

# **INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS**

**B.A. (History) – First Year**

**Paper – IV**

**Paper Code: BAHS 1914**



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## **B.A. HISTORY -SYLLABUS**

**Paper code: BAHS 1914**

### **PAPER IV**

#### **INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS**

**Unit. 1:** Mesopotomian Civilization–Sumeria and Akkad –Sumerian city states – Polity, Socioeconomic life–Script and Monuments

**Unit. 2:** Egyptian Civilization– Political Dispensation–Polity, Socio-economic life- Contribution to science- Religion- Script and Monuments

**Unit.3:** The Babylonian Empire –Code of Hammurabi, Rule of Nebuchadnezzar- Babylonian gods Assyrian conquerors, Asur Banipal

**Unit. 4:** Chinese civilization; Society, economy and Religion

**Unit.5:** Greek and Roman civilizations- Roman Society and Culture



## CONTENTS

<b>Unit – I:</b>	Mesopotamian Civilization .....	1
<b>Unit – II:</b>	Egyptian Civilization .....	19
<b>Unit – III:</b>	The Babylonian Empire .....	51
<b>Unit – IV:</b>	Chinese Civilization .....	73
<b>Unit – V:</b>	Greek and Roman Civilizations .....	91
	Maps for Practice .....	134



**UNIT I**  
**MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION**

## **UNIT I: Mesopotamian Civilization**

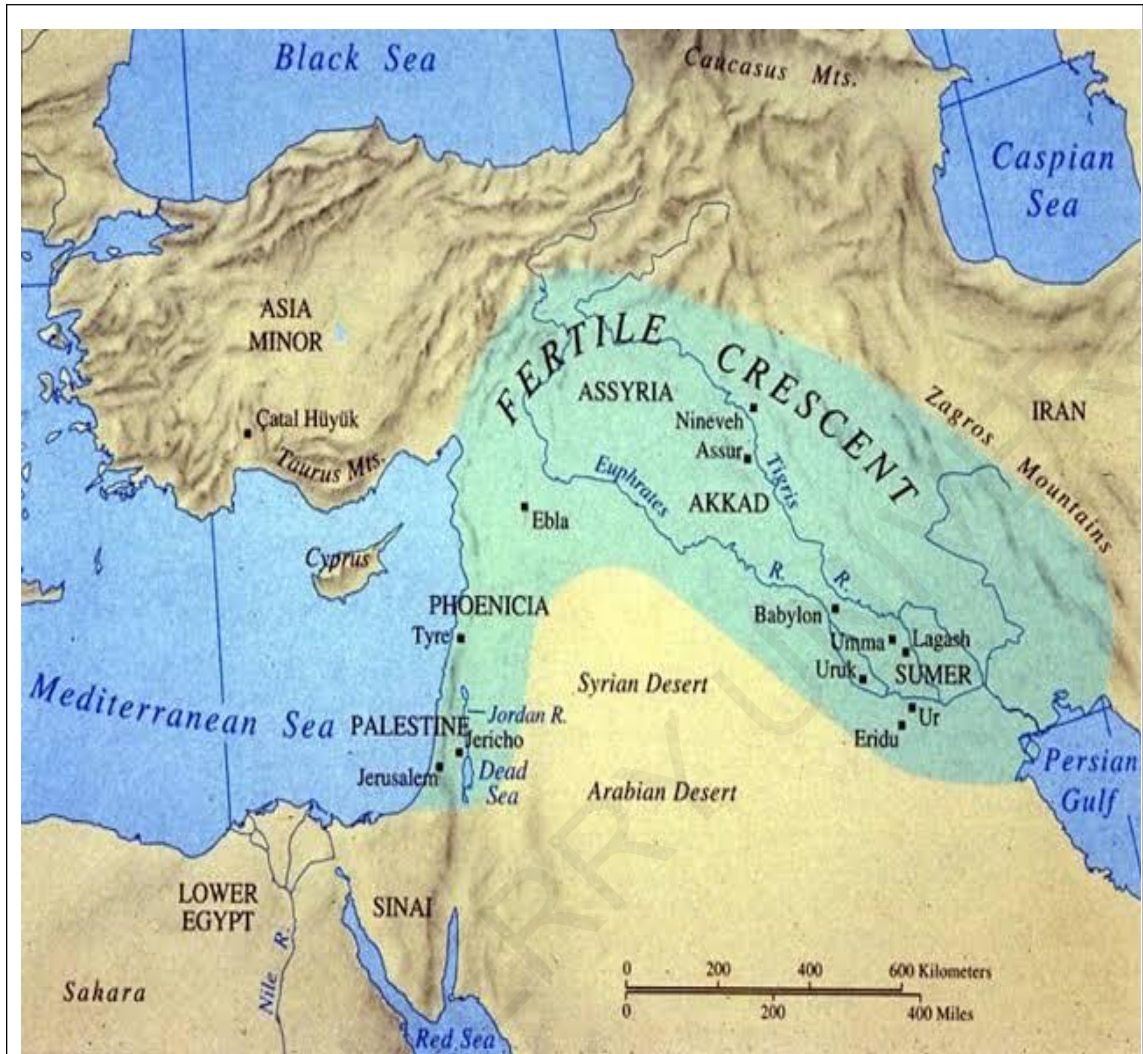
### **1.0. Mesopotamian Civilization**

The civilization which flourished in ancient Mesopotamia was almost contemporary to the Nile valley civilization. In western Asia, the land situated between the two rivers viz. Tigris and Euphrates was known as Mesopotamia in the ancient period. 'Mesopotamia' in the Greek language, means the land between the two rivers. It is now called Iraq. These two rivers originate in the Armenian mountains of Asia Minor and run in parallel lines to a distance of 1500 miles, meet the Persian Gulf in the South. This land was also called as the "Fertile Crescent" because its semicircular shape was like the visible part of the moon in the first or last quarter. The two rivers, Tigris and Euphrates made the land of Mesopotamia very fertile with their continuous flow of water throughout the year. The floods of these rivers brought every time rich deposits of soft soil and minerals to Mesopotamia that helped the land of Mesopotamia remain beneficial for agriculture. The fertility of the soil in Mesopotamia greatly contributed to the growth of civilization.

The valley of the Nile had natural protection and it was immune from external invasions which helped the civilization to flourish for a longtime. On the other hand, Mesopotamia had no natural protection and consequently, it was exposed to external aggression. That is why Mesopotamian civilization fluctuated with the rise and fall of different people in this land. At times, its civilization declined due to wars. But it helped to bring ideas from outside and led to the evolution of a composite civilization.

The Upper part of Mesopotamia was known as Assyria and the lower part as Babylon, which was further divided into Sumer and Akkad. The Sumerians, the Akkadians, the Amorites, the Kassites, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans succeeded one after another in ancient Mesopotamia. Among which the three principal civilizations viz. Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrians are considered as most important in terms of their contribution to the development of civilization. Unlike the Egyptians, their outlook on life, government and religion are different.





*Mesopotamian Civilization*

## 1.1.Sumerian Civilization

### 1.1.1. Geographical Features

The Sumerians were the first people to settle in Mesopotamia. They were living in 5000 BCE in the southern part of the land and the place later came to be known as Sumer. They probably belonged to the Indo-European stock of people. Since they were people of 'black heads' i.e. having black hair, they were called as the Sumerian, who laid strong foundations of civilization and culture of Mesopotamia. They were neither Aryan nor Semitic. Even their place of origin is not known. They were the creators of the first civilization in Mesopotamia which reached its climax in about 3500 BCE.

### **1.1.2. Socio-economic Life**

The Sumerians built a number of city-states, each centered around its chief city. Among them Nippur, Lagash, Kish and Ur were famous. These city-states were not united, rather engaged in a prolonged warfare for the supremacy over the Sumer territory. Each state was ruled by a King with a chief priest to advise him. Before the rise of kingship the priest ruled the city-states. Besides kings and priests, the society had merchants, land owners and artisans, all belonging to the middle class. At the bottom of the society there were slaves.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the Sumerians. Wheat and Barley were the two main crops of the land. Probably the cultivation of Wheat originated here. For irrigation, the people depended on rivers and canals. They invented the metal plough which helped farmers in ploughing the land easily. The Sumerians were famous for fine craftsmanship. They had the ability to prepare ornaments of gold, silver, ivory and precious stones; earthen vessels, metal furniture and various kinds of weapons. They carried on trade with an extensive area stretching from the Indus valley to the Nile Valley.

The Sumerians were war-like people. They were always engaged in warfare among themselves. They invented various kinds of weapons and evolved an advanced warfare. They fought with shields, spears, swords, bows and arrows. At the same time they applied humanitarian principles into the war. They were prepared to show mercy even to the enemies at the time of war.

### **1.1.3. Agriculture**

Sumerians were the first people to start farming. There are many inventions to their credit pertaining to agriculture and its infrastructure. They were the first to use the wheel and sail for transporting their produce. They also used wheels on war chariots. They constructed irrigation systems to support agriculture. They planted trees as wind breakers and also invented ploughs. Whenever the floods swept away the boundary marks, the Sumerians used arithmetic and geometry to reestablish the boundaries of agricultural and private residential zones.

#### **1.1.4. Food**

Barley is largely grown and appears to be the staple Sumerian diet. They made barley cakes, barley paste or just barley. They also cultivated millets and wheat. Vegetables such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, garlic, lettuce and many other are known to them even before 2500 BCE. They drank goat milk and had eggs for their breakfast. For meat, they ate pig, wild fowl, deer, goat, chicken and fish. It is interesting to note that the archaeologists found 50 different types of fish in their clay tablets dating back to 2300 BCE. Vendors of fried fish from the city of Ur had great trade contacts. Ingredients like honey, cheese and butter oil are found in some written records.

#### **1.1.5. Dress**

People in ancient Sumer wore sheepskin shirts. The skin was turned inside and the wool was beautifully decorated. Some people wore these shirts up to their knees and some up to their ankles which acted as a sign. Later, they started wearing shawls above the shirts. Some of the paintings suggest the use of the embroidery in fashion. They wore footwear made of both fabric and skin. Men and women grew long hairs and curled them.

#### **1.1.6. Houses and streets**

The Sumerian cities are urban in nature. The cities were attractive, with prosperous market places and broad boulevards. The houses were built with mud bricks. There were temples and other religious places for the people to offer their prayers. Cities are the residences for the natives and the foreign slaves. Slaves can be purchased in the market legally. Palace officials and noble class people dominated the society. Apart from the above farmers, fishermen, craftsmen, merchants and scribes formed part of the society. The citizens had great pride about their city.

#### **1.1.7. Sumerian Religion**

The Sumerian religion is based on agriculture. They worshipped the natural forces by giving them different names and built temples on mounds and hills in their honor. These temples are called '*Ziggurats*' which look like very small pyramids with an ascending staircase in the middle leading to tower where the idol of god was located. *Ziggurat* was generally built with six or seven stories high. *Patesi*, the priest was the in-charge of the temple. The Sumerians believed that gods descended to earth using the *ziggurat* as

ladder. Each city had a presiding deity, whose temple was higher than the rest of the city. The chief deity of the Sumerians was 'Enlil', the god of air. 'Enki', the god of water was also worshipped. In course of time the number of gods increased. Temples were erected for all these gods for their long life and worldly happiness. Sumerians buried the dead bodies in their houses. The hierarchy of gods consisted of 'Abu' or 'Tammuz', the god of vegetation, 'Shamash', the Sun god, 'Ishtar', the goddess of fertility, 'Assure', the god of military prowess. They also worshipped planets like Saturn, Venus, Mars, Jupiter etc.

They believed that the air contained both good and bad spirits which brought them good and bad fortunes. The people brought food and animals to the temples to offer them as sacrifice. The people helped the priests in conducting prayers and rituals. The priests commanded great respect for they were thought to be representatives of god. The priests played a great role in the administration of the city-states. Like the Egyptians, the Sumerians were polytheistic. They worshipped other gods in addition to the god of their city-state. Sumerians believed that a council of gods and goddesses ruled the earth, deciding the fate of individuals and cities. Each god had a specific rank or place within this council. To secure the favors of the god and the good spirits, the Mesopotamians offered them butter, oil, vegetables, and fruits. The offerings of the Mesopotamians to the god made the priests a wealthy section of the society. They believed in mythological stories and hymns given by the 'patesis' and followed moral code of conduct in the society. The questions of human mind were answered with mythological stories which are mostly imaginary, some are based on tradition and some answers were given from the legends like the 'Gilgamesh'.

Sumerians explained natural events as the result of actions of gods and goddesses. In Egypt, the favorable climate of the Nile valley allowed the people to enjoy life and see their gods as benevolent forces. By contrast, fear of natural disasters and invasion probably contributed to a gloomy outlook on life among Sumerians. They believed that the gods punished them by sending floods or famine. The Sumerian outlook on life coloured their belief about the afterlife. At death, they expected to descend forever into a dark underworld, a huge cave filled with nothing but dust and silence. Sumerians buried the dead bodies within in their houses.

### 1.1.8. Art of writing in Sumer

*“Why do you idle about? Go to school, stand before your school father (teacher) recite your assignment, open your school bag, write your tablet, let your big brother (school leader) write your new tablet for you. After you have finished your assignment and reported to your monitor, come to me, and do not wander about in the street. Come now, do you know what I said?”* Aren't these words familiar? Yes, True. These are the words which almost all school going kids hear from their parents. What is so special about this? Nearly 4000 years ago, a father who used to be a scribe wrote these words to his son and made his son copy the instructions on a clay tablet so that he would remember them. This clay tablet is one of the thousands of records discovered in the Sumerian state (modern Iraq) which shows the importance of art of writing and the position of a scribe in the Sumerian society.

The Sumerians made some remarkable contributions to the human civilizations in different fields. Like the ancient Egyptians, the Sumerians invented a system of writing. In the beginning they used the picture writing and subsequently that became phonetic. The earliest evidence of their art of writing is available from a stone inscription dated to 3600 BCE. This system of writing was called Cuneiform, derived from the Latin word meaning 'wedge shaped' invented around the end of the fourth millennium BCE probably in the southern Mesopotamian city of Uruk. Cuneiform writing continued in use until around 100 CE and was the most widely used system of writing prior to the alphabet, which eventually replaced it.

In 1929, a German archeologist named Julius Jordan unearthed a huge library of clay tablets belonging to the Sumerian civilization. These samples were older than the Chinese, Egyptian and Mesoamerican systems of writing. Uruk, which is small if judged by today's standards with only few residents, was once a huge urban agglomeration, and one of the wealthiest early cities of the world. The Epic of Gilgamesh talks about the city of Uruk, *“he built the town wall of Uruk, city of sheepfolds”*. The great city is famous today because it produced so many clay tablets that no modern scholars can decipher. According to Jordan the Sumerians used conical, spherical and cylindrical objects for writing. He wrote in one of his journals that the Sumerians had used the clay tablets to count the commodities of their daily life like jars and animals in a stylized and standardized way.

Later in 1970, a French archaeologist Denise Schmandt – Besserat catalogued similar products found across the region, from Turkey to Pakistan, some of which were produced 9000 years ago. According to her the Uruk tablets were used to track different quantities, and also used for both adding and subtracting the quantities. The city states in Mesopotamia like Uruk were great cities with many industries and craftsmen; they required trading and taxation also. The tablets that were discovered help us imagining the world's first accountant sitting at the temple storehouse, counting the sacks of grains that arrive and leave.



*Accounting tablet from Uruk, a Mesopotamian City State*

The Sumerians developed a Lunar calendar with 12 months. But it was not a scientific method to determine a year. Later they developed some of the principles of Algebra and Arithmetic. In the early period of their civilization, the Sumerians knew the method of calculating the areas of the fields and buildings. This is proved by some of their clay tablets on which these calculations are made. The Sumerian Arithmetic and Geometry were followed by the other people who ruled Mesopotamia from time to time.

There were about 350 signs, each representing a syllable. This script was invented by the Sumerians themselves. With those signs, they used to write full words. To write one word, they used one sign. Those signs did not stand for any alphabet. In this the cuneiform script was different from others. These signs had a shape of the English alphabet 'V'. For practicing their art of writing the Sumerian people used tablets of soft clay. They wrote on these tablets with the help of reed pen and then that was made hard by exposing to sunlight. They also wrote on stone but that was not popular due to scarcity of stones. A number of slates containing Cuneiform writing have been discovered in the agricultural settlements of the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys.

With the help of this cuneiform script the ancient people of Mesopotamia produced a huge volume of literature of different subjects and sciences. This script was adopted by the Jews and Persians up to the first century BCE. After that they gave up this script and adopted the alphabetic script of the Phoenicians. Traders and conquering armies helped to spread cuneiform writing to other peoples of the Fertile Crescent. Sumerian writing system originated as pictograms and ideograms, but scribes gradually simplified the system, using symbols to represent sounds and syllables. They used a stylus or sharpened reed instrument, to make symbols on tablets of wet clay.

Cuneiform as a writing system was a mixture of word signs (logograms), idea signs (ideograms used to represent two or more words with more or less similar meanings) and syllabic-phonetic signs. Development of syllabic signs was facilitated by the large percentage of monosyllabic words in Sumeria. Sumerian cuneiform relied heavily upon word signs and ideograms, with phonetic signs and rather precise rules for orthography and format being used to make the meaning of these signs more clear. As the Sumerian city-states grew the need for scribes increased. Priests employed scribes to write down laws, treatises and religious texts. As trade expanded, merchants hired scribes to record business deals, property holdings and contracts. To train scribes, priests setup schools in the temples. Only boys, usually the sons of scribes attended temple schools. Students paid tuition fees and ensured strict discipline in order to earn a privileged provision as a scribe. Although no schools existed for girls, priestesses and the daughters of wealthy Sumerians probably learned to read and write from private tutors.

By c.2000 BCE cuneiform seems to have spread from its original home in southern Iraq to most parts of the Mesopotamian basin. Originally created to write the Sumerian language, it was adapted to write Semitic Akkadian (before 2500 BCE) and the closely related language of 'Ebla in northern Syria (dated between c.2500 BCE - c.2250 BCE). Recent discoveries in Syria and Turkey indicate that its use throughout the third millennium was much more widespread than has generally been thought. It seems safe to assume that by the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c.2000 BCE), cuneiform was known and used from the Zagros Mountains in Iran to Mediterranean. It achieved its widest distribution in the Middle and Late Bronze Age (c.2000-1200 BCE) being attested in the East from Elam in Southwestern Iran to Mediterranean in the West and in the North from central Turkey to Egypt in the South.

The effort towards the decipherment of cuneiform writing began in the 18th century and was finally accomplished during 1846-1852. The British army officer Henry Creswicke Rawlinson played a major role in this endeavor and made decisive contributions to the decipherment.

### **1.1.9. Art and Architecture, Engineering and Science**

The Sumerians built their houses with kiln-burnt bricks. Their brick structures did not last long as the stone buildings of the Egyptians, but their architecture was well planned and executed. The Sumerians seem to have invented several important architectural elements. One was the Arch, a curved structure over an opening and one of the strongest forms in building. By combining several arches, they could also build rounded roofs in the shape of domes or vaults. They knew and used the ramp. They even built sewers beneath their buildings and roofed them with arches of brick.

The most striking Sumerian buildings were the temples, built on man-made hills that rose above the flat valley floor. The temples were even storied and pyramidal in shape. These temples were called '*Ziggurats*' that were built in layers, each one smaller than the one below, so that it looked somewhat like a "Stepped - sack" Sky scraper. On some ziggurats each storey was painted in different color and each was dedicated to a different star or planet. Usually there were seven stories. The top storey was the shrine of the god.



Sumerian engineers and scientists made many important discoveries. To measure the time of the day and night, the Sumerians devised the instruments of the sun-dial and a water clock. With the help of this instrument, the Sumerians decided the day and the night of 12 hours each. From their calculations the world developed the practice regarding the day (day and night together) as of 24 hours. In mathematics they used a system of numbers based on 60. Large numbers were stated in 60's, For example, the value of 120 was expressed as two 60's and 180 as three 60's. They decided a circle into 360 degrees (Six 60's) such degree with 60 minutes, each minute with 60 seconds.



*Tablet of mathematical calculations belonging to 27<sup>th</sup> Cen. BCE*

### **1.1.10. Weights and Measures**

To weigh the material and grains for conducting economic transactions and to measure cloth, wood, bricks, stones etc. the Sumerians developed a system of weights and measures. Their weight was called as 'Mina' which is equal to the weight of the present day pound (40 tolas). It was the leading unit of weight in the Sumerian economy. Sixty Minas formed the highest weight of the Sumerians and it was called as 'Talent'. For the smaller transactions, the Sumerians divided the Mina into 60 units of small size. These smaller units were called as shekels. The knowledge of these weights spread due to the trade and transaction of the Sumerian people in Arabia, Palestine, Phoenicia, Asia Minor and parts of Europe.

For the purpose of measuring stones, timber for the construction of buildings, manufacturing bricks of uniform sizes, the Sumerians prepared measuring rods of wood. On those rods, they marked the length of a cubit (an ancient measure of length, originally represented the length of the fore arm, about 18 to 12 inches). The cubit was subdivided into five equal parts and each of those parts was further sub divided into its one-sixth parts.

### **1.1.11. Astronomy**

The Sumerians laid the foundations of the science of astronomy in Mesopotamia. From the height of the Ziggurats, the priests observed the position of different planets in the sky. They used to maintain the records of their observations.

### **1.1.12. Sumerian city-states**

The Sumerians built a number of city-states, each centered round a chief city. Among them Nippur, Uruk, Lagash, Kish, Ur, Erich were famous. Thousands of people lived in each city. Each city was independent city-state with its own government and ruler. In a city- state, a large town or city and the surrounding country side cooperated for mutual defense. In addition, the government of a Sumerian city-state supervised the building and maintenance of dikes and canals in the surrounding farmlands. The government constructed strong defensive walls and stored food in case of invasion. When threatened by attack, farmers took refuge behind the city walls.



*Rulers of Sumerian states*

Each city-state worshipped its own god or goddess as well as other gods. The people of the city-state believed they were wholly dependent on their city's god for food and protection. The land in their city and everything produced belonged to the god. Farmers turned over about two thirds of each harvest to the temple. In Mesopotamia, where a disaster such as a flood or invasion could strike suddenly, people believed that their survival depended on keeping their gods content. Priests alone knew how to appeal the gods, and they acted as intermediaries between citizens and the gods. As a result, in the early city states priests ruled in the name of the gods.

As Sumerian city- states grew, they were in constant conflict. For example, Ur fought with Erich for control of the lower Euphrates. Some scholars suggest that frequent warfare gave military leaders power who could successfully defend their city-states and increased it. According to this theory, military leaders gradually replaced priests as rulers of the Sumerian city-states.



*Wooden Panel describing "War and Peace" in the city states*

The Sumerians did not worship their rulers as gods. Instead, they believed their kings were the god's representatives on earth. But as intermediaries between the gods and the people, Sumerian kings commanded absolute obedience.

### **1.1.13. Education**

The Sumerians considered education very important, although it was reserved for boys of the upper class. Schools were usually held in the temples and conducted by priests. Writing and spelling were important subjects. Students learned to write by copying religious books and songs. They also studied reading, history, mathematics, foreign languages, and mapmaking. There was advanced education in law, medicine and surgery. Much time was spent in learning divination or foretelling the future from various signs and omens.

### **1.1.14. Law**

The most distinctive achievement of Sumerians was their system of law which gradually evolved. Only some fragments of this law in an original form have survived. The code of Hammurabi, the Babylonian king, is now recognized to have been its variance with the code of Sumerians. But it is this code which became the basis of the law of nearly all the Semitics. The Sumerians had great regard and respect for law. Their code was so well developed that touched almost all aspects of their life. The laws were close to hard realities of human life. Arbitration method was used for settling disputes. The duties of judges were performed by temple priests.

Hammurabi was a great general and an outstanding administrator. In thousands of his codes his concerns for cleaning blocked water channels, punishing fraudulent officials etc. can be seen. He made efforts to revive the calendar, and through his conduct he achieved unity in his kingdom. He not only introduced new laws but also revived the existing laws. The courts served only as umpires to settle the dispute and not an agency of the state to maintain public security. The legal system was based on the principle of inequality before law. The society was divided into three classes viz. the aristocrats, the commons and the slaves. The Penalties were given according to the rank of the victim, but in some cases according to the rank of the offender also. Punishment for any harm to an aristocrat was always higher than the harm done to a slave for the same offence. Similarly an aristocrat was more severely punished for an offence committed by him, than similar offence committed by a slave. No distinction between accidental and intentional crime and was considered as

an offence irrespective of the fact whether it was committed accidentally or intentionally.

### **1.1.15. Polity**

The Sumerians were the founders of the Mesopotamian civilization. They did not establish any large empire. There were city-states as in Greece in later days. The greatest among them were Ur, Lagash, Umma and Nippur etc. Every city-State comprised of a big city and the territory surrounding it. These city-States were quite independent of one another and often fought with each other over land and water. In doing so they more often destroyed each other. Each of those cities was governed by a priest king or *patesi*. He was the highest head of the civil, military, religious and judicial administration of this city-state. He led the people in processions to worship gods. He was the judge and law-giver of the city. He managed the government administration from the ziggurat on the top. He looked after the constant repair of the city-walls to make them quite strong against the enemies. It was his duty to guard the canals and the waterways. During war days he led his men to battles. He supervised agriculture, industries and construction of temples. He was helped by various priests and officials in the transaction of the business of the state. He was responsible to god for the performance of his duties. He was required to protect the rights of the individuals. In theory, king was considered as representative of god on earth.

### **1.1.16. Fall of the Sumerian Civilization**

About 2750 BCE Sumerian Civilization declined due to the invasion of a race of nomads of the Arabian deserts called Akkadians. They easily conquered the Sumerians. Their leader Sargon I was a great warrior and established the first empire in recorded history. His empire extended from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Sargon restored order in Sumerian kingdom. The Akkadians adopted the Sumerian civilization. Therefore this period is called the Sumerian - Akkadian period or Sumerian - Akkadian empire. The fusion of the Sumerians and the Akkadians enriched the Mesopotamian civilization.

Sargon proclaimed himself as 'Lord of the Four Quarters of the World'. He repaired and extended the flood control and irrigation system of Mesopotamia. He sent his armies to protect trade caravans. Sumerian civilization exerted a powerful

influence on the Akkadian empire. Although the Akkadian language differed from the Sumerian, the conquerors adopted cuneiform for writing. Scribes translated Sumerian religious, scientific and literary works into Akkadian. As a result the Akkadians observed Sumerian religious beliefs and ideas about government and society.

### **Do you know : The legendary Epic of Gilgamesh**

People of Mesopotamia preserved their ancient religious beliefs, traditions, accounts of disasters in the form of stories and legends. The Gilgamesh epic is the oldest example of the Mesopotamian literature. The conversation between Enkidu and Gilgamesh is described below about a place where they were forced to enter in a dream.

*“He seized me and led me down to the house of darkness, house of Irkalla*

*The house where one who goes in never comes out again*

*The road that, if one takes it, one never comes back,*

*The house that, if one lives there, one never sees light,*

*The place where they live on dust, their food is mud,*

*Their clothes are like birds’ clothes, a garment of wings,*

*And they see no light, living in blackness: on the door and door – bolt deeply settled dust.*

*In the house of ashes where I entered,*

*I saw the mighty, their crowns fallen to the dirt.*

*I heard about crowned kings who ruled the lands from days of old,*

*Worldly images of Anu and Enlil, waiting table with roast meats,*

*Serving baked goos, filling glasses with water from cool steins.*

*In the house of ashes, where I entered ,*

*There lives the funeral priest who brings together gods and men,*

*There sits the queen of below Earth, ereshkigal:*

*Belit – tseri, tablet scribe of the underworld, kneels before her.*

*She holds a tablet and reads aloud to her,*

*Lifting her head. Ereshkigal looked directly at me – me:*

*“who has brought this one here?” .....*

The story of Gilgamesh is written on the clay tablets and found in pieces in different places across Sumerian states. For example, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the flood story in the Gilgamesh epic was discovered and considered as the rebirth of the entire epic. Similarly, another new tablet discovered (saved from illicit trafficking) in Iraq were added to the story of the Gilgamesh epic. According to the Sumerian historians twelve different tablets of Gilgamesh Epic were discovered so far.

### **Key points**

Mesopotamia is an ancient civilization flourished in the land between Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Sumerians, the Akkadians, the Amorites, the Karsites, the Assyrians and the Chaldeans succeeded one after the other in ancient Mesopotamia. The outlook of Mesopotamians on life, government and religion are different. They mastered in different fields like astronomy, arithmetic, algebra etc. City – states emerged as the powerful administrative units. The priests occupied a great position in the society. Laws were close to hard realities of human life. Multiple storied ziggurats stand as the marvels of their art and architecture. Cuneiform writing was in use, they used the 365 days calendar.

### **Map Skills**

Identify the following in the political map of Mesopotamia:

- a) Sumer b) Kish c) Erech d) Ur e) Tigris river

### **Chapter Checkup**

1. Describe how the environment in Mesopotamia caused the rise and fall of different cultures.
2. Compare the life in Sumerian and Akkadian cultures.
3. Write about the script used in the Mesopotamian civilization.
4. What is the contribution of the Mesopotamians in the fields of art and architecture?

