destroy all the other cults and replaced them with the worship of Aton. Hence Akhenaton was the first ruler to advocate for monotheism thirteen and a half centuries before Christ. Aton was represented not in human form like other gods but simply by the solar disk. Rays spread down from it and at the ends of the rays there were hands.

Temples of Aton were built without roofs so that the worshipper might commune directly with the god and feel his power in the sky above. The Atonist revolution did not survive the death of Akhenaton. His second successor Tutankhamun returned to the faith of his ancestors and became a worshipper of Amon. However it was not until the reign of Horemheb as the last king of the Eighteenth Dynasty that the persecution of Aton began with



the same persistence that had formerly applied to Amon (Abu-Bakr, 1990, 75). The Decline of Ancient Egypt

Its decline could be attributed to the following factors; 1. The empire had grown so big that it was not easy to hold it together against external attacks. The Hittites and the sea people (biblical philistines) constantly attacked the delta. 2. The weak kings undermined the state especially in the face of invaders. During the thousand years that followed the end of the New kingdom in the eleventh century/ Theban priests, Libyan mercenaries, Nubian kings, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians and Romans ruled Egypt in turns. The Art, Thought and Achievements in Ancient Egypt

Some of the art, thought and achievements are already discussed under the previous topics. For instance the roles of art and religion as well as the establishment of empire have been discussed. Perhaps what follows is to briefly itemize others; 1. The discovery of the art of writing in Egypt began as picture writing i. e. hieroglyphics carved with reed pens on papyrus. As a working script therefore, hieroglyphic writing evolved over centuries into a cursive script called hieratic. The latter looked more like modern Arabic. 2. Scientific knowledge; Astronomy, Egyptians divided the night sky into eparate constellations, compiled detailed records of the nightly positions of some heavenly bodies and constructed on this basis a calendar that is close to the solar one in use today. Mathematics: Ancient Egyptians used mathematics to survey and re-establish boundary lines after the annual inundation had washed out the line markers up and down the Nile. They also used measurement and calculation for architecture and engineering, for predicting harvests and totaling royal tax receipts. Medicine: Ancient

Egyptian medicine operated on the basis of experience and rules of the thumb.

Egyptian doctors indeed showed genuine clinical concern with symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. Some of the prescribed remedies include drugs, such as castor oil that may even have done the patient some good. 3. Construction; Ancient Egyptians were great builders. They built in stone. The old kingdom pyramids still stand out as some of the wonders of the world. The forty five hundred years and the two and a half million cubic yards of solid stone in the great pyramid of Khufu is one example of human engineering feats. Obelisks were another Egyptian architectural specialist.

They often stood almost a hundred feet high. Their hieroglyphic inscriptions described the achievements of the pharaohs who erected them i. e. Hatshepsut or Thutmose the 3rd. Other architectural feats include temples, tombs and sarcophaguses (stone coffins) 4. Polytheistic Religion; The sources of religion include ancient Egyptians need for supernatural help to ensure a supply of game, growing herds or desire for human support when dealing with life transition and with specific afflictions i. e. wars, pestilence, famine and oppression. 5. To express the inexpressible religious leaders turn to metaphor.

This experience has brought religious discourse from the historically conditioned realities of a particular time and place i. e. the sun god sails down a celestial Nile in the mind of the Egyptian. 6. Egyptians worshipped many gods i. e. Amon-Ra, Osiris, Horus. The Origin of Civilization In The Rest Of Africa Since it is established that the earliest human species is in the land of the great lakes of East Africa, it becomes clear that the Egyptian

civilization was not isolated from the areas where the earliest forms of human origins are situated. Hence there was a lot of interconnectedness between the north and the south.

We use Kush and Nubia to illustrate this point. The Nubians supplied ancient Egypt with gold, ivory, ebony, ostrich, feathers and slaves. It also supplied cattle, grain, leopards (and their skins), giraffes (whose tails were used as fly whisks, oils and perfumes among others. During the Egyptian decline, Nubian army went into Egypt and even took control of the Egyptian throne. Between the 11th c. BC and the 4th c. AD, the Nubian territory constituted the state of Kush. This area generally stretches from the first cataract of the Nile and the confluence between the Blue Nile and the White Nile.

