

COMPETENCY 1.0 UNDERSTAND MAJOR POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS THAT SHAPED THE COURSE OF WORLD HISTORY THROUGH THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY**Skill 1.1 Analyze economic, political, geographic, and cultural relationships within and among ancient Mediterranean civilizations.**

The culture of Mesopotamia was autocratic in nature, with a single ruler at the head of the government and, in many cases, also the head of the religion. The people followed his strict instructions or faced the consequences, which were often life-threatening.

The civilizations of the Sumerians, Amorites, Hittites, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Persians controlled various areas of Mesopotamia. With few exceptions, tyrants and military leaders controlled the vast majority of aspects of society, including trade, religions, and the laws. Each Sumerian city-state (and there were a few) had its own god, with the city-state's leader doubling as the high priest of worship of that local god. Subsequent cultures had a handful of gods as well, although they had more of a national worship structure, with high priests centered in the capital city as advisors to the tyrant.

Trade was vastly important to these civilizations since they had access to some but not all of the things that they needed to survive. Some trading agreements led to occupation, as was the case with the Sumerians, who didn't bother to build walls to protect their wealth of knowledge. Egypt and the Phoenician cities were powerful and regular trading partners of the various Mesopotamian cultures.

Legacies handed down to us from these civilizations include:

- The first use of writing, the wheel, and banking (Sumeria);
- The first written set of laws (Code of Hammurabi);
- The first epic story (*Gilgamesh*);
- The first library dedicated to preserving knowledge (instituted by the Assyrian leader Ashurbanipal);
- The Hanging Gardens of Babylon (built by the Chaldean Nebuchadnezzar)

The ancient civilization of the **Sumerians** invented the wheel; developed irrigation through use of canals, dikes, and devices for raising water; devised the system of cuneiform writing; learned to divide time; and built large boats for trade. The Babylonians devised the famous **Code of Hammurabi**, a code of laws.

Egypt made significant contributions including construction of the great pyramids; development of hieroglyphic writing; preservation of bodies after death; making paper from papyrus; contributing to developments in arithmetic and geometry; the invention of the method of counting in groups of 1-10 (the decimal system); completion of a solar calendar; and laying the foundation for science and astronomy.

The earliest historical record of **Kush** is in Egyptian sources. They describe a region upstream from the first cataract of the Nile as “wretched.” This civilization was characterized by a settled way of life in fortified mud-brick villages. They subsisted on hunting and fishing, herding cattle, and gathering grain. Skeletal remains suggest that the people were a blend of Negroid and Mediterranean peoples. This civilization appears to be the second-oldest in Africa (after Egypt).

Either the people were Egyptian or heavily influenced by Egyptians at a very early period in the development of the society. They appear to have spoken Nilo-Saharan languages. The area in which they lived is called Nubia. The capital city was Kerma, a major trading center between the northern and southern parts of Africa.

During the period of Egypt’s Old Kingdom (ca. 2700-2180 BCE), this civilization was essentially a diffused version of Egyptian culture and religion. When Egypt came under the domination of the Hyksos, Kush reached its greatest power and cultural energy (1700-1500 BCE). When the Hyksos were eventually expelled from Egypt, the New Kingdom brought Kush back under Egyptian colonial control.

The collapse of the New Kingdom in Egypt (ca. 1000 BCE), provided the second opportunity for Kush to develop independently of Egyptian control and to conquer the Nubian region. The capital was then moved to Napata.

For the most part, the Kushites apparently considered themselves Egyptian and inheritors of the pharaonic tradition. Their society was organized on the Egyptian model, adopting Egyptian royal titles, etc. Even their art and architecture was based on Egyptian models. But their pyramids were smaller and steeper.

In what has been called “a magnificent irony of history” the Kushites conquered Egypt in the eighth century, creating the twenty-fifth dynasty. The dynasty ended in the seventh century when Egypt was defeated by the Assyrians.