### **Short Answers**

1. Sumerian city states
2. Religion in Sumer
3. Geographical features of Mesopotamia

4. Fertile Crescent
5. Fall of the Sumerian civilization
6. Scribes of Sumer

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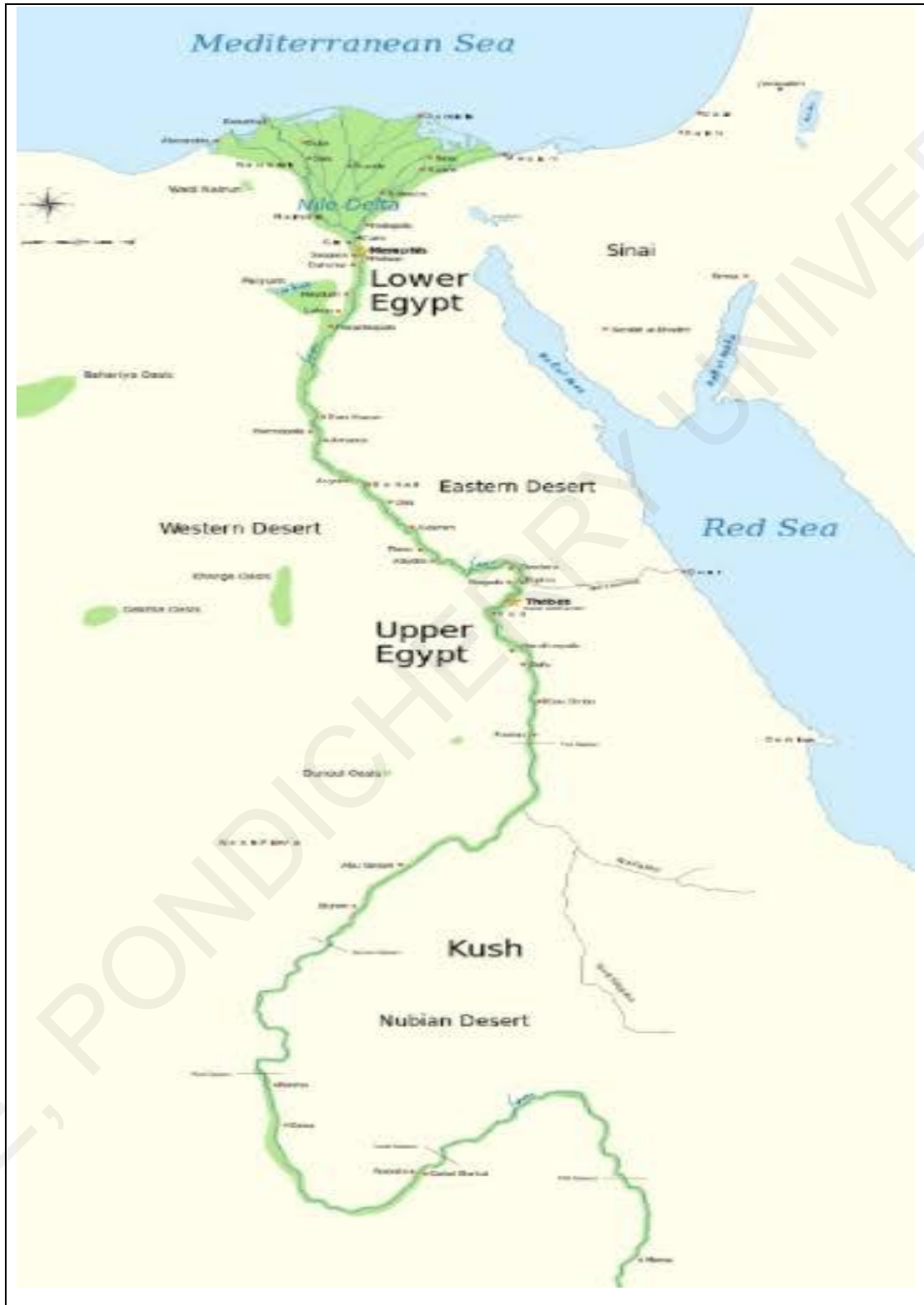
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**UNIT II**  
**EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION**

## UNIT II: Egyptian Civilization

### 2. Egyptian Civilization



*Egyptian Civilization*

## **2.1. Geographical Background**

The ancient civilization flourished in ancient Egypt was shaped by the geographical situation of the land. Egypt is situated on the Mediterranean Sea in the north-eastern part of the African continent. The river Nile passes through the entire land in to the Mediterranean Sea. The plain of the country is formed by the alluvial soil of the Nile. The ancient Egyptians called their lands as Kemet, which means rich and black soil. They respected and worshipped the soil that yielded good harvests. Every year the Nile inundates the vast plain causing its land fertile. Without the Nile, the whole of Egypt would have been a desert. The nomads of the earliest times settled down in the Nile valley with agriculture as the main occupation. It was only due to the Nile that a rich civilization could flourish here. The agricultural prosperity of this land laid the foundation of the civilization of the ancient Egypt. Therefore, the famous Greek historian Herodotus said "Egypt is the gift of the Nile".

The climate of the Egypt helped the people in making the country rich and prosperous. Moreover Egypt was for a long time isolated from the rest of the world by hills, mountains and deserts situated very close to the plains. The Egyptians were not exposed to any kind of foreign invasion. They used the ports on the Mediterranean Sea to carry out trade with foreign countries. Due to its geographical situation Egypt became the connecting link between the east and the west. It was the cradle of one of the most ancient civilizations of the world.

## **2.2. Political history of Ancient Egypt**

The river Nile divided Egypt into two kingdoms viz. the Lower and the Upper Egypt. The Lower Egypt comprised the Nile Delta and the Upper Egypt was to the South of the former. In 3100 BCE the king of Upper Egypt, Menes united those two kingdoms. Although little is known about Menes, he probably established the first dynasty or ruling family in Egypt. From that time the kingdom of Egypt came under the dynastic rules. After the king Menes the whole of Egypt was ruled by 31 dynasties. The successors of the king Menes built their capital at Memphis, where Upper and Lower Egypt met. It can be divided into three phases-the old kingdom (2700 - 2200 BCE), 2), the middle kingdom (2050 - 1800 BCE) and 3) the new kingdom or Empire Age (1570 - 1090 BCE). In the years between the three kingdoms, civil wars and immersions left Egypt without a strong dynasty.

### 2.3. The Old Kingdom

During the old kingdom, Egyptian rulers acquired extensive power. They took the title "Pharaohs" which means "Dwellers of the great houses". They enjoyed unlimited authority and lived in pomp and pleasure. Egyptians believed that the pharaoh was a god, the son of the sun god - Amon- Ra. They had absolute control over people's lives. The Pharaoh was the source of all law, but he also owned all land, quarries, mines and water in Egypt. He shared these resources with the people and they in turn paid taxes and obeyed his commands.

With this absolute power, pharaohs could organize a strong, centralized government. They divided the kingdom into provinces and appointed officials to supervise tax collection, building projects and irrigation systems in each province. The officials were responsible to the pharaoh and could be replaced. But gradually their positions became hereditary and the officials became part of the noble class while the pharaohs remained strong, they controlled the officials. Late in the old kingdom however, powerful nobles began to challenge royal authority.

The old kingdom was a period of significant achievements. Egyptians improved hieroglyphics and developed the engineering skills needed to construct more elaborate tombs for the pharaohs. The Egyptians believed that as a god the pharaoh needed a suitable house for his spirit in the afterlife. When the pharaoh Zoser ordered a tomb to be prepared, his minister, Imhotep, a brilliant engineer designed the step pyramid at Sakkara. This terraced tomb constructed about 2650 BCE is the oldest surviving stone building.

The old kingdom was also called as the Pyramid Age because Zoser's successors, as well as many wealthy nobles erected pyramid tombs. Three gigantic pyramids built during that period still stand at Giza. These massive tombs are evidence of the great wealth and power of Egyptian Pharaohs in the old kingdom. Thousands of laborers had to be recruited, fed, clothed and housed during the years it took to build a pyramid. The cost in human lives and suffering was enormous. The common people resented the nobles and pharaohs who made them work in labour gangs and increased taxes to pay for the tombs.

Despite many taxes, the huge expense of building pyramids exhausted the treasury. Gradually the power of the pharaohs weakened. By 2200 BCE officials in the provinces seized control of their territories. Peasant revolts and civil wars destroyed trade and farming. A period of disorder lasting about 150 years marked the end of the old kingdom.

### **2.3.1. Government**

Leaders from different tribes who settled on the banks of the Nile ruled the people and fought with the other territories. The subjects always obeyed the authority of their leaders. People under different leaderships believed in different gods and goddesses. Though united, the ancient Egypt portrayed a politically divided picture. The kingdom was divided into the Upper and the Lower kingdom. Menes, was the first king who conquered both Upper and Lower kingdoms by 3400 BCE. He was considered as the founder of the United Egypt and the dynasty of the Pharaohs. Pharaoh in the Hebrew language means “A man living in a large house”. He introduced a common system of transactions and so the way of life which resulted in the political and cultural integrity of the ancient Egypt.

Pharaoh Menes was responsible for having taught the use of tables and couches to the ancient Egyptians. He organised strong government machinery. People of ancient Egypt started following the orders of one leader and one law, which reflected in the achievement of spectacular glory in many aspects of life. In administration, Pharaoh was the head of the government and the religion as well. Vazir existed under the Pharaoh, who was a prime minister, chief Justice and a treasurer. Vazir always listened to the demands of his subjects and take measures which are suitable for his subjects by discussing them with the Pharaoh. Few government officials like the clerks, tax collectors etc. followed the Vazir. There was no Police department in the Ancient Egypt to maintain law and order. A significant feature of the ancient Egyptian society is that they lived a moral, virtuous and orderly life.

The ancient Egyptians enjoyed absolute equality before the law. To settle the disputes of the subjects the Pharaohs arranged Judicial courts in the villages. Supreme Courts were at the main cities and the Pharaoh was the final court when a case is escalated beyond the Supreme Court. The council of elders or the Great ones

existed to guide the Pharaoh in the administration. This council was called as Saru in the Egyptian language.

## **2.4. The Middle Kingdom**

Around 2050 BCE, a new dynasty from the south restored order in Egypt and established the middle kingdom. They restored order and prosperity. Compared to earlier rules, pharaohs of the middle kingdom seemed more interested in the common people. During this period lower class Egyptians gained the right to make their bodies mummified after death. The common people believed that this privilege gave them the same access to the afterlife as nobles and pharaohs.

The pharaohs of the middle kingdom undertook some major projects. One project, the draining of swampland in the Nile delta, created thousands of acres of new farmland. Another undertaking, the digging of a canal to connect the Nile to the Red Sea benefited trade and transportation. At about the same time two huge temples were built at Luxor and Karnak near the main capital cities of Thebes on the east bank of the Nile. During the middle kingdom Egypt expanded its borders and had greater contacts with other civilizations. Pharaohs sent trade expeditions to Kush, Syria, Mesopotamia and Crete. Contact with outsiders contributed to the flourishing of Egyptian literature and art. One famous story, the Tale of Sinuhe described the adventures of an Egyptian travelling in foreign lands. It became the basis of the Sinbad, the sailor stories.

The middle kingdom ended in disorder around 1780 BCE. The country was weakened by rivalries, conflicts and the division of powers. Then about 1730 BCE Egypt was invaded for the first time in many centuries. The Hyksos of western Asia crossed the Isthmus and Suez and conquered the Nile delta. The new comers used horses and war chariots, both unknown to Egypt. They easily crushed the disorganized Egyptian forces fought from donkey carts. The Hyksos ruled parts of Egypt for about 200 years but added little to its culture. During that time the Egyptians learned important military skills from them. They learned to ride horses and became expert charioteers. By 1570 BCE Egyptian nobles united to expel the foreigners. The nobles established another Egyptian dynasty, which began the New Kingdom.

## 2.5. The New Kingdom

The invaders -Hyksos were driven out by the Egyptians dynasty XVII which gave birth to New Kingdom. During the period of New Kingdom, the power of the Egyptians reached its peak. Egypt was again united under the succession of strong pharaohs who ruled from Thebes far up to Nile. Tribute and loot from conquered territories filled the treasury. Taxes on flourishing trade further increased Egyptian wealth. Because of the political and economic expansion during the Nile Kingdom this period is also called the Empire Age.

The pharaohs of the Nile Kingdom regained much of the authority held by the earlier pharaohs. They took power away from the nobles and priests. They kept strict control over the government and all the officials and created a strong army and navy. They adopted the horse -drawn chariots of the Hyksos and began to use iron weapons. Some of the pharaohs of the empire have become famous. One of these is believed to be the first woman ruler known to history, Queen Hatshepsut. She ruled for 22 years. It was unusual for a queen to rule as a pharaoh but Hatshepsut was unusually able. She was more interested in the welfare of her country than in war and conquest. She sent a trading expedition south to the area of present day Somalia. Merchants returned to Egypt with a rich cargo of ivory, incense, ebony, gold and monkeys for private zoos. A record of this successful expedition was carved onto the walls of Hatshepsut's funeral temple near Thebes. She ordered the construction of temples to the gods and other kinds of public buildings.



*Queen Hatshepsut*



*Temple of Queen Hatshepsut*

Hatshepsut was succeeded by her step son Thutmose III, who was a brilliant military leader. He expanded the Egyptian empire to its greater size. He conquered Palestine and Syria and organized a navy to subdue cities along the eastern Mediterranean coast. Like other rulers, Thutmose raised monuments to his own greatness. On tall, painted stone pillars, called obelisks, stone masons carved hieroglyphic inscriptions describing the pharaohs' accomplishments. His system of government was so good and his armies so powerful that Egypt remained secure for years after his death.

## **2.6. Amenhotep's Religious Revolution**

A third famous pharaoh Amenhotep IV ruled from 1375 BCE to 1358 BCE. He was not a famous conqueror or a good ruler. He was interested in changing some traditional religious practices which considered as revolution in Egyptian religion. Amenhotep was interested in a new kind of religion. He believed that the sun god Aton was the only god not just the first among many gods. He wanted Egyptians to worship the god Aton, whose symbol was the sun disk. He ordered the priests to stop worshipping other gods and to remove the names of these gods from the temples. He changed his own name from Amenhotep to Akenaton, meaning "It goes well with Aton". The priests of Aton had become so powerful that they interfered in all affairs. Akenaton moved his capital from Thebes to a new city, Tel-el Amarna where the great temple of Aton was built by him.

During his life time Akhenaton's policies aroused controversy and created serious divisions in Egypt. The priests of the other gods were displeased. Their rich and easy living was being destroyed. The priests of Amon- Re bitterly opposed the pharaoh's reforms. The rich revenues that formers gave to them at their great temple of Thebes now went to the new god in the new city. The priests of Amon and of the other gods began to cause trouble. Because they had a strong hold on the people they were able to stir up opposition to the pharaoh. The struggle between the pharaoh and priests caused much disorder in Egypt. The common people were afraid to abandon their old gods in favor of Aton. When Akhenaton rejected the defense of the empire in order to worship Aton, he lost the support of the military. Soon, Akhenaton learned that we could not manage people's beliefs by decree. Scholars are unsure if



Akhenaton was trying to introduce monotheism - the worship of a single god or if he just wanted to raise Aton to the highest status among the gods.

When Akhenaton died in 1358 BCE his son-in-law, a boy just eight years old inherited the throne. The young Pharaoh soon changed his name from Tutankhaton to Tutankhamen. By dropping Aton's name in favor of Amon's Tutankhamen showed he had returned to traditional religious practices.

## **2.7. Decline of Egyptian Power**

The last great ruler of the New Kingdom was Ramses II. He spent most of his 67 year reign reviving the empire and fighting the Hittites of Asia Minor. In 1280 BCE the first written treaty between the Hittites and the Egyptians took place. Ramses II raised many monuments to commemorate his victories. After Ramses II, Egyptian power gradually declined. By 1090 BCE civil wars had left Egypt too weak to defeat a stream of invaders. The first raiders came were known as the Sea peoples. Scholars think these people came from islands in the Aegean to attack the Nile delta. After the Sea peoples, the Assyrians and then the Persians conquered the Egypt. In 331 BCE the Greeks, led by Alexander the Great occupied the Nile lands. 300 year later, Queen Cleopatra, a descendent of one of Alexander's generals, tried to restore Egyptian greatness. But Cleopatra was the last pharaoh. In 31 BCE a roman fleet defeated Egyptian naval forces and the next year Egypt became a province of Roman empire.

## **2.8. Polity**

In ancient Egypt the pharaohs had absolute power. The people believed that the pharaohs were descended from the god and were gods themselves. In theory, the pharaoh owned all the land, commanded the army, controlled the irrigation system and received the surplus of crops produced in the royal estates. The pharaohs appointed officials to assist them in administration. The pharaohs were responsible for dispensing justice and for making all important decisions regarding government affairs. Beginning with the Old Kingdom, the Egyptians created a complex but efficient administrative system that supported the absolute authority of the pharaohs.

The government of ancient Egypt was a theocratic monarchy as the king ruled by a mandate from the gods, initially was seen as an intermediary between human

beings and the divine and was supposed to represent the god's will through the laws passed and policies approved. A central government is evident in ancient Egypt in C-3150 BCE but some form of government existed prior to this date. The Egyptologists of the 19th century CE divided the country's history into periods in order to clarify and manage their field of study. Periods in which there was a strong central government were called 'kingdoms'. While those in which there was disunity or no central government was called 'intermediate periods'. The way in which the government worked changed slightly over the centuries, but the basic pattern was set in the first dynasty of Egypt (C.3150 BCE-C.2890 BCE). The king ruled over the county with vizic as second-in-command. Government officials, scribes, regional governors known as nomarhs, mayors of the town were appointed.

## **2.9. Social Life**

Society in Egypt was divided into three well defined classes viz the higher, the middle and the lower class. The higher class consisted of the royal family, nobles and priests. The pharaohs living in a great splendor, stood at the top of the society. Just below the pharaoh was a ruling class of priests and nobles. The Egyptian life revolved around religion and the priests had the highest status after the pharaohs. Egyptians believed that the gods, who controlled the universe, required constant attention. Only the priests knew how to please the gods. Priests conducted daily sacrifices to the gods, cast spells to make the land fertile and recited prayers to help souls of the dead reach the afterlife. As guardians of this special religious knowledge, priests enjoyed great power and prestige. To support priests and temples, Egyptians paid taxes in the form of grain, linen, gold and wine.

Nobles made up the second sequent of the ruling class. Nobles often held positions as governors of provinces, court officials or tax collectors. The chief minister, who administered the business of the country, was usually chosen from the noble class. Many nobles owned large estates with gardens and pools surrounding spacious homes.

The middle class consisted of merchants, artisans, physicians and other skilled workers who provided food and services to the ruling class. As the wealth of Egypt increased, the middle class settled in cities such as Memphis and Thebes which grew up around temples and palaces. Traders brought dyes, ivory other items, which

merchants sold to nobles. Nobles paid artisans to produce goods such as pottery and glass, intricate stone and wood carvings and linen so fine that it looked like silk.

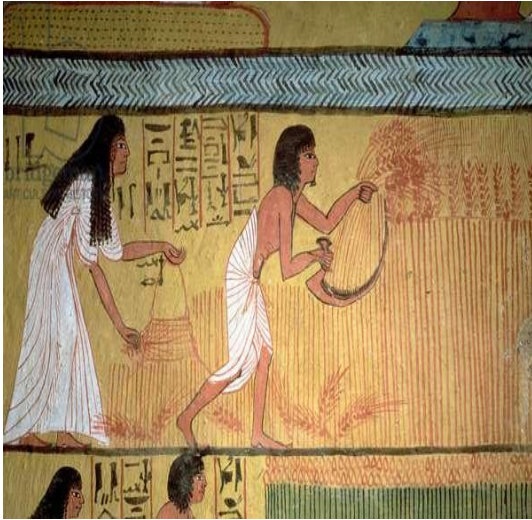
The lower class consisted of peasants and slaves who were the vast majority of Egyptians. They lived in small mud-huts with thatched roofs and dirty floors. Life in these huts was as drab as the huts themselves. The children wore no clothing. People belonging to this class ate coarse bread and vegetables such as pear, onions, beans etc. They worked very hard to support their families. They often died young due to overwork and poor diet. The life of peasant farmers changed little over thousands of years. The peasants paid about three fifths of each harvest to government tax collectors. In addition to farming peasants were often required to work on palaces and temples, clear irrigation channels and serve in the army. Most of the slaves were descendants of people brought back to Egypt as prisoners of war. Some lived like free peasants, farming plots of land. Those who served in the houses of nobles sometimes enjoyed comfortable lives or gained their freedom. On occasion, Pharaohs appointed trusted slaves to high positions in the palace or in government. However, such opportunities were rare and most slaves endured a hard existence.

### **2.9.1. Agriculture**

Egyptian farming was dominated by the rise and fall of the Nile river. When the river rose too high it flooded the villages and when it did not rise it caused famine. Under normal conditions, the Nile valley produced large variety of crops and fed many animals which formed the food of Egyptians. Shaduf is an irrigational device invented by the farmers of Egypt which is in use even today. It is used to fetch water from the canal to the field. One can easily operate the shaduf by swinging the water tub from the canal and the field. Egyptians supplied meat, milk, hides etc. they used dung for cooking. Animals like oxen helped in increasing agricultural productivity. The land in the entire kingdom was owned by the Pharaoh and the peasants worked in the fields. After harvesting, the peasants were supposed to pay the portions of the produce to the king, temples and other taxations and were allowed to keep the rest of it.

The following pictures describe the importance of farming in the Egyptian life. Their tombs depicted the pictures that describe agriculture and food. The people were depicted as standing in front of the god Osiris, who decides they enter the

“Happy field of food”.



*Harvest scenes on the tomb walls of Sennedjaem.*



*Harvest scenes from the tomb of Menna.*



*Breaking the field with plough and hoe.*



*Reaping and seed scattering.*



*Separating the grain from chaff.*







## 2.9.2. Food

Barley and emmer were the main foods of Egypt. They were used to make beer and bread. Main staples were stored in large granaries to meet the needs of the country. The surplus was exported to the neighboring countries through trade routes. Large variety of vegetables like onions, garlic, leeks, beans, lentils, peas, radishes, cabbage and lettuce were grown. Fruits like pomegranates, melons and grapes were known to them. Peasants enjoyed meat only on special occasions and the noble and

royal classes had fish, fowl and meat regularly. Animals like pigs, sheep and goats were domesticated. Wine is made by processing the grapes to serve the noble classes and beer was the peasants' favourite. Pottery bowls unearthed during the excavations suggest that they were used to serve and store the food. Hunting and fishing formed part of the religious, ritualistic and recreational beliefs of the Egyptians. Hunting scenes often depicted on the tomb walls reinforced the prowess of the kings and pharaohs. Rabbits, deers, gazelles, bulls, antelopes, hippopotamuses and lions were hunted for skin and meat. The marshy Nile valley offered large varieties of fish and fishing methods included using the hooks, line harpoons, traps and nets.

### 2.9.3. Dress

The walls of Egyptian tombs are adorned with numerous sculptures which depict men and women in very attractive and adorable wardrobes. They were particular about cleanliness and personal appearance. The poorly dressed were considered filthy and inferior. Both men and women wore jewellery and cosmetics. Flax woven linen was used for clothing. Working men wore kilts, as well as long shirts tied with a sash at the waist. Kilts were made from rectangular linen piece. Beads, armlets and bracelets were worn by both men and women. Elite women enhanced their appearance with makeup, jewels and necklaces. Both men and women wore sandals made of papyrus, vegetable fibres and leather. Hair dressing was a notable employment in the ancient Egypt. Noble and elite classes hired the hairdressers and took great care of hair. Use of henna is also known to them. Children had their heads shaved or had a style called sidelock of the youth, the style worn by god Horus as an infant.

Old Kingdom		Middle Kingdom		New Kingdom	
					
<b>Nobleman</b> Short kilt, pleated and belted; shoulder-length hair; necklace.	<b>Female servant</b> Simple sheath dress with wide shoulder straps; long hair, unbraided; jewellery.	<b>Official</b> Mid-calf kilt with a large apron that was probably stiffened to maintain its triangular shape; elaborate necklace.	<b>Female servant</b> Simple sheath dress, long unbraided hair.	<b>Nobleman</b> Elaborate pleated garment; jewellery, wig and scented cone; sandals with the extended curled toes typical of the period.	<b>Noblewoman</b> Elaborate gown; jewellery; plaited wig, hair ornaments and scented cone.

#### **2.9.4. Houses and streets**

Most of the houses in the ancient Egypt are made of brick. The mud provided by the Nile was used to make bricks. Mud, straw and water were mixed and stomped with the feet until reached the reasonable consistency. The bricks were then placed in a mould and after shaping they were left to dry in the sun. The houses of the peasants were simple with very little furniture like beds, stools, boxes and tables. Craftsmen and other working officials lived in one or two storey buildings. Their houses were flat roofed made of mud bricks. The walls are plastered and painted. The house had a reception, living room, fish pond and a balcony or a garden courtyard. There are several bed rooms and a cellar where food and grains are stored. Some houses even have the roof top terraces.

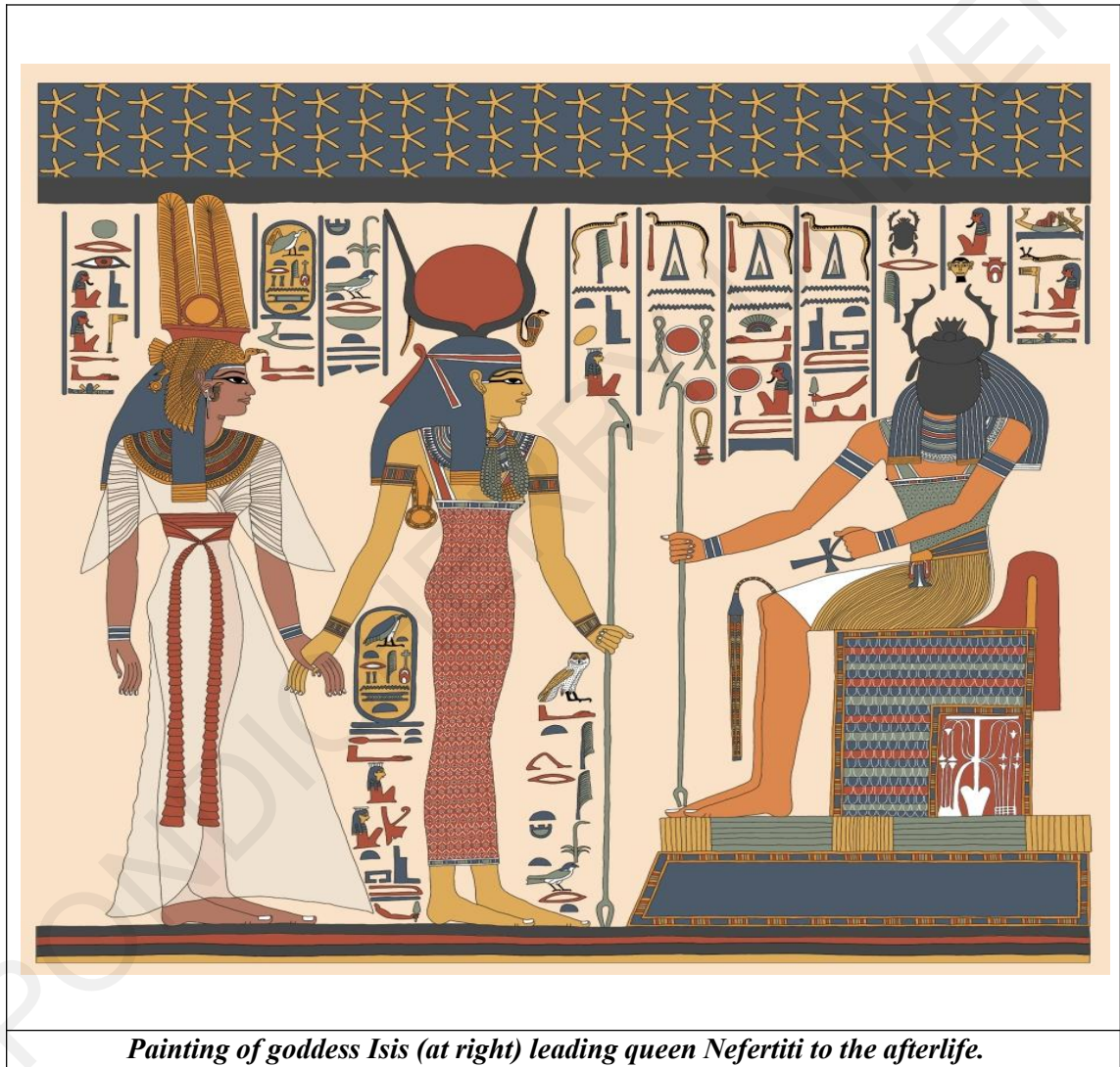
The houses of the wealthy were larger and luxurious. Similar to the houses of the working class they had reception room, living room, garden courtyard and several bedrooms. Each bed room had a separate bathroom. The ceilings and the walls of the house are painted with nature inspired designs. Lavish furniture set up increased the beauty of the houses. Painted clayware, vessels, jars and alabaster jars were found in the houses of the nobles during the excavations. The royal palaces had temples and servant villages built inside the palace premises to serve the pharaoh king.

#### **2.10. Status of Women**

Compared to women in other ancient civilizations, women in Egypt enjoyed relatively high status. They enjoyed great freedom. They had equal rights, before the law with their husbands. They could hold property and had the right to buy and sell property and to testify in court. In statues and paintings noble women were often pictured as prominently as their husbands. Although divorce was rare, both women as well as men had the right to seek divorce. Moreover in Egyptian society property descended through the female line.

Egyptians particularly valued the women's role as wife and mother. Women gained greater status when they had children. Yet despite the relatively high status of women, Egyptian writers often referred to wives as property of their husbands and urged to treat their wives with kindness. This advice suggests that women were not always well treated.

In the royal family the queen occupied a privileged position because she was the wife of a god and the mother of the next pharaoh. At times, queens ruled jointly with their husbands. Although the pharaoh might have more than one wife his first wife was the most important because her son would become the next pharaoh. Queen Nefertiti was one such queen who occupied a great position. She was the wife of the Pharaoh Ramses II. In one temple he built she was worshipped as the chief divinity.



*Painting of goddess Isis (at right) leading queen Nefertiti to the afterlife.*

## 2.11. Education

A system of education to pass on their knowledge was prevalent in ancient Egypt. The schools were established in Egypt to train the priests. At schools attached to temples, students learned reading, writing and arithmetic as well as religious ceremonies and rituals. As Egyptian civilization became more complex temple schools provided a more general education. Most of the students attended to temple schools

were sons of wealthy but occasionally poor children. Girls did not attend temple schools, although they learned the skills they would need at home.