The region is currently between Egypt's Aswan Dam and the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. During around 1500 BC, the area fell under the expansionist New Kingdom of Ancient Egypt. Egyptian Governors and garrisons, priests and artisans influenced Kush greatly. Sons of Kushite kings were educated at the Egyptian royal court at Thebes. Egyptian temples and gods royal rituals and hieroglyphics were all transplanted to the Sudan. The Egyptian religious complex at Napata in particular became a centre for the spread of the Egyptian culture among the Africans beyond the cataracts.

During the decline of Egypt from around 1100 BC, the kingdom of Kush regained its independence and flourished, none the less; the Kushite kings still followed Egyptian ways and worshipped Egyptians gods. They recovered their deeds in hieroglyphics inscriptions and buried their dead under the pyramid like those of the old kingdoms. Around 750 BC the Kushite kings Kashata and Piankhi marched north and liberated Egypt from Libyan rulers.

For more than half a century later the Kushite pharaohs of the 25th Egyptian dynasty ruled a dual kingdom that stretched around 1400 miles from the Blue Nile to the shores of the Mediterranean.

The Assyrians expelled the 25th dynasty and replaced the Kushite kings in Egypt. The golden age of Kushitic civilization was during Meroe's ascendancy. Meroe built its cities in sun-dried bricks like Egyptians. Kushitic rulers' succession was by consensus among the royal princes. The queen mother was uniquely powerful. Egyptian priesthoods i. e. the sun god was influential. But later it was replaced by the Kushite lion god Apedemek. The wealth of Kush lay in the location of its fertile land and its dynamic people. Kushite capital, Meroe was watered not only by the Nile but also by a significant annual rainfall.

Hence there was expansive pasture and cropland. There were such minerals as gold and iron. Kushite artisans exploited the iron ore so industriously that Meroe became one of the centers for the production of iron in Africa. Later Kush developed its own writing. The first centuries of Christian era witnessed the decline of Kush. Reasons could include limited land that ended up being overgrazed, the drying out of the land due to creeping of the Sahara southwards and the loss of its northern customers, Egypt. Trade in the east was taken over by Axum which destroyed the kingdom of Kush finally.

THE ORIENTAL CIVILIZATION Introduction The oriental as an adjective derives from the ' noun' orient' which refers to the ' East'. The concept of ' East as used in reference to countries in Asia was given by the Europeans. Therefore in our discussion, we will look at such civilization as those of Mesopotamia, Hebrew, Persia, India and China. THE ANCIENT CIVILIZATION OF  
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MESOPOTAMIA Ancient Mesopotamia was situated between River Tigris and River Euphrates. Indeed it was because of these two rivers that the Greeks called the land Mesopotamia to mean land between the rivers. Between 3,500 and 539 B.

Cities and temples emerged first in Sumeria in the delta at the head of the Persian Gulf. This was followed by more cities and temples in Akkadian, Babylon and climaxed in Assyria. All these constituted Mesopotamia. Gradual drying out of the sea covered delta at the mouths of the two rivers exposed the fertile side that may have attracted Neolithic farmers to migrate from the hilly areas and moved to settle in the villages at the delta or Sumeria. These early inhabitants built reeds houses in the delta and hunted birds and speared fish. They were also farmers much as they hunted and gathered wild fruits.

From this area, the ancient Sumerians built over centuries a type of civilization that was later emulated. The Sumerians first discovered how to tame the flooding waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. They constructed dykes, canals and irrigation ditches that converted the water from destructive actions to more productive uses like enabling the community to produce enough food stuffs. The Sumerians planted barley and wheat. They cultivated date palm for fruit and palm wine. Sumerians reared sheep and goats from which wool and hair clothing was made.

They used oxen to pull, plough, donkeys were beasts of burden, horses and camels were domesticated later. These latter animals were obtained during the Sumerian war encounters against their neighbouring foreigners. Mesopotamia developed such crafts as textiles, pottery and stone carving,

smelting of copper and alloy of bronze. They also invented the wheel solid and spoked (The human venture vdl) P. 37) To go along with the wheel, the Sumerians invented the carts and wagons. It is assumed that they were the first to invent writing. However, their most important invention was city itself. The city became the centre of civilization.

In Mesopotamia, cities had high and thick walls with special gateways. Inside the walls, the town was divided into four quarters by main streets that entered the city through four main gates. Dominant features in the city-state were king's palace, the temple of gods, and large houses of leading citizens. Temples or Ziggurats were pyramidal, terraced towers visible from far beyond the city walls. Streets were mostly narrow and winding, crowded with shopkeepers, artisans, slaves, citizens and even priests. The city had the aristocrats who included royal officials, members of the royal family and the chief priest of the major temples.

