

HISTORY OF THE EARLY WORLD

II SEMESTER

CORE COURSE FOR BA HISTORY

(CUCBCSS - 2014 Admission)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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HISTORY OF THE EARLY WORLD

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HISTORY OF THE EARLY WORLD

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MODULE I PRE HISTORY

Nature of Pre Historic Societies

The notion of "prehistory" began to surface during the Enlightenment in the work of antiquarians who used the word 'primitive' to describe societies that existed before written records. The first use of the word prehistory in English, however, occurred in the *Foreign Quarterly Review* in 1836

Prehistory (meaning "before history", or "before knowledge acquired by investigation", from the Latin word for "before") is the span of time before recorded history or the invention of writing systems. Prehistory refers to the period of human existence before the availability of those written records with which recorded history begins. More broadly, it can refer to all the time preceding human existence and the invention of writing.

The term "prehistory" can refer to the vast span of time since the beginning of the Universe, but more often it refers to the period since life appeared on Earth, or even more specifically to the time since human-like beings appeared. In dividing up human prehistory, pre historians typically use the three-age system, whereas scholars of pre-human time periods typically use the well-defined geologic record and its internationally defined stratum base within the geologic time scale. The three-age system is the periodization of human prehistory into three consecutive time periods, named for their respective predominant tool-making technologies: the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age. This system emerged during the late nineteenth century in the work of British, German and Scandinavian archaeologists, antiquarians and anthropologists. Another division of history and prehistory can be made between those written events that can be precisely dated by use of a continuous calendar dating from current and those that can't. The loss of continuity of calendar date most often occurs when a civilization falls and the language and calendar fall into disuse. The current civilization therefore loses the ability to precisely date events written through primary sources to events dated to current calendar dating.

The occurrence of written materials varies generally to cultures classified within either the late Bronze Age or within the Iron Age. Historians increasingly do not restrict themselves to evidence from written records and are coming to rely more upon evidence from the natural and social sciences, thereby blurring the distinction between the terms "history" and "prehistory". This view has been articulated by advocates of deep history.

This article is concerned with human prehistory, or the time since behaviourally and anatomically modern humans first appear until the beginning of recorded history. There are separate articles for the overall history of the Earth and the history of life before humans.

Definition

By definition, there are no written records from human prehistory, so dating of prehistoric materials is crucial. Clear techniques for dating were not well-developed until the 19th century.

The primary researchers into human prehistory are prehistoric archaeologists and physical anthropologists who use excavation, geologic and geographic surveys, and other scientific analysis to reveal and interpret the nature and behaviour of pre-literate and non-literate peoples. Human population geneticists and historical linguists are also providing valuable insight for these questions. Cultural anthropologists help provide context for societal interactions, by which objects of human origin pass among people, allowing an analysis of any article that arises in a human prehistoric context. Therefore, data about prehistory is provided by a wide variety of natural and social sciences, such as palaeontology, biology, archaeology, palynology, geology, archaeo-astronomy, comparative linguistics, anthropology, molecular genetics and many others.

Human prehistory differs from history not only in terms of its chronology but in the way it deals with the activities of archaeological cultures rather than named nations or individuals. Restricted to material processes, remains and artifacts rather than written records, prehistory is anonymous. Because of this, reference terms that pre-historians use, such as Neanderthal or Iron Age are modern labels with definitions sometimes subject to debate.

The date marking the end of prehistory in a particular culture or region, that is, the date when relevant written historical records become a useful academic resource, varies enormously from region to region. For example, in Egypt it is generally accepted that prehistory ended around 3200 BCE, whereas in New Guinea the end of the prehistoric era is set much more recently, at around 1900 CE. In Europe the relatively well-documented classical cultures of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome had neighbouring cultures, including the Celts, and to a lesser extent the Etruscans, with little or no writing, and historians must decide how much weight to give to the often highly prejudiced accounts of these "prehistoric" cultures in Greek and Roman literature.

Stone Age

Palaeolithic

"Palaeolithic" means "Old Stone Age," and begins with the first use of stone tools. The Palaeolithic is the earliest period of the Stone Age.

The early part of the Palaeolithic is called the Lower Palaeolithic, which predates *Homo sapiens*, beginning with *Homo habilis* and with the earliest stone tools, dated to around 2.5 million years ago. Early *Homo sapiens* originated some 200,000 years ago, ushering in the Middle Palaeolithic. Anatomic changes indicating modern language capacity also arise during the Middle Palaeolithic. The systematic burial of the dead, the music, early art, and the use of increasingly sophisticated multi-part tools are highlights of the Middle Palaeolithic.

Throughout the Palaeolithic, humans generally lived as nomadic hunter-gatherers. Hunter-gatherer societies tended to be very small and egalitarian, though hunter-gatherer societies with abundant resources or advanced food-storage techniques sometimes developed sedentary lifestyles with complex social structures such as chiefdoms, and social stratification. Long-distance contacts may have been established, as in the case of Indigenous Australian "highways."

Mesolithic

The "Mesolithic," or "Middle Stone Age" (from the Greek "*mesos*," "middle," and "*lithos*," "stone") was the period in the development of human technology between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods of the Stone Age.

The Mesolithic period began at the end of the Pleistocene epoch, some 10,000 BP, and ended with the introduction of agriculture, the date of which varied by geographic region. In some areas, such as the Near East, agriculture was already underway by the end of the Pleistocene, and there the Mesolithic is short and poorly defined. In areas with limited glacial impact, the term "Epipalaeolithic" is sometimes preferred.

Regions that experienced greater environmental effects as the last ice age ended have a much more evident Mesolithic era, lasting millennia. In Northern Europe, societies were able to live well on rich food supplies from the marshlands fostered by the warmer climate. Such conditions produced distinctive human behaviours that are preserved in the material record, such as the Maglemosian and Azilian cultures. These conditions also delayed the coming of the Neolithic until as late as 4000 BCE in northern Europe.

Remains from this period are few and far between, often limited to middens. In forested areas, the first signs of deforestation have been found, although this would only begin in earnest during the Neolithic, when more space was needed for agriculture.

The Mesolithic is characterized in most areas by small composite flint tools – microliths and microburins. Fishing tackle, stone adzes and wooden objects, e.g. canoes and bows, have been found at some sites. These technologies first occur in Africa, associated with the Azilian cultures, before spreading to Europe through the Ibero-Maurusian culture of Northern Africa and the Kebaran culture of the Levant. Independent discovery is not always ruled out.

Neolithic.

"Neolithic" means "New Stone Age." This was a period of primitive technological and social development, toward the end of the "Stone Age". The Neolithic period saw the development of early villages, agriculture, animal domestication, tools and the onset of the earliest recorded incidents of warfare. The *Neolithic* term is commonly used in the Old World, as its application to cultures in the Americas and Oceania that did not fully develop metal-working technology raises problems.

Forest gardening, originating in prehistory is thought to be the world's oldest known form of agriculture (or agro ecosystem). Vere Gordon Childe then describes an "Agricultural Revolution" occurring about the 10th millennium BCE with the adoption of agriculture and domestication of plants and animals. The Sumerians first began farming c. 9500 BCE. By 7000 BCE, agriculture had been developed in India and Peru separately; by 6000 BCE, in Egypt; by 5000 BCE, in China. About 2700 BCE, agriculture had come to Mesoamerica.

Although attention has tended to concentrate on the Middle East's Fertile Crescent, archaeology in the Americas, East Asia and Southeast Asia indicates that

agricultural systems, using different crops and animals, may in some cases have developed there nearly as early. The development of organised irrigation, and the use of a specialised workforce, by the Sumerians, began about 5500 BCE. Stone was supplanted by bronze and iron in implements of agriculture and warfare. Agricultural settlements had until then been almost completely dependent on stone tools. In Eurasia, copper and bronze tools, decorations and weapons began to be commonplace about 3000 BCE. After bronze, the Eastern Mediterranean region, Middle East and China saw the introduction of iron tools and weapons.

The cradles of early civilizations were river valleys, such as the Euphrates and Tigris valleys in Mesopotamia, the Nile valley in Egypt, the Indus valley in the Indian subcontinent, and the Yangtze and Yellow River valleys in China. Some nomadic peoples, such as the Indigenous Australians and the Bushmen of southern Africa, did not practice agriculture until relatively recent times.

Agriculture made possible complex societies – civilizations in many climates. States and markets emerged. Technologies enhanced people's ability to harness nature and to develop transport and communication. "The city represented a new degree of human concentration, a new magnitude in settlement. Cities relied on agricultural surplus. "Since the inhabitants of a city do not produce their own food...cities cannot support themselves...thus exist only where agriculture is successful enough to produce agricultural surplus." When hunter-gathering began to be replaced by sedentary food production it became more profitable to keep animals close at hand. Therefore, it became necessary to bring animals permanently to their settlements, although in many cases there was a distinction between relatively sedentary farmers and nomadic herders. The animals' size, temperament, diet, mating patterns, and life span were factors in the desire and success in domesticating animals. Animals that provided milk, such as cows and goats, offered a source of protein that was renewable and therefore quite valuable. The animal's ability as a worker, as well as a food source, also had to be taken into account. Besides being a direct source of food, certain animals could provide leather, wool, hides, and fertilizer. Some of the earliest domesticated animals included dogs (East Asia, about 15,000 years ago), sheep, goats, cows, and pigs.

It could be assumed that Neolithic people had believed in the life after death, from their burial practices. It is seen that the dead were buried with weapons, food, drink, pottery etc. The belief in Totems, is the image of an animal or plant as a symbol for a clan, or a group of families living together. They also worshipped natural forces like Sun, Moon, Stars and other forces, which they believed had possessed supernatural powers to decide the destiny of whole tribe. The erection of megalithic stones were found in different parts of the world, were the Neolithic burial places. Small clay figures of women have been found in many of the Neolithic sites in the different parts of the world.

MODULE II

Bronze Age Civilizations

The term **Bronze Age** refers to a period in human cultural development when the most advanced metalworking (at least in systematic and widespread use) included techniques for smelting copper and tin from naturally occurring outcroppings of ores, and then combining them to cast bronze. These naturally occurring ores typically included arsenic as a common impurity. Copper/tin ores are rare, as reflected in the fact that there were no tin bronzes in Western Asia before 3000 BCE. The Bronze Age forms part of the three-age system for prehistoric societies. In this system, it follows the Neolithic in some areas of the world.

The Bronze Age is the earliest period for which we have direct written accounts, since the invention of writing coincides with its early beginnings. It may not be just coincidental that the most important early civilizations, Mesopotamia, Egyptian, Minoan, Indian, and Chinese etc. arose in certain river valleys. It provided the fertility, alluvial land, water transport facilities etc. The cooperative activities of the people enabled them to develop early civilizations in these river valleys. As the people could make surplus food some of them devoted their lives to invent new techniques to further the living conditions. Architecture, sculpture, music, dance, etc, began to develop as a part of the general growth.

The early civilizations are marked by the discovery and use of metals . It was a great land mark in the history of mankind. It replaced crude stone tools.and provided geat leap forwards.Metals were more durable than stone and could be used to make a variety of tools impliments and weapons. However the first metal discoversd was copper. Earlier man had no idea about copper ore and so he had collected copper made by nature itself from river banks. During the course time men came in to contact with another metal called Tin, which could not be used independently for making stronger tools .It however necessitated man to learn the technique of mixing different metals to make a new one and thus he mixed copper with tin to produce its alloy a more stronger metal called Bronze. It was proved harder and stronger than that of copper and could make more durable strong tools and implements with it. The technology of the systematic method of extracting ores and preparing new metals, like bronze {metallurgy} paved way for the beginning of the first civilization in the history of mankind. These first civilizations were named as Bronze Age Civilizations. The Bronze Age refers to a period of time in historic societies, where metallurgy had advanced to the point of making bronze from natural ores. It paved way for the rapid improvement in agriculture as well as in the emergence of specialization of skills and knowledge. Bronze Age primarily took place in between 3500 and 1200 BCE and is traditionally divided into Early, Middle and Later Bronze ages, with progressively more sophisticated metallurgy culminating in the discovery of iron at a later stage. The beginning of the Bronze Age should have occurred about 5500years ago in the present day areas turkey, Iran, and Iraq; which were also the cradle of the first human civilization. In India it is

estimated that the beginning of the Bronze Age took place in around 3300BCE with the Harappan or Indus Valley civilization.

The increase in agriculture due to the introduction of more sophisticated tools and implements of irrigation system enabled several people to free themselves from involving in agricultural activities. Side by side other activities like trade, toole making etc were also developed. It also resulted to the development of towns and cities. The first cities were developed either in the form of the seat of the ruling class or trade or centre of religious importance.

The major centres of early Bronze Age were the areas around Mediterranean and Aegean Sea, the Indus Valley, Hwang-Ho Valley in China and the Valleys of Tigris and Euphrates and the river Nile. These civilizations had developed a unique character in its own contribution to human progress. Each of these civilizations had developed an organized political and social system, trade and commerce complex, religious beliefs, writing system art and science and mathematics.

The joining together of various communities in a large scale cooperative effort was a part of their quest for increasing agriculture production. Cooperative efforts of communities were required for deferent type irrigation activities like construction of canals, dykes etc. Canals could take water into far away cultivable land and the dykes had to be put up to protect settlements from floods. Thus the requirements of irrigation helped in bragging together many people under a central authority or government, especially in cities when such as authority came in to being, it had the responsibility to keep order, to make laws and to look after the affairs of the city. It was the beginning of the rudimentary form of government, which required the services of a body of persons.

The government has to make and record laws, maintain accounts, decide disputes and communicate with the people it is governing. Thus some form of writing has to be devised. All the early bronze age civilization had developed some form of writing in the form of script and the writing marked the beginning of the historical period. All these early civilizations had a common positive characteristic in that they change the human scale of things. They bring together the cooperative efforts of large numbers of men than any earlier societies and usually do this by physically bringing them together in large agglomerations; it is usually marked by urbanisation.