In the temple schools students learned by dictation and copying the words of the teacher as he spoke. Most students took notes on scraps of broken pottery. Only advanced students wrote on papyrus which was expensive. Pottery fragments unearthed in the Egyptian cities by archaeologists show that school discipline was strict. Most education was aimed at training scribes who performed an important function in ancient Egypt. As record keepers, they noted the heroic deeds of pharaohs as well as the ordinary events of daily life, such as births, marriages and deaths. Scribes were essential to an efficient government since they kept records of taxes and expenses. A scribe who served a powerful pharaoh or noble might become rich, acquire great influence or be appointed to an official position himself. In this way a man from the lower class might move up in the society.

In addition to temple schools, Egyptians established centers for higher education. The centre of learning at Heliopolis for example was famous for teaching astronomy, the study of the planets, stars and other bodies in space. This centre was famous throughout the ancient world. Much later, when Egypt was ruled by foreign kings, Heliopolis remained as one of the great centre of education throughout the Mediterranean world.

## **2.12. Economic Life**

Agriculture was the main occupation of the ancient Egyptians. The Nile valley was very fertile and productive. The people were using ploughs for cultivation. Wheat, Barley, Vegetables, date-palm etc. were cultivated. Cotton and flax were grown to make cloth. Cultivation was mostly done by slaves. The government built dams, dikes and canals for irrigation. Domestication of animals was another occupation of the people. Land revenue was realized from 10 to 20% of the total produce according to the fertility of the soil.

Industries and crafts were another important means of earning their livelihood. There were skilled smiths, potters, glass workers, weavers, stone cutters etc. Carpenters made wooden furniture for the king and nobles. Sometimes this furniture was overlaid with gold, silver and other valuable metals. Goldsmiths made ornaments for both men and women. The construction of pyramids and palaces necessitated a



large number of trained craftsmen. Beautifully glazed and painted clay jars, furniture, vessels of gold and silver and jewelry found in the pyramids of pharaohs speak of the high level of craftsmanship of the artisans and craftsmen of that time. The craftsmen had attained high excellence in shaping both the metal and stone.

In the field of trade and commerce the Egyptians made a remarkable progress. They carried on trade with foreign countries by ships across the Mediterranean as far as Phoenicia. Land routes were also developed. Gold, ivory, ostrich feather, fragrant gums, slaves, spices, dyes, cosmetics, incense and cedar wood were imported from India and Arabia. The Egyptians constructed the first Suez Canal in 1900 BCE. They had connected the river Nile with the Red sea through another canal. Egypt exported wheat, papyrus, metal goods, cloth, pottery, decorated furniture, and ornaments etc. to other countries. At first, exchange of goods was carried on by the barter system but later on they developed gold and silver coins to trade with foreign countries. Thus it is clear that the ancient Egyptians developed agriculture, industry and trade to a great extent which ultimately responsible to become a prospering and affluent country.

### **2.13. Contribution to Science**

The ancient Egyptians made wonderful progress in the field of science. Their achievements in the fields of engineering, astronomy, mathematics and medicine were remarkable. They built massive and magnificent pyramids, temples, dams and dikes. Egyptian farmers devised methods of land surveying out of necessity. When annual floods washed away boundary marks, farmers had to remeasure their fields. The need to survey land led to the development of mathematics, and practical geometry. They learned to measure the areas of squares and circles and to figure the volumes of cylinders and spheres.

The need to predict regular events such as Nile floods and eclipses led to advances in astronomy. Priests observed the skies and plotted the courses of stars and planets. These priest astronomers used their knowledge to produce a calendar with 365 day year. They were the only people in ancient period to have such a calendar. They divided the year into 12 months with three seasons. The Nile flood season, the planting season and the harvest season. Each season was further divided into four month of 30 days each marking a year of 360 days. But soon they realized that even by counting a year of 360 days there remained some sort of difficulty. So they set

aside a period of five days as a period of feasting which added to the last month. Then the year came to have 365 days. This discovery of the Egyptians is one of the most valuable contributions to the modern world.

The Egyptians had also acquired good knowledge of mathematics especially geometry. It stood them in good stead in building massive monuments, dams, dykes and in measuring land. They produced the decimal system and acquired the knowledge of divide and multiply. They used special signs to represent units, tens, hundreds, thousands and millions etc. The stone workers learned how to cut tall obelisks from a single rock, using hot fires and cold water to make the surrounding rocks crack. Then they finished the job with hammers and crowbars. Egyptian engineering of temples and pyramids was so precise that each block fit perfectly into the next one.

The Egyptians also made note-worthy progress in the science of medicine. Embalming of the body helped them to have knowledge of human anatomy. Though the doctors relied heavily on magic, they made scientific inquiries. For example by studying the human body, doctors learned to perform surgery. Ancient papyrus texts describe successful operations to set fractured bones and treat spinal injuries. It is known from the two papyrus rolls found in Egypt that they had the knowledge of different diseases and the medicines used for them. One of the medicines was the castor oil. They invented chemical for the preservation of the dead body. In the pyramids the dead bodies or the mummies are still preserved. The Greeks and Romans acquired much of their medical knowledge from the Egyptian sources.

## **2.14. Religion**

Religion was one of the most important concerns of the ancient Egyptian life. They were one of the most religious people in ancient world. Religion influenced all aspects of their life and regulated their thought. They worshiped natural forces and believed that different gods controlled the forces of nature, giving good harvests or causing crops to die. They thought that the gods had the power of life and death over everyone. They worshipped a number of gods and goddesses. People in each village worshipped a village god in addition to other gods. They also identified certain gods with animals such as cat, bull, crocodile etc.

### **2.14.1. Egyptian Gods**

The sun god Amon-Re was the most important Egyptian god. He was the lord of all other gods. He was held as the creator of the universe. The sun god was represented as a solid disc. The east, where the sun rose symbolized birth to the Egyptians and the west where the sun set represented death. Thus, the Egyptians always built tombs and funeral temples on the west bank of the river Nile. Osiris was the god of the river Nile and of fertility. He was the lord of the other world and judged who should be rewarded with eternal life. The Egyptian farmers gave special attention to Osiris. According to an Egyptian legend, Osiris was murdered by his brother Set, an evil god who caused harvests to wither and die. Isis, the wife of Osiris brought her husband back to life. But Osiris did not return to the world of the living. Instead he reigned as god of the underworld and judge of the dead. Every year Egyptians celebrated the death and rebirth of Osiris, which they identified with the rise and fall of the Nile. Isis the wife of Osiris was the goddess of the moon, the mother of the universe, queen of the world and the heavens. Horus was the son of Osiris and Isis, was the god of the rising sun.

### **2.14.2. Life after Death**

Belief in life after death was central to Egyptian religion. They believed that the human soul was immortal and the death meant only escape of soul from the body. They also believed that one day the soul would return to the dead body. So they tried to preserve the dead bodies till the return of the soul. Egyptians thought that in the afterlife people were happy, well fed and busy with the same activities they had enjoyed in life. They believed that the dead did not automatically go to the afterlife. Instead they went first to the underworld, where they were judged by Osiris. Standing before Osiris, the dead declared that they were innocent of sin. To see if they spoke the truth Osiris weighed each heart against a feather, the symbol of truth. Those who failed the test were eaten by a monster. The reward for those who had lived moral lives was entry into the afterlife. In Egypt, only the pharaohs and the wealthy with their wealth and power were successful in building massive pyramids as tombs for the preservation of their bodies. These pyramids were filled with the treasures, furniture and food they thought they would need in the afterlife. Although the poor made simple preparations, they too believed in the afterlife.



***Map showing the Egyptian Religious and Cultural centers***

The Egyptians believed that they would need their bodies as a home for the soul in the afterlife. For this reason they practiced mummification, a process that preserved the body of the dead. At first only rulers and nobles were allowed to have their bodies preserved after death. Eventually, the lower classes gained the same right. The Egyptians developed remarkably effective techniques of mummification. By examining the well preserved mummies from Egyptian tombs, present day scientists have even been able to identify many health problems and causes of death among ancient Egyptians.

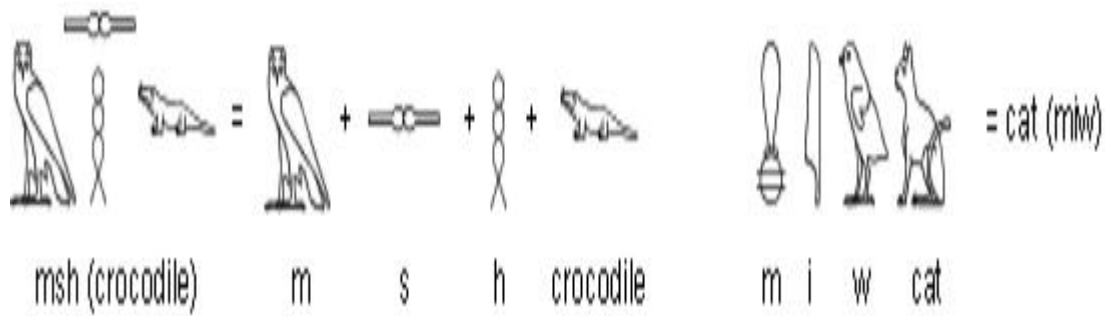
## 2.15. Script

The ancient Egyptians invented the art of writing. In order to express their thoughts and feelings they used different pictures. This picture writing was the earliest form of writings; probably the temple Priests developed a system of writing to keep the records of religious rituals and temple property. Later, this writing system is known as Hieroglyphics, or sound writings. The earliest hieroglyphic script dating from about 3100 BCE were pictograms or pictures of objects. In a pictogram, a picture of an ox meant an ox. Egyptian hieroglyphics became more complex. Because a pictogram could not express an action or an idea such as truth or honesty. Egyptians added ideograms. An ideogram is a picture that symbolizes an idea or action. For example, a picture of a reclining figure meant sleep.

As writing became more important, Egyptians modified their system adding symbols to represent sounds. They described symbols for consonant sounds but not for vowel sounds. In the beginning the Egyptians were writing on the stones but subsequently they wrote on papyrus. Papyrus was a kind of plant, growing abundantly in the swampy areas on the bank of the Nile. The Egyptians were writing on the papyrus rolls. The modern word paper has been derived from papyrus. The Egyptians were using reed pens to write on the papyrus. The ink was prepared by the Egyptians.

At first none could read this hieroglyphic script. In 1799 Napoleon invaded Egypt. A French soldier found a large black stone with an inscription on it in two different scripts. One was in Greek which the soldier could read but the other was in Egyptian Hieroglyphic script which by then could not be read by anyone. This stone later on came to be known as the Rosette stone. In 1822 however, a French scholar Jean Champollion was successful in deciphering the script with the help of the Greek script. After that the scholars began translating thousands of records written on papyrus as well as elaborate inscriptions on temple and tomb walls.



























According to the Egyptian scholars the hieroglyphics pre date the Sumerian Cuneiform writing. The direction of the script could be written either in horizontal lines from left to right or columns from top to bottom. The Glyphs have both semantic and phonetic values. For instance, the glyph for cat *miw*, combine the glyphs *m*, *i*, *w* with a picture of cat and crocodile is a combination of *msh* with the



*Picture of a crocodile.*

During the classical age there were 700 glyphs to write the middle Egyptian. The number of glyphs increased to 5000 by the Greco – roman eras c. 332 BC - 400 AD. The hieroglyphs were represented in single, double and triple consonants. The following are some of the consonants.





**Hieroglyphics used for single consonants**

								
vulture	flowering reed	flowering reeds		forearm	quail chick	lower leg	stool	horned viper
ʃ	ʃ	y		ʃ	w	b	p	f
[ʃ]	[ʃ]	(word final)		[ʃ]	[w ~ u]	[b]	[p]	[f]
								
owl	water	mouth	reed shelter	twisted flax	sieve	animal's belly	door bolt	folded cloth
m	n	r	h	ħ	ħ	ħ		s
[m]	[n]	[r]		[ħ]	[x]	[ç]		[s]
								
pool	hill slope	basket with handle	jar stand	loaf	tethering rope	hand	snake	
š	q	k	g	t	ṭ	d	ḍ	
[ʃ]	[q]	[k]	[g]	[t]	[ṭ]	[d]	[ḍ]	

### Hieroglyphics used for two consonants

								
ʕ	wʕ	bʕ	pʕ	mʕ	hʕ	hʕ	hʕ	sʕ
								
šʕ	kʕ	tʕ	tʕ	dʕ	mʔ	tʔ	wʔ	bʔ
								
ʕw	iw	mw	nw	rw	hw	hw	sw	šw
								
dw	ʕb	nb	wp	kp	im	nm	hm	km
								
gm	tm	in	wn	mn	nn	hn	hn	sn
								
šn	ir	wr	pr	mr	hr	hr	dr	bh
								
ph	mḥ	nh	is	ms	ns	hs	šs	gs
								
ʔq	sk	mt	ht	st	šd	qd	dd	ʔd
								
wḏ	nd	hd						

### Hieroglyphics used for three consonants



								
ʕbw	im	ʔb	iwʔ	iwʔ	ibʕ	imi	isw	idn
								
idr	ʔwt	ʔbʕ	ʔpr	ʔnb	ʔrq	ʔhʔ	ʕš	wih
								
wʕs	wʕḏ	wʔr	wbn	wḥm	wsr	wsh	wšm	bʕs
								
bʔ	bit	pds	mʕʔ	mnw	msn	mdḥ	nni	nbb
								
ntr	ndm	nwd/rwd	hfn	hry	htm	bbs	bpr	bnt
								
brw	bsf	hr	hnm	sʕh	sʕ	sin	swʕ	swn
								
sbʕ	sbq	spr	smʕ	smn	shm	sšm	sšr	stp
								
stʕ	sḏb	sḏm	šbn	šmʔ	šnʔ	šsp	šsm	qmi
								
kʕp	kʕ	ghs	tyw	tpy	tmʕ	dšr	ḏʔm	ḏbʕ
								
ḏbʔ								

Apart from the hieroglyphics that are used to symbolize a word or an object, some determinatives also were used to write which give us an elaborated meaning of words or acted as the word dividers. The following is the figure showing some of the determinatives.

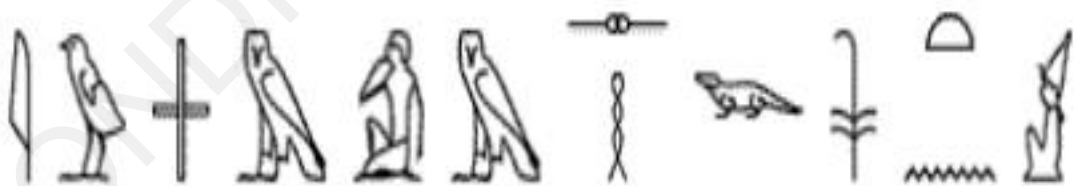
### Determinatives in the Egyptian writings

								
man, person	woman	people	child, young	old man, old, lean on	official	exalted person, the dead	king	god, king
								
god, king	goddess, queen	high, rejoice, support	praise, supplicate	force, effort	eat, drink, speak, think, feel	lift, carry	wearry, weak	enemy foreigner
								
enemy, death	lie down, death, bury	mummy, likeness, shape	head, nod, throttle	hair, mourn, forlorn	eye, see, actions of the eye	actions or conditions of the eye	nose, smell, joy, contempt	ear
								
tooth, actions of teeth	force, effort	offer, present	arm, bend arm, crease	tree	plant, flower	vine, fruit, garden	wood, tree	corn
								
grain	sky, above	sun, light, time	night, darkness	star	fire, heat, cook	air, wind, sail	stone	copper, bronze
								
sand, minerals, pellets	water, liquid, related actions	sheet of water	irrigated land	land	road, travel, position	desert, foreign country	foreign (country or person)	town, village, Egypt

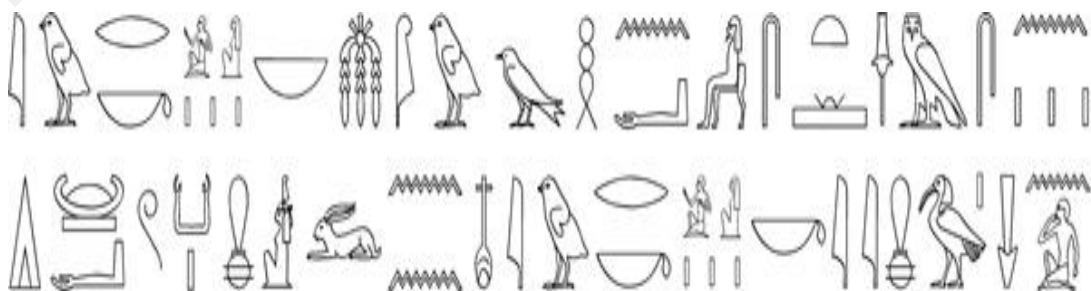


 house, building	 door, open	 box, coffin	 shrine, palaquin, mat	 boat, ship. Navigation	 sacred bark	 clothe, linen	 bind, document	 rope, actions with cord or rope
 envelop, embrace	 phallus, beget, urinate	 leg, foot, actions of the foot	 walk, run	 move, backwards	 limb, fresh	 tumours, odors, disease	 bodily discharge	 cattle
 savage	 skin, mammal	 bird, insect	 small, bad, weak	 fish	 snake, worm	 knife, cut	 hoe, cultivate, hack up	 break, divide, cross
 cup	 vessel, anoint	 pot, vessel, beverages	 bread, cake	 loaf, cake, offering	 festival	 book, writing, abstract	 royal name, king	 one
 several, plural								

The Egyptian script is so interesting and challenging that by adding different glyphs one has to translate the pictures into text and their relative meaning. Here are few examples for reading the Egyptian script.



**Transliteration:** *iw wnm msh nsw, this means "The crocodile eats the king".*



**Translation**

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

## **2.16. Art and Architecture**

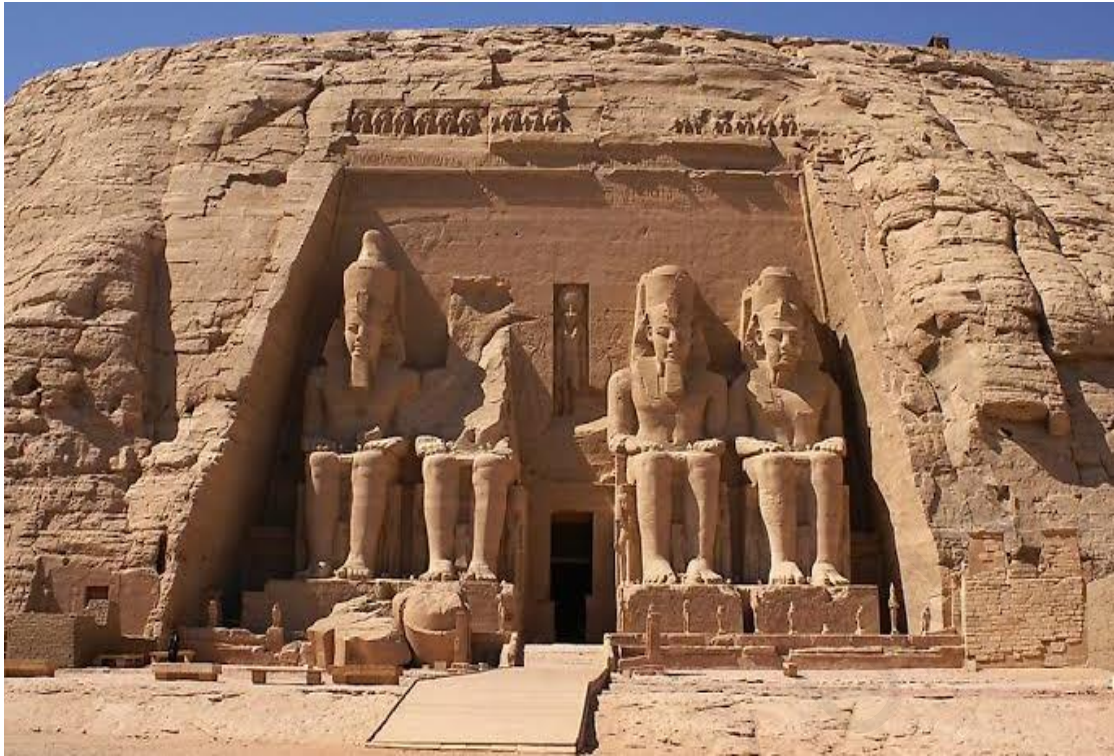
The ancient Egyptians were great builders. They made wonderful progress in Art and Architecture, Sculpture and Painting. The art and architecture of the ancient Egyptians were greatly influenced by the religious belief. The most wonderful of the ancient buildings are perhaps the pyramids or the tombs of the pharaohs. They were the symbols of the religious beliefs the people and the power of the pharaohs. The earliest surviving pyramid of Egypt is the step pyramid erected for pharaoh Zoser (3150 BCE). It was built by Imhotep. During the old kingdom enormous pyramids were built to preserve the bodies of the dead pharaohs. In one of the chambers was kept the embalmed body of the pharaoh along with food, clothes and other things used by him during his life time. In another chamber the priests used to offer sacrifices and performed sacred ceremonies for the benefit of the dead pharaoh's soul.

The greatest and finest of the pyramids is at Gizah. It is generally known as the 'Great Pyramid'. It was constructed for the pharaoh Khufu in about 3000 BCE. It occupies 13 acres of land. It is 755 feet long and 484 feet high. It contains 2,300,000 blocks of stone each weighing about 2 1/2 tons. According to the great historian Herodotus it took about 20 years to build this huge building and 1,00,000 men worked on it. It was carefully constructed to correct mathematical proportions. The engineers of this great project were indeed very brilliant. Use of arch and vault is most perfectly utilized in this pyramid. Simplicity and massiveness are the chief artistic qualities of this and other pyramids. The pyramid at Gizah is regarded as one of the wonders of the world.

The Egyptians built beautiful temples in honor of their gods. They show the skill of the engineers of that age. The most important is the temple at Karnak built at the city Thebes. This temple was the greatest and the most magnificent of all. It took 2000 years to complete it and many pharaohs made their contributions in its construction. The most attractive part of it is the Hall of columns which is situated in the middle of the temple. This hall is 338 feet long and 170 feet wide, standing on 136 columns and in 16 rows is the unique feature of this temple. In the central part are 12 massive pillars of stone in two rows. Each pillar is 79 feet high and the capital is so large that 100 men can stand on it. The pillars and walls are covered with brightly colored and attractive carvings and paintings. This temple was remarked as one of finest and largest temple built in ancient period. Besides this the temple of Luxor and the temple of Abu Simbel still bears the greatness of the pharaohs. The temple of Abu Simbel is 185 feet long and 90 feet high and is cut out of sand stone.



**Massive pillars in the temple of Karnak**



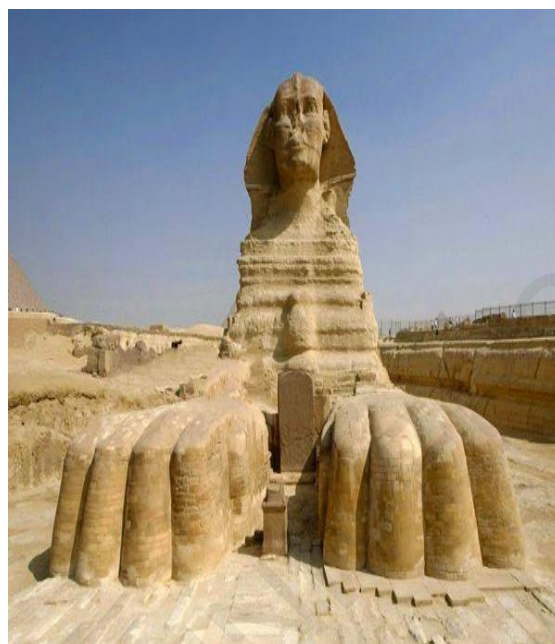
**The temple of Abu Simbel**

## **2.17. Sculpture**

The sculptural art was also highly developed in ancient Egypt. The portrait sculpture was a greatest achievement of this age. The sculptors built statues and pharaohs, about 80 to 90 feet high. Each sculpture was cut from a single block of stone. All the sculptures exhibit excellent craftsmanship. Some of the sculptures were partly human and partly animal. The most famous is the great sphinx at Giza, which represents the head of a man upon the body of a lion. It is about 160 feet long 70 feet high. This was carved out of a solid rock. It has been suggested that the head of the Sphinx is that of the pharaoh Khafre. It is one of the best examples of Egyptian sculpture and is said to be the largest portrait ever made in ancient world. Similarly pharaoh Ramses II built four statues of 60 feet each of himself at Abu Simbel. The statues of Akhenaton and his wife Nefertiti also speak of the skill of the Egyptian sculptors.



**Great Pyramids at Giza**



**Sphinx at Giza**

## **2.18. Paintings**

The Egyptians achieved excellency in the art of painting. They drew remarkable pictures of men, animals and natural scenery. The walls of pyramids, tombs and temples were beautifully painted. They had invented a variety of colors around the pictures; they drew borders of simple as well as complex floral or geometrical designs. These paintings give us valuable information about the social, economic and religious life of the people of ancient Egypt. They painted people and animals from a side view only. Perhaps the artists have not yet learnt how to use the third dimension to know the depth in their paintings.

The Egyptians also exhibited their artistic skills in some other objects like house hold decorations. Variety of furniture and utensils of various kinds have been used by them. The chair were covered with gold and silver and fitted with soft leather cushions for example, the chair of Tutankhamen, which is still preserved in the Museum at Cairo. The paintings of Tutankhamen and his wife at the back of this chair look very life-like, beautifully painted clay jars, furniture, vessels of gold and silver and jewelry reveal the artistic skills of the Egyptian artists.

The systematic study of the Egyptian civilization started only after decipherment of the Rosetta stone inscription by Jean Champollion in 1822. Though

the Egyptian civilization has a hoary past, the systematic records of this civilization are available only since 3600 BCE. The villages that grew up along the Nile gradually became part of one of the two kingdoms, Upper Egypt or Lower Egypt. About 3100 BCE Menes, the ruler of Upper Egypt united the two kingdoms by conquering Lower Egypt. He gained control over lands and trade. The capital was Memphis, where upper and Lower Egypt met.

Although very little is known about Menes, he probably established the first dynasty or ruling family in Egypt. Then 31 dynasties ruled Egypt from 3100 BCE to 332 BCE. This long period has been divided into three major periods. The Old Kingdom (2700 BCE - 2200 BCE), the Middle Kingdom or (2050 BCE- 1800 BCE) and the New Kingdom Empire Age (1570 BCE - 1090 BCE). In the years between the three kingdoms, civil wars and invasions left Egypt without a strong dynasty.

**Do you know : Instructions of the Vizier Ptah – hotep**

Out of the written literature many Egyptians texts were prayers, hymns, and charms that made people believe would help reach the happy afterlife. These thoughts were written in a collection of the Book Of the Dead, written on the papyrus and tomb walls. Egyptian literature also included histories, biographies, poems and love songs. Another peculiar feature of the Egyptian literature is the instructions and the practical advices on how to succeed in life. The following are the instructions of Vizier Ptah – hotep to his son who lived about 2450 BCE. He was a minister to the Pharaoh.

*“ Do not let your heart be puffed – up because of your knowledge; do not be confident because you are a wise man. Take counsel with the ignorant as well as with the wise....*

*If you, as a leader, have to decide on the conduct of a great many people, seek the most perfect manner of doing so, that your own conduct may be blameless.....*

*If you are sitting at the table of one greater than you, take what he may give when it is set before you. Let your face cast down until he addresses you, and you should speak only when he addresses you. Laugh after he laughs, and it will be very pleasant to his heart....*

*Be active while you live, doing more than is commanded,.... Activity produces riches, but riches do not last when activity slackens.*

*If you are one to whom petition is made, be calm as you listen to the petitioner's speech. Do not rebuff him.... Before he has said what he came for. A petitioner likes attention to his words better than fulfilling of that for which he came.....*

*If a son accepts what his father says, no project of his miscarries. Train your son to be a teachable man whose wisdom is agreeable to the great.....”*

One can imagine how great these advices even for today's generations. They are so simple yet very significant. Please discuss in the class that the advices of the Vizier are useful today or not?

### **Key Points**

This chapter helps us to know about the Egyptian society and its contributions to mankind in various fields. The villages prospered due to the fertile soil of the Nile River. Egyptians worshipped many gods of which Amon – Re and Osiris were important. They believed in happy afterlife which made them live moral lives while on earth. The rulers were believed equal to gods. Thus, the pharaohs enjoyed absolute power. During the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom - they made advancements in engineering, trade, literature, art and architecture. Women had high position in the society. Egyptian civilization not only affected their own people but also helped the other people of the world to shape their civilizations.

### **Map Skills**

Identify the following in the political map of Egypt:

- a) Nile River
- b) Red sea
- c) Nubian desert
- b) d) Upper Egypt
- e) Mediterranean sea

### **Chapter Checkup**

1. Egypt is the gift of the Nile – Explain.
2. How did the Egyptians prepare for the afterlife?
3. Describe in detail – the Pyramid Age.
4. What were the contributions of social classes in ancient Egypt?
5. Write about the accomplishments of the Egyptians in the field of art and architecture.

### **Short Answers**

1. Hatshepsut
2. Religion in ancient Egypt
3. Pharaohs.
4. Gizeh /Giza
5. Ramses II
6. Egyptian education
7. Women in ancient Egypt
8. Empire Age
9. Sphinx

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**UNIT III**  
**THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE**

## **UNIT III: The Babylonian Empire**

### **3.1. The Babylonian Empire**

About 2200 BCE the Sumerian - Akkadian empire declined. The Elamites, another Semitic tribe, occupied the southern part of the kingdom where a tribe from Syria as Amorites, attacked from the north. The Amorites first settled in a small village called Babylon. Their leader was Hammurabi. He succeeded in defeating Sumerians and Elamites occupied the whole of Sumer and Akkad. The empire which was founded by Hammurabi came to be known as Babylonia Empire. Its name is originated after Babylon, the place where they first settled. Babylon became the capital of the new empire. The civilization which developed here is called as the Babylonian civilization.

