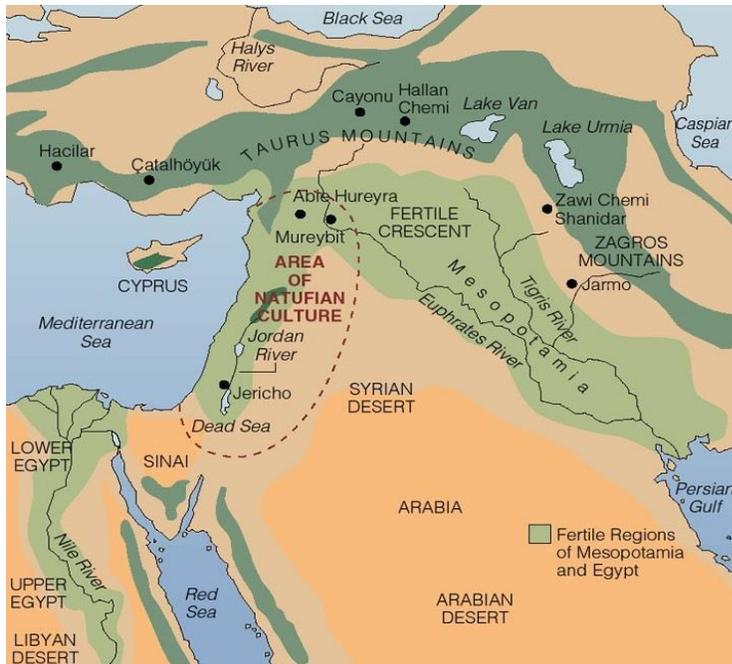


World History

Unit One Study Guide/Essential Information

Comparison of Egypt and Mesopotamia:



Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations developed in substantially different environments. While both civilizations developed in fertile river valleys rich with silt from the annual flooding of the Nile in Egypt and the Tigris and Euphrates in Mesopotamia, the flood patterns and geography of the surrounding area were quite different. These differences led to the development of starkly different outlooks on religion and political histories.

Farming villages emerged in both regions between 7,000 and 5,000 years ago. Over time these societies improved agricultural technologies like irrigation canals, leading to population growth and the development of the first urban centers like those in Ur and Uruk in Mesopotamia and the kingdoms of Upper and Lower Egypt.

Mesopotamia developed in the fertile arch (known as the Fertile Crescent) along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that runs from the Persian Gulf in the south to the Mediterranean Sea in the north. This desert region is prone to irradate flooding and lacks natural boundaries, making it susceptible to frequent invasions. Egypt on the other hand developed in the narrow fertile ribbon on the banks of the Nile River. The Nile floods with remarkable regularity from July to October of each year. Each time depositing rich silt that was ideal for agriculture, this regularity was known as the [Gift of the Nile](#) which led to remarkable stability in Egyptian society. Another factor that contributed to this stability included natural boundaries that made invasions unusual. To the north and east large bodies of water protected Egypt and to the south and west vast deserts.

These environmental differences led to starkly different outlooks of religion. Both the Egyptians and Mesopotamians were polytheistic with Gods that represented elements of nature, but because the natural world of each civilization was so different, attitudes toward these Gods were quite different. In general the Gods of Mesopotamia were viewed as unpredictable and often elicited the fear of the population which tried to win their approval with sacrifices and the construction of elaborate temples called [Ziggurats](#). Egyptian religion on the other hand, presented Gods that could be depended on to provide bounty and prosperity. This difference was also reflected in each civilization's view of the afterlife. Mesopotamians believed that the afterlife was a fearful and

gloomy place while Egyptians believed that good deeds in life were rewarded with an afterlife rich in the same pleasures they enjoyed while alive. These Egyptian views on death and the afterlife led to elaborate burial practices that included the construction of tombs and mummification.