The Kushites were gradually pushed farther south by the Assyrians and later by the Persians. This essentially cut off contact with Egypt, the Middle East and Europe. They moved their capital to Meroe in about 591 BC, when Napata was conquered. Their attention then turned to sub-Saharan Africa. Free of Egyptian dominance, they developed innovations in government and other areas.

In government, the king ruled through a law of custom that was interpreted by priests. The king was elected from the royal family. Descent was determined through the mother's line (as in Egypt). But in an unparalleled innovation, the Kushites were ruled by a series of female monarchs.

The Kushite religion was polytheistic, including all of the primary Egyptian gods. There were, however, regional gods which were the principal gods in their regions. Derived from other African cultures, there was also a lion warrior god.

This civilization was vital through the last half of the first millennium BC, but it suffered about 300 years of gradual decline until it was eventually conquered by the Nuba people.

The ancient **Assyrians** were warlike and aggressive due to a highly organized military and used horse drawn chariots.

The **Hebrews**, also known as the ancient Israelites instituted "monotheism," which is the worship of one God, Yahweh, and combined the 66 books of the Hebrew and Christian Greek scriptures into the Bible we have today.

The **Minoans** had a system of writing using symbols to represent syllables in words. They built palaces with multiple levels containing many rooms, water and sewage systems with flush toilets, bathtubs, hot and cold running water, and bright paintings on the walls.

The **Mycenaeans** changed the Minoan writing system to aid their own language and used symbols to represent syllables.

The **Phoenicians** were sea traders well known for their manufacturing skills in glass and metals and the development of their famous purple dye. They became so very proficient in the skill of navigation that they were able to sail by the stars at night. Further, they devised an alphabet using symbols to represent single sounds, which was an improved extension of the Egyptian principle and writing system.

The classical civilization of **Greece** reached the highest levels in man's achievements based on the foundations already laid by such ancient groups as the Egyptians, Phoenicians, Minoans, and Mycenaeans.

Among the more important contributions of Greece were the Greek alphabet derived from the Phoenician letters which formed the basis for the Roman alphabet and our present-day alphabet. Extensive trading and colonization resulted in the spread of the Greek civilization. The love of sports, with emphasis on a sound body, led to the tradition of the Olympic Games. Greece was responsible for the rise of independent, strong city-states. Note the complete contrast between independent, freedom-loving Athens with its practice of pure democracy i.e. direct, personal, active participation in government by qualified citizens and the rigid, totalitarian, militaristic Sparta. Other important areas that the Greeks are credited with influencing include drama, epic and lyric poetry, fables, myths centered on the many gods and goddesses, science, astronomy, medicine, mathematics, philosophy, art, architecture, and recording historical events.

The conquests of Alexander the Great spread Greek ideas to the areas he conquered and brought to the Greek world many ideas from Asia. In summary, the major objectives of the conquests were: valuable new ideas, wisdom, and the curiosity and desire to learn as much about the world as possible.

The ancient civilization of **Rome** lasted approximately 1,000 years including the periods of Republic and Empire, although its lasting influence on Europe and its history was for a much longer period. There was a very sharp contrast between the curious, imaginative, inquisitive Greeks and the practical, simple, down-to-earth, no-nonsense Romans, who spread and preserved the ideas of ancient Greece and other culture groups. The contributions and accomplishments of the Romans are numerous but their greatest included language, engineering, building, law, government, roads, trade, and the "**Pax Romana**". Pax Romana was the long period of peace enabling free travel and trade, spreading people, cultures, goods, and ideas all over a vast area of the known world.

A most interesting and significant characteristic of the Greek, Hellenic, and Roman civilizations was "**secularism**" where emphasis shifted away from religion to the state. Men were not absorbed in or dominated by religion as had been the case in Egypt and the nations located in Mesopotamia. Religion and its leaders did not dominate the state and its authority was greatly diminished.

Skill 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge of major characteristics and cultural values of the ancient civilizations of Africa, Asia, and the Americas.