The middle class included textile manufacturers, metal work manufacturers in copper and bronze, and merchants. In the fields outside the walls were peasant, serfs and slaves. Among this lower cadre of society, very few peasants were free citizens. Most were tenant farmers holding their land in return for payment in kind to absentee landlords, serfs and slaves worked on land owned by the royal family and the chief gods of the city state. These cadres of lower members in society were subjected to strict rules enforced by supervisor who made sure that the workers irrigated farms to sustain city-life.

The shadoof method was widely employed in irrigation. A shadoof was a long pivoted pole with a weight at one end and a bucket at the other. The tool

was used to lift water from larger channels into the furrows where the seeds were planted. Other methods of irrigation included levees which were constantly strengthened, canals and ditches as irrigation methods were redredged to prevent silting up. Hence a good deal of cooperation was necessary for the success of the said group work. Mesopotamia women worked as weavers, pottery makers, farm workers and manual workers.

In summer and Babylon, women could own property, sign legal contracts and engage in business themselves. Monarchies and cults of gods were central institutions in Sumerian society. Temples came first. The pyramidal Ziggurats and broad temple complexes of gods and goddesses - Anu, Enhil, Enlil, Ninhursag and Imana (the last was also known as Ishtar) dominated the skyline of the Sumerian city. Each city had its own patron among the heavenly assembly, who was believed to bring rising rivers and rich harvests to keep misfortunes at bay and to maintain law and order.

**MESOPOTAMIAN EMPIRE** An empire was the most common larger form of political organization beyond the city states. Several efforts were made at this empire building by such rulers as Sargon of Akkad, Hammurabi of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar in the New Babylonian empire. However Persians reduced these efforts by making Mesopotamia as a Persian satrapy or province. Several factors frustrated the Mesopotamia efforts at uniting. They included i. Attacks from the outsiders who included Akkadians Gadians, Kassites and Persians. ii. The existence of fragmented feudal order in Mesopotamia.

This led to division of power among land owning aristocracy. iii. The tendency of a number of regions to break up into middle sized states which

enjoyed their own hegemonies and resisted efforts from outside that aimed at imposing larger order on the entire Mesopotamia. iv. Polarization among rival Mesopotamian city -states frustrated efforts by any that aimed at uniting Mesopotamia. v. The unity which occurred temporarily was due to successful confrontations accompanied by losses in human lives and destruction of property. The following are some of the successful attempts.

Sargon of Akkad king of Sumerian founded a dynasty around 2300 BC His dynasty governed most of Mesopotamia for about a century. From a lesser Sumerian city - state, Sargon replaced his royal master on the throne, overthrew the dynasty of Uruk and conquered most of the Tigris and Euphrates valley. He garrisoned his conquests with Akkadian troops and built himself a new capital at Agade. Sargon's son and grandson ruled after him. However, a volcanic eruption may have brought drought to the region. The violent Gatians swept down from neighbouring hills destroyed Agade and its imperial Mesopotamian domain.

Sargon is thus remembered as the world's first empire builder. Hammurabi, also known as the lawgiver of Babylon (1792 -1750 BC) was born king of Babylon. The sixth in the line of Amorite rulers, Hammurabi governed Babylon for about thirty years before embarking on his expansionist venture into the rest of Mesopotamia. Employing shrewd statecraft, good timing and military force, Hammurabi expanded his empire far beyond the confines of his predecessors. For a brief [period, he and his successors had authority over all the people of Mesopotamia (Human Venture, 42)

Hammurabi the law-giver introduced a code of laws covering a range of civil and criminal matters. They tackled family relations, land laws, business laws,



personal injury, military service, matters touching on witchcraft and taxes. Some of his laws are harsh seen from the present times. For instance, a principle of 'an eye for an eye' 'a life for a life' is cited for being extreme. But looked at with knowledge about our present judicial system, would you consider them strange? Hammurabi's code observed some social hierarchy. There were laws for slaves and laws for their masters.

For example, a noble was punished more harshly for the same offence than his social inferiors. Here one gets the impression that 'might is not always right' Does it operate in our society? At his death, Hammurabi had built so expensive an empire that his successors were unable to hold together. Attacks from enemies like Kassites, from the east weakened the empire. Within a century and a half, the empire had crumbled away. It took some time before other unifiers, this time from Assyria emerged. As the Babylonian empire declined, the Assyrians emerged as a military power right from the fourteenth century BC.