Features of Civilizations: Gordon V Child

Vere Gordon Childe (1892 -1957), better known as V. Gordon Childe, was an Australian [archaeologist](#) and [philologist](#) who specialized in the study of [European prehistory](#). Working most of his life as an academic in the United Kingdom for the [University of Edinburgh](#) and then the [Institute of Archaeology, London](#), he wrote many influential books and was an early proponent of [culture-historical archaeology](#) and [Marxist archaeology](#).

Born in [Sydney, New South Wales](#) to a middle-class family of English descent, Childe studied [Classics](#) at the [University of Sydney](#) before moving to England to study [Classical archaeology](#) at the [University of Oxford](#). Here, he embraced the [socialist](#) movement and campaigned against the [First World War](#). Returning to

Australia in 1917, he was prevented from working in academia because of his socialist activism, instead working for the [Australian Labour Party](#). Immigrating to London in 1921, he continued his research into European prehistory through various journeys across the continent, publishing his findings in academic papers and books and introducing the concept of an [archaeological culture](#) into British archaeology.

From 1927 through to 1946 he worked as the Abercromby Professor of Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh, overseeing [excavation](#) of the unique [Neolithic](#) settlement of [Skara Brae](#) and the chambered tomb of [Maeshowe](#), both in [Orkney](#), Scotland. Becoming co-founder and president of [The Prehistoric Society](#), he embraced [Marxism](#) and became a noted sympathiser with the [Soviet Union](#). From 1947 to 1957 he worked as director of the Institute of Archaeology, continuing to publish his research. Upon retirement, he returned [home](#) to the Australian [Blue Mountains](#), there committing suicide.

Widely regarded as one of the most important archaeologists and pre-historians of his generation, he became known as the "great synthesizer" for his [work](#) in synthesizing regional research into a broader picture of Near Eastern and European prehistory. He was also renowned for his emphasis on revolutionary technological and economic developments in human society, such as the [Neolithic Revolution](#) and the [Urban Revolution](#), in this manner being influenced by Marxist ideas on societal development.

Childe continued writing and publishing books on archaeology, beginning with a series of works following on from *The Dawn of European Civilisation* and *The Aryans* by compiling and synthesising data from across Europe. First was *The Most Ancient Near East* (1928), which assembled information from across Mesopotamia and India, setting a background from which the spread of farming and other technologies into Europe could be understood? This was followed by *The Danube in Prehistory* (1929) which examined the archaeology along the Danube river, recognising it as the natural boundary dividing the Near East from Europe; Childe believed that it was via the Danube that new technologies travelled westward in prehistory. The book introduced the concept of an archaeological culture to Britain from Germany, revolutionising the theoretical approach of British archaeology. Another famous work of Child was "Man Makes Himself" in which he combines both bronze and Iron Age revolutions into a singular urban revolution.

The term "urban revolution" was introduced in the 1930s by [V. Gordon Childe](#), an Australian archaeologist. Childe also coined the term [Neolithic Revolution](#) to describe the earlier process by which [Hunter-Gatherer](#) Societies domesticated crops and animals and began a farming lifestyle. Childe was the first to synthesize and organize the large volume of new archaeological data in the early 20th century in social terms. Whereas previous archaeologists had concentrated on chronology and technology, Childe applied concepts and theories from the social sciences to interpret archaeological finds. Childe first discussed the Urban Revolution in his 1936 book, *Man Makes Himself*, and then his 1950 article in the journal *Town Planning Review* brought the concept to a much larger audience. In that paper, he presented a 10-point model for the changes that characterized the Urban Revolution:

1. Large population and large settlements (cities)
2. Full-time specialization and advanced division of labour
3. Production of an agricultural surplus to fund government and a differentiated society
4. Monumental public architecture
5. A ruling class
6. Writing
7. Exact and predictive sciences (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, calendars)
8. Sophisticated art styles
9. Long-distance trade
10. The state

Although sometimes interpreted as a model of the origins of cities and urbanism, Childe's concept in fact describes the transition from agricultural villages to state-level, urban societies. This change, which occurred independently in several parts of the world, is recognized as one of the most significant changes in human [Socio-cultural revolution](#). Although contemporary models for the origins of complex urban societies have progressed beyond Childe's original formulation, there is general agreement that he correctly identified one of the most far-reaching social transformations prior to the Industrial Revolution, as well as the major processes involved in the change.

MESOPOTAMIA

Mesopotamia land between rivers "land of rivers" is a name for the area of the [Tigris-Euphrates river system](#), corresponding to modern-day [Iraq](#), [Kuwait](#), the north eastern section of [Syria](#) and to a much lesser extent south eastern [Turkey](#) and smaller parts of south western [Iran](#).

Widely considered to be the [cradle of civilization](#) by the [Western world](#), [Bronze Age](#) Mesopotamia included [Sumer](#) and the [Akkadian](#), [Babylonian](#), and [Assyrian](#) empires, all native to the territory of modern-day Iraq. In the [Iron Age](#), it was controlled by the [Neo-Assyrian](#) and [Neo-Babylonian empires](#). The indigenous Sumerians and Akkadians (including Assyrians and Babylonians) dominated Mesopotamia from the beginning of written history (c. 3100 BC) to the fall of Babylon in 539 BC, when it was conquered by the [Achaemenid Empire](#). It fell to [Alexander the Great](#) in 332 BC, and after his death, it became part of the Greek [Seleucid Empire](#).

Around 150 BC, Mesopotamia was under the control of the [Parthians](#). Mesopotamia became a battleground between the [Romans](#) and Parthians, with parts of Mesopotamia coming under ephemeral Roman control. In AD 226, it fell to the Sassanid Persians and remained under Persian rule until the 7th century [Arab Islamic conquest](#) of the [Sassanid Empire](#). A number of primarily neo-Assyrian and Christian native Mesopotamian states existed between the 1st century BCE and 3rd century CE, including [Adiabene](#), [Osroene](#), and [Hatra](#).

Ur

Ur was an important [Sumerian city-state](#) in ancient [Mesopotamia](#), located at the site of modern [Tell el-Muqayya](#) in south [Iraq's Dhi Qar Governorate](#). Although Ur was once a coastal [city](#) near the mouth of the [Euphrates](#) on the [Persian Gulf](#), the coastline has shifted and the city is now well inland, south of the Euphrates on its right bank, 16 kilometres from [Nasiriyah](#).

The city dates from the [Ubaid](#) period circa 3800 BC, and is recorded in written history as a [City State](#) from the 26th century BC, its first recorded king being [Mesh-Ane-pada](#). The city's patron deity was [Nanna](#) (in [Akkadian](#), [Sin](#)), the Sumerian and Akkadian ([Assyrian-Babylonian](#)) [moon god](#), and the name of the city is in origin derived from the god's name, being the classical Sumerian spelling of, "the abode (UNUG) of Nanna .

The site is marked by the partially restored ruins of the [Ziggurat of Ur](#), which contained the shrine of Nanna, excavated in the 1930s. The temple was built in the 21st century BC, during the reign of [Ur-Nammu](#) and was reconstructed in the 6th century BC by [Nabonidus](#), the Assyrian born last king of [Babylon](#). The ruins cover an area of 1,200 metres northwest to southeast by 800 metres northeast to southwest and rise up to about 20 metres above the present plain level.

Archaeological research of the region has also contributed greatly to our understanding of the landscape and long-distance interactions that took place during these ancient times. We know that Ur was the most important port on the Persian Gulf, which extended much further inland than it does today. All the wealth which came to Mesopotamia by sea had to pass through Ur. So far evidence for the earliest periods of the Early Bronze Age in Mesopotamia is very limited. [Mesh-Ane-pada](#) is the first king mentioned in the Sumerian King List, and appears to have lived in the 26th century BC. That Ur was an important urban centre already then seems to be indicated by a type of [cylinder seal](#) called the City Seals. These seals contain a set of [proto-cuneiform](#) signs which appear to be writings or symbols of the name of city-states in ancient Sumer. Many of these seals have been found in Ur, and the name of Ur is prominent on them.

Ur came under the control of the [Akkadian Empire](#) founded by [Sargon the Great](#) between the 24th and 22nd centuries BC. This was a period when the [Semitic](#) Akkadians of Mesopotamia gained ascendancy over the [Sumerians](#), and indeed much of the ancient [Near East](#).

The third dynasty was established when the king [Ur-Nammu](#) came to power, ruling between ca. 2047 BC and 2030 BC. During his rule, temples, including the ziggurat, were built, and agriculture was improved through [irrigation](#). His code of laws, the [Code of Ur-Nammu](#) is one of the oldest such documents known, preceding the [Code of Hammurabi](#) by 300 years. He and his successor [Shulgi](#) were both deified during their reigns, and after his death he continued as a hero-figure: one of the surviving works of Sumerian literature describes the death of Ur-Nammu and his journey to the underworld. About that time, the houses in the city were two-storied villas with 13 or 14 rooms, with plastered interior walls.

According to one estimate, Ur was the largest city in the world from c. 2030 to 1980 BC. Its population was approximately 65,000. 2011 research indicates that the

area was struck by drought conditions from 2200 to 2000 BC. The population dropped by 93%. Ur was sacked twice by nomads during this time. At the end of this drought, the use of the Sumerian language died out.

Language and writing

The earliest language written in Mesopotamia was [Sumerian](#), an [agglutinative language isolate](#). Along with Sumerian, [Semitic languages](#) were also spoken in early Mesopotamia. [Subartuan](#) a language of the Zagros, perhaps related to the [Hurro-Urartuan language family](#) is attested in personal names, rivers and mountains and in various crafts. [Acadian](#) came to be the dominant language during the [Acadian Empire](#) and the [Assyrian](#) empires, but Sumerian was retained for administrative, religious, literary and scientific purposes. Different varieties of Acadian were used until the end of the [Neo-Babylonian](#) period. [Old Aramaic](#), which had already become common in Mesopotamia, then became the official provincial administration language of first the [Neo-Assyrian Empire](#), and then the [Achaemenid Empire](#): the official dialect is called [Imperial Aramaic](#). Acadian fell into disuse, but both it and Sumerian were still used in temples for some centuries. The last Acadian texts date from the late 1st century AD.

Early in Mesopotamia's history (around the mid-4th millennium BC) [cuneiform](#) was invented for the Sumerian language. Cuneiform literally means "wedge-shaped", due to the triangular tip of the stylus used for impressing signs on wet clay. The standardized form of each cuneiform sign appears to have been developed from [pictograms](#). The earliest texts (7 archaic tablets) come from the [É](#), a temple dedicated to the goddess Inanna at Uruk, from a building labeled as Temple C by its excavators.

The early [logographic](#) system of cuneiform script took many years to master. Thus, only a limited number of individuals were hired as [scribes](#) to be trained in its use. It was not until the widespread use of a [syllabic](#) script was adopted under Sargon's rule that significant portions of Mesopotamian population became literate. Massive archives of texts were recovered from the archaeological contexts of Old Babylonian scribal schools, through which literacy was disseminated.

During the third millennium BC, there developed a very intimate cultural symbiosis between the Sumerian and the Akkadian language users, which included widespread [bilingualism](#).^[15] The influence of Sumerian on Akkadian (and vice versa) is evident in all areas, from lexical borrowing on a massive scale, to syntactic, morphological, and phonological convergence.^[15] This has prompted scholars to refer to Sumerian and Akkadian in the third millennium as a [sprachbund](#).^[15] Akkadian gradually replaced Sumerian as the spoken language of Mesopotamia somewhere around the turn of the 3rd and the 2nd millennium BC (the exact dating being a matter of debate),^[16] but Sumerian continued to be used as a sacred, ceremonial, literary, and scientific language in Mesopotamia until the 1st century AD.

Religion and philosophy

[Mesopotamian religion](#) was the first to be recorded. Mesopotamians believed that the world was a flat surrounded by a huge, holed space, and above that, [heaven](#).

They also believed that water was everywhere, the top, bottom and sides, and that the [universe](#) was born from this enormous sea. In addition, Mesopotamian religion was [polytheistic](#). Although the [beliefs](#) described above were held in common among Mesopotamians, there were also regional variations. The Sumerian word for universe is an-ki, which refers to the god [an](#) and the goddess [Ki](#). Their son was Enlil, the air god. They believed that Enlil was the most powerful god. He was the chief god of the [Pantheon](#), equivalent to the Greek god [Zeus](#) and the Roman god [Jupiter](#).

Philosophy

[Giorgio Buccellati](#) believes that the origins of [philosophy](#) can be traced back to early Mesopotamian [wisdom](#), which embodied certain philosophies of life, particularly [ethics](#), in the forms of [dialectic](#), [dialogs](#), [epic poetry](#), [folklore](#), [hymns](#), [lyrics](#), [prose](#) works, and [proverbs](#). Babylonian [reasoning](#) and [rationality](#) developed beyond [empirical](#) observation.

The earliest form of [logic](#) was developed by the Babylonians, notably in the rigorous nature of their [social systems](#). Babylonian thought was [axiomatic](#) and is comparable to the "ordinary logic" described by [John Maynard Keynes](#). Babylonian thought was also based on an [open-systems ontology](#) which is compatible with [ergodic](#) axioms. Logic was employed to some extent in [Babylonian astronomy](#) and medicine.

Babylonian thought had a considerable influence on early [Greek](#) and [Hellenistic philosophy](#). In particular, the Babylonian text [Dialogue of Pessimism](#) contains similarities to the [agonistic](#) thought of the [sophists](#), the [Heraclitean](#) doctrine of contrasts, and the [dialectic](#) and dialogs of [Plato](#), as well as a precursor to the [maieutic method](#) of [Socrates](#).^[32] The [Ionian](#) philosopher [Thales](#) was influenced by Babylonian cosmological ideas.