Environmental difference also led to remarkably different political histories with Mesopotamia marked by frequent change and Egypt experiencing substantial continuity. The first phase of Mesopotamia's political history, known as Sumer, was dominated by several independent and often warring city-states, each with its own hereditary monarch. Each city-state had a walled urban area made up of simple mud-brick dwellings and a ceremonial and administrative center dominated by a Ziggurat. Outside of the city walls, each city-state controlled the large areas of surrounding farmland. Around 4,000 years ago the King of Akkad, Sargon, conquered this region creating the world's first empire. This empire was relatively short lived as several waves of invasions and insurrection shifted political power to other groups. One of these groups, the Babylonians brought important political innovation when they unified the region in the 18th century BCE. The Babylonian King Hammurabi introduced the World's first written law code which limited the arbitrary justice of earlier kings. The Old Babylonian Empire as it is known by historians also witnessed a flowering in mathematics and literature. However, like the Mesopotamian empires that came before, Babylonians succumb to invasion leading to a series of warring empires. These empires included the Hittites, an Indo-European speaking people who arrived in the region about 2000 BCE bringing iron technology, the Assyrians who rose in power around 1900 BCE, and the Persians who began to build a long-lived empire around 550 BCE.

Egypt, protected by vast desert and seas, saw far fewer invasions and as a result had a remarkably stable political history for over 2,000 years. This history began about 3,000 BCE with the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt into a single kingdom ruled by a divine hereditary monarch known as the Pharaoh. The Pharaohs were aided by an elaborate bureaucracy that included priests, administrators and scribes. This government was able to undertake elaborate public works projects like the construction of Pyramids that served as tombs for the Pharaoh. Historians divide Egyptian History into the Old Kingdom (c. 2649 to 2150 BCE), the First Intermediate Period, Middle Kingdom (c. 2030-1640 BCE), the Second Intermediate Period, and the New Kingdom (c. 1550-1070). The intermediate periods mark the only major times instability in Egypt before 1070 BCE. During the Second Intermediate Period, Egypt experienced its first major invasion from the Hyksos of Mesopotamia who introduced the region to the horse, chariot and compound bow. After 1070, the political histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia intersected as they both experienced invasions from groups like the Hittites (who introduced Iron to the region), Assyrians and Persians.

Fertile river valleys combined with technological advances like irrigation canals and plows allowed both Mesopotamia and Egypt to produce surplus food. With an agricultural surplus, both empires developed specialization of labor which in turn led to the development of social classes. Both societies had the same basic social hierarchy with the royal family at the top followed by priests, government officials, landowners, soldiers, and scribes constituting a ruling class followed by merchants and artisans in the middle and peasant farmers at the bottom. Mesopotamia tended to rely more heavily on slaves but Egypt developed a slave class made up mostly of foreigners later in its history. This specialization of labor allowed both societies to make notable cultural and technological advances. Both Mesopotamia and Egypt developed complex systems of writing,

cuneiform and hieroglyphics respectively. Both also developed advanced literary, artistic and architectural traditions including The Epic of Gilgamesh from Mesopotamia.

Comparison of India and China

Farming villages first appeared in South Asia about 3200 BCE in the fertile plain between the Indus and Ganges rivers. This region's climate is dominated by monsoon rains and a wall of mountains to the north and west partially isolate its people. Urban centers appeared about 2500 BCE with Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa being the most significant

Little is known about these early civilizations because historians are unable to read the written language of the region but urban planning in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa indicate the presence of a strong central government. The cities were elevated and surrounded by earthen walls and levees to protect them from flooding. Inside the walls, the streets were laid out on a grid system. Homes were constructed of baked brick, each with its own bathroom served by a city-wide sewer and plumbing system. Each city had a fortified citadel in the center which likely served as the political and religious center. Archaeologists have found a large number of children's toys and few weapons, indicating that these societies were generally peaceful. The economy was dependent on agriculture with evidence of trade with the Middle East and Central Asia.

Urban decay, possibly brought on by earthquakes and soil exhaustion set in around 1750 BCE. A new group of people, the Indo-European Aryans, migrated into the region in about 1500 BCE. This group eventually established the Magadha Kingdom which controlled a portion of northeast India by the second century BCE.