By the later part of the eighth century BC, they were incorporating their victims into a large and growing empire. In the seventh century BC under Sennacherib and Assurbanipal, Assyrians conquered Egypt and most of Mesopotamia. Thus under Assurbanipal Assyrian empire briefly ran from the Nile valley to the Persian Gulf. However, in the last part of the seventh century BC, chaos bedeviled the Assyrian empire. In 612 BC, an allied force of Chaldeans from Babylon and Medes from the eastern mountains attacked Assyria, defeated it and destroyed its city Nineveh.

One lasting legacy the Assyrians were known for was savage brutality. The Assyrian decline prepared room for the rise of New Babylonian Empire.

During the New Babylonian empire, Nebuchadnezzar II (605 -562) was a dominant figure. Soon after the fall of Nineveh, while still prince of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar commanded the Babylonian army which had defeated the Egyptian forces at Carchemish in 605 BC. As king, he repeatedly attacked Palestine, destroyed Jerusalem and forced Judeans into exile. At its peak, the new Babylonian empire compared in size with the Assyrian empire at its climax.

It thus stretched from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea during the sixth century BC. Nebuchadnezzar II was a great builder of canals and caravan roads as well as temples and palaces. He raised huge new walls around his capital, eleven miles long and very wide. He opened the broad processional way through the heart of the city to the Ishtar gate. He built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, a towering ziggurat featuring terraces planted with trees and exotic plants. It is said he did this to please his Median wife who missed the hills of her mountains home.

Nebuchadnezzar's successors were not able to keep the huge empire safe from external attacks. Hence in 539 BC, the Persian conqueror, also known as 'Cyrus the Great' defeated the rulers of the New Babylon Empire and ushered in a new era. THE HEBREW CIVILISATION Introduction In this section, we look at the Hebrew (or Jews) as a people, their efforts at establishing their Jewish Kingdom and the lasting legacy to posterity. It is at their legacy that the aspect of monotheism is critically discussed. It is also worthy noting that Hebrew history is intertwined with the Old Testament story.. The Hebrew people

At the beginning of the second millennium BC the Hebrews were part of the nomadic population of Semitic speakers who wandered and settled along the shores of the Arabian Desert between Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations. Abraham, the founder or patriarch of the Hebrew community moved from Ur with his wives and children, servants, shepherds and flocks around him and settled for a time in Palestine (Canaan) situated around Jordan River. A section of the community moved into Egypt where tradition states they were oppressed in the New Kingdom of Egypt. Hence in the thirteenth century BC, these Hebrews resumed their wanderings.

Their liberator, Moses held them together for forty years in the wilderness of Sinai. Moses rallied them behind a single God, Yaweh. Hence by the 1200's BC, the Hebrews had become monotheists (The Human Venture, Vol. 1, p. 67) and promised to obey his commandments. It is believed, God's messenger to the Hebrews, Moses wrote the Torah, also known as Pentateuch. These were the first five books of the Bible. Thus, through these books, Moses the liberator and law giver became a world historical figure. The Hebrews had some of their sections also known as Yehudim which when translated into English became Jews.

Hence the genesis of the name that mostly refers to the present descendants of the Hebrews. The Hebrew Kingdom When the Hebrews ultimately settled at Palestine, all the twelve ethnic groups evolved into a kingdom. Earlier, before making this decision, the Hebrew communities were divided and disunited along clan and ethnic lines. Their leaders were called judges. At times they were also guided by charismatic prophets. Shortly before 1000 BC, however, all the twelve ethnic groups resolved to follow a

single king who was to be also a war leader capable of winning wars against their enemies.

Saul, David and Solomon were some of the first kings of the Hebrews. David (1010-960 BC) a gifted military leader defeated the Philistines and completed the conquest of Canaan. He cemented the political unity of the twelve ethnic groups, established a Hebrew state and began to build a Hebrew capital at Jerusalem. Generally regarded as the strongest of Hebrew rulers, David is reputed for founding a centralised kingdom of Israel in the tenth century BC. Indeed Saul, the first ruler made effort but could not score definitive victory against enemies of the Hebrews. Hence when he fell in battle, he was replaced by David.