Legal System

Mesopotamia created the first law codes, drawn from legal precedence and decisions made by Kings. The codes of [Urukagina](#) and [Lipit Ishtar](#) have been found. The most renowned of these was that of [Hammurabi](#), as mentioned above, who was posthumously famous for his set of laws, the [Code of Hammurabi](#) (1780 BC), which is one of the earliest sets of laws found and one of the best preserved examples of this type of document from ancient Mesopotamia. He codified over 200 laws for Mesopotamia. The oldest known code is believed to have been proclaimed about 2100BCE. However, it is problematic to establish with certainty the dates of promulgation of cuneiform texts.

Another legal system was the Laws of Lipit- Ishtar of about 1930 BCE, which deals primarily with laws of marriage, family and property. It is almost similar to the earlier one. The fact that even the divinities to which these two collections of laws refer are the same is a proof of the strong and intense diffusion that was undergoing the Mesopotamian region in all spheres of social life. The Laws of Eshnunna was another set of laws prevailed around 1720 BCE in the city of Eshnunna, located on the east of Tigris river. It is also not a systematic code.

The Sumerian laws can be defined neither as codification in the true sense, nor as customary rules that had simply been collected nor written down. They

represent certain historical and socio economic circumstances which engendered diffusion between close but different cultures. This code contains no laws having to do with religion. The basis of criminal law is that of equal retaliation, comparable to the Semitic law of “an eye for an eye”.

EGYPT

Egyptian civilization of [ancient North-eastern Africa](#), concentrated along the lower reaches of the [Nile River](#) in what is now the modern country of [Egypt](#). It is one of [six civilizations](#) globally to arise independently. Egyptian civilization coalesced around 3150 BC (according to [conventional Egyptian chronology](#)) with the political unification of [Upper and Lower Egypt](#) under the first [pharaoh](#). The [history of ancient Egypt](#) occurred in a series of stable Kingdoms, separated by periods of relative instability known as Intermediate Periods: the [Old Kingdom](#) of the [Early Bronze Age](#), the [Middle Kingdom](#) of the [Middle Bronze Age](#) and the [New Kingdom](#) of the [Late Bronze Age](#).

Egypt reached the pinnacle of its power during the New Kingdom, in the Ramesside period where it rivalled the [Hittite Empire](#), [Assyrian Empire](#) and [Mitanni Empire](#), after which it entered a period of slow decline. Egypt was invaded or conquered by a succession of foreign powers, such as the [Canaanites/Hyksos](#), [Libyans](#), the [Nubians](#), the [Assyrians](#), [Babylonians](#), the [Achaemenid Persians](#), and the [Macedonians](#) in the [Third Intermediate Period](#) and the [Late Period of Egypt](#). In the aftermath of [Alexander the Great](#)'s death, one of his generals, [Ptolemy Soter](#), established himself as the new ruler of Egypt. This [Greek Ptolemaic Dynasty](#) ruled Egypt until 30 BC, when, under [Cleopatra](#), it fell to the [Roman Empire](#) and became a [Roman province](#).

The success of ancient Egyptian civilization came partly from its ability to adapt to the conditions of the Nile River valley for agriculture. The predictable [flooding](#) and controlled [irrigation](#) of the fertile valley produced surplus crops, which supported a more dense population, and [social development](#) and culture. With resources to spare, the [administration](#) sponsored mineral exploitation of the valley and surrounding desert regions, the early development of an independent [writing system](#), the organization of collective construction and agricultural projects, trade with surrounding regions, and a military intended to [defeat foreign enemies](#) and assert Egyptian dominance. Motivating and organizing these activities was a bureaucracy of elite [scribes](#), religious leaders, and administrators under the control of a pharaoh, who ensured the cooperation and unity of the Egyptian people in the context of an elaborate system of [religious beliefs](#).

The many achievements of the [ancient Egyptians](#) include the quarrying, surveying and construction techniques that supported the building of monumental [pyramids](#), [temples](#), and [obelisks](#); a system of [mathematics](#), a practical and effective [system of medicine](#), irrigation systems and agricultural production techniques, the first known ships, [Egyptian faience](#) and glass technology, new forms of [literature](#), and the [earliest known peace treaty](#), made with the [Hittites](#). Egypt left a lasting legacy. Its [art](#) and [architecture](#) were widely copied, and its antiquities carried off to far corners of the world. Its monumental ruins have inspired the imaginations of

travellers and writers for centuries. A new-found respect for antiquities and excavations in the early modern period by Europeans and Egyptians led to the [scientific investigation](#) of Egyptian civilization and a greater appreciation of its cultural legacy.

Egyptian religion was a complex system of [polytheistic](#) beliefs and rituals which were an integral part of [ancient Egyptian](#) society. It centered on the Egyptians' interaction with many [deities](#) who were believed to be present in, and in control of, the forces and elements of nature. The practices of Egyptian religion were efforts to provide for the gods and gain their favour. Formal religious practice centred on the [pharaoh](#), the king of Egypt. Although a human, the Pharaoh was believed to be descended from the gods. He acted as the [intermediary](#) between his people and the gods, and was obligated to sustain the gods through rituals and offerings so that they could maintain [order in the universe](#). The state dedicated enormous resources to Egyptian rituals and to the construction of the [temples](#).

Individuals could interact with the gods for their own purposes, appealing for their help through prayer or compelling them to act through magic. These practices were distinct from, but closely linked with, the formal rituals and institutions. The popular religious tradition grew more prominent in the course of Egyptian history as the status of the Pharaoh declined. Another important aspect was the belief in the afterlife and [funerary practices](#). The Egyptians made great efforts to ensure the survival of their [souls](#) after death, providing tombs, grave goods, and offerings to preserve the bodies and spirits of the deceased.

The religion had its roots in Egypt's prehistory and lasted for more than 3,000 years. The details of religious belief changed over time as the importance of particular gods rose and declined, and their intricate relationships shifted. At various times, certain gods became preeminent over the others, including the sun god [Ra](#), the creator god [Amun](#), and the mother goddess [Isis](#). For a brief period, in the [aberrant theology](#) promulgated by the Pharaoh [Akhenaten](#), a single god, the [Aten](#), replaced the traditional pantheon. Ancient Egyptian religion and mythology left behind many writings and monuments, along with significant influences on ancient and modern cultures.

[Egyptian language](#)

The [Egyptian language](#) is a northern [Afro-Asiatic](#) language closely related to the [Berber](#) and [Semitic languages](#). It has the second longest history of any language (after [Sumerian](#)), having been written from c. 3200 BC to the Middle Ages and remaining as a spoken language for longer. The phases of ancient Egyptian are [Old Egyptian](#), [Middle Egyptian](#) (Classical Egyptian), [Late Egyptian](#), [Demotic](#) and [Coptic](#). Egyptian writings do not show dialect differences before Coptic, but it was probably spoken in regional dialects around Memphis and later Thebes.

Ancient Egyptian was a [synthetic language](#), but it became more [analytic](#) later on. Late Egyptian develops pre-fixal definite and indefinite [articles](#), which replace the older inflectional [suffixes](#). The Egyptian [hieroglyphic](#), [hieratic](#), and demotic scripts were eventually replaced by the more phonetic [Coptic alphabet](#). Coptic is still used in the liturgy of the [Egyptian Orthodox Church](#).

[Hieroglyphic writing](#) dates from c. 3000 BC, and is composed of hundreds of symbols. A hieroglyph can represent a word, a sound, or a silent determinative; and the same symbol can serve different purposes in different contexts. Hieroglyphs were a formal script, used on stone monuments and in tombs, that could be as detailed as individual works of art. In day-to-day writing, scribes used a cursive form of writing, called [hieratic](#), which was quicker and easier. While formal hieroglyphs may be read in rows or columns in either direction (though typically written from right to left), hieratic was always written from right to left, usually in horizontal rows. A new form of writing, [Demotic](#), became the prevalent writing style, and it is this form of writing – along with formal hieroglyphs – that accompany the Greek text on the Rosetta Stone.

Around the first century AD, the Coptic alphabet started to be used alongside the Demotic script. Coptic is a modified [Greek alphabet](#) with the addition of some Demotic signs. Although formal hieroglyphs were used in a ceremonial role until the fourth century, towards the end only a small handful of priests could still read them. As the traditional religious establishments were disbanded, knowledge of hieroglyphic writing was mostly lost. Attempts to decipher them date to the Byzantine and Islamic periods in Egypt, but only in 1822, after the discovery of the Rosetta stone and years of research by [Thomas Young](#) and [Jean-François Champollion](#), were hieroglyphs almost fully deciphered.

Trade and Exchange System

The ancient Egyptians engaged in trade with their [foreign neighbors](#) to obtain rare, exotic goods not found in Egypt. In the [Predynastic Period](#), they established trade with Nubia to obtain gold and incense. They also established trade with Palestine, as evidenced by Palestinian-style oil jugs found in the burials of the First Dynasty pharaohs. An Egyptian [colony](#) stationed in southern [Canaan](#) dates to slightly before the First Dynasty. [Narmer](#) had Egyptian pottery produced in Canaan and exported back to [Egypt](#).

By the Second Dynasty at latest, ancient Egyptian trade with [Byblos](#) yielded a critical source of quality timber not found in Egypt. By the Fifth Dynasty, trade with [Punt](#) provided gold, aromatic resins, ebony, ivory, and wild animals such as monkeys and baboons. Egypt relied on trade with [Anatolia](#) for essential quantities of tin as well as supplementary supplies of copper, both metals being necessary for the manufacture of bronze. The ancient Egyptians prized the blue stone [lapis lazuli](#), which had to be imported from far-away [Afghanistan](#). Egypt's Mediterranean trade partners also included [Greece](#) and Crete, which provided, among other goods, supplies of [olive oil](#).¹ In exchange for its luxury imports and raw materials, Egypt mainly exported grain, gold, linen, and papyrus, in addition to other finished goods including glass and stone objects.

Legal system

The head of the legal system was officially the pharaoh, who was responsible for enacting laws, delivering justice, and maintaining law and order, a concept the ancient Egyptians referred to as [Ma'at](#). Although no [legal codes](#) from ancient Egypt survive, court documents show that Egyptian law was based on a common-sense

view of right and wrong that emphasized reaching agreements and resolving conflicts rather than strictly adhering to a complicated set of statutes. Local councils of elders, known as *Kenbet* in the New Kingdom, were responsible for ruling in court cases involving small claims and minor disputes. More serious cases involving murder, major land transactions, and tomb robbery were referred to the *Great Kenbet*, over which the vizier or pharaoh presided. Plaintiffs and defendants were expected to represent themselves and were required to swear an oath that they had told the truth. In some cases, the state took on both the role of prosecutor and judge, and it could torture the accused with beatings to obtain a confession and the names of any co-conspirators. Whether the charges were trivial or serious, court scribes documented the complaint, testimony, and verdict of the case for future reference.

Punishment for minor crimes involved either imposition of fines, beatings, facial mutilation, or exile, depending on the severity of the offense. Serious crimes such as murder and tomb robbery were punished by execution, carried out by decapitation, drowning, or impaling the criminal on a stake. Punishment could also be extended to the criminal's family. Beginning in the New Kingdom, [oracles](#) played a major role in the legal system, dispensing justice in both civil and criminal cases. The procedure was to ask the god a "yes" or "no" question concerning the right or wrong of an issue. The god, carried by a number of priests, rendered judgment by choosing one or the other, moving forward or backward, or pointing to one of the answers written on a piece of papyrus or an [ostrakon](#).

Memphis

Memphis was the ancient capital of [Aneb-Hetch](#), the first [name](#) of [Lower Egypt](#). Its ruins are located near the town of [Mit Rahina](#), 20 km south of [Cairo](#). According to legend related by [Manetho](#), the city was founded by the [pharaoh Menes](#). [Capital](#) of [Egypt](#) during the [Old Kingdom](#), it remained an important city throughout ancient [Mediterranean history](#). It occupied a strategic position at the mouth of the [Nile delta](#), and was home to feverish activity. Its principal port, *Peru-nefer*, harboured a high density of workshops, factories, and warehouses that distributed food and merchandise throughout the ancient kingdom. During its golden age, Memphis thrived as a regional centre for commerce, trade, and religion.

Memphis was believed to be under the protection of the god [Ptah](#), the patron of craftsmen. Its great [temple](#), *Hut-ka-Ptah*, was one of the most prominent structures in the city. The name of this temple, rendered in Greek by the historian Manetho, is believed to be the etymological origin of the modern English name *Egypt*.

The history of Memphis is closely linked to [that of the country](#) itself. Its eventual downfall is believed to be due to the loss of its [economic](#) significance in late antiquity, following the rise of coastal [Alexandria](#). Its religious significance also diminished after the abandonment of the [ancient religion](#) following the [Edict of Thessalonica](#).

The ruins of the former capital today offer fragmented evidence of its past. They have been preserved, along with the [pyramid complex at Giza](#), as a [World Heritage Site](#) since 1979. The site is open to the public as an [open-air museum](#). Memphis became the capital of Ancient Egypt for over eight consecutive [dynasties](#)

during the Old Kingdom. The city reached a peak of prestige under the [6th dynasty](#) as a centre for the worship of [Ptah](#), the god of creation and artworks. The alabaster [sphinx](#) that guards the Temple of Ptah serves as a memorial of the city's former power and prestige. The Memphis [triad](#), consisting of the creator god Ptah, his consort [Sekhmet](#), and their son [Nefertem](#), formed the main focus of worship in the city.

Memphis declined briefly after the [18th dynasty](#) with the rise of [Thebes](#) and the New Kingdom, and was revived under the [Persians](#) before falling firmly into second place following the foundation of [Alexandria](#). Under the [Roman Empire](#), Alexandria remained the most important Egyptian city. Memphis remained the second city of Egypt until the establishment of [Fustat](#) (or Fostat) in 641 CE. It was then largely abandoned and became a source of stone for the surrounding settlements. It was still an imposing set of ruins in the 12th century but soon became a little more than an expanse of low ruins and scattered stone.