The Ottoman Empire is noted for its ability to unite a highly varied population growing through conquest and treaty arrangement. This ability is attributed to military strength, a policy of strict control of recently invaded territories, and an Islamic-inspired philosophy that stated that all Muslims, Christians and Jews were related because they were all “People of the Book.” The major religious groups were permitted to construct their own semi-autonomous communities.

Conquering armies immediately repaired buildings, roads, bridges, and aqueducts or built them where needed. They also built modern sanitary facilities and linked the city to a supply structure that was able to provide for the needs of the people. This religious and ethnic tolerance was the basis upon which a heterogeneous culture was built. It quickly transformed a Turkish empire into the Ottoman Empire.

The attitude of tolerant blending and respect for diverse ethnic and cultural groups, in time produced a rich mix of people that was reflected in multi-cultural and multi-religious policies that were based on recognition and respect for different perspectives. Ottoman architecture, although influenced by Seljuk, Byzantine and Arab styles, developed a unique style of its own. Music was important to the elites of the empire. Two primary styles of music that developed were Ottoman classical music and folk music. Again, both styles reflect a basis in the diversity of influences that came together in the unified empire.

The Mongol Empire, founded by Genghis Khan, included the majority of the territory from Southeast Asia to central Europe during the height of the empire. One of the primary military tactics of conquest was to annihilate any cities that refused to surrender.

Government was by decree on the basis on a code of laws developed by Genghis Khan. It is interesting that one of the tenets of this code was that the nobility and the commoners shared the same hardship. The society, and the opportunity to advance within the society, was based on a system of meritocracy. The carefully structured and controlled society was efficient and safe for the people. Religious tolerance was guaranteed. Theft and vandalism were strictly forbidden. Trade routes and an extensive postal system were created linking the various parts of the empire. Taxes were quite onerous, but teachers, artists and lawyers were exempted from the taxes. Mongol rule, however, was absolute. The response to all resistance was collective punishment in the form of destruction of cities and slaughter of the inhabitants.

The lasting achievements of the Mongol Empire include:

- Reunification of China and expansions of its borders,
- Unification of the Central Asian Republics that later formed part of the USSR,
- Expansion of Europe's knowledge of the world.

The Ming Dynasty in China followed the Mongol-led Yuan Dynasty. In addition to its expansion of trade and exploration of surrounding regions, the period is well known for its highly talented artists and craftsmen. The Hongwu emperor rose from peasant origins. He distributed land to small farmers in an effort to help them support their families.

To further protect family farms, he proclaimed title of the land non-transferable. He also issued an edict by which anyone who cultivated wasteland could keep the land as their property and would never be taxed. One of the major developments of the time was the development of systems of irrigation for farms throughout the empire. Hongwu maintained a strong army by creating military settlements. During peacetime, each soldier was given land to farm and, if he could not afford to purchase equipment, it was provided by the government.

The legal code created during the period is generally considered one of the greatest achievements of the dynasty. The laws were written in understandable language and in enough detail to prevent misinterpretation. The law reversed previous policy toward slaves, and promised them the same protection as free citizens. Great emphasis was placed on family relations. It was clearly based on Confucian ideas. The other major accomplishment of this dynasty was the decision to begin building the Great Wall of China to provide protection from northern horsemen.

The Mogul Empire reached its height during the reign of Akbar. In the administration of the empire, Akbar initiated two approaches that are notable. First, he studied local revenue statistics for the various provinces within the empire. He then developed a revenue plan that matched the revenue needs of the empire with the ability of the people to pay the taxes. Although the taxes were heavy (one third to one half of the crop), it was possible to collect the taxes and meet the financial needs of the empire. Second, he created a rank and pay structure for the warrior aristocracy that was based on number of troops and obligations.

He introduced a policy of acceptance and assimilation of Hindus, allowed temples to be built, and abolished the poll tax on non-Muslims. He devised a theory of “rulership as a divine illumination” and accepted all religions and sects. He encouraged widows to remarry, discouraged marriage of children, outlawed the practice of sati, and persuaded the merchants in Delhi to recognize special market days for women who were otherwise required to remain secluded at home. The empire supported a strong cultural and intellectual life. He sponsored regular debates among religious and scholarly individuals with different points of view.