The farming villages between the Huang He and Yangtze Rivers of China grew into cities about 2000 BCE. These urban areas both benefited from and suffered because of the rich but loose yellow silt called loess deposited by the flooding of Yangtze. While the soil supported agriculture its loose nature made major shifts in the course of the river and massive floods common. These struggles are recorded in Chinese legend as the Xia Dynasty whose Emperor Yu is said to have brought flood control and irrigation to China.

The first documented dynasty of China was the Shang which was founded about 1700 BCE. This dynasty started a long tradition of governance in China that included a hereditary monarch supported by a complex bureaucracy.

Like other early civilizations, during the Shang period urban centers were walled and surrounded by large agricultural areas. While the economy was dominated by agriculture, craft production and trade were also present. China developed a writing system, complex urban planning, irrigation and flood control in this period.

This period also saw the emergence of foundational and interconnected Chinese religious principles. These include concept of Yin and Yang which offered an early and enduring understanding of the universe as balanced between male and female forces. Daoism, founded by

Lao Tsu, asked humanity to respect and live in harmony with nature and ancestor worship venerated deceased family members in the hope that they would intercede with the powers in Heaven on behalf of the living.

Emergence of Monotheism: Hebrews

While aspects of monotheism emerged in a variety of places and times including in Egypt under the Pharaoh Amenhotep IV in the mid-1300s BCE and in Persia after growth of Zoroastrianism in the 600s BCE, monotheism reached its most complete and enduring form among the Hebrews starting around 1250 BCE

These beliefs, recorded in the Hebrew Bible, begin with the Hebrew people (led by Moses) entering into a covenant with God in which God promises to protect His chosen people in exchange for their exclusive obedience to Him. The basic tenants and Judaism, including monotheism, were established in this period as the Ten Commandments.

The Hebrew people established a kingdom on the eastern Mediterranean in about 1020 BCE which split into two kingdoms in 920 BCE. The concept of monotheism became more formalized during this period and was spread to other areas by the Jewish diaspora that began with the conquest of the northern Kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 721 BCE and the deportation of many Jewish leaders to Babylonia in 587 BCE. While in Babylonia, the institution of the Synagogue was established and in about 450 BCE Judaism as a monotheistic faith was fully developed with the completion of the Hebrew Bible.

Bantu Migration:

Agricultural villages became common in West Africa below the Sahara desert about 4,000 years ago. Sometime after, these villages developed iron technology which they used to produce tools of agriculture. Extensive linguistic evidence suggests that West Africans from around the modern border between Nigeria and Cameroon began to use this technology to clear forest to the southeast for farming. This led to a slow migration of these Bantu speaking people to the southeast and south from about 500 BCE to 600 CE. This migration brought agriculture, iron technology, and a new language to a region previously dominated by hunter gathers. Anthropologist believe that this migration laid the foundation for a common cultural heritage present in much of West, Central, East and South Africa.

Rise of the Olmecs:

Civilizations also developed in the Americas in this period. Geographic isolation made them more unique but they followed many of the same patterns of civilizations in Afro-Eurasia.

Agricultural villages based on the cultivation of corn, beans, and squash emerged about 3500 BCE. These villages grew into a variety of urban centers around 1200 BCE, the most influential of which was the Olmec culture found in the modern Mexican states of Veracruz and Tabasco.

Political authority and social stratification developed in these urban areas as a result of agricultural surplus and the need to mobilize large numbers of people to construct irrigation systems, ceremonial buildings and to drain land for farming.



Sophisticated urban planning based on the movement of the stars, the creation of monumental artwork including several giant Olmec head statues, and the construction of monumental architecture indicate a strong central government able to mobilize the labor of the population over time. Each Olmec city was likely independently ruled by a hereditary monarch who maintained power by presenting himself as an intermediary to the gods. These rulers, assisted by a class of priests, performed awe inspiring rituals on large platforms in the center of each city that included bloodletting and human sacrifice. These rituals served to reinforce the power of the state and laid the cultural foundations for the civilization that followed.

The Olmec economy like other ancient civilizations was dominated by agriculture but sophisticated trade networks and craft production also existed.