MODULE III

IRON AGE CIVILIZATIONS

The Iron Age is the third principal period of the three age system created by Christian Thomsen (1788-1865) for classifying ancient societies and pre historic stages of progress. Iron is harder than copper and bronze and is available in plenty. The use of iron helped to produce a vast variety of tools, implements, and weapons. Plough-share, sickles, shovels, spades, axes, etc. Favoured cleaning of jungles on a large scale and thereby making more land for cultivation. The beginning of the Iron Age in Europe and adjacent areas is characterized by certain forms of implements, weapons, personal ornaments, and pottery, and also by systems of decorative design, which are altogether different from those of the preceding age of bronze. [Metalsmithing](#) expanded from the primary form in the Bronze Age, [casting](#), to include [forging](#). The system of decoration, which in the Bronze Age consisted chiefly of a repetition of [rectilinear patterns](#), gave way to a system of [curvilinear](#) and flowing designs. The term "Iron Age" has low chronological value, because it did not begin simultaneously across the entire world. The dates and context vary depending on the region, and the sequence of ages is not necessarily true for every part of the earth's surface. There are areas, such as the islands of the South Pacific, the interior of Africa, and parts of North and South America, where peoples have passed directly from the use of stone to the use of iron without an intervening age of bronze.

The term Iron Age has less Chronological value because it did not begin simultaneously across the entire world. The advent Iron Age in Mesopotamia is dated around 1300BCE, in India and Europe around 1200BCE and in China much later. The discovery and growth of civilization and its spread to many new arias of the world. The ancient European civilizations, Hellenic and Hellenistic civilizations together with Roman civilisations did make a deep impact on the pattern of future European culture.

These civilizations mark mans continuing progress. Although each civilization was different from the other, they all contributed to the world's heritage in art, literature, philosophy, science and government. The greatest achievement of the early Iron Age civilizations was in the cultural field. Because of their cultural achievements, these civilizations are directly linked with the entire course of human history.

Hellenic Civilization

Ancient Greece was a [civilization](#) belonging to a period of [Greek history](#) that lasted from the [Archaic period](#) of the 8th to 6th centuries BC to the end of [antiquity](#). Immediately following this period was the beginning of the [Early Middle Ages](#) and the [Byzantine](#) era. Included in ancient Greece is the period of [Classical Greece](#), which flourished during the 5th to 4th centuries BC. Classical Greece began with the repelling of a [Persian invasion](#) by [Athenian](#) leadership. Because of conquests by [Alexander the Great](#) of Macedonia, [Hellenistic civilization](#) flourished from [Central Asia](#) to the western end of the [Mediterranean Sea](#). The different groups of migrants

to Greece like the Achaeans, Ionians, and Dorians, who spoke the Indo-European language, together called themselves 'hellenes', which means Greeks.

Classical [Greek culture](#), especially philosophy, had a powerful influence on the [Roman Empire](#), which carried a version of it to many parts of the [Mediterranean Basin](#) and [Europe](#), for which reason Classical Greece is generally considered to be the seminal culture which provided the foundation of modern [Western culture](#).

Classical Antiquity in Greece is preceded by the [Greek Dark Ages](#) (c. 1200 – c. 800 BC), [archaeologically](#) characterised by the [proto-geometric](#) and [geometric styles](#) of designs on pottery. This period is succeeded, around the 8th century BC, by the [Orientalising Period](#) during which a strong influence of [Syro-Hittite](#), [Assyrian](#), [Phoenician](#) and [Egyptian](#) cultures becomes apparent. Traditionally, the [Archaic period](#) of ancient Greece is considered to begin with Orientalising influence, which among other things brought the [alphabetic script](#) to Greece, marking the beginning of Greek literature ([Homer](#), [Hesiod](#)). The end of the Dark Ages is also frequently dated to 776 BC, the year of the first [Olympic Games](#). The Archaic period gives way to the [Classical period](#) around 500 BC, in turn succeeded by the [Hellenistic period](#) at the death of [Alexander the Great](#) in 323 BC.

Athens

In [Ancient Greek](#), Athens' name was a plural. However, in earlier Greek, such as [Homeric Greek](#), the name was in the singular form, and was then rendered in the plural. The root of the word is probably not of Greek or [Indo-European](#) origin, and is a possible remnant of the [Pre-Greek substrate](#) of Attica, as with the name of the goddess [Athena](#), who was always related to the city of Athens.

An [etiological myth](#) explaining how Athens has acquired this name was well known among ancient Athenians and even became the theme of the sculpture on the West pediment of the [Parthenon](#). The goddess [Athena](#) and the god [Poseidon](#) had many disagreements and battles between them, and one of these was a race to be the Patron God of the city. In an attempt to compel the people, Poseidon created a salt water [spring](#) by striking the ground with his trident, symbolizing [naval power](#). However, when Athena created the [olive tree](#), symbolizing [peace](#) and [prosperity](#), the Athenians, under their ruler [Cecrops](#), accepted the olive tree and named the city after Athena.

The oldest known human presence in Athens is the Cave of Schist, which has been dated to between the 11th and 7th millennium BC. Athens has been continuously inhabited for at least 7000 years. By 1400 BC the settlement had become an important centre of the [Mycenaean](#) civilization and the Acropolis was the site of a major [Mycenaean](#) fortress, whose remains can be recognised from sections of the characteristic [Cyclopean](#) walls. Unlike other Mycenaean centres, such as [Mycenae](#) and [Pylos](#), it is not known whether Athens suffered destruction in about 1200 BC, an event often attributed to a [Dorian](#) invasion, and the Athenians always maintained that they were "pure" [Ionians](#) with no Dorian element. However, Athens, [like many other Bronze Age settlements](#), went into economic decline for around 150 years afterwards.

[Iron Age](#) burials, in the [Kerameikos](#) and other locations, are often richly provided for and demonstrate that from 900 BC onwards Athens was one of the leading centres of trade and prosperity in the region. The leading position of Athens may well have resulted from its central location in the Greek world, its secure stronghold on the Acropolis and its access to the sea, which gave it a natural advantage over inland rivals such as [Thebes](#) and [Sparta](#).

By the 6th century BC, widespread social unrest led to the reforms of [Solon](#). These would pave the way for the eventual introduction of democracy by [Cleisthenes](#) in 508 BC. Athens had by this time become a significant naval power with a large fleet, and helped the [rebellion of the Ionian cities](#) against [Persian](#) rule. In the ensuing [Greco-Persian Wars](#) Athens, together with Sparta, led the coalition of Greek states that would eventually repel the Persians, defeating them decisively at [Marathon](#) in 490 BC, and crucially at [Salamis](#) in 480 BC. However, this did not prevent Athens from being captured and sacked twice by the [Persians](#) within one year, after a heroic resistance at [Thermopylae](#) by [Spartans](#) and other Greeks led by [King Leonidas](#), after both [Boeotia](#) and [Attica](#) fell to the Persians.

The decades that followed became known as the [Golden Age of Athenian democracy](#), during the time of Pericles 594BCE. He gave membership to all Athenians in the popular assembly called 'Ecclesia'. Administration was based on the majority decisions of the Ecclesia. An administrative council of ten members was in charge of the day-to-day administration of the state. Pericles was the head of the council. The weakness of Athenian Democracy was women and slaves were not given membership to the Ecclesia.

Athens became the leading city of [Ancient Greece](#), with its cultural achievements laying the foundations of [Western civilization](#). The playwrights [Aeschylus](#), [Sophocles](#) and [Euripides](#) flourished in Athens during this time, as did the historians [Herodotus](#) and [Thucydides](#), the physician [Hippocrates](#), and the philosopher [Socrates](#). Guided by [Pericles](#), who promoted the arts and fostered democracy, Athens embarked on an ambitious building program that saw the construction of the [Acropolis of Athens](#) (including the [Parthenon](#)), as well as empire-building via the [Delian League](#). Originally intended as an association of Greek city-states to continue the fight against the Persians, the league soon turned into a vehicle for Athens's own imperial ambitions. The resulting tensions brought about the [Peloponnesian War](#) (431–404 BC), in which Athens was defeated by its rival [Sparta](#).

By the mid-4th century BC, the northern Greek kingdom of [Macedon](#) was becoming dominant in Athenian affairs. In 338 BC the armies of [Philip II](#) defeated an alliance of some of the Greek city-states including Athens and Thebes at the Battle of Chaeronea, effectively ending Athenian independence. Later, under Rome, Athens was given the status of a free city because of its widely admired schools. The Roman emperor [Hadrian](#), in the 2nd century AD, constructed a library, a gymnasium, an aqueduct which is still in use, several temples and sanctuaries, a bridge and financed the completion of the [Temple of Olympian Zeus](#).

By the end of [Late Antiquity](#), the city experienced decline followed by recovery in the second half of the Middle Byzantine Period, in the 9th to 10th

centuries AD, and was relatively prosperous during the [Crusades](#), benefiting from Italian trade. After the [Fourth Crusade](#) the [Duchy of Athens](#) was established. In 1458 it was conquered by the [Ottoman Empire](#) and entered a long period of decline.

Following the [Greek War of Independence](#) and the establishment of the [Greek Kingdom](#), Athens was chosen as the capital of the newly independent Greek state in 1834, largely due to historical and sentimental reasons. At the time it was a town of modest size built around the foot of the Acropolis. The first [King of Greece](#), Otto of Bavaria, commissioned the architects [Stamatios Kleanthis](#) and [Eduard Schaubert](#) to design a modern city plan fit for the capital of a state.

Sparta

Sparta was a prominent [city-state](#) in [ancient Greece](#), situated on the banks of the [Eurotas River](#) in Laconia, in south-eastern [Peloponnese](#). It emerged as a political entity around the 10th century BC, when the invading [Dorians](#) subjugated the local, non-Dorian population. Around 650 BC, it rose to become the dominant military land-power in ancient Greece.

Given its military pre-eminence, Sparta was recognized as the overall leader of the combined Greek forces during the [Greco-Persian Wars](#). Between 431 and 404 BC, Sparta was the principal enemy of [Athens](#) during the [Peloponnesian War](#), from which it emerged victorious, though at great cost of lives lost. Sparta's defeat by [Thebes](#) in the [Battle of Leuctra](#) in 371 BC ended Sparta's prominent role in Greece. However, it maintained its political independence until the [Roman conquest of Greece](#) in [146 BC](#). It then underwent a long period of decline, especially in the [middle ages](#), when many Spartans moved to live in [Mystras](#). [Modern Sparta](#) is the capital of the Greek regional unit of [Laconia](#) and a centre for the processing of goods such as citrus and olives.

Sparta was unique in [ancient Greece](#) for its social system and constitution, which completely focused on military training and excellence. Its inhabitants were classified as [Spartiates](#) (Spartan citizens, who enjoyed full rights), [Mothakes](#) (non-Spartan free men raised as Spartans), [Perioikoi](#) (freedmen), and [Helots](#) (state-owned serfs, enslaved non-Spartan local population). Spartiates underwent the rigorous military training and education regimen, and Spartan [phalanges](#) were widely considered to be among the best in battle. Spartan women enjoyed considerably more rights and equality to men than elsewhere in the classical world.

Sparta was the subject of fascination in its own day, as well as in the West following the revival of classical learning. This love or admiration of Sparta is known as [Laconism](#) or [Laconophilia](#). At its peak around 500 BC the size of the city would have been some 20,000 – 35,000 free residents, plus numerous helots and perioiko. At 40,000 – 50,000 it was one of the largest Greek cities; however, according to Thucydides, the population of Athens in 431 BC was 360,000 – 610,000, making it unlikely that Athens was smaller than Sparta in 5th century BC.

Sparta was an [Oligarchy](#). The state was ruled by two [hereditary kings](#) of the [Agiad and Eurypontid families](#), both supposedly descendants of [Heracles](#) and equal in authority, so that one could not act against the power and political enactments of his colleague.

The duties of the kings were primarily religious, judicial, and military. They were the chief priests of the state and also maintained communication with the Delphian sanctuary, which always exercised great authority in Spartan politics. In the time of Herodotus, about 450 BC, their judicial functions had been restricted to cases dealing with heiresses, adoptions and the public roads. [Aristotle](#) describes the kingship at Sparta as "a kind of unlimited and perpetual generalship" while [Isocrates](#) refers to the Spartans as "subject to an [oligarchy](#) at home, to a kingship on campaign" Civil and criminal cases were decided by a group of officials known as the [ephors](#), as well as a council of [elders](#) known as the [Gerousia](#). The Gerousia consisted of 28 elders over the age of 60, elected for life and usually part of the royal households, and the two kings. High state policy decisions were discussed by this council who could then propose action alternatives to the *Damos*, the collective body of Spartan citizenry, who would [select one of the alternatives by voting](#).

The royal prerogatives were curtailed over time. Dating from the period of the Persian wars, the king lost the right to [declare war](#) and was accompanied in the field by two ephors. He was supplanted also by the ephors in the control of foreign policy. Over time, the kings became mere figureheads except in their capacity as generals. Real power was transferred to the ephors and to the Gerousia.

The origins of the powers exercised by the assembly of the citizens are virtually unknown because of the lack of historical documentation and Spartan state secrecy.

Citizenship

Not all inhabitants of the Spartan state were considered to be citizens. Only those who had undertaken the Spartan education process known as the [agoge](#) were eligible. However, usually the only people eligible to receive the agoge were [Spartiates](#), or people who could trace their ancestry to the original inhabitants of the city.

There were two exceptions. [Trophimoi](#) or "foster sons" were foreign students invited to study. The Athenian general [Xenophon](#), for example, sent his two sons to Sparta as trophimoi. The other exception was that the son of a helot could be enrolled as a syntrophos if a Spartiate formally adopted him and paid his way. If a syntrophos did exceptionally well in training, he might be sponsored to become a Spartiate.

Others in the state were the [perioikoi](#), who were free inhabitants of Spartan territory but were non-citizens, and the [helots](#), the state-owned [serfs](#). Descendants of non-Spartan citizens were not able to follow the agog and Spartans who could not afford to pay the expenses of the agog could lose their citizenship. These laws meant that Sparta could not readily replace citizens lost in battle or otherwise and eventually proved near fatal to the continuance of the state as the number of citizens became greatly outnumbered by the non-citizens and, even more dangerously, the helots.