#### **3.1.1. The Code of Hammurabi (2123-2080 BCE)**

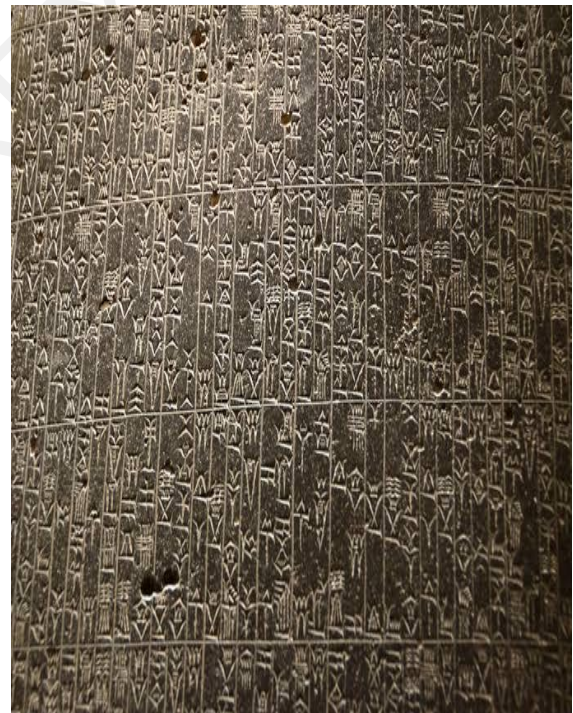
Hammurabi was one of the great rulers of ancient times. He was an outstanding general, an excellent administrator, and a patron of arts. In hundreds of surviving letters, he shows concern for details such as clearing blocked river channels, punishing dishonest officials, reforming the calendar and honoring the gods. However, he is best known for drawing up a uniform code of laws. This was a greatest achievement. He is called as the first historic law giver of mankind. To acquire unity with in his empire, Hammurabi appointed a committee to revise existing laws. His purpose, he declared, was 'to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak and to further the welfare of the people.'

Although the resulting system of laws relied on earlier law codes, the code of Hammurabi represents the first efforts by an empire to record all its laws. The code contained 282 laws arranged under headings such as trade, family, labor, real estate, and personal property. The greatest achievement of Hammurabi was the codification of laws. He is called the first law giver of mankind. He engraved the laws on a piece of stone of eight feet (25 meters) height which was placed for everyone to see. These were written in semeiotic language. On the top of the stone the figure of Hammurabi has been represented as receiving the laws from Shamash, the Sun god and god of justice. The god's image reminded Babylonians that by breaking a law they not only offended the king but also the gods.

This was first discovered at Susa in 1902. He evolved this code of laws to give stability, prosperity and orderly life to the Mesopotamians. In that code, Hammurabi gave the Mesopotamians laws relating to personal property, trade, business, family, labor, banking contracts, debts, interest, wages, public morality, prices and criminal conduct. Hammurabi observed the customs, manners, traditions etc. which prevailed among the people living in his empire and on the basis of it he formulated a set of laws according to the needs of the people. Those laws were applicable to all - from the nobles to the slaves. There were 282 clauses which can be divided into four groups - civil code, penal code, commercial code and code of procedure. It was a comprehensive code dealing with marriage, trade and commerce, money lending, property agreement, ownership and so on. It aimed at securing justice to all especially to poor, widows, orphans, and laborers. The prices of different commodities and wages for different works were fixed. Even Hammurabi fixed the charges to be realized by the doctors from the patients.



**Hammurabi receiving laws from Shamash, the god of justice**



**Law codes of Hammurabi**

Hammurabi also prescribed punishments for various offences like murder, theft, negligence of duty, cheating etc. Some of the punishments do not satisfy the modern conception of justice. For example it was stated in his code that if the son of the householder would die due to the collapse of the roof of the house, the son of its builder

must be put to death. This was based on the old conception of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". If a son would beat his father his hands would be amputated. A man who blinded another was punished by losing an eye. Similarly the code directed the amputation of doctor's hand in case of negligence of duty on his part. These laws acted as deterrence for crimes in his empire. People refrained from committing crimes in view of the severity of the punishment.

Hammurabi wanted to regulate the contemporary society with his code. He wanted to establish a rule of law, instead of his personnel rule. He enforced his code throughout his empire. In his administration all were equal before law. In this respect he was far advanced of his age. Despite the severity of most punishments, Hammurabi's code was a fundamental contribution to civilization. It distinguished between major and minor offenses, established the state as the authority that would enforce the law and attempted to ensure social justice.

### **3.1.2. Administration of Hammurabi**

Hammurabi was an able administrator. He established peace and order in his empire. He divided the empire into provinces for better administration. He appointed governors on the basis of efficiency and intelligence. This is evident from the discovery of 55 clay tablets containing his orders to some of his officers. These orders covered various aspects of administration. In one of his tablets he directed his officers to be considerate while collecting taxes from poor cultivators. In another tablet he asked one of his officers to clear the Euphrates after a flood. In a third tablet he ordered his officers to attend a sheep sharing festival. It is known that he punished bribery.

### **3.1.3. Babylonia after Hammurabi**

The rule of Hammurabi was a glorious period in Babylonian history. After his death his empire began to decline. In about 1750 B.C. Babylon was attacked by the Hittites from the west and Kassites from the east. Later on Babylon was conquered by the Assyrians and the Egyptians respectively. After Hammurabi the invaders conquered Babylon and destroyed everything. The civilization and culture received a setback. Under the rule of Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon gained her lost glory between 604 to 562 BCE. After the death of this great king Babylon passed under the rule of the Egyptians.

### **3.1.4. Social Life**

Like the Sumerian society, the Babylonian society was also divided into three classes viz. the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. The upper class consisted of priests, nobles and high officials who enjoyed many rights. The middle class comprised of landlords, traders and craftsmen who led a happy life. The slaves formed the lower class. The slaves were protected by the law. They enjoyed certain rights. Slaves might own property, marry and will their professions of their children. Freedom from bondage could be obtained easily. Women occupied a high position in the society and enjoyed various rights and freedom. They could hold property and adopt various professions. Marriage was considered as a legal bondage. Generally a man married one wife but polygamy was also prevalent in society. Justice was also assured to widows and orphans. The widows had the right to remarriage.

### **3.1.5. Food and agriculture**

The Babylonian farmers followed farmers' instructions for ploughing and preparing the fields, planting and harvesting. This suggests that they paid more attention for agricultural procedures. Hammurabi's law codes (40 – 50) are about the agricultural lands and 51-65 are about the rights and liabilities of the shepherds and farmers. Similarly the codes from 253-260 prevents a greedy land owner from stealing from the peasants. Codes 268-278 are about hiring livestock, labor and boats. The law codes given by Hammurabi were mainly based on public interests and to protect from the wealthy and the noble classes. The law codes were no doubt the weapons of the peasant and slave community.

The land between the Euphrates and Tigris was blessed with fertile soil. They followed the diet similar to the Sumerians. Barley is largely grown and frequently used in the Babylonian diet. They made barley cakes, barley paste or just barley. They also cultivated millets and wheat. Vegetables such as beans, lentils, chickpeas, garlic, lettuce and many other are known to them even before 2500 BCE. They drank goat milk, had eggs for their breakfast. For meat, they ate pig, wild fowl, deer, goat, chicken and fish. It is interesting to note that the archaeologists found 50 different types of fish in their clay tablets.

### **3.1.6. Economic Life**

The land was very fertile. Hence agriculture was the main occupation of the Babylonians. Hammurabi paid special attention to the construction of dams, dikes, canals and reservoirs for irrigation purposes. The farmers grew rich crops of cereals and fruits. Agriculture formed the basis for their economic life. The government built good roads and maintained peace and order. In this way it encouraged industry and commerce. Various craftsmen, such as weavers, dyers, carpenters, brick makers, goldsmiths, jewelers, potters, sculptors, metal workers etc. have been mentioned in their writings and their rights were safeguarded by the government.

The Babylonians had trade relations with the Egyptians, the west Asian countries and people living in the Indus valley. They kept records and accounts. Money was lent on interest which varied from 20 to 35%. They used weights such as "Mine" and "Shakel". Trade was carried on the basis of the barter system but sometimes silver coins were also used. The Babylonians were well off because of the improved farming and flourishing trade and industry.

### **3.1.7. Religious Life**

Religion played an important role in the life of the people. The priests are a powerful class in the society and they were able to foretell the future by observing the movement of the planets and stars. This helped the development of astronomy. The Babylonians worshipped a number of gods. They believed in nature-worship. The chief god was Marduk. Shamash was the sun-god. Ishtar was the goddess of love and fertility who afterwards became the Greek god Aphrodite and Roman Venus.

The Babylonians built many temples for their gods and they were known as 'Ziggurats'. Later on these temples became the centre of learning art, science and commerce. Such an importance attached to the temples naturally exalted the position of the priests in the society. They grew richer and powerful day by day.

The Babylonians had faith in good and bad omens as well as in astrology. They sowed and cut crops at auspicious occasions. The astrologers used to foretell the future with the help of the sterious signs found on the liver of the sacrificed sheep. Sometimes they foretold the future by observing movements of the stars and planets. They had no interest in after life, which they consider dismal and as such they

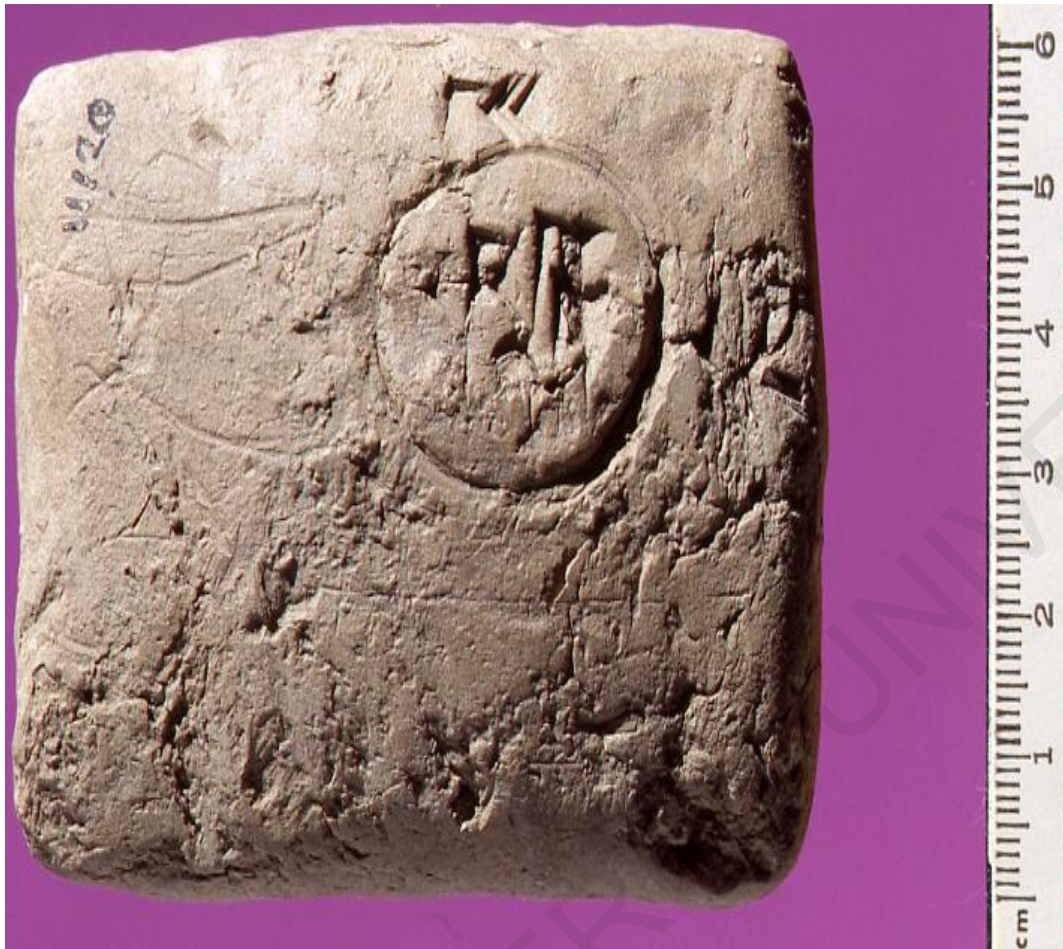
believed in improving their life on this earth. Great importance was attached to education in Babylonian civilization.

### 3.1.8. Education

The Babylonians made progress in the field of education. There were schools in Babylon to impart education to the students. The schools which were usually in or beside the temples, boys were taught reading, writing and arithmetic clerical work. Clay tablets were used as slates. A school house of 55 square feet was discovered by the archaeologists in 1844. The purpose of the schools was to teach the students the art of writing. The students were required to memorize 350 signs, which was not an easy task. A proverb of the period, engraved on the wall of an old school house, reads, "He who shall excel in tablet writing shall shine like the Sun". This was how the educated persons were held in high esteem in the society. The students wrote on soft clay which could be easily erased at any time. Some of the clay tablets in the Yale Babylonian collection show the mathematical finds. They contain the scribe's exercises in which the area of a designated trapezoid and circles are recorded. The pictures are given below.



**Clay tablet recording mathematical calculations.**



### 3.1.9. Art and Architecture

Due to the foreign invasions much of the art and architecture of the Babylonians disappeared completely. Another reason for its disappearance was that the buildings were made of wood and bricks instead of stone. Babylonian literature is the only source of knowledge about the Babylonian temples and palaces. The kings built palaces and Ziggurats with many storeys like a tower. The tower of Babel, 288 feet high, is the best example of such pyramidal structure. The royal palaces were spacious and useful in their own way but they lacked the massiveness and ornamentation of the Egyptian buildings.

The Babylonians are very poor in sculptures, which are inferior to those of Egyptians. The art of painting did not flourish as an independent art but was used only for decorating walls with the paintings of men, animals, birds and natural scenes. The statues of stone and metal were not of high quality. The development of seals was the greatest artistic accomplishment of the Babylonians. The Babylonians had not made any wonderful progress in the realm of architecture, painting and



sculpture yet they were great lovers of art. Weaving became a great industry and clothes of bright colors were woven. They were dyed blue and red in stripes of different hues. They were also skillful in the art of smithery and could make very beautiful ornaments of gold and silver. They had also advanced much in the field of music. They manufactured many types of musical instruments. They also invented coins, weights and measures.

### **3.1.10. Literature**

Mythology and epics were the favorite forms of Babylonian literature. In their literature they tried to explain the existence of man and his relationship with the universe. Many hymns and songs were written in praise of different gods. They wrote many poems and stories. Gilgamesh was their great art epic. It contained many Babylonian myths. It has been compared with Milton's paradise lost. The heroic deeds of the prince Gilgamesh has been described in a very interesting manner. He survived the Deluge and escaped death. Babylonian stories and proverbs are famous all over the world.

### **3.1.11. Sciences**

The Babylonians made wonderful progress in the field of various sciences like Mathematics, Astronomy and Medicine. They were skillful in Mathematics and perhaps they were the first to develop Algebra and Geometry. Like Sumerians, they used 60 as unit for counting. They had invented the signs for three digits i.e. 1, 10 and 100. A sign for one could be repeated up to 9, a sign for 10 could be repeated up to 50. They had also invented tables for multiplication and division. Like the Sumerians they had divided the circle up to 360 degrees.

Babylonians were far advanced in Astronomy. In the words of George Guest, "Babylonia had been called the birth place of astronomy, for almost every city possessed an observatory". They studied the movements of the sun, the moon and the planets and their influence on man. They used sun-clock and water-clock to note down time in the day time and night time respectively. They developed a lunar calendar and divided a year into 12 lunar months and also invented a seven day week. They had divided the hour into 60 seconds.

The Babylonians had great interest in the science of medicine also. The priests used to cure disease by incantations. The medicines were also used for this purpose. Herbs were also used to cure disease. Sunflower seed was recommended to toothache, milk for stomach trouble and oil shampoo and beer for baldness.

### **3.2. Hittite Culture**

By about 2000 B.C. the Hittites migrated to south and west to Asia Minor. They were the herdsmen of the garlands north of Black and Caspian seas. Like other people from this region they spoke a language of the Indo-European family. The Hittites were the first people to make extensive use of iron for weapons. They also had copper and silver mines and traded these metals with other people for the goods they wanted. The Hittites did not trade their iron, however nor the knowledge of how they made it. They kept the process secret. Using the advantage of superior iron weapons they defended themselves against stronger and more numerous peoples, conquered weaker ones and expanded into territories over most of Asia Minor, establishing their capital at Hattusa.

The supreme achievement of the Hittites was their legal system, which was less brutal than the code of Hammurabi. Capital punishment was reserved for major crimes, such as rebellion, and mutilation was limited. Hittite law emphasized payment of damages rather than retribution. For example if someone broke the arm of a freeman, he paid twenty pieces of silver rather than to have his own arm broken. In assessing punishment the law also took account of premeditation-that is whether a person intended beforehand to commit the crime.

When the Hittites invaded the Tigris-Euphrates valley, they conquered and looted Babylon itself. The Hittites were too far from their homeland to control Babylonia permanently, and soon withdrew. However, they remained powerful in the western part of the Fertile Crescent where they came into conflict with the Egyptians. The Hittite empire ceased to exist about 1200 B.C.

### **3.3. Assyrian Empire**

#### **3.3.1. Rise of the Assyrians**

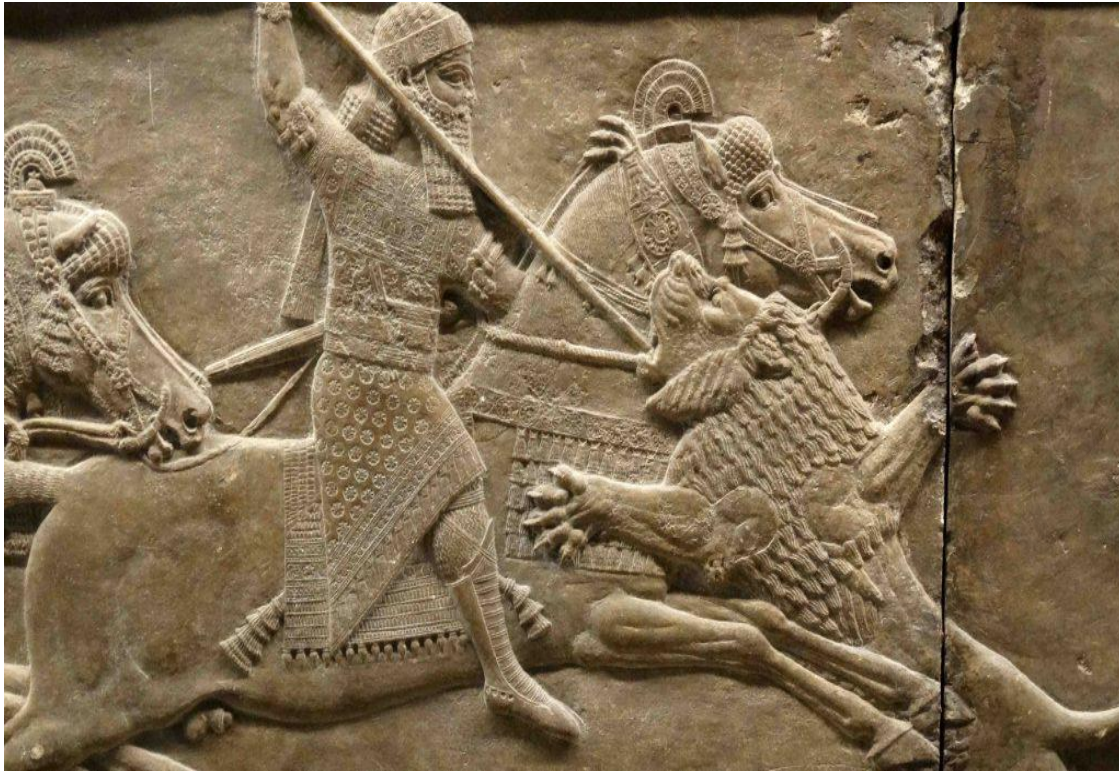
The Assyrians were great and powerful people. Their military organization was

superior to any other organizations of that time. They belong to Semitic group. They first settled in Assur and Nineveh. They occupied Babylon in 1100 BCE. The Assyrians knew the use of iron and made iron weapons for the war. Therefore they had an edge over the Ammorites who fought with copper weapons. Secondly with the use of horse and chariots they could easily overpower their members. Finally they were great warriors and skilled in warfare.

The Assyrians came into fame in about 12th Century BCE under their ruler Tiglath Pileser I. Tiglath Pileser III ascended the Assyrian throne in 745 BCE and laid the foundation of Assyrian empire. He conquered Babylon. He also Conquered Syria, Damasus, Sumeria and even Egypt. He was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV. Then one of the Assyrian generals, who assumed the name Sargon II, forcefully captured the throne. His son was Sennacherib Both Sargon II and Sennacherib raised the super structure of the Assyrian empire on the foundation laid by Tiglath pileser III. Sennacherib destroyed Babylon and made Nineveh one of the famous cities of western Asia. He also attacked Israel and brought many Jews to his capital as prisoners.

### **3.3.2. Ashurbanipal (668-625 BCE)**

Sennacherib was succeeded by his grandson Ashurbanipal (668-625 BCE). He is the last king of Assyria. This last king is famous for his longest reign of 38 years. He was most barbarous and blood - thirsty. He carried on wanton destruction in Babylon. He also conquered Egypt. At the same time he was famous for his patronage of learning. He claimed that he was a great peace giver. He was also a great builder and patronized arts and letters. About 22000 clay tablets discovered now throw much light on the rule of Ashurbanipal. He was greatly interested in the ancient literature of Mesopotamia. He had spent the massive resources to build a Library under his name. This library had a huge collection of various texts and documents. Today more than 30,000 cuneiform texts survived from this library are a significant source to understand the ancient Mesopotamian religion, language, science and literature.



Sculpture depicting the lion hunting scenes of Assurbanipal in his palace at Neneveh which says *“I am Assurbanipal, king of the Universe, king of Assyria,.. I seized a fierce lion and pierced his body with my lance.”*

The Assyrian empire declined after Ashurbanipal. The Assyrian empire was based on militarism and therefore, it did not have a strong foundation. Moreover, the Assyrians lost the sympathy and support of the people due to their barbarism. They were terror to the people. They were famous as the most oppressive people in the history of the world. They exacted heavy tributes from the people of the conquered territories. They suppressed the rebellions mercilessly. In 612 BCE, Medes and Chaldeans destroyed Nineveh. That heralded the death of the Assyrian empire.

### **3.3.3. Military and Political Organization**

The Assyrians were very war like and they were the first to use weapons of iron. Their plans for battle were carefully made before they attacked. The king and his nobles led the army in chariots. They were followed by horsemen, carrying spears and arrows with iron points. For attacking the walled cities they invented the battering-ram tripped with iron. They could easily batter down the brick fortifications surrounding a city. The Assyrian army was well armed and disciplined. Assyrian kings boasted of their cruelty and their armies spread terror all around wherever they

went. They believed that their god, Assur was to organize their military strength and extend their empire. They were perhaps the pioneers of imperialism in the world. The empire which they built was remembered in the ancient world more for its cruelty than for its splendor.

The Assyrian government was highly centralized. The king was a despot and the general of military and civil affairs of the state. He was the chief law-giver and appointed all the governors of the provinces. He ruled with an iron hand and controlled his people with the help of his armed forces. He decided all matters concerning peace and war. The people of the conquered territories were treated very cruelly. They were either killed or carried off into slavery. The penal code was very severe. The king appointed messengers who kept him in close touch with all the important centers of the empires. The Assyrians were perhaps the first to develop public postal system so that orders could be dispatched to all the provinces of the emperor easily and immediately. In short it can be said that the Assyrian state was a military state. Such efficient military and political organizations were the chief contributions of the Assyrians.

The Assyrian administration was very highly centralized. The kingdom was divided into provinces and each province was headed by a governor, who was appointed by the king. He also very closely supervised their activities through a well knit messenger system. The feudal lords associated with the running of the administration. Hence the king could not ignore them.

#### **3.3.4. Social Life**

The Assyrian society was divided into two classes, the independent citizens and the slaves. The citizens consisted of nobles, artisans and the commoners. The nobles led a luxurious life and enjoyed special rights and privileges. The artisans had organized themselves into guilds. The commoners did not lead a happy life. The life of the slaves was very miserable and unhappy. The Assyrians enslaved the persons captured during the wars. The Assyrians were, no doubt a cruel and fierce people. So the warriors occupied an honorable position in the society. Women were also respected in the society.

### **3.3.5. Economic Life**

Assyrians cultivated the lands and this was mainly done by the slaves. They cultivated wheat, barley, cotton etc. The cotton plants were known as the "Trees that bore fruits". Perhaps these cotton trees were imported from India. They tried to augment their economic position with the rich plunder they acquired from the conquered lands.

### **3.3.6. Religious Life**

The Assyrians mostly followed the religion of the Babylonians. Their chief god was Assur and probably they were called Assyrians after the name of that deity. Assur was the god of war and identified with the Sun. In the sculptures he was represented as a winged sun disc. They believed that Assur was much pleased with sacrifice, so they killed countless prisoners before his temples to please him. The Assyrians also worshipped Ishtar, the goddess of love, a goddess called Nina, after whom the capital was named as Nineveh.

### **3.3.7. Art and Architecture**

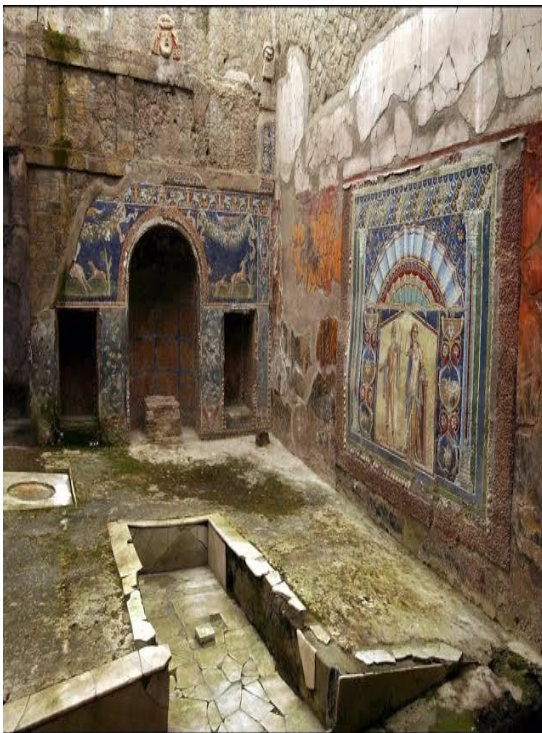
The Assyrians made much progress in architecture, painting and sculpture. Sargon II and Sennacherib were great builders. They built the finest city of Nineveh and ornamented it with beautiful palaces and temples. The palaces were luxurious, with huge Alabaster statues, glazed brick walls and brilliant colors used everywhere. The kings decorated the interiors of their palaces with gigantic pictures describing of their power. Aqueducts were built to bring water to the kings and to the city from a big reservoir.

Assyrian sculpture was superior to those of the Babylonians. Many of the Assyrian sculptures have been discovered from the ruins of the cities. Much of the subject matter was taken from military life. Bulls, horses and lions, were protracted better than men. Animal sculptures showed vigor of action and feeling. Bar-relief was developed to a great perfection. The human-headed bulls, a winged bull speak of the developed character of the Assyrian sculpture. The hunting and war scenes engraved on stone are very much life like. From the Egyptians they learnt the process of glazing colored bricks. They built big palaces surrounded by massive walls. In the walls and other places of the palaces there were beautiful gates. Some paintings of their period have been discovered. Among them the paintings of hunting scene are

most beautiful.

### 3.3.8. Literature

The Assyrians showed great interest in learning and education as well. They used the cuneiform writing of the Sumerians. But in a later stage they learnt Aramaic writing from Arameans. They wrote on tablets of clay. Their famous emperor Ashurbanipal was a great patron of learning. He maintained a library of 22,000 clay tablets at Nineveh. These tablets dealt with various branches of learning like books of hymns, prayers, medicine, letters, grammar and the statements of the superstitions of the people. By means of these tablets modern historians have been able to read the thoughts of ancient Assyrians.



Ruins of Ashurbanipal Library



Cuneiform clay tablets of Ashurbanipal

### 3.3.9. Achievements of the Assyrian Civilization

One of the greatest achievements of the Assyrians was military and political organization. The Assyrians were known to the history to use horses, and iron weapons for the first time in ancient world. They developed the art of sculpture and they carried the Babylonian culture to their empire. Which their military power they established a vast empire. But they adopted ruthless methods in the wars. Continuous wars resulted in crippling their military power and as a result they could not hold their sway over the conquered territories for a long time. The economic

condition of the Assyrians also became worse. The war of succession among the Assyrians also weakened their power. Consequently in about 612 BCE the Babylonians, Medes and Chaldeans captured and destroyed the Assyrian capital and its empire.

### **3.4. The Chaldeans - Nebuchadnezzar (605 - 562 BCE)**

In 612 BCE, the Chaldeans oppressed people within the Assyrian empire joined the Medes and Chaldeans to capture and completely destroy Nineveh. The victors divided the Assyrian empire. The Medas occupied the highlands north of Mesopotamia and the Chaldeans established an empire in Mesopotamia proper. They rebuilt the old city of Babylon and their empire was called as New Babylonian Empire.

#### **3.4.1. Nebuchadnezzar (605 - 562 BCE)**

Nebuchadnezzar is regarded as the empire's greatest king. He succeeded his father Nabopolassar in 605 BCE. He is famous for his military campaigns against Levant and the projects in Babylon. In 587 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Judah and Jerusalem. He was a great enemy to the Jews as the destruction of Jerusalem had increased the captivity of Babylonia and people of surrounding lands reached Babylonia for new opportunities. He is described as the cruel enemy and as the ruler appointed by the god to punish disobedient people in the Book of Jeremiaiah.

During the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldeans extended their empire over the entire Fertile Crescent. Nebuchadnezzar (605 - 562 BCE) rebuilt Babylon as a symbol of strength. Massive walls surrounded the city and the outlying farm lands, thereby protecting the food supply during a siege. Nebuchadnezzar's immense palace, decorated with blue glazed bricks was rivaled the splendors by the famous hanging gardens of Babylon. The most famous of the Chaldean emperors was Nebuchadnezzar (604 - 561 BCE). According to a legend, Nebuchadnezzar designed the gardens for his wife, who despised the flat plains of Mesopotamia and longed for the mountains of her median home land. Many terraces filled with exotic plants and trees amazed travelers who returned home awed by this wonder of the ancient world.