Classical India (Maurya and Gupta)

The Maurya (324 BCE to 184 BCE) were the first empire to unify large areas of India. There is some evidence that the founding emperor Chandragupta Maurya may have been inspired by Alexander the Great whose death left a political vacuum in Northwest India that the Maurya filled. The empire was ruled by a hereditary monarch aided by an elaborate bureaucracy made up of relatives and close associates who governed ethnicity based regional provinces. The central government was able to collect high taxes, issue a standard currency and maintain control of mining. This was facilitated by an extensive network of spies that kept the central government aware of disloyalty. Further, a powerful standing army that included elephant, chariot, and cavalry divisions helped secure this power.

While agriculture remained the primary economic activity, an extensive network of roads and maritime connections to Southeast Asia and the Middle East foster both internal and international trade. India profited from the export of cotton cloth, iron, and salt.

In 269 BCE the Emperor Ashoka came to power ushering in a period of religious pluralism and tolerance. As a young man, Ashoka engaged in violent wars of conquest. Guilt associated with this violence drove Ashoka to convert to Buddhism. As a Buddhist emperor, he made it state policy to promote Buddhism throughout his empire by erecting pillars that promoted the teachings of the Buddha. This policy was an important factor in ensuring the longevity of Buddhism as a major world religion.

The Maurya Empire fell in 184 BCE as a result of dynastic disputes and invasions by outside enemies. Following a period of political disunity, the Gupta Empire came to power in 320 CE, ruling a portion of North Central India. The founder, Chandra Gupta modeled his rule on that of the Maurya. While the Gupta were able to collect high taxes, demand labor from subjects for state

projects, and control metal mining and salt production they were never able to maintain the level of central authority that the Maurya enjoyed. Regional hereditary governors were only nominally under the control of the central government forcing the emperor to rely on diplomacy to maintain the unity of the empire.

Hinduism enjoyed a resurgence during the Gupta period leading to the strengthening of the Caste System and the intensification of patriarchy. The tradition of sati, widows throwing themselves on the funeral pyre of their late husbands, became common. Internal and international trade continued to flourish and major advances in mathematics were realized, including the development of the decimal system, Arabic numerals (wrongly named because of their diffusion to Europe through the Middle East), and pi.

The Gupta Empire fell in the 500s CE largely as a result of nomadic invaders from the northwest.

China: the Zhou , Qin, and Han Dynasties



Fundamental elements of Chinese governance came with the second Dynasty, the Zhou (1027 to 221 BCE). These principles include the Mandate of Heaven which argues that the ruling dynasty has been charged by Heaven to rule the people with benevolence (called the Dao) and Confucianism. While Confucianism did not have a profound political impact until about 200 BCE the basic tenants of filial piety, adherence to tradition, patriarchy and duty were

established during the Zhou dynasty. The Zhou were only able to maintain centralized authority until about 800 BCE, after that they relied on a system of feudalism to administer the empire and by 480 BCE civil war thrust China into the Warring States Period. This conflict lasted until the Shi Huangdi emerged victorious and established the Qin Dynasty.

During these years of conflict a new governing philosophy emerged in China called Legalism. Proponents of Legalism argued that humans were innately self-serving and destructive therefore societal order had to be maintained with strict laws and harsh punishments. Shi Huangdi, prescribed to these beliefs and built a highly centralized bureaucracy around these tenants. While the Qin Dynasty was short-lived it is given credit for unifying China politically, economically, and culturally. Under the Qin, weights, measures, coinage, laws, writing, and axle length were all standardized. The state directed the construction of extensive roads and canals, work on the Great Wall of China began, and land reform broke up the

power of feudal lords. These reforms laid the foundations for the effective administration of the vast empires of the dynasties that followed.

The extensive use of forced labor and excessive taxation quickly led to rebellion after the death of Shi Huangdi in 210 BCE. Out of these rebellions, a peasant named Liu Bang emerged as the new emperor of China and established the Han Dynasty. The Han Dynasty maintained many of the policies of the Qin but tempered the severity of Legalism with the political use of Confucianism which required leaders to earn the respect of the governed. This combination proved durable and long-lived.