The Greek city states were gradually dragged into a mutual suicidal war in the later part of the 5 th century BCE the Peloponnesian war which turned out to be the death-knell of the Greek city states. It was the end of the 'glory that was Greece'.

Hellenic Culture-Legacies

The Hellenic culture characterised as the 'classical' or simply the great. Greek cultural contribution reached its height in the Persian Athens. As the large number of slaves was the actual producers of the society, the Greek citizens had ample time to spend for cultural activities their orientation towards life was based upon reason, beauty, and truth and they are manifested with their cultural contributions. They were rooted in the past but were pointed towards the future.

Philosophy

Greek Philosophy arose in the 6th century BCE and continued throughout the [Hellenistic period](#) and the period in which [Ancient Greece](#) was part of the [Roman Empire](#). It dealt with a wide variety of subjects, including [political philosophy](#), [ethics](#), [metaphysics](#), [ontology](#), [logic](#), [biology](#), [rhetoric](#), and [aesthetics](#).

Many [philosophers](#) today concede that Greek philosophy has influenced much of Western thought since its inception. [Alfred North Whitehead](#) once noted: "The safest general characterization of the [European](#) philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to [Plato](#)." Clear, unbroken lines of influence lead from [ancient Greek](#) and [Hellenistic philosophers](#) to [Early Islamic philosophy](#), the European [Renaissance](#) and the [Age of Enlightenment](#).

Some claim that Greek philosophy, in turn, was influenced by the older wisdom literature and mythological cosmogonies of the [ancient Near East](#). [Martin Litchfield West](#) gives qualified assent to this view, stating, "contact with oriental [cosmology](#) and [theology](#) helped to liberate the [early Greek philosophers'](#) imagination; it certainly gave them many suggestive ideas. But they taught themselves to reason. Philosophy as we understand it is a Greek creation."

The Sophists

The first man to call himself a sophist, according to Plato, was [Protagoras](#), whom he presents as teaching that all [virtue](#) is conventional. It was Protagoras who claimed that "man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not," which Plato interprets as a radical [perspectives](#), where some things seem to be one way for one person (and so actually are that way) and another way for another person (and so actually are *that* way as well); the conclusion being that one cannot look to nature for guidance regarding how to live one's life.

Protagoras and subsequent sophists tended to teach rhetoric as their primary vocation. [Prodicus](#), [Gorgias](#), [Hippias](#), and [Thrasymachus](#) appear in various [Dialogues](#), sometimes explicitly teaching that while nature provides no ethical guidance, the guidance that the laws provide is worthless, or that nature favours those who act against the laws

Socrates

Socrates, born in [Athens](#) in the 5th century BCE, marks a watershed in ancient Greek philosophy. Athens was a centre of learning, with sophists and philosophers travelling from across Greece to teach rhetoric, astronomy, cosmology, geometry, and the like. The great statesman [Pericles](#) was closely associated with this new

learning and a friend of [Anaxagoras](#), however, and his political opponents struck at him by taking advantage of a conservative reaction against the philosophers; it became a crime to investigate the things above the heavens or below the earth, subjects considered impious. Anaxagoras is said to have been charged and to have fled into exile when Socrates was about twenty years of age. There is a story that [Protagoras](#), too, was forced to flee and that the Athenians burned his books. Socrates, however, is the only subject recorded as charged under this law, convicted, and sentenced to death in 399 BCE. In the version of his [defence speech](#) presented by Plato, he claims that it is the envy he arouses on account of his being a philosopher that will convict him.

While philosophy was an established pursuit prior to Socrates, [Cicero](#) credits him as "the first who brought philosophy down from the heavens, placed it in cities, introduced it into families, and obliged it to examine into life and morals, and good and evil." By this account he would be considered the founder of [political philosophy](#). The reasons for this turn toward political and ethical subjects remain the object of much study.

The fact that many conversations involving Socrates (as recounted by Plato and [Xenophon](#)) end without having reached a firm conclusion, or [aporetically](#), has stimulated debate over the meaning of the [Socratic Method](#). Socrates is said to have pursued this probing question-and-answer style of examination on a number of topics, usually attempting to arrive at a defensible and attractive definition of a [virtue](#).

While Socrates' recorded conversations rarely provide a definite answer to the question under examination, several maxims or paradoxes for which he has become known recur. Socrates taught that no one desires what is bad, and so if anyone does something that truly is bad, it must be unwillingly or out of ignorance; consequently, all virtue is knowledge. He frequently remarks on his own ignorance. [Plato](#) presents him as distinguishing himself from the common run of mankind by the fact that, while they know nothing noble and good, they do not *know* that they do not know, whereas Socrates knows and acknowledges that he knows nothing noble and good.

Numerous subsequent philosophical movements were inspired by Socrates or his younger associates. Plato casts Socrates as the main interlocutor in his [dialogues](#), deriving from them the basis of [Platonism](#). Plato's student [Aristotle](#) in turn criticized and built upon the doctrines he ascribed to Socrates and Plato, forming the foundation of [Aristotelianism](#). [Antisthenes](#) founded the school that would come to be known as [Cynicism](#) and accused Plato of distorting Socrates' teachings. [Zeno of Citium](#) in turn adapted the ethics of Cynicism to articulate [Stoicism](#). [Epicurus](#) studied with Platonic and Stoic teachers before renouncing all previous philosophers (including [Democritus](#), on whose atomism the [Epicurean](#) philosophy relies). The philosophic movements that were to dominate the intellectual life of the [Roman Empire](#) were thus born in this febrile period following Socrates' activity, and either directly or indirectly influenced by him. They were also absorbed by the expanding Muslim world in the 7th through 10th centuries CE, from which they returned to the

West as foundations of [medieval philosophy](#) and the [Renaissance](#), as discussed below.

Plato

Plato was an [Athenian](#) of the generation after [Socrates](#). Ancient tradition ascribes thirty-six dialogues and thirteen [letters](#) to him, although of these only twenty-four of the dialogues are now universally recognized as authentic; most modern scholars believe that at least twenty-eight dialogues and two of the letters were in fact written by Plato, although all of the thirty-six dialogues have some defenders. A further nine dialogues are ascribed to Plato but were considered spurious even in antiquity.

Plato's dialogues feature Socrates, although not always as the leader of the conversation. (One dialogue, the [Laws](#), instead contains an "Athenian Stranger.") Along with [Xenophon](#), Plato is the primary source of information about Socrates' life and beliefs and it is not always easy to distinguish between the two. While the Socrates presented in the dialogues is often taken to be Plato's mouthpiece, Socrates' reputation for [irony](#), his caginess regarding his own opinions in the dialogues, and his occasional absence from or minor role in the conversation serve to conceal Plato's doctrines. Much of what is said about his doctrines is derived from what Aristotle reports about them.

The political doctrine ascribed to Plato is derived from the [Republic](#), the [Laws](#), and the [Statesman](#). The first of these contains the suggestion that there will not be justice in cities unless they are ruled by [philosopher kings](#); those responsible for enforcing the laws are compelled to hold their women, children, and property in [common](#); and the individual is taught to pursue the common good through [noble lies](#); the *Republic* says that such a city is likely impossible, however, generally assuming that philosophers would refuse to rule and the people would refuse to compel them to do so.

Whereas the *Republic* is premised on a distinction between the sort of knowledge possessed by the philosopher and that possessed by the king or political man, Socrates explores only the character of the philosopher; in the *Statesman*, on the other hand, a participant referred to as the Eleatic Stranger discusses the sort of knowledge possessed by the political man, while Socrates listens quietly. Although rule by a wise man would be preferable to rule by law, the wise cannot help but be judged by the unwise, and so in practice, rule by law is deemed necessary.

Both the *Republic* and the *Statesman* reveal the limitations of politics, raising the question of what political order would be best given those constraints; that question is addressed in the *Laws*, a dialogue that does not take place in Athens and from which Socrates is absent. The character of the society described there is eminently conservative, a corrected or liberalized [timocracy](#) on the [Spartan](#) or [Cretan](#) model or that of pre-democratic [Athens](#).

Plato's dialogues also have [metaphysical](#) themes, the most famous of which is his [theory of forms](#). It holds that non-material abstract (but [substantial](#)) forms (or ideas), and not the material world of change known to us through our physical senses, possess the highest and most fundamental kind of reality.

Plato often uses long-form [analogies](#) (usually [allegories](#)) to explain his ideas; the most famous is perhaps the [Allegory of the Cave](#). It likens most humans to people tied up in a cave, who look only at shadows on the walls and have no other conception of reality. If they turned around, they would see what is casting the shadows (and thereby gain a further dimension to their reality). If some left the cave, they would see the outside world illuminated by the sun (representing the ultimate form of goodness and truth). If these travellers then re-entered the cave, the people inside (who are still only familiar with the shadows) would not be equipped to believe reports of this 'outside world'. This story explains the theory of forms with their different levels of reality, and advances the view that philosopher-kings are wisest while most humans are ignorant. One student of Plato (who would become another of the most influential philosophers of all time) stressed the implication that understanding relies upon first-hand observation:

Aristotle

Aristotle moved to Athens from his native [Stageira](#) in 367 BCE and began to study philosophy (perhaps even rhetoric, under [Isocrates](#)), eventually enrolling at [Plato's Academy](#). He left Athens approximately twenty years later to study [botany](#) and [zoology](#), became a tutor of [Alexander the Great](#), and ultimately returned to Athens a decade later to establish his own school: the [Lyceum](#). At least twenty-nine of his treatises have survived, known as the [corpus Aristotelicum](#), and address a variety of subjects including [logic](#), [physics](#), [optics](#), [metaphysics](#), [ethics](#), [rhetoric](#), [politics](#), [poetry](#), botany, and zoology.

Aristotle is often portrayed as disagreeing with his teacher Plato. He criticizes the [regimes](#) described in Plato's [Republic](#) and [Laws](#), and refers to the [theory of forms](#) as "empty words and poetic metaphors." He is generally presented as giving greater weight to empirical observation and practical concerns.

Aristotle's fame was not great during the [Hellenistic period](#), when [Stoic](#) logic was in vogue, but later [peripatetic](#) commentators popularized his work, which eventually contributed heavily to Islamic, Jewish, and medieval Christian philosophy. His influence was such that [Avicenna](#) referred to him simply as "the Master"; [Maimonides](#), [Alfarabi](#), [Averroes](#), and [Aquinas](#) as "the Philosopher."

Religion

Hellenic religion was a polytheists worship the ancient [Greek Gods](#), including the Olympians, nature divinities, underworld deities ([chthonic gods](#)) and [heroes](#). Both physical and spiritual ancestors are honoured. It is primarily a devotional or votive religion, based on the exchange of gifts (offerings) for the gods' blessings. The ethical convictions of modern Hellenic polytheists are often inspired by ancient Greek [virtues](#) such as [reciprocity](#), [hospitality](#), [self-control](#) and [moderation](#). The [Delphic maxims](#), [Tenets of Solon](#), the [Golden Verses of Pythagoras](#), or even Aristotle's [Ethics](#) each function as complete moral codes that a Hellenic Polytheist may observe. Key to most ethical systems is the idea of *kharis* (or "[charis](#)", grace), to establish reciprocity between humanity and the gods, between individuals, and among community members. Another key value in Hellenic Polytheism is [eusebeia](#),

often translated as *piety*. This implies a commitment to the worship of the Hellenic gods and action to back this up.

There is no central "ecclesia" (church/assembly) or hierarchal clergy, though some groups (i.e., Hellenion) do offer training in that capacity. Individual worshipers are generally expected to perform their own rituals and learn about the religion and the gods by reference to primary and [secondary sources](#) on ancient Greek religion and through personal experience of the gods. Information gained from such personal experiences is often referred to in Hellenic groups as "[UPG](#)" (Unverified Personal Gnosis), a term borrowed from [Ásatrú](#). encompasses the collection of beliefs, rituals, and [mythology](#) originating in [ancient Greece](#) in the form of both popular public religion and [cult practices](#). These different groups varied enough for it to be possible to speak of Greek religions or "cults" in the plural, though most of them shared similarities.

Many of the ancient Greek people recognized the major (Olympian) gods and goddesses ([Zeus](#), [Poseidon](#), [Hades](#), [Apollo](#), [Artemis](#), [Aphrodite](#), [Ares](#), [Dionysus](#), [Hephaestus](#), [Athena](#), [Hermes](#), [Demeter](#), [Hestia](#), and [Hera](#)), although philosophies such as [Stoicism](#) and some forms of [Platonism](#) used language that seems to posit a transcendent single deity. Different cities often worshiped the same deities, sometimes with [epithets](#) that distinguished them and specified their local nature.

The religious practices of the Greeks extended beyond mainland Greece, to the islands and coasts of [Ionia](#) in [Asia Minor](#), to [Magna Graecia](#) (Sicily and southern Italy), and to scattered Greek colonies in the Western Mediterranean, such as [Massalia](#) (Marseille). Greek religion was tempered by [Etruscan cult and belief](#) to form much of the later [Ancient Roman religion](#).

Ancient Greek [theology](#) was [polytheistic](#), based on the assumption that there were many gods and goddesses. There was a hierarchy of deities, with [Zeus](#), the king of the gods, having a level of control over all the others, although he was not omnipotent. Some deities had dominion over certain aspects of [nature](#). For instance, Zeus was the sky-god, sending thunder and lightning, [Poseidon](#) ruled over the [sea](#) and [earthquakes](#), [Hades](#) projected his remarkable power throughout the realms of death and the [Underworld](#), and [Helios](#) controlled the [sun](#). Other deities ruled over an abstract concept; for instance [Aphrodite](#) controlled [love](#).

While being immortal, the gods were certainly not [all-good](#) or even [all-powerful](#). They had to obey [fate](#), which overrode any of their divine powers or wills. For instance, in mythology, it was [Odysseus'](#) fate to return home to [Ithaca](#) after the [Trojan War](#), and the gods could only lengthen his journey and make it harder for him, but they could not stop him.