### 3.4.2. Renovations of old temples and buildings under the Assyrians

The Mesopotamian kings engaged themselves in the restoration of temples in Babylonia and Assyria. They believed that the gods built the first towns as their residences. For instance, the god Enlil of Nippur, in the mythical time, chose that the temple Ekur, “the temple mountain” would be his sanctuary to be built in Duranki, “the link between the star, sky and earth.” According to the ancient Sumerian hymns, humankind was created to serve gods. Yet, in the preservation, the kings of the ancient Mesopotamia have nothing to offer to the world. The Neo – Babylonian kings in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE accomplished the restoration programs in Babylonia. Largely decayed temples were treated on priority. The kings of Babylon from Nebopolassar to Nabuchodonosor to Nabonidus were inspired by gods, often by the means of dreams. They took keen interest in exploration, excavations near the ancient temples, even tried to find the foundation inscriptions and were sure not to make any mistakes and innovations which would result severe punishments from gods.

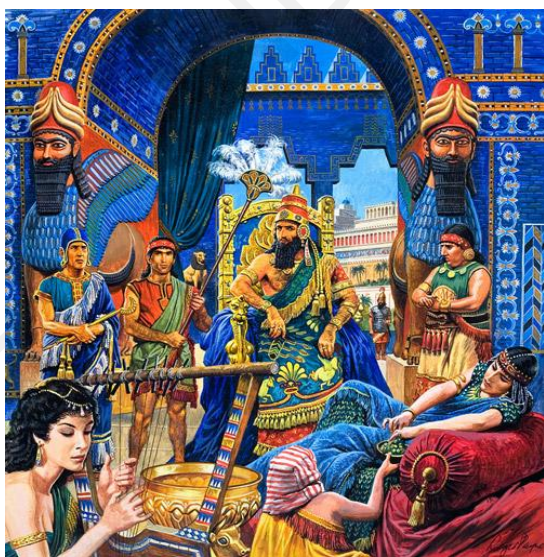
The famous temples of Ebabbar of Shamash (sun god) in Sippar, Nabuchadnezzar found the foundation inscription of Burnaburiash, the king of Kassite. His successor Nabonidus boasted about finding a 3200 years old inscription of Hammurabi which is 700 years older than Burnaburiash. In his restoration texts the elements used were mentioned: “*I mixed mortar with beer, wine, oil and honey and anointed its excavation ramps with it.....*” This Babylonian king engaged himself in the excavations of ancient temples and buildings of political importance. Many of the ancient places were explored in Babylonia during his reign. One important among these restoration programs is that while looking for the foundations of the temple Eulmash of the goddess Ishtar in Akkad, he found the statue of Great Sargon. Nabonidus was described in the inscriptions as the archaeologist of his times. This great ruler was always surrounded by the experts of ancient Sumerian and Akkadian characters. One of the famous scholars in his team was Nabuzerlishir. The archaeological researches of the Babylonian kings intertwined with political, religious and antiquarian interest.

Like the earlier people of Mesopotamia, the Chaldeans advanced the study of mathematics and astronomy. They believed that the positions of the stars, planets and

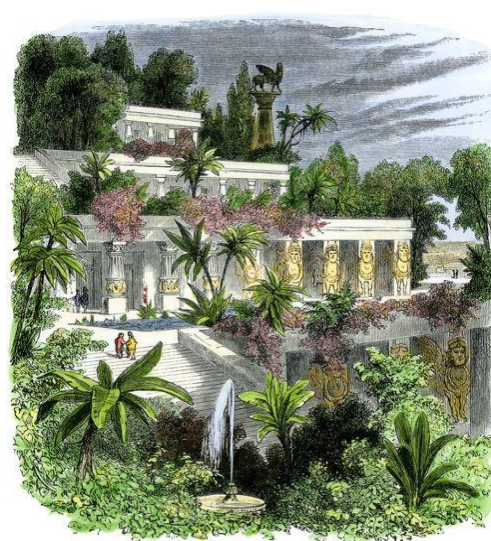
comets determined the fates of individuals and empires by charting the paths of planets, stars and comets. Chaldean priests acquired a vast store of knowledge about eclipses and the movement of heavenly bodies. They also accurately calculated the length of a year to within a few minutes. Priests, who used their knowledge of the stars to predict the future, occupied a privileged position in Chaldean society. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean empire, like those before it, suffered which wars. In 539 BCE the Chaldean empire was over turned by the Persians under Cyrus, the Great. Unlike the Assyrians, the Persians left the city standing and it remained a flourishing centre of commerce and learning.

### 3.4.3. Architecture under Nebuchadnezzar

Mesopotamian architecture reached its height of grandeur during the time of Nebuchadnezzar. He constructed a huge wall of 56 miles in length, around Babylon, his capital city. It was so broad "that a four-horse chariot could be driven along the top". He also built imposing palaces in Babylon. He used yellow bricks for this purpose. Its floors were made of variety of sand stones of various colors and shades. Nebuchadnezzar constructed terraces of 75 feet above the ground, on super - imposed circular pillars. He covered these surfaces with soil to the depth of many feet. He planted largest and most deep rooted trees and flower plants on the soil. To supply water to those trees and plants, he made arrangements to carry water from the river Euphrates with the help of hydraulic engines. These gardens were called as "Hanging Gardens" by the Greeks who regarded them as one of the wonders of the ancient world.



Nebuchadnezzar (604 - 561 BCE)



Hanging gardens of Babylon, one of the seven wonders.

### Do you know : Hammurabi's Code

Hammurabi observed the customs, manners, traditions etc. which prevailed among the people living in his empire and on the basis of it he formulated a set of laws according to the needs of the people. Those laws were applicable to all - from the nobles to the slaves. There were 282 clauses which can be divided into four groups - civil code, penal code, commercial code and code of procedure. The following are the law codes of Hammurabi.

**Table of Hammurabi's law codes**

Legal area	Laws	Specific provisions	Example (English)
<b>Offences against the administration of law</b>	1-5	false charges (1-2) false testimony (3-4) falsification of judgement (5)	If a man accuses another man and charges him with homicide, but cannot bring proof against him, his accuser shall be killed. (1)
<b>Property offences</b>	6-25	stealing and receiving stolen property (6-13) kidnapping (14) harbouring fugitive slaves (15-20) breaking and entering (21) burglary (22-24) looting burning houses (25)	If a man breaks into a house, they shall kill him and hang him(?) in front of that very breach. (21)
<b>Land and houses</b>	26-k	<a href="#">tenure of fiefs</a> (26-41) duties of farmers (42-48) debts of farmers (49-52) irrigation offences (53-56) cattle trespass (57-58) cutting down trees (59) care of date orchards (60-a) offences connected with houses (b-k)	If a man has a debt lodged against him, and the storm-god Adad devastates his field or a flood sweeps away the crops, or there is no grain grown in the field due to insufficient water—in that year he will not repay grain to his creditor; he shall suspend performance of his contract [literally "wet his clay tablet"] and he will not give interest payments for

			that year. (48)
<b>Commerce</b>	1-126	loans and trade (1-107) innkeeping (108-111) fraud by couriers (112) <a href="#">distrain</a> and pledge of persons for debt (113-119) safe custody or deposit (120-126)	If a merchant should give silver to a trading agent for an investment venture, and he [the trading agent] incurs a loss on his journeys, he shall return silver to the merchant in the amount of the capital sum. (102)
<b>Marriage, family, and property</b>	127-194	slander of <i>ugbatum</i> -priestesses or married women (127) definition of "married woman" (128) adultery (129-132) remarriage in husbands' absence (133-136) divorce (137-143) marriage to <i>naditum</i> -women (144-147) maintenance of sick wives (148-149) gifts from husbands to wives (150) liability of spouses for debt (151-152) murder of husbands (153) incest (154-158) inchoate marriage (159-161) devolution of marriage-gifts after wives' deaths (162-164) gifts to sons <i>inter vivos</i> (165) succession amongst sons (166-167) disinheritance of sons (168-169) legitimation (170) widows' property (171-174) marriage of <i>awilum</i> -class women to slaves (175-176) remarriage of widows (177) sacral women (178-184) adoption and nursing of infants (185-194)	If a man takes in adoption a young child at birth [literally "in its water"] and then rears him, that ling will not be reclaimed. (185)
<b>Assault</b>	195-214	assaults on fathers (195) assaults on <i>awilum</i> -class men (196-208) assaults causing miscarriage (209-214)	If an [ <i>awilum</i> ] should blind the eye of another [ <i>awilum</i> ], they shall blind his eye. (196)

<b>Professional men</b>	215–240	surgeons (215–223) veterinary surgeons (224–225) barbers (226–227) builders (228–233) shipbuilders and boatmen (234–240)	If a builder constructs a house for a man but does not make it conform to specifications so that a wall then buckles, that builder shall make that wall sound using his own silver. (233)
<b>Agriculture</b>	241–273	oxen (241–252) theft of fodder by tenants (253–256) hire of agricultural labourers (257–258) theft of agricultural implements (259–260) hire of herdsmen (261) duties of shepherds (262–267) hire of beasts and wagons (268–272) hire of seasonal labourers (273)	If an ox goes to death a man while it is passing through the streets, that case has no basis for a claim. (250)
<b>Rates of hire</b>	274–277	wages of craftsmen (274) hire of boats (275–277)	If a man rents a boat of 60-[kur] capacity, he shall give one sixth [of a shekel] of silver per day as its hire. (277)
<b>Slaves</b>	278–282	warranties on sale of slaves (278–279) purchase of slaves abroad (280–281)	If a slave should declare to his master, "You are not my master", he [the master] shall bring charge and proof against him that he is indeed his slave, and his master shall cut off his ear. (282)

### Key points

The Sumerian – Akkadian city – states declined around 2200 BCE. The Amorites occupied Sumeria and Akkad. This empire is named as Babylonian Empire, after the city where they first settled. Their leader was Hammurabi, known for drawing up a uniform code of laws. Laws were close to hard realities of human life. Hammurabi was considered as the first law giver to the mankind. Like the Sumerian society, the society in Babylonia was divided into three classes viz. upper, middle and the lower. Silver coins ‘Mine’ and ‘Shakel’ were in use. They believed in

nature worship. After the decline of the Babylonian empire, the Hittites and Chaldeans ruled Babylonia. It gained its past glory during the Assyrian rule. Nebuchadnezzar was a great king among the Assyrian rulers. Hanging gardens stand as the marvels of Assyrian art and architecture. Cuneiform writing was in use. Scribes had a high demand and huge respect in the society.

### Map Skills

Identify the following in the Hammurabi's Empire:

- a) Akkad                      b) Babylon                      c) Sumer
- d) Ur                              e) Syrian Desert

### Chapter Checkup

1. Describe the conditions that led to the establishment of the Babylonian Empire.
2. Hammurabi is the first historic law giver of mankind – Discuss.
3. Compare the religious beliefs of the Babylonians and the Assyrians.
4. Write about Ashurbanipal's library and its significance.

### Short answers

1. Hanging gardens
2. Cuneiform script
3. Nebuchadnezzar
4. Babylonian gods and goddesses
5. Scribes role in Babylonian education
6. Akkadian architecture

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**UNIT IV**  
**CHINESE CIVILIZATION**

## **UNIT IV: Chinese Civilization**

### **4.0. Chinese Civilization**

The civilization of ancient China was greatly influenced by the geographical condition of the land. Like other river valley civilizations, the ancient Chinese civilization flourished in the valleys of two great rivers. Hwang Ho and Yang-tse-Kiang. These two rivers made the land fertile. The agricultural prosperity of the valleys led to the evolution of a highly developed civilization. At the same time the floods of Hwang Ho caused serious damage to the life and prosperity of the people every year. Therefore Hwang-Ho was called "the sorrow of China".

China is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean in the east, the Tibetan plateau in the west, the mountain ranges of Tien Shan and Altai and the plateau of Mongolia in the north, and the great Himalayan Mountains and the forests of Burma in the South. These surroundings isolated China from the external world which made the people develop their civilization in an isolated manner. They were immune from all kinds of external influences. Besides, China was not exposed to external danger of invasions, its civilization continued for a long time.

The early history of China is mainly legendary. Chinese mythology records the names of rulers from 3000 BCE. But we have a clear picture of the historical data from 2150 BCE onwards. The ruler Yu established the Hsia dynasty and founded the first dynastic rule in 2150 BCE. After that many dynasties ruled over China one after another and slowly China marched towards a developed culture and civilization.

#### **4.1. The Hsia Dynasty (2150 BCE to 1750 BCE)**

King Yu formed this dynasty. He was an engineer king who saved his people from terrible floods. He did justice to everyone. The rule of this dynasty lasted for about 400 years. During this period, there was peace and order in China and laid the foundation for centralized government. The Art of writing was developed during this period.

#### **4.2. The Shang Dynasty (1750 BCE to 1122 BCE)**

China made wonderful progress during the reign of this dynasty. The rulers of this dynasty promoted agriculture and industry and thus enriched the economic life of



the Chinese. In fact, the history of China from historians' point of view commences from the rule of the Shang kings. They ruled for nearly six centuries (1583 BCE - 1027 BCE). Bronze castings, among other things, of this period have been discovered in Anyang recently. The Shang rulers united all the city-states near the Yellow river. Unfortunately, they did not develop it into a well-knit kingdom. The people developed glazed pottery, silk-weaving and making the bronze vessels. The Chinese started worshipping their great god Shang Ti and other nature gods. They offered prayers and sacrifices to gods in the temples.

#### **4.2.1. Writing during the Shang period**

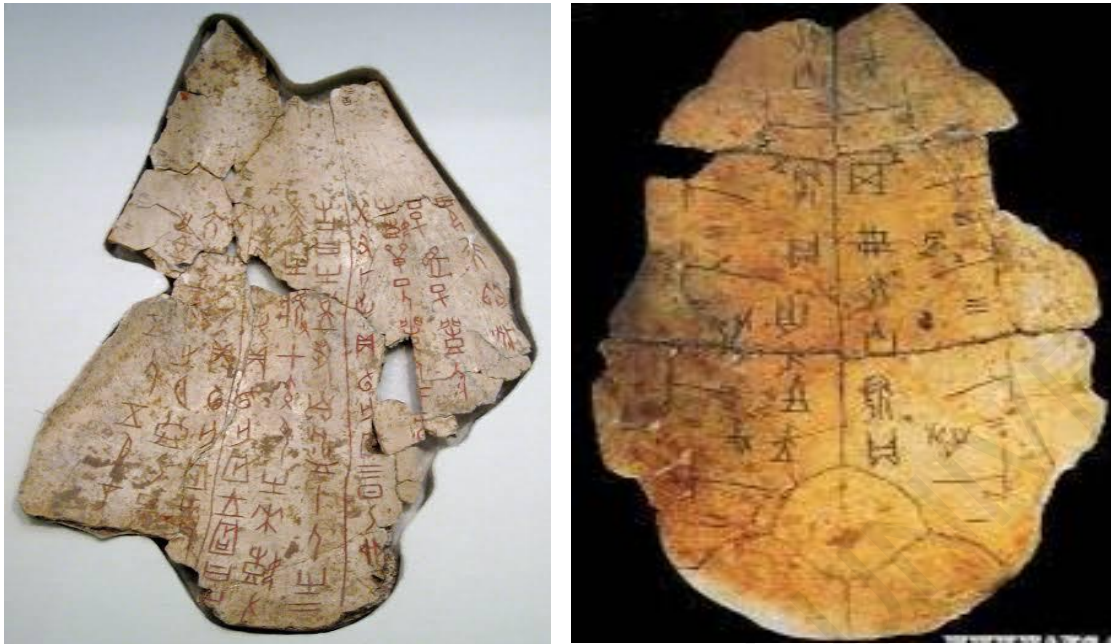
During the rule of The Shang dynasty, the Chinese developed a system of writing. Like the Egyptians and Sumerians, the early Chinese used pictograms or drawings of objects. Later, they added ideograms, symbols that expressed ideas such as wisdom or unity. Their written language included over 3000 symbols or characters. The Shang scribes drew characters with a sharp stick brush on many types of material, including bone, bamboo, bronze, pottery, wood, Jade and silk. Scribes usually wrote on strips of bamboo which were tied together in rolled bundles. Because the strips were narrow, the characters were written in vertical columns.

#### **4.2.2. Shang Religious Beliefs**

The Shang people believed that many gods and spirits resided in nature. The principle God was Shang Ti. Shang gods had the power to cause floods, drought and locust plagues. They controlled all human affairs. Therefore, the people tried to influence the gods by calling on the spirits of their own ancestors to act as go-betweens. The Shangs believed that if they made the right sacrifices, their ancestors would bring them good fortune. Bad fortune was considered as a sign of an ancestor's displeasure. So ancestor worship was an important part of Shang religion.

The Shang king, as chief priest, made daily sacrifices to ensure that his ancestors acted favorably on behalf of the kingdom. Priests assisted the king in these ceremonies. Shang Priests also tried to foretell the future. Before undertaking an important action, a person would ask a priest to consult his or her ancestors. To do this, the priest scratched a question on the shoulder bone of an ox. Then he carved notches in the bone and applied a heated bronze rod to notches. The heat caused the bone to crack. The priest interpreted the cracks to find an answer to the question.

Bones used for telling the future in this way are called oracle bones.



**Oracle bones inscribed with Questions in Shang Dynasty**

Archaeologists have found thousands of oracle bones near Anyang and other Shang cities. These were inscribed with questions addressed by kings to their ancestors. One king asked if 5000 soldiers would be enough to defeat an enemy. Another wondered if his ancestors were responsible for his toothache. By reading the oracle bones, scholars have learned much about religious beliefs and daily life in Shang China.

### **4.2.3. Daily Life**

The Shang dynasty had a strict division of classes. The king performed political and religious duties in the capital. The majority of the people were peasants living in scattered villages. They paid a portion of each harvest to the king or noble governor of the region. Sometimes peasants were drafted to serve as foot soldiers or to build royal palaces, tombs and temples. In contrast to the luxurious dwellings of the wealthy, Shang farmers lived in tiny houses built partially underground. The ground helped to insulate the house during the hot summers and cold winters on the North China Plain.

The extended family was the focus of Shang village life, as it was in Aryan villages in India. Several generations lived in the same household, headed by the oldest male. He and his wife made the necessary sacrifices to the family ancestors. Ancestor worship contributed to respect for age and duty to family. Little is known

about women in Shang China. Queens seem to have received considerable respect. Among the royal family and nobles, men often had more than one wife, but the first wife and her sons were the most important. Peasant women worked in the fields alongside men. They were also responsible for silk making and weaving.

#### **4.2.4. Achievements in Shang Period**

Shang artisans developed new technologies, especially in bronze working. They invented bronze weapons, such as daggers, spears, and armor. After inventions, including the Yoke, harness, and spoked wheel led to the development of the two horse war chariot. These military advances gave Shang rulers an advantage over neighboring peoples who did not know about them. The Shang also made advances in the arts and sciences. The artisans of the cities laid the foundations for all later Chinese ceramic art. They learned to use Kaolin, a fine white clay, and to shape vessels on the potter's wheel. They glazed some of their pottery. Shang potters developed every form and shape that was used later in Chinese ceremonial vases. Silk textiles, jade ornaments, and ivory carvings attest to the skill of Shang artisans. The bronze castings of Shang artisans have been a marvel of later times. In Mathematics the Shang developed a decimal system. Priest-astronomers devised a calendar with 12 months and  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days. These advances were the foundation for later Chinese.

#### **4.2.5. Fall of the Shang Dynasty**

It was around 1022 BCE that the Shang capital, Anyang, fell into the hands of the Chou, who lived on the western borders. The Chou set up their own dynasty and proclaimed their king as the "Son of Heaven".

### **4.3. The Chou Dynasty**

The dynasty established by the Chou was the longest in China's history. They ruled for nearly eight centuries from 1122 BCE to 256 BCE. According to Chinese tradition, the "Martial King" Wu Wang, captured the Shang capital Anyang and established the new dynasty. The Chou people were from the Weis River in north central China. Earlier they adopted many features of Shang civilization, such as the war chariots and bronze weapons with which they defeated the Shang. After 1122 BCE, the Chou retained many Shang laws and customs. However they also made their own contributions to Chinese civilization.

The Chou rulers called themselves as the "Sons of Heaven and claimed to

rule by the Mandate of Heaven", that is by order of the gods. Like earlier Chinese rulers, they were obliged by this claim to keep the gods contented, perform rites to ensure the fertility of the soil, and control the rivers.

#### **4.3.1. Chou Government**

The Chou Government was decentralized. There was a central government, run by a Chief Minister and officials in charge of agriculture, public works, the army, and other royal affairs. But local governments were numerous and independent. During the rule of this dynasty, a feudal system emerged in China. Since the Chou controlled more territory than the Shang had, Chou kings could not extend their authority over all the land. Therefore, the king ruled his capital and the surrounding lands, but he allowed powerful nobles to govern large parts of the kingdom. In exchange, the noble owned loyalty, military service, and tribute to the king.

For about 250 years, Chou kings controlled the feudal nobles. They settled disputes between warring nobles and granted all titles to land. But Chous' strength gradually declined as powerful nobles carved out independent states. Between 771 BCE and 256 BCE weak Chou rulers could not prevent warfare among hundreds of feudal states.

In the feudal states of Chou China, different bureaus controlled finances, the armed forces, law enforcement, and record keeping. The state with the most efficient organization had the advantage in the power struggles of the late Chou dynasty.

#### **4.3.2. Life in Chou period**

Constant wars between the feudal lords weakened the warrior nobility. As large, well organized states emerged, a new class of able ambitious government officials gradually gained power. These officials became the new ruling class in China. At the head of the society were the government officials. They gained greater status by becoming land owners. Below them was the huge peasant class. Some peasants were tenant farmers and some others had farmed land allotted by the villagers. Soldiers occupied a low position in the society. Education became important as the need for government officials grew. The tutors trained the boys for government service. Educated people wrote books which were later considered as classics.

#### **4.3.3. Economic Growth**

There was an enormous economic growth in China during the time of Chou

rule. Peasants used fertilizers and iron tools. By which the development of irrigation facilities and the newly introduced ox-drawn plough, they cultured more land and increased food production. The ancient Chou people developed trade expanded the growth of cities and the beginning of a money economy. The feudal lords encouraged trade and commerce by empowering transportation facilities. Roads, rivers and inland canals carried produces from villages to towns and cities. They developed trade contracts with the western Asia and borrowed certain ideas from them. The ancient Chou people introduced metal coins. The money economy widened the gap between the rich and poor. Some merchants made huge profits by buying grain and then selling it at high prices in times of famines. If a peasant could not pay back a loan, he and his family lost the right to farm the land.

#### **4.3.4. Decline of Chou Dynasty**

Wars between the feudal states marked the end of the Chou dynasty in 256 BCE. The Chou rule is memorable in history, not by political achievements, but for the brilliant civilization that flourished during that time.

#### **4.4. The Chin or Shin Dynasty**

The Chin rulers put an end to the Chou rule and established a strong and unified empire in China in around 256 BCE. Shi-Hwang-Ti was the most famous king of this dynasty. He was the greatest warrior and statesman. He conquered various regions of China and brought them under his control. He ended feudalism which had proved to be a great curse to his country. He built a well-knit empire having 36 provinces. He established peace and order and set up a strong centralized government in the country. He gave a clean and efficient administration to China. He ruled by explicit laws and himself saw it that his laws were carried out. He built many roads, bridges and canals. In order to save his country from the frequent attacks of the barbarians like the Huns, he erected the “Great Wall of China”. Successive rulers continued this work and the present wall is 1500 miles long 22 feet high and 20 feet thick. It has watch-towers at regular intervals. It is still regarded as one of the “Seven Wonders of the World”. He beautified his capital with beautiful palaces and statues.



### **The Great wall of China**

Shi-Huang-Ti styled himself as the first universal emperor and set about the task of destroying the works of Confucius and others by saying they were feudal in outlook. Only books on Medicine and other technical subjects were spared. Shi-Hwang-Ti also encouraged a new kind of literature and rendered help to reform the Chinese language and script. He introduced a uniform code of laws throughout the country. He established trade contacts with the European countries. In order to increase the revenue he brought the trade on salt and iron under the sole control of the state. He forced the merchants to use standard weights and measures.

Shi-Hwang-Ti claimed divinity for himself. None had access to his private life. He was moving throughout his kingdom in disguise. He built tunnels in his own palace in order to move from one room to another. The time and route of his movement were not made public. Therefore, it created a terror in the minds of the people. The people had a superstitious belief that the emperor, like gods, would be present at any time with them by virtue of his divine power. They were afraid of the invisible presence of the emperor. The people began to worship him as god out of fear.

#### **4.5. The Han Dynasty (206 BCE to 221 CE)**

After the death of **Shi-Hwang-Ti** in 210 BCE there was a civil war in China. Then came the Han Dynasty in about 206 BCE and ruled for four hundred years. Under the rule of this dynasty China witnessed peace and prosperity and a great progress in political, economic and cultural spheres. The rule of this dynasty is known as “The Golden Age” in the History of China.

**Wu-Ti**(140-87 BCE) was the greatest ruler of this dynasty. He was a great warrior. He kept out the Tartars and extended his empire up to the Caspian Sea. He was a capable and benevolent ruler. He set up an efficient and strong centralized government. He organized the civil service and appointments and promotions were made on the basis of the competitive examinations, ability and accomplishments. He established commercial relations with India, Persia, Syria and Mediterranean countries. Buddhism found its way into China from India during this period. He introduced Socialism in China. He controlled trade and commerce. Taxation was made uniform. Various works of public utility were undertaken by him. The Chinese silk became extremely popular in the Roman Empire. The trade route which connected the mainland of China and the Roman Empire came to be called as the Silk route. The Chinese exported silk and iron, and imported glass, amber and precious stones.

The study of the Confucian classics was revived with the opening of an Imperial University in 124 BCE. This university trained the students for the civil service. The teachings of Confucius became popular which resulted in the moral upliftment of the Chinese people. The development of education was greatly facilitated by the invention of paper and other writing materials like the camel brush and ink. The Han emperors patronized the arts. Singing and dancing to the tunes of musical instruments became extremely popular. The Chinese paintings and sculptural works received support from the aristocratic class. Han dynasty was followed by the Sui Dynasty and then by Tang dynasty which ruled up to 907A.D.

#### **4.6. Social Life**

The early Chinese society consisted of four classes viz., the agriculturists, craftsmen, traders and literary class comprising the ‘Mandarins’ and scholars. The

scholars enjoyed great respect in the society. Though they formed a major part of the society, the condition of the peasants was not so good. Slaves existed in China. The condition of the slaves was miserable and sometimes they were buried along with their masters to serve them in heaven too. Confucianism brought significant change in the society. Family life became more secure and stable on account of attachment between children and parents. The ancestral land divided equally to all the sons. Women did not enjoy high social status or any special privileges in the society. Confucius preferred giving rights to women. They observed purdah and were under the complete control of men.

#### **4.7. Economic life**

Many crafts and industries grew up in ancient China. Silk and embroidery works were the major contributions of the Chinese in textiles. The artisans made ornaments of gold and silver and kitchen utensils of iron and bronze. The pottery of the Chinese had a great demand in the world. Glass, Paper, ink, printing press, gun powder and compass etc. were also manufactured in China. The workers in each craft formed their own organization called guilds, which regulated the quality of the work.

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. They cultivated wheat, rice, millet, Soya beans and tea. Because of the perennial rivers, irrigation facilities developed in China in early period. For this canals were dug. Chinese used manures to increase the production and followed the system of rotation of crops. Tea was their chief crop. Tea drinking became a habit in ancient China.

China's internal trade developed to a great extent after the construction of canals and water ways. The rulers of Chou and Han dynasties encouraged trade and commerce. The Chinese had commercial contacts with India, Persia, Syria and Rome. They exported silk, salt, iron, rhubarb, spices, jade, lacquer and fruits and imports included precious stones, amber, coral and glass. Coin currency appeared during the late second century BCE. Banking and money lending came into vogue. The merchants formed into different guilds to increase their trade and to protect their interests.



## **4.8. Agriculture and food**

People in China ate grains like rice, wheat and millets. The wealthy and noble classes ate plenty of meat including pork, chicken, duck, goose and dog. Broad beans, turnip and yams were the vegetables included in the ancient Chinese cuisine. People drank soups made of shark's fin, bird's nest and paws of the bears. They drank wine made from millet and rice. People of the lower strata had no privileges regarding food. They either ate dumplings made of wheat, pancakes and noodles. Rice and fish were also a part of their food. The people in ancient China are farmers and worked in small family farms. The farmers used ploughs and animals like dogs and oxen to work in the fields. They worked in the lands owned by the kings and the noblemen. The farmers celebrated spring festival every year to yield good produce. They had to pay a part of their produce to the government.

## **4.9. Houses and streets**

Rich people lived in the houses made of wood and tiles where as the poor lived in the huts of thatched roofs. The furniture was limited in both the higher and lower houses but the elite had adorned their houses with beautiful gardens. They lived in the houses which had a courtyard open to the sky. A significant feature of the Chinese civilization is that the three generations (grandparents, parents and children) lived together in one house which is seen even today in some of the Chinese families.

## **4.10. Religion and philosophy**

The earliest religion which flourished in China was worship of gods of nature which was followed by ancestor-worship. In each house, the family members practiced ancestor worship. In course of time, three religions found favor among the Chinese. They were Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism.

### **4.8.1. Confucianism:**

The most influential philosopher in ancient China was Kung-Fu-Tse, known to westerners as Confucius. He lived from about 551 BCE to about 478 BCE. He was born in the Chinese province of Lu (modern Shantung). He was a contemporary of Buddha at the age of three he lost his father and was brought up by his mother. He had to pass through extreme poverty and hardship. In spite of the financial difficulties he

could manage to get education and ultimately became a great learned man of his times. At the age of twenty two he established a school where he taught the students the sense of discipline and leadership. Confucius dominated the minds of the learned for centuries and he was finally deified.