David was later succeeded by Solomon (960-920 BC), his son, reputed for his wisdom. Solomon was a shrewd diplomat and a great builder. He married many wives and kept many concubines, he built a magnificent palace for himself and a great temple for Yaweh. Solomon further strengthened and equipped his army with chariots and new iron-age weapons. Furthermore, he built, rebuilt and fortified a number of cities. Solomon also constructed ships and traded with the Phoenicians and even down the Red Sea. Hence, Solomon in a way symbolized the governmental ideals of wisdom and power in the service of the people.

In his effort to ensure that the Hebrew Kingdom remained powerful in the region, Solomon employed huge amounts of labour and money. He used oppressive taxation, forced labour and other harsh measures that made him unpopular among his people. Differences among the urban and commercial northerners and the pastoral, agricultural and more religious southerners of

his kingdom weakened the monarchy. The emerging rebellion split the kingdom after Solomon's death. The Fall of the Hebrew Kingdom The split of the Hebrew Kingdom into Judah in the South and ruled from Jerusalem and Israel in the North marked the fall of the kingdom.

The nation of Judah was made up of two of the Hebrew communities while Israel had ten of the original twelve ethnic groups. Neither of the two could withstand attacks from more powerful enemies who included the Assyrians and Babylonians. Hence in the eighth century BC, Israel was conquered by the Assyrians while Nebuchadnezzar II of New Babylonian empire defeated Judah in the sixth century (586) BC. Jerusalem and Solomon's great temple were destroyed. Many Hebrews were held captive in Babylon. Others fled to Egypt and beyond, beginning the diaspora or dispersal of the Jewish people.

Some captives escaped and returned to rebuild the temple of their Lord, Yaweh, before the end of the sixth century BC. But such short-lived Jewish states as what emerged in later periods could not withstand attacks from Persians, Macedonians, Romans, Arabs and Turks. It was not until 1948 that a new nation of Israel, approximating the size of the one ruled over by David, was declared. That nation of Israel is still busy fending off attacks from Arabs. The Birth of Monotheism The earliest Hebrews were organised along family, clan and ethnic lines.

As earlier argued, the twelve ethnic groups were believed to have descended from the twelve sons of Abraham. Within the family, patriarchy prevailed. Male heads of families had power over wives and children. Polygamy was allowed for men wealthy enough to support several wives. Only sons could inherit property because daughters could marry away from the families. A

wife retained control of the dowry she brought with her to her marriage. But she had few other property rights. Divorce was easy for men but difficult for women to secure. How does this compare with our present circumstances?

There were exceptions though. Some women stepped outside the family centred system entirely. Some exercised political power - as judges, or religious authority as prophetesses e. g. Deborah. Some like Judith who slew the commander of an invading host (The Human venture, Vol. 1, p. 71) were hailed as national heroes for their deeds. Religion played a central role in Hebrew life. In fact, the many ancient Hebrew laws recorded in the Old Testament had a deep religious touch much as they also reflected the traditional Hebrew values. One such law was the principle of 'an eye for an eye'.

Other Hebrew laws also prescribed kinds of foods to be eaten, persons and communities from which to marry or be married among, or what punishments to be given out against violations of these taboos. Hebrew prophets carried the words of their god, Yaweh, carved on two stone tablets in a chest as they preached to their people. They proclaimed their divinely ordained rule in a promised land in Palestine. Over a millennium and half between Abraham and the return to Jerusalem from Babylon, the Hebrews evolved a unique conception of divinity and of humanity's relationship to it.

During Abraham's time, the Hebrew worshipped their own god without interfering with the other community's way of worship. But by Moses' time, Hebrew spiritual leaders began to insist that Yaweh demanded exclusive worship in return for his special patronage. The spiritual leaders further insisted that Yaweh was the only real God in the universe. During the second

millennium BC, the Hebrew began believing that Yaweh demanded exclusive devotion from Hebrews. They believed that Yaweh was a jealous god and would tolerate no others. Over the centuries, Hebrews believed that Yaweh could not tolerate any images of himself.

He thus remained a purely spiritual presence. He remained an incarnation of such superhuman qualities as all knowledge, absolute power and benevolent caring who had miraculously selected the ancient Hebrews as his chosen people. Yaweh's prophets of the first millennium BC preached ethical monotheism, stressing the moral dimension of the worship of one God. In sermons to the Hebrews, preachers like Samuel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah insisted that Yaweh demanded believers to obey the commandments that forbade murder, theft, lying, covetousness and many other sins.