The gods acted like humans, and had human [vices](#). They would interact with humans, sometimes even spawning children with them. At times certain gods would be opposed to others, and they would try to outdo each other. In the [Iliad](#) Zeus, [Aphrodite](#), [Ares](#) and [Apollo](#) support the Trojan side in the Trojan War, while [Hera](#), [Athena](#) and Poseidon support the Greeks . Some gods were specifically associated with a certain city. Athena was associated with the city of [Athens](#), Apollo with [Delphi](#) and [Delos](#), Zeus with [Olympia](#) and Aphrodite with [Corinth](#). Other deities

were associated with nations outside of Greece; Poseidon was associated with [Ethiopia](#) and [Troy](#), and Ares with [Thrace](#).

Identity of names was not a guarantee of a similar [cults](#); the Greeks themselves were well aware that the Artemis worshipped at Sparta, the virgin huntress, was a very different deity from the Artemis who was a many-breasted [fertility goddess](#) at [Ephesus](#). When literary works such as the *Iliad* related conflicts among the gods these conflicts were because their followers were at war on earth and were a celestial reflection of the earthly pattern of local deities. Though the worship of the major deities spread from one locality to another, and though larger cities boasted temples to several major gods, the identification of different gods with different places remained strong to the end.

The Greeks believed in an [afterlife](#) where the spirits of the dead went after death. It was commonly supposed that unless the proper funeral rituals were performed, the deceased person's spirit would never reach the underworld and so would haunt the [upper world](#) as a ghost forever. There were various views of the underworld, and the idea changed over time. A few, like [Achilles](#), [Alcmene](#), [Amphiarus](#) [Ganymede](#), [Ino](#), [Melicertes](#), [Menelaus](#), [Peleus](#), and a great number of those who fought in the Trojan and Theban wars, were considered to have been physically immortalized and brought to live forever in either Elysium, the Islands of the Blessed, heaven, the ocean, or literally right under the ground. Such beliefs are found in the most ancient Greek sources, such as [Homer](#) and [Hesiod](#). This belief held strong even into the Christian era. For most people at the moment of death there was, however, no hope of anything but continued existence as a disembodied soul.

Greek religion had an extensive [mythology](#). It consisted largely of stories of the gods and of how they affected humans on Earth. Myths often revolved around heroes and their actions, such as Heracles and his twelve labors, Odysseus and his voyage home etc. Various religious festivals were held in ancient Greece. Many were specific only to a particular deity or city-state. For example, the festival of [Lycaea](#) was celebrated in [Arcadia](#) in Greece, which was dedicated to the pastoral god [Pan](#). There were also the Games held each year in different locations, culminating in the [Olympic Games](#), which were held every 4 years. These celebrated Zeus.

Hesiod's [Theogony](#) and [Works and Days](#), Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and [Pindar's Odes](#) are included as sacred texts as are other works of classical antiquity. These are the core texts that were considered inspired and usually include an invocation to the Muses for inspiration at the beginning of the work. Such texts, however, were not considered inspired in the sense that they had to be believed by everyone. Plato even wanted to exclude the myths from his ideal state described in the *Republic* because of their low moral tone.

Literature

This period of Greek literature stretches from [Homer](#) until the 4th century BC and the rise of [Alexander the Great](#). Greek literature was divided in well-defined literary genres, each one having a compulsory formal structure, about both [dialect](#) and metrics. The first division was between prose and poetry. Fictional literature was written in verse, while scientific literature was in prose. Within the poetry we

could separate three super-genres: epic, lyric and drama. We can observe here that the Greek terminology has become the common European terminology about literary genres. Lyric and drama were further divided into more genres: lyric in four (elegiac, iambic, monadic lyric and choral lyric); drama in three (tragedy, comedy and pastoral drama). About literature in prose there was more freedom; the main areas were historiography, philosophy and political rhetoric.

At the beginning of Greek literature stand the two monumental works of [Homer](#), the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The figure of Homer is shrouded in mystery. Although the works as they now stand are credited to him, it is certain that their roots reach far back before his time (see [Homeric Question](#)). The *Iliad* is the famous story about the Trojan War. It centers on the person of Achilles, who embodied the Greek heroic ideal.

While the *Iliad* is pure [tragedy](#), the *Odyssey* is a mixture of [tragedy](#) and [comedy](#). It is the story of Odysseus, one of the warriors at [Troy](#). After ten years fighting the war, he spends another ten years sailing back home to his wife and family. Penelope was considered the ideal female, Homer depicted her as the ideal female based on her commitment, modesty, purity, and respect during her marriage with Odysseus. During his ten-year voyage, he loses all of his comrades and ships and makes his way home to [Ithaca](#) disguised as a beggar. Both of these works were based on ancient legends. The stories are told in language that is simple, and direct. The [Homeric dialect](#) was an archaic language based on [Ionic dialect](#) mixed with some element of [Aeolic dialect](#) and [Attic dialect](#), the latter due to the Athenian edition of the 6th century BC. The epic verse was the [hexameter](#).

The other great poet of the preclassical period was [Hesiod](#). Unlike Homer, Hesiod speaks of himself in his poetry; it remains true that nothing is known about him from any external source. He was a native of [Boeotia](#) in [central Greece](#), and is thought to have lived and worked around 700 BC. His two works were *Works and Days* and *Theogony*. The first is a faithful depiction of the poverty-stricken country life he knew so well, and it sets forth principles and rules for farmers. *Theogony* is a systematic account of creation and of the gods. It vividly describes the ages of mankind, beginning with a long-past [Golden Age](#). Together the works of Homer and Hesiod comprised a kind of [Bible](#) for the [Greeks](#); Homer told the story of a [heroic](#) relatively near past, which Hesiod bracketed with a creation narrative and an account of the practical realities of contemporary daily life.

The type of poetry called lyric got its name from the fact that it was originally sung by individuals or a chorus accompanied by the instrument called the [lyre](#). Although, despite the name, the lyric poetry in this general meaning was divided in four genres, two of which were not accompanied by [cithara](#), but by flute. These two letters genres were the [elegiac poetry](#) and the [iambic poetry](#). Both were written in [ionic dialect](#), elegiac poetry was in [elegiac couplets](#) and iambic poems in [iambic trimeter](#). The first of the lyric poets was probably [Archilochus of Paros](#), circa 700 BC, the most important iambic poet. Only fragments remain of his work, as is the case with most of the poets. The few remnants suggest that he was an embittered adventurer who led a very turbulent life. The lyric in narrow sense was written in

aeolic dialect and meters were really varied. The most famous authors were the so-called [Nine lyric poets](#), and particularly [Alcaeus](#) and [Sappho](#) for [monodic](#) lyric and [Pindarus](#) for [choral](#) lyric.

Ancient Greek drama developed around Greece's [theater](#) culture. Drama was particularly developed in [Athens](#), so works are written in [Attic dialect](#). The dialogues are in [iambic trimeter](#), while chorus are in the meters of choral lyric.

In the age that followed the [Greco-Persian Wars](#), the awakened national spirit of [Athens](#) was expressed in hundreds of superb tragedies based on heroic and legendary themes of the past. The tragic plays grew out of simple choral songs and dialogues performed at festivals of the god [Dionysus](#). In the classical period, performances included three tragedies and one pastoral drama, depicting four different episodes of the same myth. Wealthy citizens were chosen to bear the expense of costuming and training the chorus as a public and religious duty. Attendance at the festival performances was regarded as an act of worship. Performances were held in the great open-air theater of Dionysus in Athens. All of the greatest poets competed for the prizes offered for the best plays.

The three best authors are [Aeschylus](#), [Sophocles](#) and [Euripides](#). From Aeschylus, we still have seven tragedies, among which the only surviving series of three tragedies performed together, the so-called [Oresteia](#). Seven works of Sophocles have survived, the most important of which are [Oedipus rex](#) and [Antigone](#). From Euripides, seventeen tragedies have survived, among them [Medea](#) and [The Bacchae](#).

Like tragedy, comedy arose from a ritual in honor of [Dionysus](#), but in this case the plays were full of frank obscenity, abuse, and insult. At [Athens](#), the comedies became an official part of the festival celebration in 486 BC, and prizes were offered for the best productions. As with the tragedians, few works still remain of the great comedic writers. Of the works of earlier writers, only some plays by [Aristophanes](#) exist. These are a treasure trove of comic presentation. He poked fun at everyone and every institution. For boldness of fantasy, for merciless insult, for unqualified indecency, and for outrageous and free political criticism, there is nothing to compare to the comedies of [Aristophanes](#). In [The Birds](#), he held up Athenian democracy to ridicule. In [The Clouds](#), he attacked the philosopher [Socrates](#). In [Lysistrata](#), he denounced war. Only 11 of his plays have survived. The third dramatic genre was the [satyr play](#). Although the genre was popular, only one example has survived in its entirety, Euripides' [Cyclops](#).

Two of the most famous historians who have ever written flourished during Greece's classical age: [Herodotus](#) and [Thucydides](#). Herodotus is commonly called the father of history, and his "History" contains the first truly literary use of prose in Western literature. Of the two, Thucydides was the more careful historian. His critical use of sources, inclusion of documents, and laborious research made his History of the Peloponnesian War a significant influence on later generations of historians.

A third historian of ancient Greece, [Xenophon](#), began his Hellenica where Thucydides ended his work about 411 BC and carried his history to 362 BC. His writings were superficial in comparison to those of Thucydides, but he wrote with

authority on military matters. He therefore is at his best in the [Anabasis](#), an account of his participation in a Greek mercenary army that tried to help the Persian Cyrus expel his brother from the throne. Xenophon also wrote three works in praise of the philosopher Socrates: [Apology](#), [Symposium](#), and [Memorabilia](#). Although both Xenophon and Plato knew Socrates, their accounts are very different, and it is interesting to compare the view of the military historian to that of the poet-philosopher.

The greatest achievements of the 4th century were in philosophy. There were many [Greek philosophers](#), but [Socrates](#), [Plato](#), and [Aristotle](#) tower above the rest and had enormous influence on Western society. Socrates himself wrote nothing, but his thought (or a reasonable presentation of it) is believed to be given by Plato's early [Socratic dialogues](#). [Aristotle](#) is virtually without rivals among scientists and philosophers. The first sentence of his [Metaphysics](#) reads: "All men by nature desire to know." He has, therefore, been called the "Father of those who know." His medieval disciple [Thomas Aquinas](#) referred to him simply as "the Philosopher." Aristotle was a student at Plato's [Academy](#), and it is known that like his teacher he wrote dialogues, or conversations. None of these exist today. The body of writings that has come down to the present probably represents lectures that he delivered at his own school in Athens, the [Lyceum](#). Even from these books the enormous range of his interests is evident. He explored matters other than those that are today considered philosophical. The treatises that exist cover logic, the physical and biological sciences, ethics, politics, and constitutional government. There are also treatises on [The Soul](#) and [Rhetoric](#). His [Poetics](#) has had an enormous influence on literary theory and served as an interpretation of tragedy for more than 2,000 years. With his death in 322 BC, the classical era of Greek literature drew to a close.

Greek Art

Artistic production in Greece began in the prehistoric pre-Greek [Cycladic](#) and the [Minoan](#) civilizations, both of which were influenced by local traditions and the [art of ancient Egypt](#).

There are three scholarly divisions of the stages of later ancient Greek art that correspond roughly with historical periods of the same names. These are the Archaic, the Classical and the Hellenistic. The [Archaic period](#) is usually dated from 1000 BC. The Persian Wars of 480 BC to 448 BC are usually taken as the dividing line between the Archaic and the Classical periods, and the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC is regarded as separating the Classical from the Hellenistic period. Of course, different forms of art developed at different speeds in different parts of the Greek world, and varied to a degree from artist to artist.^[1] There was no sharp transition from one artistic period to another.

The art of ancient Greece has exercised an enormous influence on the culture of many countries from ancient times until the present, particularly in the areas of [sculpture](#) and [architecture](#). In the West, the art of the [Roman Empire](#) was largely derived from Greek models. In the East, [Alexander the Great](#)'s conquests initiated several centuries of exchange between Greek, Central Asian and [Indian](#) cultures, resulting in [Greco-Buddhist art](#), with ramifications as far as [Japan](#). Following the

[Renaissance](#) in [Europe](#), the [humanist](#) aesthetic and the high technical standards of Greek art inspired generations of European artists. Pottery was either red with black designs or black with red design

Hellenistic philosophy went through a peculiar evolution – or retrogression, it might almost be better to say. During the first stage it was still under the influence of Greek thought and consequently showed an elemental regard for reason as the key to the solution of *man's* problems. During what may be considered a second stage, skepticism concerning all truth and all values resulted in the rejection of reason entirely. Toward the end of the civilization philosophy degenerated into a barren mysticism, with the consequence that the whole intellectual approach, whether based upon reason or experience, was thrown into the discard. Despite the fundamental differences in their teachings, the philosophers of the Hellenistic [Age](#) were all agreed upon one thing: the necessity of finding some way of , salvation for man from the hardships and evils of his existence.

The first and most important of the Hellenistic philosophies were Epicureanism and Stoicism, both of which originated about 300 B.C. The founders were, respectively, Epicurus and Zeno, who were residents of Athens, though the former was born on the island of Samos, while the latter was a native of Cyprus, probably of Phoenician descent. Epicureanism and Stoicism had several features in common. Both were individualistic, concerned not with the welfare of society “primarily, but with the good of the individual. Materialistic, denying categorically the existence of any spiritual substances; even divine beings and the soul were declared to be formed of matter. In Stoicism and Epicureanism alike there were definite traces of defeatism, since both of them implied that the efforts of man are futile and suggested a retreat into Oriental quietism as an aim for the wise to pursue. Lastly, the two philosophies were similar in their doctrines that concepts and abstractions are nothing but names, that only particular things are real, and that all knowledge has its basis in sense perception.