The unique style of architecture of the Mogul Empire was its primary contribution to South Asia. The Taj Mahal was one of many monuments built during this period. The cultural was a blend of Indian, Iranian and Central Asian traditions. Other major accomplishments were:

- Centralized government,
- Blending of traditions in art and culture,
- Development of new trade routes to Arab and Turkish lands,
- A unique style of architecture,
- Landscape gardening,
- A unique cuisine,
- The creation of two languages (Urdu and Hindi) for the common people.

Skill 1.3 Recognize the characteristics of Byzantine culture and the achievements of Islamic civilization.

The **Byzantine Empire**, which the Eastern Empire became, was closer to the Middle East and so inherited the traditions of Mesopotamia and Persia. This was in stark contrast to the Western Empire, which inherited the traditions of Greece and Carthage. Byzantium was known for its exquisite artwork including the famous church Hagia Sophia. Perhaps the most wide-ranging success of the Byzantine Empire was in the area of trade. Uniquely situated at the gateway to both West and East, Byzantium could control trade going in both directions. Indeed, the Eastern Empire was much more centralized and rigid in its enforcement of its policies than the feudal West.

The **Byzantine** and **Saracenic** (or Islamic) civilizations were both dominated by religion. The major contributions of the Saracens were in the areas of science and philosophy including accomplishments in astronomy, mathematics, physics, chemistry, medicine, literature, art, trade and manufacturing, agriculture, and a marked influence on the Renaissance Period of history.

The **Byzantines** (Christians) made important contributions in art and the preservation of Greek and Roman achievements including architecture (especially in eastern Europe and Russia), the Code of Justinian and Roman law.

During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Muslim Empire experienced great expansion. The conquest of Ghana by Muslim Berbers in 1076 permitted rule to devolve to a series of lesser successor states. By the 13th century, the successor state of Kangaba established the Kingdom of Mali. This vast trading state extended from the Atlantic coast of Africa to beyond Gao on the Niger River in the east.

Much of the history of Mali was preserved by Islamic scholars because the Mali rulers converted to Islam and were responsible for the spread of Islam throughout Africa. The expansion of the Mali kingdom began from the city of Timbuktu and gradually moved downstream along the Niger River. This provided increasing control of the river and the cities along its banks, which were critical for both travel and trade. The Niger River was a central link in trade for both west and north African trade routes. The government of the Mali kingdom was held together by military power and trade.

The kingdom was organized into a series of feudal states that were ruled by a king. Most of the kings used the surname "Mansa" (meaning, "sultan"). The most powerful and effective of the kings was Mansa Musa.

The religion and culture of the kingdom of Mali was a blend of Islamic faith and traditional African belief. The influence of the Islamic empire provided the basis of a large and very structured government which allowed the king to expand both territory and influence. The people, however, did not follow strict Islamic law. The king was thought of in traditional African fashion as a divine ruler removed from the people. A strong military and control of the Niger River and the trade that flourished along the river enabled Mali to build a strong feudal empire.

Farther to the east, the king of the Songhai people had earlier converted to Islam in the 11th century. Songhai was at one time a province of Mali. By the 15th century, Songhai was stronger than Mali and it emerged as the next great power in western Africa. Songhai was situated on the great bend of the Niger River. From the early 15th to the late 16th centuries, the Songhai Empire stood, one of the largest empires in the history of Africa. The first king Sonni Ali conquered many neighboring states, including the Mali Empire. This gave him control of the trade routes and cities like Timbuktu. He was succeeded by Askia Mohammad who initiated political reform and revitalization. He also created religious schools, built mosques, and opened his court to scholars and poets from all parts of the Muslim world.

During the same period, the Zimbabwe kingdom was built. "Great Zimbabwe" was the largest of about 300 stone structures in the area. This capital city and trading center of the Kingdom of Makaranga was built between the 12th and 15th centuries. It was believed to have housed as many as 20,000 people. The structures are built entirely of stone, without mortar. The scanty evidence that is available suggests that the kingdom was a trading center that was believed to be part of a trading network that reached as far as China.