Confucius was a great student of human nature. When his country was in deep trouble, he felt that it was due to the lack of moral principles and social ethics on the part of the individuals in the society. Therefore, he started building a society by reviving the old norms like ancestor worship and filial piety and respect to authority. He tried to bring harmonious human relations between the rulers and the ruled, between parents and children, elder and younger brothers, husband and wife and among friends. He prescribed a code of conduct for every class of human beings. He taught good manners, humanity, devotion to duty, and truth and faith in others. His golden rule on etiquette was “what you do not like when done to yourself, do not do to others”. His teachings had great effect on moulding the character of the Chinese for many centuries.

The teachings of Confucius were based on moral principles. He advised the people to regulate their conduct and make their private life polished and decent. He never claimed that he was ordained by god to preach morality among the people. He wanted that people should realize the values of personal qualities. Good behavior, cleanliness, modesty, honesty, politeness, liberality, dutifulness and higher thought are the qualities, according to him, to be cultivated by all.

Confucius stressed the importance of education. He believed that good administration depended upon the ability and qualities of the ruler which would be acquired only through the education. Good citizens could be produced through the education only. He advised the students to learn History, Music, and Poetry etc. All should have equal right to get education. He did not hesitate to receive meritorious, poor boys as his students. He taught the students by means of dialogue by which he put questions to the students and the students were required to find answers to those questions. Confucius preferred this method to that of delivering lectures. He laid emphasis on perseverance and determination in education. On the whole his education aimed at the building of character. Moreover, he wanted to reform the society through education.

Confucius was not satisfied with the existing system of education and wanted to reform it. He advised that the rulers should be ideal to the officers. The rulers should influence the officers through their personal examples. The duty of the state should be to guide the people in the virtuous way by uplifting their moral character.

Confucius wanted to establish an ideal society. In that society, as he believed the patriarchal family had a great role to play being an effective link between the individual and the society. Family was the proper place for the building of character. The affection between the father and the son was the ideal of the society. He advised the people to show respect and submission to father. He treated the whole world as a big family and in that ideal family the emperor should play the role of the father. He believed in universal fraternity. He said that law was the greatest virtue and therefore his entire philosophy was based on love and affection. In his view knowledge meant to him the understanding of their virtue. He laid the emphasis on the affection between the father and the son, proper understanding between the husband and the wife, cordial relationship between the brothers and confidence between the friends.

Confucius was an idealistic philosopher. He did not preach a new religion, rather he advised the people to lead an ideal life. He wanted the moral upliftment of the people on the development of the inner virtues of the individual. He opined that the pious deeds would lead a life of peace, prosperity and happiness; whereas the bad deeds would lead to the sufferings. His teachings had a deep impression on the minds of the people of China through the centuries. They eventually took on religious significance. In 195 BCE for example, Liu Pang the founder of the Han dynasty visited the tomb of Confucius and offered a sacrifice to his spirit. Confucius's greatness lies in the fact that like a true teacher, writer and reformer he proved that his teachings were universal and practicable. He compiled his moral and religious philosophy in five books known as 'Record of rites', 'Book of Change', 'Book of Odes', 'Spring and Autumn Annals' and 'Book of History'. They are regarded as the great wealth of China. He died in 479 BCE at the age of 72.

## 4.8.2. Taoism

### Lao –Tze (604 BCE-517 BCE)

Lao-Tze was another great philosopher of ancient China. He was a contemporary of Confucius. His life was full of mystery. The date of birth of Lao-Tze is controversial but some believed that he lived in around 600 BCE in the province of Henan. Probably his early name was Li. Nothing is known about his early life. Some thought that he worked in the archive of the Province Chan. He was the founder of a philosophy called Taoism, which got its name from its central idea, Tao which defined as the way of nature. Lao-Tze became disappointed at seeing people turning selfish and wicked. He became a mystic thinker and writer. His work Tao Te Ching, contains his maxims and principles. He insisted on leading a very simple life in harmony with nature. He said that people can know better of Tao (eternal spirit) not by study or reason but by deep contemplation and prayer. He mentioned that the root cause of unhappiness lies in greed and desires. He said that moral virtues should be developed, and good conduct should govern individual life. His teachings attracted thousands of people. But eventually, when Buddhism spread all over China from the first century C.E Taoism began to decline rapidly. There was close similarity between the Buddhism and Taoism. So he is called as the Buddha of China.

Lao-Tzu did not believe in temples or formal religion. But after his death his teachings were organized into a religion. He had laughed at the idea of gods, yet he came to be worshiped as a god. He raised his voice against the moral degeneration of the people of his time. To support his views on morality he wrote Tao-Te-King which means the virtuous way. He advised the people to lead a virtuous life. Happiness could be achieved by non-attachment with the worldly life. Non-attachment was the key-note of Taoism. Therefore his followers liked to live in isolation. He put emphasis on the natural life. Taoism did not encourage learning. Lao-Tzu believed that government was the best which granted freedom to the people. The philosophy of Lao-Tzu was thus different from Confucius. In course of time superstitions crept into Taoism and he was worshiped by the people as the god. However, like Confucius, the principles of Lao-Tze was also continued to influence the life and thought of the Chinese people for ages.

### 4.8.3. Buddhism

The age of the Hans witnessed not only the growing prosperity on account of the brisk trade but also the spread of Buddhism. Though Buddhism entered in China during the period of the Han dynasty it became a major Chinese religion about 400 years later. Then China came into contact with India and with Central Asia (to which Buddhism has spread). Merchants, missionaries and scholars came to China in large numbers. At that time it appeared as if China was on the verge of 'Indianised'. The number of Chinese Buddhists increased at such a rapid rate that by the 5<sup>th</sup> century they comprised in some areas, nine tenth of the population.

Buddhist missionaries preached principles of Mahayana Buddhism, which were received warmly in China during the first century C.E. Among the Indian Buddhist monks who assisted in setting up a mission in central China, two are noteworthy. They were Kasyapa Matanga and Dharmaratna. They went there with the sacred texts and relics of the Buddha. Buddhism became popular in China from third century CE. Many Buddhist schools were set up in China, the most popular being Ch'an. The spread of Buddhism had its impact on Chinese art like painting and sculpture.

Later on scores of Chinese scholars travelled overland or by sea to India where they visited monasteries and temples, discussed with Indian scholars, collected texts, studied Sanskrit, returned to China, wrote accounts of their travels and spent years translating the sacred texts they collected. They also wrote commentaries on them. Notable among such Chinese scholars was Fa-Hien. He started in 399 CE and travelling through Turkistan and Afghanistan, reached India. In India he spent several years, studying and collecting the Buddhist texts. Almost after 15 years he returned to China. Another traveler Hiuen-Tsang visited India by land through Central Asia. He translated a large number of Buddhist texts into China. It-Sing also visited India. Apart from translating many Buddhist texts, he also prepared a Sanskrit Chinese lexicon.

Buddhism introduced the following ideas to Chinese which were alien to the Chinese. Out look upon life, asceticism, the celibacy of monks and nuns, the sanctity of animal life, pity for suffering of fellow human beings, the transmigration of soul and the notion that a righteous person might become the savior of his fellow men. The

concepts of nirvana and karma did not make a deep impression on the Chinese. The Buddhists believed that a man would make his own fate, either winning salvation by faith and good behavior or incurring punishment in one or more hells. But the non-Buddhist Chinese believed that fate was pre-determined which a common man could not change and should learn to accept.

In course of time many diverse sects developed among the Chinese Buddhists. One of the most popular was the school of Ching- Te or “pure land”. According to this there were many Buddha, who had attained supreme enlightenment and then passed on the pure land of western paradise. Because they had earned a surplus of merit they would protect those who involved their name and asked for help.

Another sect was the Chan (this appeared in Japan also in the name of Zen). Though Chan recognizes the importance of good works and asceticism it lays emphasis on meditation. The third school was Tien-Tai. This emphasized the intensive study of scriptures and hence gained the favor of scholarly classes. Still another sect Chen-Yen or ‘true word’ stressed upon rituals and symbols. It appealed to some Chinese because it had a place for the traditional rites of ancestor worship and provided experts who could rescue souls at funerals.

Though Buddhism won the favor of some Chinese, it had to face strong opposition also. Non-Buddhists criticized the Buddhist emphasis on the salvation of the enormous wealth amassed by the Buddhist temples and monasteries. They did not favor Buddhist nuns as they failed to perform a women’s function i.e., bearing children. Similarly they disfavored Buddhist monks as they evaded the obligation of military service. This antagonism sometimes led to attack on Buddhists of China. Between 842 and 845 CE many monks and nuns were killed. Buddhist buildings destroyed and most of the Buddhist clergy was forced to take up secular vocation. There after Buddhism gradually declined. However, it did not disappear in China as it happened in India. Buddhism did not regain its former prestige and power.

**Do you now : Chinese Facts**

According to Chinese legends an early emperor and empress introduced farming, writing, bronze working and silk making to China. The origin of silkworm cultivation and bronze working dates back to 2200 BCE in China.

In Shang and Shou dynasty skilled craftsmen made magnificent cups, vessels, vases etc. Rulers and wealthy nobles considered bronze as a symbol of wealth and prestige.

Making bronze models from molds is invented in China. The bronze figures masked tigers and dragons. The Chinese recognized the importance of silk and made many efforts to prevent illicit smuggling of silkworm eggs or the seeds of mulberry tree outside China and by doing this they managed to preserve the process of Silk weaving in China for 3000 years.

People of china had faith in various superstitious beliefs. One among them is that the young girls had their feet bound to prevent from growing because that they believed that the small feet could bring fortunes.

An eight thousand year old flute is discovered in the archaeological excavations. For the Chinese, music was used for pleasure, religious ceremonies, announcements, dance and many other aspects.

The Chinese are the first to divide the musical instruments into 8 categories based on the material used to make them. They were; silk, bamboo, hide, gourd, clay, metal, stone and wood.

### **Key Points**

The geography of China had made it an isolated civilization, difficult to invade. Like the other civilizations, Chinese civilization also grew along the river valley of Hwang Ho. The Shin dynasty and the Shang dynasty made many developments in the fields of writing, making a calendar and bronze making and many other scientific and artistic techniques. Confucius, Taoism and Buddhism are the three important religions in ancient China. Ancestor worship and gods of nature worship flourished in China. The Chinese established trade contacts with India, Persia, Syria and Rome. Silk road transported the famous Chinese cloth to the Roman Empire. The society consisted of agriculturists, craftsmen, traders and literary class. Slaves led a miserable life.

## Map Skills

Identify the following in the political map of ancient China:

- a) Anyang
- b) Loyang
- c) Chengchow
- d) Silk route
- e) Yellow Sea

## Chapter Checkup

1. Describe the developments of the Shang dynasty in ancient China.
2. Confucius is a great teacher, writer and reformer – Justify.
3. Write about the journey of Buddhism in ancient China.
4. What are the contributions made by the Han dynasty to the Chinese civilization?

## Short Answers

1. Taoism
2. Economic conditions in ancient China.
3. Shi – Hwang- Ti
4. Five books of Confucius
5. Great wall of China
6. Slavery in ancient China

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**UNIT V**  
**GREEK AND ROMAN**  
**CIVILIZATIONS**

## UNIT V: Greek and Roman Civilizations

### 5.1. Greek Civilization

The civilization which flourished in ancient Greece is the mother of the modern European civilization. Thus the whole Europe is indebted to Greece.



Map: Ancient Greece

#### 5.1.1. Geographical Background

The Greek peninsula is situated to the south of Europe on the Mediterranean Sea and separated from Asia Minor by the Aegean Sea. The Mainland of Greece is surrounded by a number of islands. One of the largest islands which appear directly below the peninsula is Crete. It was here that the predecessors of Ancient Greeks pioneered a great civilization called the Aegean Civilization. The Aegean Civilization is also known by other names such as Cretan or Minoan. Even before the advent of the Phoenicians as traders and sailors in this region, The Aegean or Cretans flourished

as trading people and built an empire. They built cities on the mainland of Greece, and Aegean islands and in the Asia Minor. Their main outpost in Asia Minor was the city of Troy.

The climate of Greece is excellent for health. It is neither very hot nor very cold and naturally, people feel comfortable in that climate. The climate made the people active and hardworking and at the same time it helped the development of their mental faculties to a great extent. A number of natural harbors surrounded the sea coast of Greece, helping the growth of maritime trade which ultimately led to the economic prosperity of the people. These geographical factors contributed greatly to the growth of Greek civilization.

### **5.1.2. The Aegean civilization**

This civilization flourished in the islands of the Aegean Sea between 2000 BCE and 1400 BCE. This can be called as the first civilization of Europe. This was called as Aegean Civilization. As it was first developed on the island of Crete in the Aegean Sea, it was called the Cretan Civilization. The rulers of the island of Crete were called Minos and so the civilization was called Minoan Civilization after a city called Mycenae, built by the Cretans.

The Aegean Empire flourished between 2500 and 1400 BCE probably with its capital, Knossos. It was at Knossos that the splendid palace of king Minos was found. The palace contained over 800 rooms, including a magnificent throne room. The rooms were connected by courtyards and corridors. The complex structure served as a royal residence, temple, store room and government center. The palace had an elaborate drainage system, yet it had no defensive walls. Apparently, the Cretans felt that their ships and the sea protected them from invaders.



### **Ruins of the Throne room of Minos, an Aegean King at Knossos**

The record of the Minoan Civilization is incomplete. The Cretans developed a writing system based on pictograms and signs made up of lines. Scholars call this writing as Linear A, but they have as yet found no clue to deciphering it. Most information on the Cretans has come from the excavations at Knossos.

The Cretan Civilization eventually grew weak, and Crete was invaded by people from the Greek mainland. About 1400 BCE Knossos itself was destroyed, perhaps by an earthquake, a volcano, or invaders. Like the Indus Valley Civilization, this early civilization on Crete mainland was buried for a long time. Yet Crete directly influenced the peoples of mainland Greece.

### **5.1.3. Achaean Civilization**

About 2000 BCE the Achaeans, Indo-European people like the Hittites and Aryans, invaded the Greek peninsula from the north. The Achaeans settled in one region for a few generations. Then they pushed further south. As they conquered new territory, they intermarried with the people already living on the Greek peninsula.

Eventually, the Achaeans extended their conquests over the Peloponnese, the southern half of Greece.

The Achaeans expanded their empire through warfare and trade. By about 1400 BCE, they controlled the Aegean and probably occupied Knossos. They built strong fortress cities on the mainland. Each city was ruled by a warrior king. Riches from trade and war loot allowed Achaean rulers to fill their palaces and tombs with gold treasures. Outside of each walled city, traders, merchants, artisans and farmers lived in small villages that paid tribute to the king.

The Achaeans built on the achievements of Minoan civilization. Artisans at Mycenae reproduced Minoan designs on their jewelry, Pottery and tools. The Achaeans also learned writing from the Minoans. Achaean writing, called Linear B, consists of signs adapted from Minoan Linear A.

#### **5.1.4. The Trojan War**

About 2000 BCE, the mainland of Greece was invaded by the Achaeans, a branch of Indo-Europeans. They settled on the mainland and some of them even occupied the islands nearby including Crete. About 1200 BCE they attacked the city of Troy. Ten years of siege and the final destruction of this city are described by Homer in one of his epic poems Iliad. After a long and devastating war, the Achaeans emerged as victors.

Scholars first learned about the Trojan War from the Iliad and Odyssey, two of the best known epic poems in the world. The poems were probably composed by Homer, a blind Greek poet, about 750 BCE long after the fall of Troy. Homer based his poems on stories that had been passed on by earlier generations. The Iliad deals with the war between the Spartans and Troy. The Odyssey deals with the adventures of Odysseus on his homeward journey from the war after the fall of Troy.

According to the Iliad, the tragic struggle occurred because, Paris, a Trojan Prince, kidnapped Helen, the wife of the king of Sparta. The Spartan king and his brother, king Agamemnon of Mycenae, enlisted the help of other rulers and eventually involved all of Greece in the effort to rescue Helen. After ten years of war, the Achaeans destroyed Troy and drove the Trojans into exile.

Until the late 1800s, historians considered the Iliad and Odyssey to be fiction. The poems, which mixed stories of gods and goddesses with legends of human heroes, seemed to have no historical value. However, Heinrich Schliemann an amateur archaeologist believed that Troy had really existed and he set out to prove it. Then he began to excavate a site in north western Asia Minor that matches Homer's description of Troy. Digging revealed the ruins of an ancient city, but, Schliemann soon discovered that at least nine cities had been built at different times on the same spot. Finally, he discovered the city Troy, which was actually destroyed by the Achaeans. Later, Schliemann excavated the site of Mycenae, which was also described by Homer.

### **5.1.5. Greek Epics - Iliad and Odyssey of Homer**

The Greeks created the most influential mythology of western civilization. This mythology is noted for its rich, yet disciplined imaginations, for its human quality and for its aesthetic nature. It rarely emphasized the cruel or frightening aspects of life. Throughout Greek history it was a fertile source of ideas for dramatists, artists and philosophers. Throughout the Greek mythology the world is depicted as dominated by gods who were like human beings, but for being more powerful and immortal. These gods were favorable to men particularly great heroes. The Zeus, Heracles and some others were such heroes favored by gods.

The same views which created Greek Mythology were also present in the Greek Epic. However, they were developed into one of the world's greatest literary achievements. The subjects of the great epics were largely the wars and the other adventures of the heroes who lived before, during and just after the Trojan War. The Trojan War was launched by all the Greeks under the leadership of Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae to regain the beautiful Helen, who was stolen from his brother Menelaus of Sparta. King Agamemnon and his brother were supported in war by Nestor of Pylos, Odysseus from the western islands of Ithaca and Achilles of Thessalian Pithia and others. Against the Greeks were the Seducer Paris, his brother Hector and other warriors under the king Priam of Troy together with allies drawn from Asia and Thrace.

### 5.1.5.1. Iliad

The tale of the wrath of Achilles is a story of passion of bloody warfare and of proud heroes. However its ultimate lessons are far deeper. Achilles learns the folly of his blind anger, the man while great in his military glory is subjected to higher authority. The epic has two phases of action, the divine and human. Of these the divine is more important. The gods gave foreknowledge of the future through dreams, the flight of birds, thunder and even actual messengers. At times gods themselves participated in battles and got wounded. It is interesting that gods often that they were quarrelled, some adulterous and skilled in tricky. Yet the gods bowed before the master of all viz., Zeus of the mount Olympus. In fact Zeus himself was bound by the laws of the universe. The cult of these gods is devoid of superstitions and magic. It is often considered that the heroes like Odysseus, Achilles, and Agamemnon are more types than individuals. This idealistic attitude remained powerful in Greek philosophy of later days.



An illustration of war in Iliad by Homer, a blind Greek poet

### **5.1.5.2.Odyssey**

The second great epic, the Odyssey recounts the wanderings of Odysseus after the fall of the Troy for years and his return to the city Ithaca to kill the arrogant suitors of his wife Penelope. According to some scholars Homers was not the author of this poem. The pattern of the Odyssey is more discursive, less concentrated and less styled when compared to Illiad. The psychological and religious temper is also different. Both the epics survived. The Greeks know how to write before 750 BCE. However, we do not know when actually these two epics were committed to writing. But when they were written down they became very popular and became a source for artists, a stimulus to poets and a powerful statement of Greek views on man and the gods.

### **5.1.6.The Dark Age (1100-750BCE)**

After the fall of Troy, the Achaean civilization suffered a disastrous blow when Dorian invaders swarmed into Greece. The invaders had a military advantage because they had iron weapons and the Achaeans did not. The Dorians plundered the rich cities of the Peloponnesus and disrupted trade. Between 1100 BCE and 750BCE, Greece entered a troubled period. The glory of Achaean civilization vanished. Artistic skills and writing were largely forgotten. Scholars have called this period of Greek history as Dark Age.

During the Dorian invasions, some Greeks from the mainland migrated to Asia Minor. Other migrations took place within the Greek peninsula itself and they preserved the memories of Achaean civilization. In the cities founded by the refuges, ideals and traditions emerged that would influence later Greek civilization. In fact, Homer lived in Asia Minor when he composed the Illiad and Odyssey.

The invasions and migrations prepared the way for a great new civilization. As the wanderers had finally settled down after about 700 BCE. The patterns of stable culture began to emerge. This period of first beginnings of settled culture dated roughly from 700 BCE to 500 BCE is called as the Archaic or Formative Age in Greek history.



### **5.1.7. The Archaic or Formative Age (700 - 500 BCE)**

Due to the Dorian invasions large number of Greeks migrated to several places. Some remained in their own places. During this period the institutions and attitudes of the Hellenic society began to take shape. The society of this era was diverse, complicated and changing. But it was on this foundation that the Classic Greek civilization arose.

One of the most important developments of this period was the spread of Greek settlements far and wide throughout the lands around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. For example Byzantium was founded by the Greeks in 658 BCE. This colonization gave the Greeks new sources of wealth. With the wealth the number of Greeks and their sea faring activities increased. They developed trade all around the Mediterranean. As commerce increased fierce economic rivalries sprang up which sometimes resulted in war among the rival Greek cities themselves. The development of commerce led to the use of coinage which replaced barter system. The increase of trade and commerce resulted in the formation of two sections, new class of very rich and slaves. Thus the social order underwent a significant change.

### **5.1.8. Development of Greek City-States**

The growth of city-states was an important feature of the Greek civilization. Each tribe occupied a valley which was separated from the other by mountains and rivers. Each city-state was very particular in protecting its independence. Often the city-states are jealous with each other. As the state developed around a city was called as city-state. The Greeks were loyal to their own city-states and even prepared to sacrifice their life for it. At the center of each city-state there was the fort of the king on a hill. It was surrounded by the villages on the plains. Each city-state was protected by a wall. A place was demarked for the common meeting ground of the people. In that place the king and the council used to meet to take important decisions. There was a council and an assembly to carry out the administration of the city-state.

In spite of the spirit of independence each city-state, all the Greeks strongly believed that they were all the descendants of a common ancestor Hellen. Another bond which united them was the common language and literature. Religion was another factor which united Greeks. Besides worshipping the patron god or goddess, they worshiped common and popular gods like Zeus (sky god), his son Apollo (sun

God), Poseidon (sea God), Athena (goddess and protector of cities) etc. All the Greeks regarded Iliad and odyssey of Homer as their common property. The Olympic Games were another important unifying factor. These games were held in each fourth year at a place called Olympia in honor of the god Zeus. All the Greeks participated in these games to compete in athletic events, poetry and music competitions. Finally the Greeks thought that they were superior to the people living outside Greece. This idea inculcated into their mind a strong sense of national unity.

Among the city-states Sparta and Athens were most important, but they differed widely in character. The Spartans concentrated on physical development while the Athens on mental. While the Spartans glorified the war, the Athenians emphasized the need to develop the finer aspects of life. Consequently, Sparta became a center of heroism and Athens a center of Greek culture.

#### **5.1.8.1. Sparta**

The city Sparta was established by the Dorian migrants in the southern part of Greece. In order to oppress the revolted people the, Dorians formulated a set of rules which made them physically powerful. The Spartans believed that only the healthy children could become great soldiers in future. That's why only the healthy and good looking children were allowed to live in Sparta. Each newborn child was examined by experts. Women were asked to bear strong and healthy children. For this they were required to undertake regular physical exercise like males. From the age of seven the boys were required to study in military campus where they were given rigorous military training for twelve years. The Spartans did not have any inclination towards education and learning. After the military training they were forced to work in the army up to the age of sixty.

In this way the Spartan life was hard and rude. The entire state looked like a military camp. Family life was forbidden to the people. Their life was dry and devoid of enjoyment. They could not devote time to agriculture and trade which were left to the slaves. This made Spartans military strong with an invisible army. As warriors they were second to none. They were always busy in the fighting with others. But they could not inspire others, as the Greeks of nature, they were fond of Art, Philosophy and science. The Spartans are remembered in history for their martial spirit, heroism, patriotism and sense of discipline.

### **5.1.8.2. Athens**

Athens was situated in the province of Attica. The life in Athens was quite different from Sparta. Athenians developed Greek literature, art and architecture, philosophy, politics etc. which reached the climax during the time of Pericles. They established democratic system of government. Political power was transferred to the people. Athenians were fond of trying political experiments. Monarchy and Oligarchy did not suit their temperament and hence they discarded them and adopted Democracy. At that time the nobles enjoyed all kinds of privileges. They oppressed the common people and their condition gradually deteriorated. They were overburdened with debts and served as slaves under the nobles. There were no written laws and the administration was carried out on arbitrary basis. In course of time some reformers in Athens tried to improve the condition of the common people and to establish Democracy. These reformers were Draco, Solon, Pisistratus and Clisthenes.

### **5.1.8.3. Foundations of Democracy in Athens**

In 621 BCE the Archons (The aristocracy governed through a council, headed by three archons or officials) appointed Draco, a noble, to draw up a written code of law. They felt that such a code was necessary to prevent civil war. At that time there were no written laws. The judges interpreted the laws in their own way. That's why the ordinary people failed to get justice. This caused discontent among the people. So Draco first codified the laws. Like Hammurabi's code, the law codes of Draco were very harsh. It ordered the death penalty for many offenses. But Draco's code made the law's public and required that judges, usually nobles, apply the laws equally to all classes. His laws were extremely severe and even today the word "Draconian" is used for all kinds of severity. But unfortunately, Draco's code failed to satisfy the demands of most Athenians, and violence continued to disrupt the city. But still, Draco's code was first step towards the establishment of the rule of law. In the next century, other leaders would make further changes that became the foundations for Democracy in Athens.

In 594 BCE Athenians turned to Solon, a wise, well-educated, sensitive leader, to solve Athens's problems. He was a great statesman. He felt sorry for the miserable conditions of the poor peasants. Solon abolished the practice of debt slavery and freed citizens previously forced into slavery. He also limited the amount of land. One

citizen could own and extend citizenship to some skilled artisans from other cities. To increase the food supply and keep prices down, he stopped the sale of grain aboard. However, he encouraged the export of olive oil and wine, which helped make Athens a great trade center.

Through Solon's reforms, ordinary citizens gained greater political power. The assembly of citizens obtained the right to approve government decisions. A new law code, milder than Draco's, guaranteed citizens the right to bring charges against other citizens in a law court. To check the power of those who administered the laws, Solon created new law courts in which citizens owning a certain amount of property served as Jurors.

Despite Solon's reforms, unrest prevailed in the society. Land ownership was still the basis of real political power. The Landless citizen could not hold many official positions, and families freed from debt slavery were left with no land. As a result, the land-owning nobility continued to dominate the Athenian government.

Discontent eventually paved the way for the establishment of tyranny. In 560 BCE Pisistratus, a tyrant seized power with the support of poor citizens. He redistributed land, giving more to the peasants. He also reduced the privileges of the nobles and directed new building projects. He ruled for thirty years and during his reign there was remarkable progress in Athenian art and architecture, literature, agriculture and trade and commerce. During his period Athens gained prestige throughout the Greek world. After his death again anarchy prevailed in Athens.

The rise of Cleisthenes put an end to the anarchy. In 508 BCE Cleisthenes moved Athens further along the road to democratic government. He made the Athenian assembly the law making body. All citizens, regardless of whether they owned land, participated in the assembly. Cleisthenes also granted citizenship to some immigrants and former slaves. He established a council of 500 citizens to propose laws and to administer those laws that the assembly approved. Members of the council were chosen by lot.

Cleisthenes took some steps to prevent the rise of tyranny in future and project Democracy in Athens. For this he introduced a new system called Ostracism. Ostracism was the temporary exile of a citizen from the city. If citizens thought a

person was a threat to Athens, they could vote to ostracize him by writing his name on a piece of pottery. Any one receiving more than 6,000 such votes, was banished from Athens for ten years. In this way the people controlled the administration of the state. The development of Democracy in Athens continued in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. It reached its height under the great statesman Pericles.

### **5.1.9. Persian Invasions**

During the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, events took place in the Middle East that would greatly affect the Greek world. Under the leadership of Emperor Cyrus, the Persians built a large empire. Its border stretched from the Aegean Sea shore in the west to the border of Afghanistan in the east. Cyrus defeated Croesus, the world's richest king of Lydia in 546 BCE. This helped the Persians to expand further. The Greek cities of Asia Minor came under the rule of the Persian Emperors. But the Greek cities of Asia Minor revolted against the Persian rulers (499 BCE- 494 BCE) and sought help of the Greek cities on the mainland. Athens and a few other states sent aid. But the new Persian Emperor, Darius the Great crushed these revolts. He decided to teach a lesson to Athens for helping the Greeks of Asia Minor.

#### **5.1.9.1. Persian wars**

The Persian emperor Darius sent a large army to attack Athens. The Athenians fought this battle at Marathon (490 BCE) bravely and the Persian's fled. The Persians suffered heavy casualties (6400 dead) while the Athenians lost 200 soldiers only. Soon after victory the joyous Athenian leader sent a runner to inform the people at home about the glorious victory. The runner covered the distance of 26 miles and 385 yards at a stretch, released the happy news and got died. (hence the expression Marathon run. In modern Olympics this sports item is included as the last event).

The Persian war did not end with the Marathon battle. Ten years later Xerxes, the successor of Darius, organized land and sea expeditions to defeat the Greeks. He encouraged the Phoenicians to attack Greek colonies in Italy and Sicily. The Spartans realized the danger and the Spartan king Leonidas, with 300 soldiers guarded the narrow pass at Thermopylae for three days but finally the Persians were defeated. Then the Persian army entered the Athenian plains and burnt the city. But Athenians avenged this by defeating and destroying the Persian fleet in the naval battle of

Salamis (480 BCE). The Athenian statesman Themistocles was responsible for this victory. The Persian emperor fled to Asia Minor leaving his army on Greek soil. The Athenian further gained victories at Plataea (479 BCE) and at Mycale on the Ionian Sea Coast. The Phoenicians attacking the Greek colonies also could not make much progress. The Persian emperor gave up all hopes of conquering the Greek city-states. Even the Greek cities of Asia Minor got freedom. By championing the cause of Greek freedom Athens stood foremost among the Greek states. Free from fear, the Greek city-states grew prosperous. Their success in the naval battles paved way for prosperous sea-trade with the neighboring countries. Many Greek city-states made an alliance with Athens for self-protection. Athens achieved the climax of glory during the time of Pericles (462-429 BCE).