The Han were able to maintain control of an empire even larger than the Qin. From their capital in Chang'an, the Han directed a vast bureaucracy organized into nine ministries and regional authorities.

This bureaucracy was staffed by educated civil servants who received their appointments based on their score on a rigorous civil service examination. The state operated an effective tax collection system, a postal service, built extensive roads, canals, and defensive walls, and protected the empire from the constant threat of nomadic invaders from the north.

The security of the Han period led to a thriving economy that engaged in extensive internal and international trade, profiting tremendously from the export of silk. Economic growth was also aided by advancements in farm technology like the horse collar and better irrigation.

The Han Dynasty began to decline around 200 CE, contributing factors included: bureaucratic corruption and infighting, food shortages, epidemic disease, banditry, and pressure from nomadic invaders along the northern border.

Hinduism and Buddhism and their impact on India and Confucianism in China

Indo-European religious traditions, preserved in the the [Vedas](#), blended with the indigenous traditions of the Dravidian population to create a nascent form of Hinduism. These religious traditions began to formalize around 750 to 550 BCE with the writing of the [Upanishads](#). This faith centered on the basic belief that all living things are reincarnated after death with the quality of the next life based on the deeds (Karma) of the individual in the previous life. Humans are expected to live according to the Dharma and good conduct is rewarded with an eventual release from the cycle of reincarnation called Moksha.

This faith, combined with the dominance of the Indo-European Aryans over the indigenous Dravidians led to the creation of a rigid social class system called Caste or Varna. The population was divided into five hereditary social classes based on ethnicity and occupation.

Hinduism fully developed during the Gupta Dynasty (320 CE to 550 CE). During this period the hereditary nature of the occupational classes of the Caste System, patriarchy, the belief in a pantheon of Gods, a rich tradition of epic literature and the construction of monumental Hindu architecture became commonplace. These traditions, established Gupta Dynasty, endured for centuries among the population of South Asia.

Hinduism's dominance in the region was challenged by the emergence of new faiths including Jainism and Buddhism in around 500 BCE. While Buddhism had little success in gaining adherents in South Asia it did spread along trade routes and become a major faith in East and Southeast Asia. Buddhism was founded by a Hindu prince named Siddhartha Gautama who rejected the caste system and the pantheon of Hindu Gods and taught instead that spiritual enlightenment (Nirvana) and escape from the cycle reincarnation could be reached in a single lifetime by accepting the [Four Noble Truths](#) and following the [Eightfold Path](#).

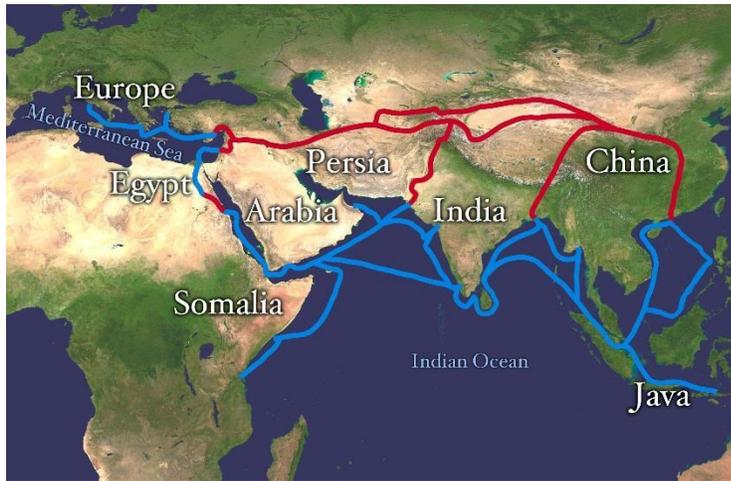
In the period after c. 500 BCE Buddhism offered an alternative to the sometimes oppressive nature of Hinduism's caste system and patriarchal traditions. The popularity of Buddhism reached its peak in the Mauryan Dynasty (324-184 BCE) under the Emperor Ashoka. Ashoka made it state policy to promote the spread of Buddhism. These policies ensured that Buddhism would endure as a major world religion. During the Gupta Dynasty (320 CE-550 CE) Buddhism fell out of favor in South Asia but endured as a major faith along the trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the Silk Road. This endurance was facilitated by the tradition of monasticism in the Buddhist faith. Buddhist nuns and monks established monasteries in remote areas along major trade routes. These monasteries spread the faith among traveling merchants and offered a life free of the traditional confines of patriarchy and caste for both women and men.