The two systems were quite different. Zeno and his principal disciples taught that the cosmos is an ordered whole in which all contradictions are resolved for ultimate good. Evil is, therefore, relative; the particular misfortunes which befall human beings are but necessary incidents to the final perfection of the universe. Everything that happens is rigidly determined in accordance with rational purpose. Man is not master of his fate; his destiny is a [link](#) in an unbroken chain. He is [free](#) only in the sense that he can accept his fate or rebel against it. But whether he accepts or rebels, he cannot overcome it. The supreme duty of man is to submit to the order of the universe in the knowledge that that order is good; in other [words](#), to resign himself as graciously as possible to his fate. Through such an act of resignation he will attain to the highest happiness, which consists in tranquility of mind. The individual who is most truly happy is therefore the man who by the assertion of his rational nature has accomplished a perfect adjustment of his life to the cosmic purpose and has purged his soul of all bitterness and whining protest against evil turns of fortune

Development of Science

The **history of science in classical antiquity** encompasses both those inquiries into the workings of the universe aimed at such practical goals as establishing a reliable calendar or determining how to cure a variety of illnesses and those abstract investigations known as [natural philosophy](#). The ancient peoples who are considered the first [scientists](#) may have thought of themselves as natural philosophers, as practitioners of a skilled profession (for example, physicians), or as followers of a religious tradition (for example, temple healers). The encyclopaedic works of [Aristotle](#), [Archimedes](#), [Hippocrates](#), [Galen](#), [Ptolemy](#), [Euclid](#), and others spread throughout the world. These works and the important commentaries on them were the wellspring of science.

The practical concerns of the [ancient Greeks](#) to establish a calendar is first exemplified by the *Works and Days* of the Greek poet [Hesiod](#), who lived around 700 BC. The *Works and Days* incorporated a calendar, in which the farmer was to regulate seasonal activities by the seasonal appearances and disappearances of the stars, as well as by the phases of the Moon which were held to be propitious or ominous. Around 450 BC we begin to see compilations of the seasonal appearances and disappearances of the stars in texts known as *parapegmata*, which were used to regulate the civil calendars of the Greek [city-states](#) on the basis of astronomical observations.

Medicine provides another example of practically oriented investigation of nature among the Ancient Greeks. It has been pointed out that [Greek medicine](#) was not the province of a single trained profession and there was no accepted method of qualification or licensing. Physicians in the [Hippocratic](#) tradition, temple healers associated with the cult of [Asclepius](#), herb collectors, drug sellers, midwives, and gymnastic trainers all claimed to be qualified as healers in specific contexts and competed actively for patients. This rivalry among these competing traditions contributed to an active public debate about the causes and proper treatment of disease, and about the general methodological approaches of their rivals. In the Hippocratic text, *On the Sacred Disease*, which deals with the nature of epilepsy, the author attacks his rivals (temple healers) for their ignorance and for their love of gain. The author of this text seems modern and progressive when he insists that epilepsy has a natural cause, yet when he comes to explain what that cause is and what the proper treatment would be, his explanation is as short on specific evidence and his treatment as vague as that of his rivals.

There were several acute observers of natural phenomena, especially [Aristotle](#) and [Theophrastus](#), who wrote extensively on animals and plants. Theophrastus also produced the first systematic attempt to classify [minerals](#) and rocks, summarised in the [Naturalis Historia](#) of [Pliny the Elder](#) in 77 AD.

[Thales](#) of Miletus (624–546 BC) considered that all things came to be from and find their sustenance in water. [Anaximander](#) (610–546 BC) then suggested that things could not come from a specific substance like water, but rather from something he called the "boundless." Exactly what he meant is uncertain but it has been suggested that it was boundless in its quantity, so that creation would not fail; in its qualities, so that it would not be overpowered by its contrary; in time, as it has

no beginning or end; and in space, as it encompasses all things. [Anaximenes](#) (585–525 BC) returned to a concrete material substance, air, which could be altered by rarefaction and condensation. He adduced common observations (the wine stealer) to demonstrate that air was a substance and a simple experiment (breathing on one's hand) to show that it could be altered by rarefaction and condensation.

[Heraclitus](#) of Ephesus (535–475 BC), then maintained that change, rather than any substance was fundamental, although the element fire seemed to play a central role in this process. Finally, [Empedocles](#) of Acragas (490–430 BC), seems to have combined the views of his predecessors, asserting that there are four elements (Earth, Water, Air and Fire) which produce change by mixing and separating under the influence of two opposing "forces" that he calls Love and Strife.

All these theories imply that matter is a continuous substance. Two Greek philosophers, [Leucippus](#) (first half of the 5th century BC) and [Democritus](#) of Abdera (lived about 410 BC) came up with the notion that there were two real entities: [atoms](#), which were small indivisible particles of matter, and the void, which was the empty space in which matter was located. Although all the explanations from Thales to Democritus involve matter, what is more important is the fact that these rival explanations suggesting an ongoing process of debate in which alternate theories were put forth and criticized.

[Xenophanes](#) of [Colophon](#) prefigured [palaeontology](#) and [geology](#) as he thought that periodically the earth and sea mix and turn all to mud, citing several [fossils](#) of sea creatures that he had seen.

Pythagoreans

The materialist explanations of the origins of the cosmos seem to miss an important point. It doesn't make much sense to think that an ordered universe comes out of a random collection of matter. How can a random assemblage of fire or water produce an ordered universe without the existence of some ordering principle?

The first step in this emphasis upon a model was that of the followers of [Pythagoras](#) (582 – 507 BC), who saw number as the fundamental unchanging entity underlying all the structure of the universe. For Pythagoras and his followers matter was made up of ordered arrangements of point/atoms, arranged according to geometrical principles into triangles, squares, rectangles, and so on... Even on a larger scale, the parts of the universe were arranged on the principles of a musical scale and a number. For example, the [Pythagoreans](#) held that there were ten heavenly bodies because ten is a perfect number, the sum of $1 + 2 + 3 + 4$. Thus with the Pythagoreans we find number emerging as the rational basis for an orderly universe – as the first proposal for a scientific ordering principle of the cosmos.

Aristotle was one of the most prolific natural philosophers of Antiquity. He made countless observations of nature, especially of the structure and habits of [plants](#) and [animals](#). He also made many [observations](#) about the large-scale workings of the universe, which led to his development of a comprehensive theory of [physics](#). For example, he developed a version of the classical theory of the elements ([earth](#), [water](#), [fire](#), [air](#), and [aether](#)). In his theory, the light elements (fire and air) have a natural tendency to move away from the centre of the universe while the heavy

elements (earth and water) have a natural tendency to move toward the centre of the universe, thereby forming a spherical earth. Since the celestial bodies – that is, the [planets](#) and [stars](#) – were seen to move in circles, he concluded that they must be made of a fifth element, which he called Aether.

Aristotle could point to the falling stone, rising flames, or pouring water to illustrate his theory. His laws of [motion](#) emphasized the common observation that [friction](#) was an omnipresent phenomenon – which anybody in motion would, unless acted upon, *come to rest*.

Hellenistic science

The most brilliant age in the history of science prior to the seventeenth century A.D. was the period of the Hellenistic civilization. Indeed, many of the achievements of the modern age would scarcely have been possible without the discoveries of the scientists of Alexandria, Syracuse, Pergamum, and other great cities of the Hellenistic world. The reasons for the phenomenal development of science in the centuries after the downfall of Alexander's empire are not far to seek. Alexander himself had given some financial encouragement to the progress of research. More important was the stimulus provided for intellectual inquiry by the fusion of Chaldean and Egyptian science with the learning of the Greeks. Possibly a third factor was the new interest in luxury and comfort and the demand for practical knowledge which would enable man to solve the problems of a disordered and unsatisfying existence.

The sciences which received the major attention in the Hellenistic Age were astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine, and physics. Chemistry as a pure science was practically unknown. Except for the work of Theophrastus, who was the first to recognize the sexuality of plants, the biological sciences were also largely neglected. Neither chemistry nor biology bore any definite relationship to trade or to the forms of industry then in existence and apparently they were not regarded as having much practical value.

The most famous of the earlier astronomers of this time was Aristarchus of Samos (310-230 B.C.), who is sometimes called the "Hellenistic Copernicus." As a result of his discovery that the apparent immobility of the "fixed" stars is due to their vast distance from the earth, he was the first to have any adequate conception of the enormous size of the universe. But his chief title to fame comes from his deduction that the earth and the other planets revolve around the sun. Unfortunately this deduction was not accepted by his successors. It conflicted with the teachings of Aristotle and with the anthropocentric ideas of the Greeks. Besides, it was not in harmony with the beliefs of the Jews and other Orientals who made up so large a percentage of the Hellenistic population. The only other astronomer of much importance in the Hellenistic Age was Hipparchus, who did his most valuable work in Alexandria in the latter half of the second century B.C. His chief contributions were the invention of the astrolabe, the preparation of the best chart of the heavens known to antiquity, the approximately correct calculation of the diameter of the moon and its distance from the earth, and the discovery of the precession of the equinoxes. His fame was eventually overshadowed, however, by the reputation of

Ptolemy of Alexandria, the last of the Hellenistic astronomers. Although Ptolemy made few original discoveries, he systematized the work of others. His principal writing, the *Almagest*, based upon the geocentric theory, was handed down to medieval Europe as the classic summary of ancient astronomy.

Closely allied with astronomy were two other sciences, mathematics and geography. The Hellenistic mathematician of greatest renown was of course Euclid (323-285 BC), erroneously considered the founder of geometry. Until the middle of the nineteenth century his *Elements of Geometry* remained the accepted basis for the study of that branch of mathematics. Much of the material in this work was not original but was compiled as a synthesis of the discoveries of others. The most original of the Hellenistic mathematicians was probably Hipparchus, who laid the foundations of both plane and spherical trigonometry. Hellenistic geography owed most of its development to Eratosthenes (ca. 276-ca. 194 B.C.), astronomer, poet, philologist, and librarian of Alexandria. By means of sun dials placed some hundreds of miles apart, he calculated the circumference of the earth with an error of less than 200 miles. He produced the most accurate map that had yet been devised, with the surface of the earth divided into degrees of latitude and longitude. He propounded the theory that all of the oceans are really one, and he was the first to suggest the possibility of reaching India by sailing west. One of his successors divided the earth into the five climatic zones which are still recognized and explained the ebb and flow of the tides as due to the influence of the moon.

Perhaps none of the Hellenistic advances in science surpassed in importance the progress in medicine. Especially significant was the work of Herophilus of Chalcedon, who conducted his researches in Alexandria about the beginning of the third century. Without question he was the greatest anatomist of antiquity and, according to Galen, the first to practice human dissection. Among his most important achievements were a detailed description of the brain, with an attempt to distinguish between the functions of its various parts; the discovery of the significance of the pulse and its use in diagnosing illness; and the discovery that the arteries contain blood alone, not a mixture of blood and air as Aristotle had taught, and that their function is to carry blood from the heart to all parts of the body. The value of this last discovery in laying the basis for knowledge of the circulation of the blood can hardly be overestimated.

The ablest of the successors of Herophilus was Erasistratus, who nourished in Alexandria about the middle of the third century. He is considered the founder of physiology as a separate science. Not only did he practice dissection, but he is believed to have gained a great deal of his knowledge of bodily functions from vivisection. He discovered the valves of the heart, distinguished between motor and sensory nerves, and taught that the ultimate branches of the arteries and veins are connected. He was the first to reject absolutely the humeral theory of disease and to condemn excessive blood-letting as a method of cure. Unfortunately this theory was revived by Galen, the great encyclopedias of medicine who lived in the Roman Empire in the second century A.D.

Prior to the third century B.C. physics had been a branch of philosophy. It was made a separate experimental science by Archimedes of Syracuse. Archimedes discovered the law of floating bodies or specific gravity and formulated with scientific exactness the principles of the lever, the pulley, and the screw. Among his memorable inventions were the compound pulley, the tubular screw for pumping water, the screw propeller for ships, and the burning lens. Although he has been called the "technical Yankee of antiquity," there is evidence that he set no high value upon his ingenious mechanical contraptions and preferred to devote his time to pure scientific research.

Certain other individuals in the Hellenistic Age were quite willing to give all their attention to applied science. Pre-eminent among them was Hero or Heron of Alexandria, who lived in the last century B.C. The record of inventions credited to him almost passes belief. The list includes a fire engine, a siphon, a force pump, a hydraulic organ, a slot machine, a catapult operated by compressed air, a thermoscope, and even a steam engine. How many of these inventions were really his own is impossible to say, but there appears to be no question that such contrivances were actually in existence in his time or soon thereafter. Nevertheless, the total progress in applied science was comparatively slight, probably for the reason that human labor continued to be so abundant and cheap that it was not worthwhile to substitute the labor of machines.

Roman Civilization

Rome is one of the oldest named cities in the world. There is archaeological evidence of human occupation of the Rome area from at least 5,000 [years](#), but the dense layer of much younger debris obscures Palaeolithic and Neolithic sites. Evidence of stone tools, pottery and stone weapons attest to at least 6,000 years of human presence. The power of the well known tale of Rome's legendary foundation tends also to deflect attention from its actual, and much more ancient, origins. The origin of the city's name is thought to be that of the reputed founder and first ruler, the legendary [Romulus](#). It is said that Romulus and his twin brother [Remus](#), apparent sons of the god Mars, who were suckled by a she-wolf after being abandoned, decided to build a city. After an argument, Romulus killed Remus and named the city Rome, after himself. After founding and naming (as the story goes) Rome, he permitted men of all classes to come to Rome as citizens, including slaves and freemen without distinction. To provide his citizens with wives, Romulus invited the neighbouring tribes to a festival in Rome where he abducted the young women from amongst them (known as [The Rape of the Sabine Women](#)). After the ensuing war with the [Sabines](#), Romulus shared the kingship with the Sabine king [Titus Tatius](#). Romulus selected [100](#) of the noblest men to form the [Roman senate](#) as an advisory council to the king. These men he called *patres*, and their descendants became the [patricians](#). He created three [centuries](#) of [equites](#) named *Ramnes* (meaning Romans), *Tities* (after the Sabine king) and a third called *Luceres* (Etruscans). He also divided the general populace into thirty [curiae](#), named after thirty of the Sabine women who had intervened to end the war between Romulus and Tatius. The *curiae* formed the voting units in the [Comitia Curiata](#).