The prophets also preached that Yaweh demanded social justice from his people. The rich were not to oppress the poor, nor the mighty oppress the weak. The prophets preached that God had made a Special Covenant with the Hebrews. Whenever they sinned, God punished them severely i. e. by having them enslaved in Egypt or held captives in Babylon. But if they remained loyal to him alone and kept his commandments, they would get a promised land where they would have respect among nations. It is this monotheistic legacy that the Hebrews have bequeathed to posterity.

For instance, in the first century AD, Jesus Christ, born and raised in the Jewish community of Northern Palestine, became the founder of the Christian faith, a faith that later spread around the world. In the Seventh Century AD, the Prophet Muhammad, an Arabian merchant conversant with both Judaism and Christianity, founded the third major world religion, Islam. Down through

the centuries Hebrew leaders like Moses and Solomon would be honoured not only in later Judaism, but also in the Christian Old Testament and the Muslim Quran. ANCIENT PERSIA Ancient Persia is situated in the Middle East.

A region known to have given rise to many civilizations including Mesopotamia. During the millennium of the Christian era, the broad diversified Middle Eastern region had intermittent unity under a series of Persian dynasties. Some of the leading Persian unifiers include the Achaenemids (550-331 BC). The Achaenemids are a royal house which was founded by Cyrus the Great. The Persians were Indo-European descendants who had migrated into the Iranian Plateau hundreds of years earlier. In the 6th C BC, Persians were still a war-like semi-pastoral people living in the mountains of what is present day Western Iran.

There they were within easy reach of the Euphrates and Tigris valley. Cyrus the Great, also known as Cyrus the Shepherd was a self made emperor. He was merciful with defeated enemies, tolerant of all religions and very courageous. He was a brave fighter. By the middle of the 6th C, the Medes who had participated in the destruction of the Mesopotamian Empire were weak. This enabled Cyrus, a hereditary chief of the Persian people who were tributary to the Medes to rise. In 550BC, Cyrus invaded and overthrew the last Medean king of the Medes and crowned himself king of the Medes and Persians.

For the next twenty years, Cyrus waged many victorious campaigns. Cyrus' horse soldiers wore leather breeches and heavy felt boots, sat on their rugged mountainous ponies and were armed with compound bows. In his reign and that of his successors, Persia expanded to become the largest



empire in the 6th century. About three years after seizing control of the Median confederacy, Cyrus crossed the Taurus Mountains into present day Turkey and overthrew king Croesus of Lydia. Using the wealth acquired from Croesus, Cyrus marched eastwards subduing residents of present day Iran and Afghanistan.

In the process of expanding Persian Empire, Cyrus also expanded his troops so that by the time he invaded the New Babylonian Empire, the weaker and disunited Babylonian leaders were no match for him. About 539 BC Cyrus easily occupied Babylon, bringing to an end the Mesopotamian independence. Persia became the greatest power in the Middle East. About nine years later, Cyrus was killed in war in eastern part of today's Iran. Cambyses, his son succeeded him and conquered Egypt. Cambyses' successor, Darius 1(522-486) further extended Persian Empire into northern India and Macedonia, on the northern frontier of Greece.

Darius 1 also known as Darius the Great thus governed over a huge empire, from the Egyptians, Babylonians, Lydians, Greeks, Persians and Medes among others. To administer the expansive empire effectively, it was divided in provinces (satrapies). Each satrapy was under a Satrap (governor) who was often a member of the imperial family or a leading local nobleman. The satraps were granted political, military and financial autonomy on a large scale. As long as a satrapy paid its tribute on time and provided its share of recruits for the army, the province could be left on its own in local matters.

But to avert any rebellious satrapies, garrisons of royal troops were strategically situated across the huge empire. In addition, there were also royal agents (the king's eyes and ears) who monitored on the satraps and

regularly briefed the rulers of the empire. Darius formulated a single imperial code of laws based on the Mesopotamian model. He also borrowed the idea of minted coinage from the Lydians and began minting gold and silver coins. Besides he established a common set of weights and measures, a system of royal couriers and mail, a common calendar borrowed from Egypt and Aramaic, as a lingua franca.