The area known today as the Republic of Benin was the site of an early African kingdom known as Dahomey. By the 17th century, the kingdom included a large part of West Africa. The kingdom was economically prosperous because of slave trading relations with Europeans, primarily the Dutch and Portuguese, who arrived in the 15th century. The coastal part of the kingdom was known as "the Slave Coast." This kingdom was known for a very distinct culture and some very unusual traditions. In 1729 the kingdom started a female army system. A law was passed stating that females would be inspected at the age of 15. Those thought beautiful were sent to the Palace to become wives of the king. Those who were sick or were considered unattractive were executed. The rest were trained as soldiers for two years. Human sacrifice was practiced on holidays and special occasions. Slaves and prisoners of war were sacrificed to gods and ancestors.

The slave trade provided economic stability for the kingdom for almost three hundred years. The continuing need for human sacrifices caused a decrease in the number of slaves available for export. As many colonial countries declared the trade of slaves illegal, demand for slaves subsided steadily until 1885 when the last Portuguese slave ship left the coast. With the decline of the slave trade, the kingdom began a slow disintegration. The French took over in 1892.

Skill 1.4 Analyze the structure and development of feudal societies in Europe and Asia.

The system of **feudalism** became a dominant feature of the economic and social system in Europe. It was a system of loyalty and protection. The strong protected the weak that returned the service with farm labor, military service, and loyalty. Life was lived out on a vast estate, owned by a nobleman and his family, called a "manor." It was a complete village supporting a few hundred people, mostly peasants. Improved tools and farming methods made life more bearable although most never left the manor or traveled from their village during their lifetime.

Feudalism was the organization of people based on the ownership of land by a **Lord** or other **Noble** who allowed individuals known as *peasants* or *serfs* to farm the land and to keep a portion of it. The lord or noble, in return for the serfs' loyalty, offered them his protection. In practical effect, the serf is considered property owned by his lord with little or no rights at all. The lord's sole obligation to the serfs is to protect them so they could continue to work for him (in most cases, though not all lords were men). This system would last for many centuries. In Russia it would last until the 1860s.

The end of the feudal manorial system was sealed by the outbreak and spread of the infamous **Black Death**, which killed over one-third of the total population of Europe. Those who survived and were skilled in any job or occupation were in demand and many serfs or peasants found freedom and, for that time, a decidedly improved standard of living. Strong nation-states became powerful and people developed a renewed interest in life and learning.

From its beginnings, Japan morphed into an imperial form of government, with the divine emperor being able to do no wrong and, therefore, serving for life. **Kyoto**, the capital, became one of the largest and most powerful cities in the world. Slowly, though, as in Europe, the nobility - rich and powerful landowners - grew powerful. Eventually, they had more power than the emperor.

The nobles were lords of great lands and were called **Daimyos**. They were of the highest social class and had working for them people of lower social classes, including the lowly peasants, who had few privileges other than being allowed to work for the great men that the Daimyos told everyone they were.

The Daimyos had warriors serving them known as **Shogun**, who were answerable only to the Daimyo. The Shogun code of honor was an exemplification of the overall Japanese belief that every man was a soldier and a gentleman. The contradiction that the emerging social classes identified didn't seem to get noticed much, nor did the needs of women.

The main economic difference between imperial and feudal Japan was that the money that continued to flow into the country from trade with China, Korea, and other Asian countries and from good, old-fashioned plundering on the high seas made its way no longer into the emperor's coffers but rather the pockets of the Daimyos.

Feudalism developed in Japan later than it did in Europe and lasted longer as well. Japan dodged one huge historical bullet when a huge Mongol invasion was driven away by the famed **kamikaze**, or "divine wind," in the twelfth century. Japan was thus free to continue to develop itself as it saw fit and to refrain from interacting with the West, especially. This isolation lasted until the nineteenth century.