### **5.1.9.2. The Golden Age**

Pericles was the great grandson of Cleisthenes. He led his soldiers to victory at the battles of Salamis and Mycale. The Athenians elected him to the highest office (strategos) for the next 30 consecutive years. He completed the work of laying the foundation for Democracy. Being a radical politician he believed in reforms. He transferred the political powers to the council of 500. This body suggested measures to assembly where they were freely discussed by all the citizens of Athens and passed into laws.

Another important feature of the Periclean age was the jury system. Every year about 500 Jurors were elected for a term of one year to act as judges. There were no lawyers or judges and so the plaintiff and the defendant had to argue their own cases before the Jurors. The Jurors decided the guilt and accordingly passed sentences. The assembly which consisted of all the citizens of Athens, elected ten executive officers to command the army, navy and conduct foreign policy. Pericles was one among those ten, but he dominated the rest. He was a great lover of Democracy and hence wanted even the poorest citizen to take part in the Democratic system. For this he introduced the system of payment of salaries to the archons (magistrates) and to the members of the council of Five Hundred and Jurors.

### **5.1.9.3. Building of Athens as Beautiful city**

During the Persian war, Athens was destroyed. Pericles undertook the task of rebuilding the city. Hundreds of artists and architects worked hard to construct large public buildings. The most attractive feature of the new city was the Parthenon temple on the Acropolis. This was built of color marble stones. Inside the temple there was the tall marble statue of Athena, the patron goddess of the city. The sculptor of this statue of Athena was Phidias. He also made the statues of Athena in ivory and gold. The temple was built by the architect Ictinus. In this temple three styles viz., Doric, Ionic and Corinthian were blended beautifully. The Acropolis (a small hill in the center of the city of Athens) with many temples including the famous Parthenon became the main religious center of Athens. Polygnotus was the painter who decorated the temples and buildings with his beautiful paintings. Pericles also patronized Music. The Athenians were the great lovers of beauty and music. To protect the beautiful city from foreign invaders, Pericles got the “long Walls” built (5miles) connecting the city with the port. A big Gymnasium was also built for the youth of Athens. Another important place in Athens was the market place the Agora. Thus Pericles’s contribution to the Athenian culture was very significant.



**Parthenon Temple on the Acropolis**

### **5.1.10. Religious Beliefs**

Ancient Greek myths wove complex stories about many Greek gods and goddesses. In these myths, the gods and goddesses often looked and behaved like ordinary human beings. They differed from humans, however, because they were more powerful and had eternal life. Greeks did not fear their gods, but failure to honor the gods was considered a serious offense. There are 12 most powerful gods and goddesses in Greek civilization. They met on Mount Olympus. The chief god was Zeus. He ruled the universe and made his presence through thunder, lightning and earthquakes. Poseidon was the lord of the seas and Hades, the ruler of the underworld were the brothers of Zeus. Their sister Hestia was the goddess of the hearth, or home fire. Hera, the wife of Zeus, was the goddess of marriage. Athena, the patron goddess of Athens was the goddess of wisdom, handicrafts and agriculture. Artemis was the goddess of the woods. Aphrodite was the goddess of love. Hermes, was the messenger of the gods. Hephaestus, was the god of fire and metalworkers and Ares, the god of war; Apollo, the god of the sun, music and healing. He was the most popular god in ancient Greece.

Each Greek city-state held festivals to honor individual gods. Religious celebrations held each year and all citizens took part in the events. Every four years, Athletes assembled at Olympia to honor Zeus and Olympic Games were open to all Greeks. The Greeks also participated in festivals connected to mystery religions. These religions emphasized secret rituals and promised immortality, or eternal life to followers. These mystery religions were very popular.

### **5.1.11. Greek Literature**

The contribution of Greeks to the field of literature is very significant by means of the heroic epics, the power of the dramas and in the form of history and philosophy. They interpreted man and his world with sympathy and beauty. The first great figure in Greek literature is Homer, the author of the epics Iliad and Odyssey. In these Homer wrote the proud past of the Greeks. In ancient Greece religion, drama and poetry were linked. For example, chanting verses around the altar of Dionysos, the god of wine, led to the development of dramatic poetry. The Athenian poet Thespis created the first play. Greek plays were performed in outdoor theatres built into hillsides. The audience sat on sloping tiers of stone seats. Three male actors



performed all different parts, while an all-male chorus chanted verses to explain the play's action. The attendance was limited only to men, both rich and poor.

The earliest Greek plays were tragedies. Inspired by the stories from Iliad and Odyssey and by ancient myths, Greek playwrights posed questions about the behaviors of the gods and the causes of human suffering. They concerned with the individuals who struggled to achieve excellence but failed because of fate or their own weaknesses. Three great writers of Greek tragedy lived in Athens in 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. They are Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Aeschylus was called as the father of Greek tragedy. His plays were concerned with the relationships between people and the gods. Sophocles wrote 123 plays but only seven have survived. Euripides questioned the actions of the Olympian gods and was more critical of traditional ideas. He had sympathy for women and the oppressed.

Like tragedy, Greek comedy also originated in Athens. Comedies were plays in which poets ridiculed people, ideas and social customs. Aristophanes wrote The Birds, The Clouds and The Frogs. He enjoyed great popularity and influence. The Greeks admired epic poetry such as Iliad and Odyssey. They also enjoyed lyric poems. Sappho won fame for her lyric poetry. Pinder wrote Odes or poems honoring special occasions. He praised the winning Olympic athletes.

### **5.1.12. Historians**

The writing of history originated in Greece. Two greatest historians of the world, Herodotus and Thucydides lived in Ancient Greece. Herodotus is called as the Father of History. He made the first attempt together and analyses historical evidence. In order to write "History of the Persian Wars" he traveled extensively, interacted with many people, recorded the customs of the people and the geography of the places he visited. Thucydides wrote the "History of the Peloponnesian wars" improved on Herodotus methods. He tried to include only facts that he could prove. He tried to remain impartial. He also set an example of unbiased reporting for future historians.

### **5.1.13. Art and Architecture**

The educated Greeks thought that art was a part of everyday life. They lived with it in religion, in sports and even in politics of the city-state. The Greeks won their notable success in architecture by adhering to principles of simplicity and grace. They

took over the basic form of their temple from the Achaeans. At that state it was a rectangular structure, first made of wood but later stone. The Cella or the main portion of the temple was provided with a porch and row of columns surrounded by both porch and cella. The space below the angle of the sloping roof was usually fitted with brightly pointed sculptures. The style of the temple architecture is determined primarily by the shape and ornamentation of the columns. In the archaic period two styles were in use. The Doric style was popular in the mainland and in the west. In this, a plain, heavy column with sharp fluting was used. The Ionic style was popular in the islands and the Asiatic coast. In it a more slender column with flat fluting and volute capital was used. The Corinthian style appeared later, about the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. The most famous of all Greek architectural works is the Parthenon temple built on Acropolis in Athens. This was built on the orders of the emperor Pericles. Another outstanding example of the Greek architecture is the Erechtheum, which is also on the Acropolis. The Parthenon temple was built by Ictinus. The goddess Athena was the product of the famous sculptor Phidias. The statue of Athena was made of wood both overlaid with gold and ivory. Phidias also built the famous statue of Zeus of Olympia.

Greek sculptors shaved the perfect harmony and proportion in their sculptures. They portrayed the ideal rather than the real. Greek artisans produced fine pottery. On vases and bowls, artists painted figures of legendary warriors, chariot races or single scenes from the marketplace. The arts of ancient Greece were widely achieved and frequently copied. The achievements of Greece influenced artistic styles first in Rome and later in the rest of Western Europe.

#### **5.1.14. Philosophy**

The age of Pericles was also “The Age of Reason”. Great philosophers wanted to seek true knowledge “about man and the Universe”. They were not prepared to accept anything which did not stand to reason. The first great to win fame for his speculation on the nature of the universe was Thales (c.640-546 BCE). He is known as the “Father of Philosophy”. According to him water was the first only element and all things were made of water. Another notable Ionic philosopher was Anaximander (611-547 BCE). He too was a naturalist. According to him “indefinite” or “naturalist boundless” was the first principle. Out of boundlessness, through a process of the

separation of the opposite (like heat and cold) arose the world. The world is composed by four elements viz., earth, fire, air and water. Pythagoras (582-507 BCE) did not favor them realistic or physical interpretation as shown above. He sought an exploration beyond the physical world. His followers aimed at setting up a way of life that would free the soul from its confinement in the body. They believed that unless the soul is liberated it will be doomed to round of reincarnation. They also believed in the cultivation of the arts and sciences. This led them to a philosophy based on numbers. They regarded numbers as the key to an understanding of the universe. This resulted in the advancement of mathematics and astronomy.

#### **5.1.14.1. Socrates**

Socrates (469-399BCE) was a man of indomitable personal courage and extraordinary endurance. He was a member of the council of 500. Socrates was convinced that before men can begin tolerant they must recognize their own ignorance. So he first tried to clear the minds of his students' misconceptions. Socrates inspired a number of young and brilliant men in Athens. Plato was his greatest disciple. A number of his students belonged to the Oligarchy party. Consequently, Socrates was accused of teaching hostile ideas to the state religion and of corrupting the youth and he was awarded death penalty. According to the sentence he drank poison and died. His death is movingly described by Plato in his "Phaedo".

We have no writings of Socrates himself and we have to depend upon Plato's reports. Socrates did not formulate a systematic philosophy. He was concerned solely with men and their problems and he sought to give them moral guidance. Socrates emphasised that the rules of virtue alone can give happiness. He tried hard to show his students the importance of clear thinking. Thus his teachings were constructive.

#### **5.1.14.2. Plato**

Plato (427-347BCE) was the greatest disciple of Socrates. He was a wealthy aristocrat who never thought of the Democracy of his native Athens. At Athens he maintained a school known as the Academy. He wrote down the political thoughts of Socrates. He was much interested in formal philosophy. He tried to explain the meaning of the entire universe. Most of his writings were in the form of dialogues. The clarity and beauty of the dialogues made Plato as one of the greatest masters of

Greek prose. Of his writings those on philosophy were the most excellent. Plato was particularly devoted to mathematics. The core of Plato's teachings was his theory of forms or ideas. The world we know is, like an image reflected in a mirror. He argues, like his teacher Socrates, that man should use his reason to attain virtue. That is why in his work, "The Republic" Plato said that the love of virtue should be inculcated by the state. The cultivation of virtues is the highest purpose of the state.

According to Plato in the ideal state there are to be three classes. 1) the lowest would do the work. 2) The second would protect the state and 3) The highest would govern. The highest class should have a rigorous education. Amassing of wealth is prohibited. Similarly the family ties are to be prohibited. Women should share in education and also in military service.

### **5.1.14.3. Aristotle**

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was born in Stagira. In 367 BCE he went to Athens and there he attended the lectures of Plato at the Academy and became the disciple of Plato. He was with Plato as his student for 20 years. Later he served for some time as tutor of Alexander, who was at that time a prince. After this he founded a school of his own in Athens. Aristotle was a prolific writer. But only some of his lecture notes survived. He was a man of superlative brilliance and energy. According to him it is essential for any student to know how to think clearly before beginning to think. For this he worked out a complete system of formal logic. He divided knowledge into three parts 1) Speculative or theoretic knowledge. Its purpose is to know for the sake of knowing. It includes metaphysics, the natural science and mathematics. 2) Practical Philosophy. It is directed towards the achievements of main happiness. It includes ethics, politics and economics. 3) Creative Philosophy. It is the theory of the arts. Aristotle considered metaphysics as the most important branch of knowledge.

According to Aristotle all things move towards their end or purpose according to nature's plan. Again according to him the highest of all is god in whom the perfect form is attained. He is the prime mover or source of all motion. He is far above the world and has nothing to do with it. He is completely aloof and engaged solely in self-contemplation. Aristotle's practical philosophy is expressed mainly in his "Ethics" and "Politics". He considered Monarchy and Aristocracy are theoretically superior to

Democracy. However, he observed that no one type of government is the best in all circumstances.

### **5.1.15. Science**

During the time of Pericles, Greek science was one-sided. The science of the early Greeks was chiefly speculative. Except for Medicine it was always allied with Philosophy. Many of the greatest philosophers of 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE were notable mathematicians and astronomers like Pythagoras, Plato and Euclid. Plato was a staunch advocate of geometry. Some progress was made in astronomy. It is said that Thebes predicted an Eclipse. Considerable success was achieved in measuring time. The solar year was reckoned at 365  $\frac{1}{4}$  days.

Aristotle carried out research in biological sciences and also collected a lot of information. Though he made mistakes in his studies of animal life and physics, the information recorded by him is of immense value. Though Medicine was practiced from very early times it actually made real progress in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In this field great physician was Hippocrates (460 BCE). In early times the healing art was in the hands of guilds or families of priests and heroes of medicine. However, by the time of Hippocrates medicine became free of religious association. So he realized that illness was a departure from the normal functioning of the body and not the work of some supernatural force. He used drugs and surgery rarely. He considered good diet and Fresh air as important for good health. Some of the terms introduced by Hippocrates are still in use in medical science. The “oath of Hippocrates” which is even now administered set the highest ethical and scientific standards for medical practitioners.

Geography was also a subject of study. The famous geographer Eratosthenes measured the circumference of the earth as 25,000 miles (his mistake was only by 200 miles) without any scientific aid or instrument. He also prepared maps with longitudes and latitudes. Archimedes discovered the principle of specific gravity.

### **5.1.16. Decline of Greek City-States**

Once the Persian treat was over, internal quarrels began. Sparta became jealous of the growing power of Athens and so war become inevitable between them. This war was known as Peloponnesian war. Sparta was helped by Persia who was

always eager to divide the Greek city-states. In 404 BCE Athens was defeated. Sparta reigned supreme for some time but by the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BCE all the Greek city-states remained hopelessly divided.

Taking the advantages of the Greek city-states king Philip of Macedonia invaded. He conquered all the Greek city-states except Sparta. He had plans for a united Greece and to fight the common enemy, Persian Empire. But before he could execute his plan he was assassinated. Philip was succeeded by his 20 years old son, Alexander the great. In 336 BCE by the time he ascended the throne Alexander had a highly disciplined and well-trained Greek army. Alexander's teacher was Aristotle. Alexander like his father loved Greek culture. Soon after Alexander came to the throne a revolt broke out in his own kingdom. Alexander mercilessly crushed it. The Greeks also revolted but Alexander put down the revolt and destroyed the city of Thebes completely. However, he spared the religious buildings and the house of the famous poet Pindar as he was a great admirer of his works. Alexander became the undisputed leader of Greece. Greeks were also ready to fight the Persians under his able leadership. Thus the Persians were defeated, under the leadership of Alexander in three successive battles at Granicus (334 BCE), Issus (333 BCE) and Arabela (331 BCE). Then Phoenician cities and Egypt came under his control. He built the city of Alexandria at the mouth of the Nile. Next he invaded India from the northwest and defeated the king Porus (326 BCE). This is followed by setting up his capital at Babylon in 324 BCE. Alexander died at the age of 33 in 323 BCE.

### **5.1.17. Social Life**

The ancient Greek society comprised four main social classes. They were slaves, metics, women and citizens. Men always were engaged in wars while the women left home for shopping and slaves carried household activities. However, in most of the Greek cities and villages, getting water from the town fountain was done by the women of the households. Women had no political rights and they were not allowed to attend the assembly and hold office etc.

#### **5.1.17.1. Food**

The people in Greece ate bread made of wheat and porridge made from barley. They used olive oil for cooking. Vegetables like chickpeas, olives, onions and garlic

were known to them. Since many Greek cities are in a close vicinity to the Sea, they had many varieties of fish. They also consumed milk and cheese and many families domesticated the goat. Meat was eaten on occasions only. People of Greece had bread dipped in wine for breakfast. They loved wine and considered that it is a gift to the mankind from the god Dionysus, the wine god.

### **5.1.17.2. Dress**

The clothing in ancient Greek is homemade. They used the fabric as a garment, shroud or a blanket. The vase paintings of Greece suggest that the fabrics were colored brightly. A Tunic and a cloak were the two main garments of both men and women. The garments were wide and long and were placed around the body and fastened at the shoulders with a pin. Men also wore a chiton similar to the women but only up to the knee level. An exomis and a short chiton is worn when horse riding and hard labor. Greek women donned a flat-brimmed hat on occasions. Men and women both wore sandals, slippers, shoes and boots.

### **5.1.17.3. Houses and streets**

The homes of the ancient Greek citizens were markedly different from the huge palaces and temples we see in the Greek architecture. They are made of mud and wood. The Greeks did not have separate rooms for different functions like kitchens for cooking, living rooms, reception room and bedrooms. An area which is used to cook food might turn into a bed room in the next minute. The houses were rebuilt and repaired every year as the walls deteriorate fast. Stone is also used for building purposes in the areas its found abundantly. Windows were smaller and covered with shutters in the houses of the poor. A Number of rooms depended on the wealth owned by the family. It varied from 2 to 12 rooms. Some houses are two-storeyed. Children and slaves lived upstairs. A Significant feature is that a room called ‘andron’ (men’s room) is common in every house. This room was similar to a lounge for men to host their friends and associates and the Greek women were tend to attend this area when there are dinner parties and symposia. Women also had their own room called ‘gynaecium’ (women’s room). These rooms were often built at the rear of the house or upstairs. Some areas in the house are left to ply their craft, making cheese, weaving cloth etc. The ancient Greek homes rarely had bathrooms. Wells and water supply was

not common, so women fetched water from the town fountains. Chambered pots were used by the wealthy people.



**Public latrines in Ephesus, ancient Greece.**

## **5.2. Roman Civilization**

The ancient Greeks gave the world their idea of democracy, art, philosophy, science and literature. Their successors, the Romans, added to it their legal system and the art of statecraft. While the Greeks always remained disunited, the Romans showed the way to unity and consolidation. The Greeks tended to be intellectual but the Romans proved to be practical minded. With these contrasts in mind, let us examine the genesis and development of the Roman Empire.





**Ancient Roman Empire**

### **5.2.1. Geographical Factors**

Like ancient Greece, the early history of Rome in Italy was very much influenced by geographical factors. The Italian peninsula has two main divisions, The Valley of the “PO” river in the north and the long narrow peninsula proper stretching away to the southeast. The Alps Mountains separate Italy from the rest of Europe. The Alps and the seas surrounding on all the three sides gave Italy its natural protection. However, hordes of tribes entered Italy through its passes. The Apennine mountains run north-south along the eastern coast and hence made it possible for Rome (lying at the Centre of the West Coast) to dominate over the entire peninsula at later date. Mild climate and fertile soil were helpful to the growth of agriculture. Because of these

natural advantages Italy, even from early times, began to attract settlers from many other lands. About 2000 BCE Indo –Europeans settled in the central and southern portions of Italy. The people known as the Latins were the most notable among these early immigrants. Another people Etruscans arrived in Italy from the eastern Mediterranean region (Asia Minor) in about 800 BCE. A little later, Greek colonists began to settle in southern Italy and Sicily. Both the Etruscans and Greeks contributed much to the Roman culture. But neither the Etruscans nor the Greeks ruled over Italy in true sense. It was the Latins who ruled Italy.

### **5.2.2. Rise of Rome**

As noted above by about 2000 a group of Indo-Europeans called “Italics” came to Italy through Alpine passes. One of their tribes was the Latin who settled in Latium (the Central Plains of Italy) lying south of the river Tiber. They spoke Latin language. They began to live in small and walled villages. They established several such villages in the midst of seven hills near the west coast overlooking the Tiber River. They became trading posts of the Latins and finally developed into Rome. It had been said that this city was founded in 753 BCE. According to legends Rome was founded by twin brothers Romulus and Remus. But there is no history basis of these legends.

### **5.2.3. The Age of the Kings (Etruscan Rule)**

As noted above, the settlement of Rome began in 753BCE. Thereafter several kings are said to have ruled Rome. Of them the later ones were Etruscan conquerors. Finally, the Etruscan rule ended in 509 BCE. Though it is not certain how far these legends are true. They are not wholly imaginary. It is certain that a kingship existed in Rome in Ancient times and it resembled the Greek kingship of early time. The Roman king was a religious, military and judicial leader. He held sovereign power. There was an advisory council of aristocrats and an assembly of the people. These councils can only approve or disapprove the legislations, but the kings decision was final (these two bodies attained greater importance only at a later period).

The division between social classes was rigid. The land owners and patricians formed upper classes. Their number was small. The remaining mass of the people called Plebeians were small farmers and artisans. The Plebeians had no wealth and no

political power. The ruling class made use of religion to support their superior position. The first popular assembly had only a passive role in legislation. Its organization was based on the division of the Roman people into three tribes. Though plebeians were also in the assembly the patricians dominated.

Towards the end of the period of the kings a new assembly began to take shape. Its organization was based upon military considerations. The Roman people were divided into five classes based upon their economic ability to purchase military equipment. This again resulted in domination of the rich in the assembly as it happened earlier.

After the expulsion of the Kings the patricians gained control of Roman society. The severing power that the king formerly held has now delegated to two senior magistrates of equal power (called Consuls) who were elected for a term of one year. Only patricians were elected to these and other high positions. The senate was the chief legislative body and it was named so because it was a council of elders. From the first it was an aristocratic body. Though Roman government was no longer a monarchy but a republic it was still not a democracy. It was an Oligarchy (a system of rule by the few) in which only wealthy had the real political power.

### **5.2.3.1. Roman Democracy**

Two and half centuries after the establishment of the republic a considerable movement towards democracy was made in Rome's government. This development was the result of a long struggle between patricians and plebeians. The Patricians gained upper hand as soon as the kingship was abolished. But during the wars the plebeians assumed important rule. This is because it is the common people who sent a large number of soldiers for Roman army. So the Patricians could not ignore the Plebeians demand for a share in the loot of war and a higher place in the state.

But the plight of peasants was miserable. They had to raise debt and sometimes they were forced into slavery. After a long struggle some concessions were given to plebeians. Now the plebeians had the right to choose officials to defend their interests. Those officials were called "Tribunes". Then a new popular assembly called "Plebian assembly" came into existence. This was not dominated by the Patricians. Under this arrangement, the plebeians won the right to hold their own meeting to

those tribunes who also take care of other matters concerning them. The powers of the tribunes were enormous. They could protect the plebeians from the mischievous magistrates. They had the veto power over all official business. They further had the right to initiate legislation. Gradually the plebeians improved their position. The laws pertaining to them were written down. They became eligible to all high offices such as magistrates, consuls and priests. In 367 BCE, legislation was passed which helped plebeians in overcoming their economic hardships. According to a law passed in 237 BCE. The acts of Plebian assembly could become law without the approval of the Senate. This was the final victory for the plebeians. Now with all those changes, the Roman government appeared democratic. But only one permit to be noted that only a few plebeians could become rich and they were beginning to form a new class. This very few plebeians could get into senate. So senate continued to be dominated by wealthy people and not common masses.

### **5.2.3.2. The Roman Republic (Expansion in Italy (509 To 265 BCE))**

The expansion of the Roman Republic started long back before the end of the struggle between the patricians and plebeians. All the Romans were united for this cause. The expansion of the Republic took place through different states. In the first state, Rome brought the whole of Italy under its control. The Punic wars marks the second phase of the expansion, In the third phase Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt were conquered. The conquests of Julius Caesar constituted the conducting phase of the expansion of the Roman Republic.

#### **5.2.3.2.1. First Phase**

In the first phase the Romans defeated the Volscians, Aequians, Etruscans, Samnites and other tribes of Italy and established supremacy throughout Italian peninsula. Then the Gauls attacked the city Rome and burnt it. The Romans were forced to pay a huge ransom to save themselves. Then the Gauls left Italy and there by the Republic saved. By 270 BCE the Rome became supreme power in the entire Italy.

#### **5.2.3.2.2. Second Phase (Punic Wars)**

But the troubles of Rome did not come to an end. Carthage, lying on the North African Coast just opposite Sicily was the most powerful and wealthy Phoenician

colony. It had a powerful navy. Carthage was afraid of the expansion policies of Rome and attempted to prevent it from trading with Sicily. Consequently series of wars called the “Punic Wars” (after the Phoenicians) broke out between Rome and Carthage.

The first war was waged in 264 BCE as Carthage occupied Messina, a port in North-Eastern Sicily. This war was mostly fought on the sea. Rome suffered a series of defeats at the hands of the Carthaginians. However learning from experience, the Romans started building better battle ships to fight the enemy. The war ended after 23 years (241 BCE) Carthage made peace with Rome ceding the Island of Sicily. This was the first Punic War.

Again after 23 years (281 BCE) the Second Punic war broke out. Now Carthage under the able leadership of the general Hannibal attacked Saguntum (East coast of Spain), which was an ally of Rome. The general scored brilliant victories over Romans. However, he could not capture Rome. Though he stayed 13 years in Italy he did not get the cooperation of the Italian cities. The Romans appointed Fabius Maximus as dictator to deal with Hannibal. Maximus adopted delaying tactics. He did not fight his enemy in open battles. The Romans further sent a brilliant commander, Publius Scipio to Spain to defeat Carthaginians. He defeated the Carthaginians who were holding Spain and from there proceeded to Carthage. In 202 BCE he defeated Carthage. So again Carthage had to make peace with Romans by paying heavy penalty. Carthage also agreed not to wage any war against Rome. But Hannibal once again tried to fight with Rome with the help of Macedonia, Greece and West Asia Minor. But Rome conquered all these three powers one by one. Thus Hannibal's efforts to conquer Rome remained futile.

Despite these attacks Carthage recovered her former glory in about a century. Angered with these repeated attacks of the Carthaginians, Romans took a vow to destroy Carthage. A Roman senator Marcus Porcius Cato once visited the city of Carthage after the second Punic war. He could not take the recovery of Carthage in good spirit and apprehended that it might produce another Hannibal in future. He returned to Rome and eventually pleaded in the Senate for another war with Carthage. The substance of all his speeches in the Senate was “Carthage must be destroyed”. The war started in 149 BCE and continued up to 146 BCE. In this war the entire

Carthage was destroyed and its people were either killed or sold away as slaves by the Romans. Finally Carthage became part of Rome. This Rome became a supreme power in the Mediterranean world. With this victory Rome came into contacts with the Hellenistic Culture and was greatly benefited by it. Macedonia and Greece became Roman Provinces in 146 BCE.

#### **5.2.4. Julius Caesar (49-44 BCE)**

Among the Roman generals who became famous (as the first Triumvirate) were Pompey, Julius Caesar and Crassus. Pompey conquered Syria and the Near East and controlled the Roman State. Julius Caesar conquered Gaul (Modern France and Belgium) and Britain. Crassus died fighting the Parthians. The victories of Julius Caesar made Pompey not only feel jealous but also nervous. So he ordered Caesar to return to Rome without his army. But Caesar with his loyal army marched towards Rome (49 BCE). This was the most fateful step Caesar took in his lifetime. Being extremely popular with the Romans, Caesar made a triumphant entry into Rome. Pompey and the senate members fled. But Caesar chased Pompey into Egypt and killed him there. Egypt under Queen Cleopatra became an ally of Rome. Though Caesar ruled the Roman Empire like a virtual dictator, he showed respect to the Republican traditions and form of Government. After putting down the revolts in Spain and Africa he inaugurated his rule with a series of reforms.

The Roman governor had been mismanaged for more than 150 years. Both the assembly and senate had used their powers selfishly. So he preferred dictatorship. Now the senate once all-powerful became a rubber stamp. Caesar controlled the entire military power.

The measures taken by Caesar for the welfare of the Roman Empire were very significant and long-lasting. He viewed the Empire as a common wealth of people under the protection and guidance of Rome. As a step towards realizing his conception of the empire, he gave full or partial rights of citizenship to the people of Gaul and Sicily. His other reforms included improvement in agriculture, reduction of taxes, removal of corruption and oppressive governors, distribution of public lands, inauguration of public work programs, improving the coinage system and introducing the Julian calendar. He also planned to bring about a legal code and construction of a library. Municipal governments were given uniform administration. They could

appoint their own tax collectors. The governors of Provinces were made responsible to the central government. They were not allowed to rule as aristocracy. These reforms of Caesar were undoubtedly very significant and were followed by his successors.

Within Rome itself also Caesar introduced reforms. He reduced the number of citizens living on government money. He encouraged a large number of citizens to migrate to overseas colonies. He distributed a considerable amount of land to small farmers. The city of Rome was over crowded which resulted in disorder. So Caesar made plans for reconstructing buildings in Rome. His other public works included the planning of a harbor at Ostia to recall the shipments of grain bowed for Rome. He arranged public entrainments and banquets which earned him the goodwill of the people. We must note that Caesar achieved all these with his short rule of time, which is less than four years.

Though Caesar had the support of most of the people, the majority of the senators were against him. To them the tremendous rise of Caesar was a danger to democracy in Rome. So a conspiracy was hatched against him, under the leadership of Marcus Brutus, who was one of the intimate friends of Caesar. On March 15<sup>th</sup> 44 BCE Caesar was mercilessly slain by the senators Brutus, Cassius and Caius. With the death of Caesar the Republic was not revived. Rome was again plunged into a civil war.

The cultural life of Rome can be studied under two sections. The first section deals with the cultural life prior to 100 BCE, while the second section with the cultural life during the last century of the Republic.

### **5.2.5. Cultural Life Prior To 100 BCE**

#### **5.2.5.1. Society**

The wars of imperial expansion brought significant changes in the Roman society. Rome had always been divided into classes. But now the division became sharpened. The rivalry between classes became more acute. Peasants gave up farming and moved to Rome or other cities. This migration resulted in unwelcome growth in urban population. Due to lack of work in cities the poor people lived a wretched life. They were even doing menial work. Sometimes a poor man having voting right would

vote for a rich man and do menial work for him. Such a poor man called 'client'. In return the wealthy man contributes to upkeep the poor man. This relationship was known as 'clientage'. This clientage became widespread during this period resulting in the degeneration of the society. The rich aristocrats were exploiting the society to the maximum. Thus the gap between the rich and poor became dangerously wider.

## Food

Like all the other civilizations in the world, Rome also had a hierarchical society. The food on the plates of the wealthy and rich is completely different from the poor. The master and the slave had different food served on their plates. Human wastes excavated by the archaeologists in the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii left some digested dietary evidences. A surviving 10 volume book on cookery, Apicius' *De re Coquinaria* dated to 4<sup>th</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> Cen. CE and Pliny, the Elder's *Natural History* are fine sources on edible plants.