Confucius (c551-479 BCE) lived in the waning days of the Zhou Dynasty, a period of social and political upheaval. His philosophy, recorded by his followers in the [Analects](#), proposed a solution to this unrest. He argued that the long established traditions of filial piety and the Mandate of Heaven held the key to social order. For Confucius, the family served as a model for society as a whole. The eldest male of the family held a moral obligation to lead and care for his household with wisdom and benevolence in exchange each member of the family was obliged to obey. Confucius believed that the hierarchy of family could be expanded to bring order to society as a whole. Arguing that humans were innately good and that if treated with respect would obey righteous leaders, the Analects laid out five relationships that were rooted in long held Chinese traditions and would bring peace and order to society. Each relationship was based in reciprocal respect and duty, they include ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. In an ideal Confucian society, wise superiors protect and respect their subordinates, subordinates obey and respect their superiors and all obey the golden rule: "never do to others what you would not like them to do to you." Confucianism created a fairly rigid social hierarchy, strongly supported patriarchy, encouraged education, and supported the tradition of ancestor veneration in China from the Han Dynasty onward.

Silk Road and Indian Ocean Trade:

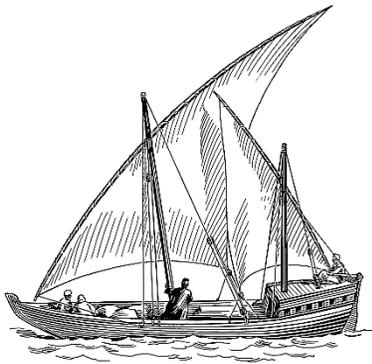
The vast open steppe land of Central Asia was home to numerous nomadic societies. These societies relied on a pastoral economy that exploited the natural resources of the open steppe. This reliance on pastoralism made these societies experts on the use of pack animals including horses, camels and oxen. These transport technologies combined with potential for vast profits from the trade in silk, glassware, cotton cloth, horses, spices, perfumes and slaves led to the rise of the Silk Road. The Silk Road operated in two principle phases, the first from about 100 BCE to 800 CE. In this period the trade route linked the Roman Empire in the west, the Chinese dynasties of the Han,

Sui and Tang in the East, the Indian empires of the Mauryan and Gupta in the south, and the Persians in the middle. The Silk Road peaked again from 1200 to 1500 (see SSWH4e).



During the first phase of the Silk Road, it functioned primarily as a relay system with each merchant only traveling a portion of the full length of the road. Major trading cities developed as a result of this system like Chang'an, Samarkand, and Bukhara. While individuals rarely traveled the full length of the trade routes, elements of culture and technology did. Some key examples of this include:

- Buddhism spread from India to China -Christianity spread to the east
- the stirrup spread from Central Asia to Europe, China, and the Middle East
- horse technology spread to China
- New crops were introduced to China (alfalfa, grapes), Rome (peaches, apricots), and the Middle East (rice, sugarcane, and cotton)



The predictable nature of the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean eased open-water navigation and led to the rise of a vast network of exchange between East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China in the Classical Age. Mariners, motivated by potential profits from the exchange in goods like ebony, ivory, copper, myrrh, frankincense, dates, spices, jewels, cotton cloth, and silk developed technologies that capitalized on the monsoon winds and allowed the efficient transport of massive amounts of goods. These technologies include the dhow and lateen sail developed by Arab sailors and the junk developed by the Chinese.

The seasonal nature of the monsoon winds forced long stays by sailors in their various ports of call. This led to the establishment of diasporic communities in the major ports of the Indian Ocean Maritime System. Several of the diasporic communities left an enduring impact of the host culture. For example the Swahili language of East Africa is a product of the blending of Arabic with indigenous Bantu languages and the Malay Peninsula has a Chinese community that endures to this day.