Aramaic was already widely used by business people in the general area. Darius was also a builder. He set up a network of hundred of miles of roads linking the far removed places of Persian Empire. Some ran from the capital at Susa to the Western City of Sardises Darius and his successors loved relaxing in gardens which they called 'Paradises' and in great palaces at Susa, Bablylon and Persepolis. From the fifth century B. C. some Satrops began revolting against the Persian rule. For instance, the Ionian Greek City-states revolted and were supported by Athens. Gradually palace intrigues undermined the power of the empire.

Even women were ruthlessly conspiratorial and by the fourth century B. C. Alexander the Great, King of Macedonia attacked and destroyed Achaemenid Empire. Attempts to revive the empire by such groups as the Seleucids (323-250 B. C. ) and the Parrthians (250 B. C. -224A. D. ) could not succeed. The two were not Persians and from 224 A. D. , the Sassanids, an Iranian group took over and ruled Persia until 641A. D. The four hundred year reign of the Sassanids is thus viewed as a restoration of the Achaemenid rule (Esler, A. , The Human Venture Vol. 1 p. 153). The Sassanids constructed an elaborate system of power.

The bureaucracy, the Iranian barons and the Magi (Priests of Zoroaster) were most influential. The Grand Visier, was the King's right hand man and operational head of the state. Other powerful officials included the chief priest, head scribe, and general of the armies. Iranian barons granted estates along the frontiers of the empire and provided a flexible border defense. While defending their own lands, the barons by the same means also protected the Sassanid Empire. The Magi collected the peasant land tax on which the government depended and also provided religious sanction for Sassanid imperial power.

Indeed under the Sassanids, Persian Empire emerged to the expansiveness of the earlier Achaemenid Empire under Darius and Xerxes. During its greatest the empire reached today's Pakistan in the east and Egypt in the west. In the north the empire reached Central Asia upto the suburbs of Constantinople. The expansion of the empire made it fall into conflict with such western powers as Ancient Rome and Medieval Byzantine Empire. At one time the struggle took on a religious overtone between Zoroastrianism (Persia) and Christianity (Rome and Byzantium).

Finally the Sassanid Empire was overwhelmed by the Muslim conquerors. The Persian Society and Culture Ancient Persian Empire was a class based society. The classes included the aristocrats, officials, priests, merchants, artisans, peasants, workers and slaves. In terms of gender relations, it depended on regions. In Mesopotamia women worked in handicraft industries while in Egypt women enjoyed legal rights. For example, a marriage contract guaranteed the bride to return her dowry in the event of

the marriages dissolution and also receive a third of the husband's earnings.

### The Faith of Zoroaster

Initially, Persians were polytheists. They worshipped Anahita, goddess of the life-giving waters and Mithra, god of the Sun. Sacrificial fire played a central part in the religion of the early Persians. But from the sixth century, Prophet Zoroaster founded a new religion, Zoroastrianism. Six hundred years before Christi, Zoroaster preached a faith that resembled present day Christianity. He preached belief in one god, Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord, god of light, goodness and truth. Ahura Mazda was the creator of all things, the judge of all people, and the rewarder of virtue with spiritual blessings.

Zoroastrianism proclaimed Liar as the prince of darkness. Liar was also known as Abriman. He preached that the universe was the battle ground between Ahura Mazda and his agent Mithra on the one hand against Abriman on the other. Zoroaster urged all human beings to take a stand in the struggle between the two forces. He predicted victory for Ahura Mazda and his followers would enter paradise while those who served Liar (Abriman) will be cast into the bridge of judgment into a pit of darkness and torment. The faith became a faith of the royal family and nobility in Persia.

Ahura Mazda was symbolized in a small human figure at persepolis. Zoroastrianism was largely a religion, therefore of the aristocrats given that Persians seldom sought converts to it. Nonetheless Zoroastrianism spread eastwards to India where the Parsi sect comprises the largest body of Zoroastrians in the world today (Elser, The Human Venture, p. 156). The cult of Mithra the sun god, champion of light against darkness spread westwards

into Rome. Even Liar found a place in foreign pantheons such as Satan of the Christians. The Indian Civilization Introduction

In this sub-topic we look at the general overview of the Indian subcontinent, its earliest organization, and invasion from outside before eventually discussing the evolution of the empire. There after we will examine the major philosophical and religious contribution of India to the rest of humankind. The Indian Subcontinent Indian subcontinent is made up of raised areas such as the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas as well as the river valleys and coastal plains. It is in these valleys that the Indian civilization was born and later expanded to cover the entire sub continent.

It is argued that the subcontinent is about two thousan