**Still life with eggs, birds and bronze dishes, from the House of Julia Felix, Pompeii.**



They ate meat, fish, vegetables, cheese and grains. The meat of dormice, hare, snails and boar made a part of their meal. Small birds like thrushes ,and chicken were also consumed. Romans grew beans, olives, peas, salads etc. The Romans are the pioneers in making cheese and it is interesting to know that Emperor Diocletian had passed laws to fix its price. While the rich ate protein and nutritious food, the poor had staple porridge. In 2013, the bone analysis of poor Romans proved that they consumed larger quantities of millet. Recent excavations in Pompeii suggest that the Romans generally dined out in the cafeterias and restaurants.

## **Dress**

People of Rome wore clothes made of wool. They also bought silk, cotton and linen brought from other parts. Many of the Roman men wore toga. Only male citizens of Rome were allowed to wear the togas. There were togas of different colors for different occasions. Tunic was another standard dress for the slaves to nobles. Cheapest tunics were made by sewing two pieces of wool. Both men and women wore a cloth called subligaculum as an inner ware. Shoes and sandals made of leather are worn by the Romans. All men had their hair cut and cleanly shaved.

## **Houses and streets**

Roman housing conditions depended on their financial conditions. It is common that the wealthy lived in large and spacious villas and the poor lived in unhealthy houses. Archaeologists have unearthed houses that are well preserved in Pompeii and made several remarks on the houses of the ancient Romans. The rich people and the noble lived in single storeyed house called Domus. These homes had the Antica at the front the Postica at the rear. Homes are adorned with pillars, statues etc. the bed rooms and living rooms were in the central area. The postica area is private that it was used to grow herbs and other garden works.



### **The Domu of Menander in Pompeii**

The working Romans in cities lived in insula. They are the multi storeyed apartments. The ground floors in these apartments are generally shops and the shop owners lived above these shops. Fire, collapse and floods were common. Paid tenants lived in the first two floors, with large rooms, windows, balconies etc.

#### **5.2.5.2. Education**

In the older Roman society the education was given to the boys directly by their fathers and it was largely practical in nature. The aim of education was to produce man with strong bodies and disciplined character. The boys were to study Roman Legends and history to develop a serious attitude and sense of duty towards the gods, the family and the state. The intelligent Romans studied Greek Literature like Homer's works, rhetoric's and philosophy. But they considered themselves as weaklings. Arithmetic, Geometry, singing, dancing, grammar, dialects, rhetoric's, astronomy, medicine and architecture were taught to the children at private schools.



**Students making notes on wax tablets**

### **5.2.5.3.Literature**

Latin literature started appearing from third century BCE with the translation of Greek poems into Latin. Thus there was Greek influence on Latin language, literary form and in spirit also. However, Greek tragedies did not attract the Romans. Roman poets Plautus (254-214 BCE) and Terence (190-159 BCE) attained distinction in comedies. In one type of poetry called 'Satire'. Romans achieved something original. Lucilius established the satire in Roman literature. Latin prose did not make much progress during this period.

### **5.2.5.4.Art**

In the Roman Art of this period we find foreign influence. The Romans drew some influence from the Etruscans. But in some fields of Roman Art strong influence of the Greeks can be seen. In fact, in some instances the Roman art appears to be a construction of artistic tradition. But there is some difference between the Greek and Roman artistic traditions. The Roman art was more specific and realistic while Greek art was idealistic.

As far as architecture is concerned the Romans showed a creative genius in the kinds of structure in which engineering was most important. Bridges, aqueducts, baths, amphitheaters etc. In their buildings, Romans were always versatile than Greeks. Much of their work is imposing and majestic.

In Roman sculpture we can see more Etruscan and Greek influence. The Romans liked the realistic, bold and virile sculptures of Etruscans. As the Romans looted many Greek cities during wars they developed a liking towards the Greek sculptures.

#### **5.2.5.5. Religion**

The primitive Roman religion was simple and unimaginative. Human relationship with gods was business like. Certain taboos were carefully observed and rituals were meticulously performed. The gods were expected to be pleased by these observations and performances and fulfill the desires of people. The early Roman religion centered in the family and gods of the household and fields were worshipped. Thus the gods of earth, Fire and the doorway and of the store room were among the gods worshipped. The Romans strongly believed in the ancestral worship. Apart from this family religion there grew up a state religion that remained important throughout the Roman history. At first the king was the chief priest and later a separate person called 'Pontifex Maximus' took over the job of the chief priest. Jupiter became the chief god of the state religion. The Romans borrowed certain beliefs from Etruscans like reading omens. The Greek religion gave much more. Some Greek gods were borrowed by the Romans.

#### **5.2.6. Cultural life during the last Century of the Republic**

##### **5.2.6.1. Religion**

During this period Greek and Eastern influences on Roman culture became more pronounced. This was particularly evident in religion. The worship of old texts continued only as a ritual but very few believed in it. In the last stages of the decay of the republic a cult to Julius Caesar was instituted with Antony as the chief priest. This shows that deification of men was gaining ground and how religion was being used for political ends. The Roman emperors like Augustus and Diocletian encouraged

people to worship them like gods. In later period the Romans influenced by the Greeks and started having prototype of Greek gods in different names. God Jupiter was the only god and the Romans considered as almighty. The most important goddess was Juno. Mars became the god of war. Ceres became popular with the farmers as this deity gave good crops. Venus became the goddess of life. Neptune was the sea-god. The Romans also observed some important festivals with all gaiety.

The patricians who were formerly following public cults now favored the philosophy of Plato. Some preferred stoic conception of god ordering the universe and encompassing the lesser gods, Still some offers ignored the religion altogether and cultivated a morality based on personal and integrity and social conscience.

The poor people did not find any comfort either in state religion or abstract philosophy. So they turned to the mystery cults brought to Rome by soldiers fighting in the imperial wars, traders from the east and slaves sold in Rome. For example the Egyptian cult of Isis was favored by many poor people. Some of these gods were recognized by the masters of the slaves also.

#### **5.2.6.2. Philosophy**

As the traditional religion declined Greek philosophy gained a stronger hold on the Romans. Many Romans found in this philosophy a broad explanation of the physical world, a kind of answer to the social problems of the empire and a code of personal morality. Thus the philosophies remained more eastern than Roman. So very few Romans made original contributions to philosophy of the Roman philosophers the greatest was Lucretius who wrote "on the Nature of Things". Cicero was another philosopher worth mentioning. The rigid morality and emphasis on duty to the state advocated stoicism was favored by the Romans. The most prominent stoic philosophers were Panaetius of Rhodes, Seneca of Rome and emperor Marcus Aurelius.

#### **5.2.6.3. Roman Law**

The most lasting contribution of the Romans was made in the field of law. It is no exaggeration to say that their laws had made a profound impact on almost all the civilized nations of the world today. The first written code came in the form of Twelve Tables in 150 BCE which were inscribed on the twelve tables of bronze. The

Roman government appointed a special judge Praetor Peregrinus, to look into the matters related to the rights of foreigners living in Rome. Taking the customs and traditions of the foreigners into consideration, a new body of laws came to be evolved by the judges. This body of law came to be known as **jus gentium**. The great Eastern Roman emperor Justinian (527 – 565 CE) undertook the task of classification and codification of these laws and named after him as the Justinian Code. As the Roman law was humane in character, it was adopted by many civilized nations. To mention a few salient features, the Roman law gave an opportunity to the accused to defend his case. Unless his guilt was proved ‘beyond any reasonable doubt’ in a court of law he was not punished. All the citizens either high or low were equal before law.

The Romans of this period realized the need to reassess the traditional values of government and adopt new laws according to the new needs. Though the old Roman law remained in force and regularly necessary amendments were made of them. In doing so some of the Eastern usages were adopted. Soon the concept of a ‘Law of Peoples’ was developed as a supplement to the Roman Law. This was applied throughout the empire to deal with the problems like property, sales and contracts.

The final of most significant legal concept was “Jus Natural” (Natural Law). According to this all men have certain inalienable rights just because they were men. Thus all the men of the entire Roman Empire, be they as Romans or the people of subjugated regions should be treated equally. This basic principle was remembered and practiced through the centuries. Cicero in his ‘The Law’, restated this natural law. He wrote ‘Republic’ imitating Plato, in which he discussed his ideal state.

#### **5.2.6.4. Literature**

Roman writers adapted Greek literary forms such as lyric poetry and drama to the Latin language. Romans also developed new styles of writing that were influenced by Greek oratory, the art of persuading an audience. The literature of this period shows the increasing sophistication of Rome. Roman writing was more vigorous than Greek and more distinctively Roman than before. Latin and Greek became common language around the Mediterranean.

Oratory became a powerful weapon for the politicians. This brought a new force in the spoken and written language. Cicero was the greatest in this field. He

developed a clear, logical style of writing that became a model for other writers. In essays on government, morality and philosophy, he expressed his admiration for the Roman Republic and for the Roman idea of justice. His works on polity and philosophy are also very significant. They mark among the classics of Latin prose. His personal letters provide an intimate account of life in Roman.

History was also reaching new heights during this period both in style and accuracy. The Salustian was one of the most successful of the historians of this period. The most learned Roman of the century was Varro (116-27 BCE). He wrote 490 books dealing with Roman religion, language, agriculture, antiquities and other topics. Julius Caesar wrote two history books Gallic Wars and Civil War. In the Gallic wars, he skillfully combined a history of the wars with reminders of his own military successes.

#### **5.2.6.5. Art and Architecture**

When the Romans conquered Greece, they brought shiploads of sculptures and other art objects. Roman sculptors did a brisk business copying Greek works, and talented Greek artists found rich patrons in Rome. Some Eastern artists were brought to Rome as slaves, some others came on their own in search of work. So the Romans did not feel the need of developing their own indigenous art. However, some Roman developed their own style and created realistic portraits. Roman artists produced beautiful paintings to decorate walls of homes. The subject matters of the paintings were often Roman but the technique was Greek.

The most distinctive Roman contribution to art was in architecture. Romans borrowed many ideas in architecture and they also made important advances. From the Etruscans and Greeks, they learned to use columns and arches. They improved on the arch by inventing the dome, a roof formed by rounded arches. The Romans also introduced new building materials such as concrete. New building techniques allowed architects to design massive structures. For example, the Colosseum had three storeys of arches and columns. Roman architecture was more ornate than simple, elegant temples of classical Greece. Emperors erected solid, richly decorated monuments, such as huge public stadiums to symbolize Roman strength.

### 5.2.6.6. Technology and Science

The Romans applied their technical knowledge to many practical concerns. They built strong bridges, supported by arches, to span turbulent rivers. Romans designed roads to last forever. They made them of heavy blocks set in layers of crushed stones and pebbles. The Romans constructed aqueducts to carry water from reservoirs in the country to the cities. Roman aqueducts were canal-like stone structures that tunneled through mountains and spanned valleys.

#### **Do you know : The blind bard and the Trojan Horse**

In the ancient Greece, the professional story tellers sang Iliad and Odyssey to the audiences. The story of the Trojan horse, which follows, was told in the Odyssey by a blind poet.

*The bard inspired by heaven took up the story at the point where some of the Greek warriors from Argos set fire to their tents and sailed away while others, hidden within the horse, were waiting with Odysseus in the Trojans themselves had drawn the horse into their fortress, and it stood there while they sat in council around it, and were in three minds as to what they should do. Some were for breaking it up then and there; others would have it dragged to the top of rock on which the fortress stood, and then thrown down the precipice; while yet were for letting it remain as an offering... for the gods. And this last way was how they settled it...*

*But the city was doomed when it took in that horse, within which were all the bravest of the Argives waiting to bring death and destruction on the Trojans.*

*Then Demodocus sang how the sons of the Achaeans issued from the horse, and sacked the town, breaking out from their ambush. He sang how they overran the city hither and thither and ravaged it, and how Odysseus went raging the Ares [the god of war].... to the house of Deiphobus. It was there that the fight raged most furiously; nevertheless by Athena's help he was victorious.*

Observe the way Homer explained the ransacking of the villages.



## **Key Points**

### **Greek Civilization**

The Minoan civilization flourished in Crete between 2000 BCE to 1400 BCE. The Achaeans occupied Greek Mainland. Trade helped these two cultures to prosper. With the continuous destructions the civilization in Greece plunged into the dark age between 1100 BCE to 750 BCE. Many social reforms took place from time to time. Draco, Solon, Pisistratus, Cleisthenes etc. were some of the reformers. Law codes were formed in favor of the poor and the oppressed. Sparta and Athens emerged as powerful city – states. Many great personalities like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle made significant contributions to the world. As many as 12 gods were worshipped out of which, Zeus was the chief god. Homer composed the epics Iliad and Odyssey. Thespis created the first play. Herodotus and Thucydides composed historical works. Many sculptors and architects built architectural marvels in the ancient Greek.

### **Roman Civilization**

The Roman Republic was founded in 509 BCE. This civilization was mostly influenced by the Etruscans and the Greeks in many ways. The society consisted of two classes' viz. Patricians and Plebeians. Plebeians with the later reforms in law rose to higher positions. Rome occupied Italy and the Punic wars made Romans, the supreme powers in the Mediterranean. In 49 BCE, Julius Caesar restored order in Rome but was killed soon. The Roman architects used Greek and Etruscan techniques and improved the architecture in their own way.

## **Map Skills**

Identify the following in the political map of Greece and Ancient Rome:

1.

a) Sparta                      b) Athens                      c) Alexandria

b) d) Susa                      e) Nineveh

2.

a) Sicily                      b) Macedonia                      c) Corsica

d) Crete                      e) Carthage

## Chapter Checkup

1. Describe how Heinrich Schliemann uncovered the early Aegean civilization.
2. Compare the life in Athens with the life in Sparta in terms of education and government.
3. Write about the Persian War.
4. What is the contribution of ancient Greece to the field of art and architecture?
5. Describe the evolution of the plebeians as equivalent to the patricians in the Roman society.
6. Write about Julius Caesar's career and his reforms in detail.
7. What are the cultural conditions prior to 100 BCE in Rome?
8. What is the contribution of the Romans in the field of art and architecture?

## Short Answers

1. Iliad and Odyssey
2. Peloponnesian wars
3. Dark Age of Greece
4. Draco's law code
5. Palace at Knossos
6. Alexander, the Great
7. Aristotle
8. Socrates
9. Hippocrates
10. Punic Wars
11. Roman Literature
12. Religion in Rome

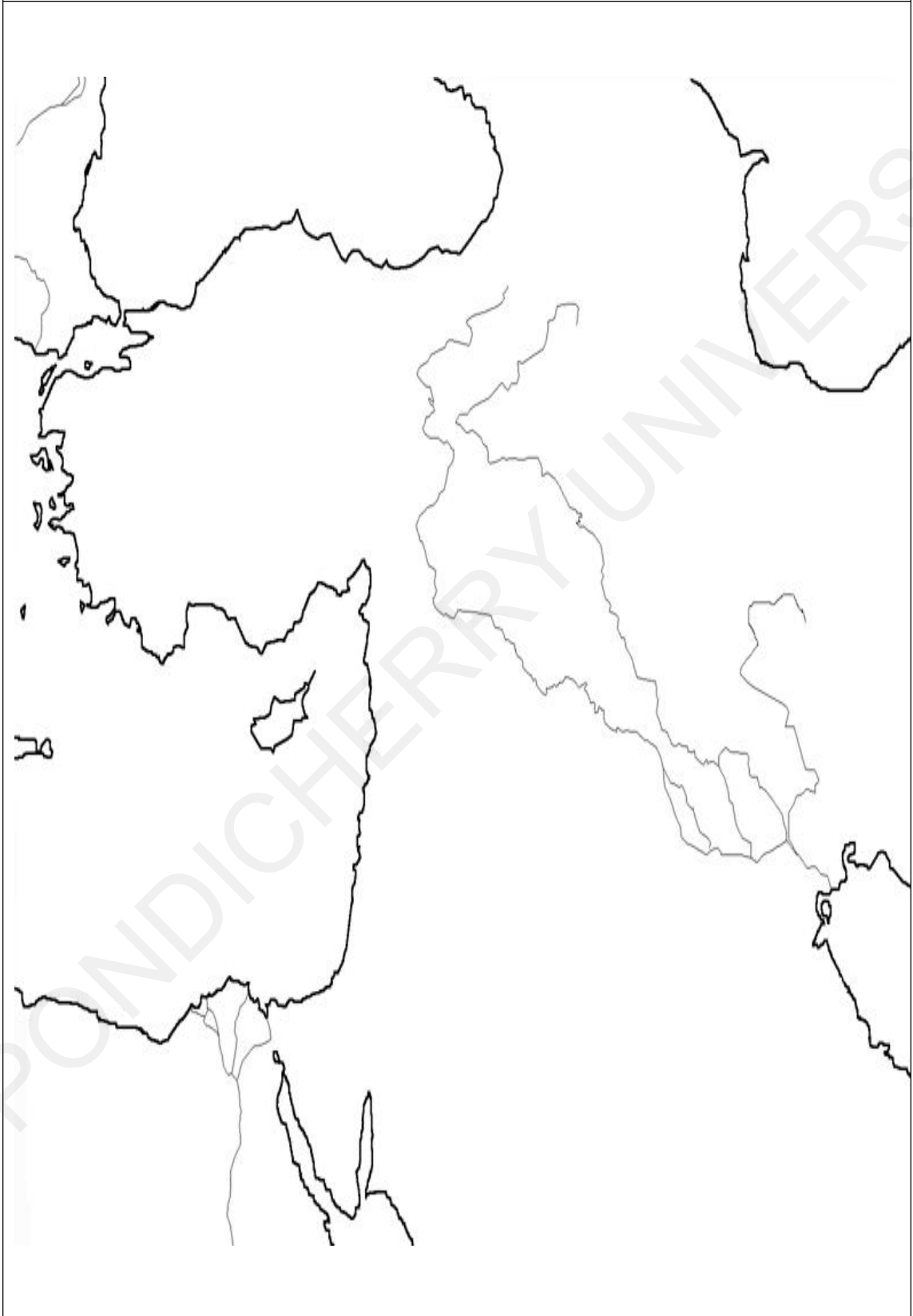
13. Education
14. Hannibal
15. Rivalry between Rome and Carthage
16. The first Triumvirate

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**MAPS FOR  
PRACTICE**

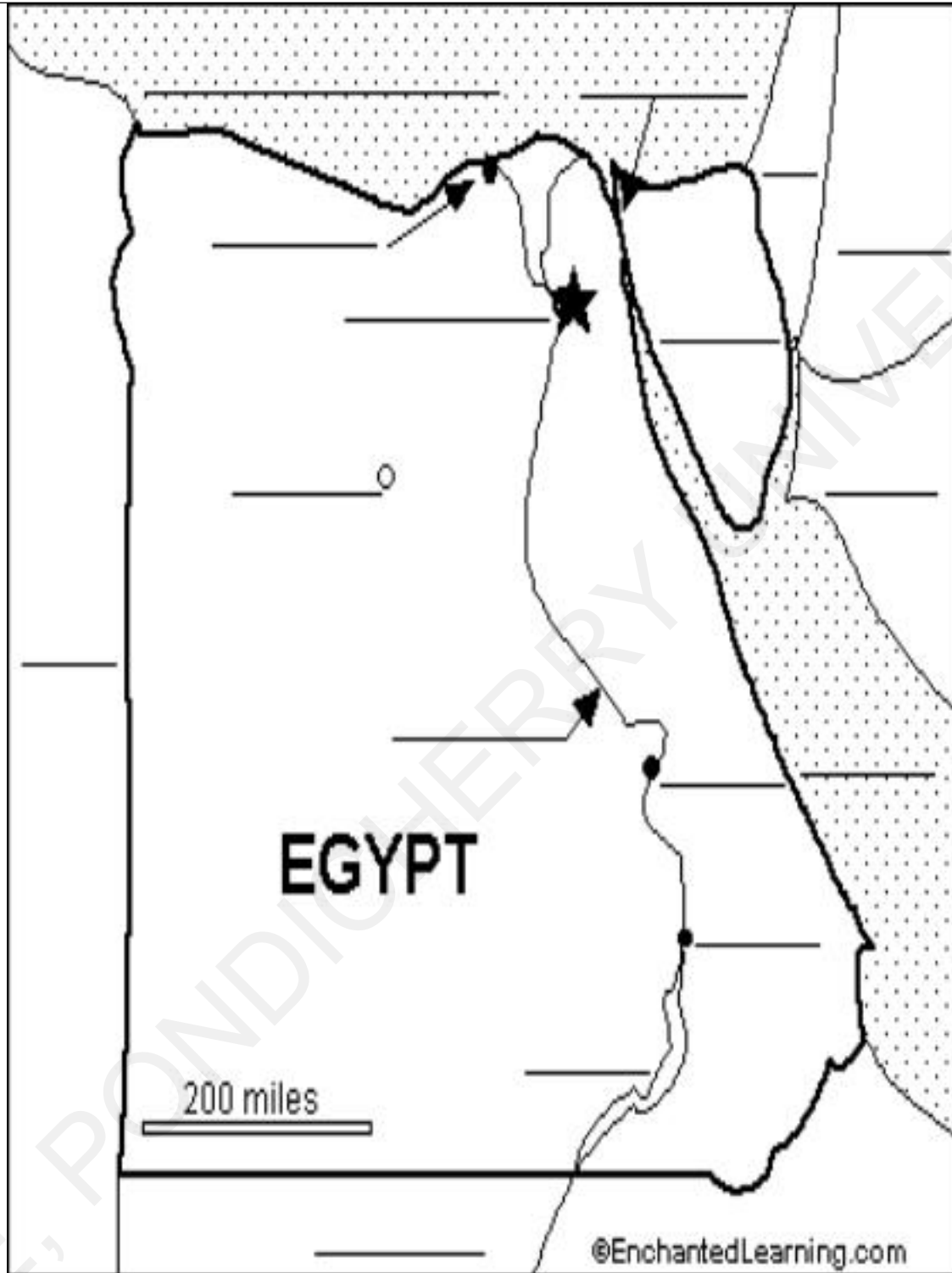
## Mesopotamian Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit I

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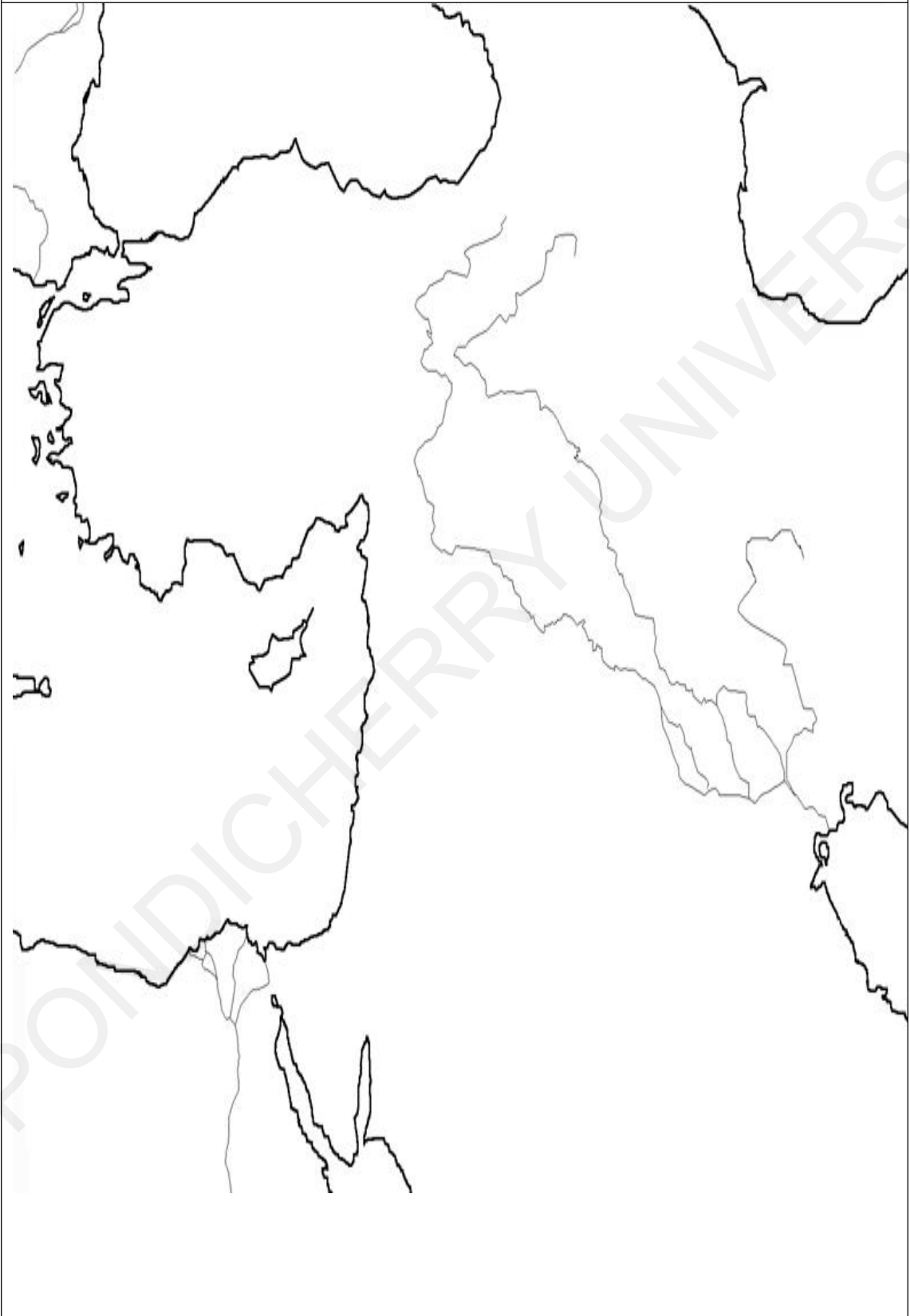
# Egyptian Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit II

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## Babylonian Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit III

Source: <https://stacities.files.wordpress.com/2010/09/mesopotamia1.gif>

## Chinese Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit IV

Source: <https://ecdn.teacherspayteachers.com/thumbitem/Ancient-China-Map-Activity-2259195-1657565851/original-2259195-1.jpg>



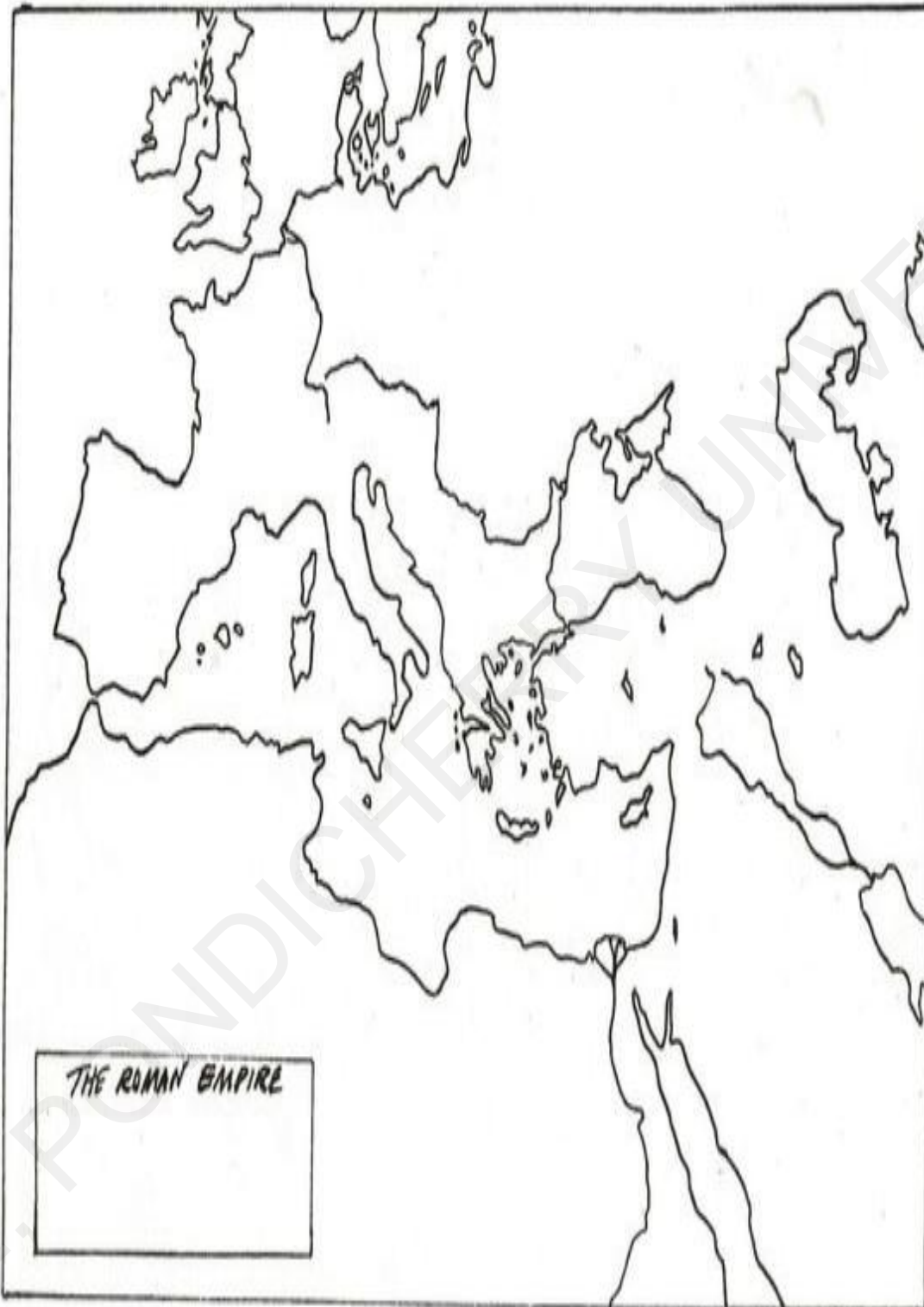
# Greek Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit V

Source: <https://az779572.vo.msecnd.net/>

## Roman Civilization



Locate the places given in map skills for unit V

Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/7e/7d/04/7e7d040906b838d122585fb6d2650637--the-map-roman-empire-lessons.jpg>