After 650 BC, the [Etruscans](#) became dominant in Italy and expanded into north-central Italy. Roman tradition claimed that Rome had been under the control of [seven kings](#) from 753 to [509 BC](#) beginning with the mythic [Romulus](#) who along with his brother [Remus](#) were said to have [founded the city of Rome](#). Two of the last three kings, namely [Tarquinius Priscus](#) and [Tarquinius Superbus](#), were said to be (at least partially) Etruscan (Priscus is said by the ancient literary sources to be the son of a Greek refugee, and an Etruscan mother), their names referring to the Etruscan town of [Tarquinia](#).

This traditional account of Roman history, which has come down to us through [Livy](#), [Plutarch](#), [Dionysius of Halicarnassus](#) and others, is that in Rome's first centuries, it was ruled by a succession of seven kings. The traditional chronology, as codified by [Varro](#), allots 243 years for their reigns, an average of almost 35 years, which, since the work of [Barthold Georg Niebuhr](#), has been generally discounted by modern scholarship. The [Gauls](#) destroyed much of Rome's historical records when they sacked the city after the [Battle of the Allia](#) in 390 BC and what was left was eventually lost to time or theft. With no contemporary records of the kingdom existing, all accounts of the kings must be carefully questioned. The list of kings is also of dubious historical value, though the last-named kings may be historical figures. It is believed by some historians (again, this is disputed) that Rome was under the influence of the Etruscans for about a century. During this period a bridge called the [Pons Sublicius](#) was built to replace the [Tiber](#) ford, and the [Cloaca Maxima](#) was also built; the Etruscans are said to have been great engineers of this type of structure. From a cultural and technical point of view, Etruscans had arguably the second-greatest impact on Roman development, only surpassed by the Greeks.

Expanding further south, the Etruscans came into direct contact with the Greeks. After initial success in conflicts with the Greek colonists, Etruria went into a decline. Taking advantage of this, around 500 BC Rome rebelled and gained independence from the Etruscans. It also abandoned monarchy in favour of a republican system based on a [Senate](#), composed of the nobles of the city, along with popular assemblies which ensured political participation for most of the freeborn men and elected magistrates annually.

The Etruscans left a lasting influence on Rome. The Romans learned to build temples from them, and the Etruscans may have introduced the worship of a triad of gods – [Juno](#), [Minerva](#), and [Jupiter](#) – from the [Etruscan gods: Uni, Menrva, and Tinia](#). However, the influence of Etruscan people in the evolution of Rome is often overstated. Rome was primarily a Latin city. It never became fully Etruscan. Also, evidence shows that Romans were heavily influenced by the Greek cities in the South, mainly through trade

Roman Republic

After 500 BC, Rome joined with the Latin cities in defence against incursions by the [Sabines](#). Winning the [Battle of Lake Regillus](#) in 493 BC, Rome established again the supremacy over the Latin countries it had lost after the fall of the monarchy. After a lengthy series of struggles, this supremacy became fixed in 393, when the Romans finally subdued the [Volsci](#) and [Aequi](#). In 394 BC, they also

conquered the menacing Etruscan neighbour of [Veii](#). The Etruscan power was now limited to Etruria itself, and Rome was the dominant city in Latium.

According to tradition, Rome became a [republic](#) in 509 BC. However, it took a few centuries for Rome to become the great city of popular imagination. By the 3rd century BC, Rome had become the pre-eminent city of the Italian peninsula. During the [Punic Wars](#) between Rome and the great Mediterranean empire of Carthage (264 to 146 BC), Rome's stature increased further as it became the capital of an overseas empire for the first time. Beginning in the 2nd century BC, Rome went through a significant population expansion as Italian farmers, driven from their ancestral farmlands by the advent of massive, slave-operated farms called [latifundia](#), flocked to the city in great numbers. The victory over Carthage in the [First Punic War](#) brought the first two provinces outside the Italian peninsula, [Sicily](#) and [Sardinia](#). Parts of [Spain](#) ([Hispania](#)) followed, and in the beginning of the 2nd century the Romans got involved in the affairs of the Greek world. By then all Hellenistic kingdoms and the Greek city-states were in decline, exhausted from endless civil wars and relying on mercenary troops.

The Romans looked upon the Greek civilisation with great admiration. The Greeks saw Rome as a useful ally in their civil strifes, and it wasn't long before the Roman legions were invited to intervene in Greece. In less than 50 years the whole of mainland Greece was subdued. The Roman legions crushed the Macedonian phalanx twice, in 197 and 168 BC; in 146 BC the Roman consul [Lucius Mummius](#) razed [Corinth](#), marking the end of free Greece. The same year [Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus](#), the son of [Scipio Africanus](#), destroyed the city of [Carthage](#), making it a Roman province.

In the following years, Rome continued its conquests in Spain with [Tiberius Gracchus](#), and it set foot in Asia, when the last king of [Pergamum](#) gave his kingdom to the Roman people. The end of the 2nd century brought once again threat, when a great host of [Germanic peoples](#), namely [Cimbri](#) and [Teutones](#), crossed the river Rhone and moved to Italy. [Gaius Marius](#) was consul five consecutive times (seven total), and won two decisive battles in 102 and 101 BC. He also reformed the Roman army, giving it such a good reorganization that it remained unchanged for centuries.

The first thirty years of the last century BC were characterised by serious internal problems that threatened the existence of the Republic. The [Social War](#), between Rome and its allies, and the [Servile Wars](#) (slave uprisings) were very hard conflicts, all within Italy, and forced the Romans to change their policy with regards to their allies and subjects. By then Rome had become an extensive power, with great wealth which derived from the conquered people (as tribute, food or manpower, i.e. slaves). The allies of Rome felt bitter since they had fought by the side of the Romans, and yet they were not citizens and shared little in the rewards. Although they lost the war, they finally got what they asked, and by the beginning of the 1st century AD practically all free inhabitants of Italy were Roman citizens.

However, the growth of the Imperium Romanum (Roman power) created new problems, and new demands, that the old political system of the Republic, with its annually elected magistrates and its sharing of power, could not solve. The

dictatorship of [Sulla](#), the extraordinary commands of Pompey Magnus, and the first [triumvirate](#) made that clear. In January 49 BC, [Julius Caesar](#) the conqueror of Gaul, marched his legions against Rome. In the following years, he vanquished his opponents, and ruled Rome for four years. After his assassination in 44 BC, the Senate tried to re-establish the Republic, but its champions, [Marcus Junius Brutus](#) (descendant of the founder of the republic) and [Gaius Cassius Longinus](#) were defeated by Caesar's lieutenant [Marcus Antonius](#) and Caesar's nephew, [Octavian](#).

The years 44-31 BC mark the struggle for power between Marcus Antonius and Octavian (later known as Augustus). Finally, on 2 September 31 BC, in the Greek promontory of [Actium](#), the final battle took place in the sea. Octavian was victorious, and became the sole ruler of Rome (and its empire). That date marks the end of the Republic and the beginning of the [Principate](#)

By the end of the Republic, the city of Rome had achieved a grandeur befitting the capital of an empire dominating the whole of the [Mediterranean](#). It was, at the time, the largest city in the world. Estimates of its peak population range from 450,000 to over 3.5 million people with estimates of 1 to 2 million being most popular with historians. This grandeur increased under [Augustus](#), who completed Caesar's projects and added many of his own, such as the [Forum of Augustus](#) and the [Ara Pacis](#). He is said to have remarked that he found Rome a city of brick and left it a city of marble (*Urbem latericium invenit, marmoream reliquit*). Augustus's successors sought to emulate his success in part by adding their own contributions to the city. In AD 64, during the reign of [Nero](#), the [Great Fire of Rome](#) left much of the city destroyed, but in many ways it was used as an excuse for new development.

Rome was a subsidised city at the time, with roughly 15 to 25 percent of its grain supply being paid by the central government. Commerce and industry played a smaller role compared to that of other cities like [Alexandria](#). This meant that Rome had to depend upon goods and production from other parts of the Empire to sustain such a large population. This was mostly paid by taxes that were levied by the Roman government. If it had not been subsidised, Rome would have been significantly smaller

Rome's population declined after its peak in the 2nd century. At the end of that century, during the reign of [Marcus Aurelius](#), a plague killed 2,000 people a day. Marcus Aurelius died in 180, his reign being the last of the "[Five Good Emperors](#)" and [Pax Romana](#). His son [Commodus](#), who had been co-emperor since AD 177, assumed full imperial power, which is most generally associated with the gradual decline of the Western Roman Empire. Rome's population was only a fraction of its peak when the [Aurelian Wall](#) was completed in the year 273 (at that year its population was only around 500,000).

Starting in the early 3rd century, matters changed. The "[Crisis of the third century](#)" defines the disasters and political troubles for the Empire, which nearly collapsed. The new feeling of danger and the menace of barbarian invasions was clearly shown by the decision of Emperor [Aurelian](#), who at year 273 finished encircling the capital itself with a massive [wall](#) which had a perimeter that measured close to 20 km (12 mi). Rome formally remained capital of the [empire](#), but emperors

spent less and less time there. At the end of 3rd century [Diocletian](#)'s political reforms, Rome was deprived of its traditional role of administrative capital of the Empire. Later, [western emperors](#) ruled from [Milan](#) or [Ravenna](#), or cities in [Gaul](#). In 330, [Constantine I](#) established a second capital at [Constantinople](#). At this time, part of the Roman aristocratic class moved to this new centre, followed by many of the artists and craftsmen who were living in the city.

Still Rome remained one of the strongholds of Paganism, led by the aristocrats and senators. However, the new walls did not stop the city being sacked first by [Alaric](#) on 24 August, 410, by [Geiseric](#) in 455 and even by general [Ricimer](#)'s unpaid Roman troops (largely composed of barbarians) on 11 July, 472. This was the first time in almost 800 years that Rome had fallen to an enemy. The previous [sack of Rome](#) had been accomplished by the [Gauls](#) under their leader [Brennus](#) in 387 BC. The sacking of 410 is seen as a major landmark in the [decline and fall of the Western Roman Empire](#). [St. Jerome](#), living in Bethlehem at the time, wrote that "The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken." These sackings of the city astonished the entire Roman world. In any case, the damage caused by the sackings may have been overestimated. The population already started to decline from the late 4th century onward, although around the middle of the fifth century it seems that Rome continued to be the most populous city of the two parts of the Empire, with a population of not less than 650,000 inhabitants. The decline greatly accelerated following the capture of [Africa](#) by the [Vandals](#). Many inhabitants now fled as the city no longer could be supplied with grain from Africa from the mid-5th century onward. At the beginning of the 6th century Rome's population may have been less than 100,000. Many monuments were being destroyed by the citizens themselves, who stripped stones from closed temples and other precious buildings, and even burned statues to make lime for their personal use. In addition, most of the increasing number of churches was built in this way. For example, the [first Saint Peter's Basilica](#) was erected using spoils from the abandoned [Circus of Nero](#). This "self-eating" attitude was a constant feature of Rome until the [Renaissance](#). From the 4th century, imperial edicts against stripping of stones and especially marble were common, but the need for their repetition shows that they were ineffective. Sometimes new churches were created by simply taking advantage of early Pagan temples, perhaps changing the Pagan god or hero to a corresponding Christian saint or martyr. In this way, the Temple of Romulus and Remus became the basilica of the twin saints [Cosmas and Damian](#). Later, the [Pantheon](#), Temple of All Gods, became the church of All Martyrs.

Roman law

Roman courts held [original jurisdiction](#) over cases involving Roman citizens throughout the empire, but there were too few judicial functionaries to impose Roman law uniformly in the provinces. Most parts of the Eastern empire already had well-established law codes and juridical procedures. In general, it was Roman policy to respect the *mos regionis* ("regional tradition" or "law of the land") and to regard local laws as a source of legal precedent and social stability. The compatibility of Roman and local law was thought to reflect an underlying *ius gentium*, the "law of nations" or [international law](#) regarded as common and customary among all human

communities. If the particulars of provincial law conflicted with Roman law or custom, Roman courts heard [appeals](#), and the emperor held final authority to render a decision.

Revenue and Taxation

Taxation under the Empire amounted to about 5 percent of [gross product](#). The typical tax rate paid by individuals ranged from 2 to 5 percent. The tax code was "bewildering" in its complicated system of [direct](#) and [indirect taxes](#), some paid in cash and some [in kind](#). Taxes might be specific to a province, or kinds of properties such as [fisheries](#) or [salt evaporation ponds](#); they might be in effect for a limited time. Tax collection was justified by the need to maintain the military, and taxpayers sometimes got a refund if the army captured a surplus of booty. In-kind taxes were accepted from less-[monetized](#) areas, particularly those who could supply grain or goods to army camps.

The primary source of direct tax revenue was individuals, who paid a [poll tax](#) and a tax on their land, construed as a tax on its produce or productive capacity. Supplemental forms could be filed by those eligible for certain exemptions; for example, Egyptian farmers could register fields as fallow and tax-exempt depending on flood patterns of the [Nile](#). Tax obligations were determined by the census, which required each head of household to appear before the presiding official and provide a head count of his household, as well as an accounting of property he owned that was suitable for agriculture or habitation.

A major source of indirect-tax revenue was the customs and tolls on imports and exports, including among provinces. Special taxes were levied on the slave trade. Toward the end of his reign, Augustus instituted a 4 percent tax on the sale of slaves, which Nero shifted from the purchaser to the dealers, who responded by raising their prices. An owner who manumitted a slave paid a "freedom tax", calculated at 5 percent of value.

An [inheritance tax](#) of 5 percent was assessed when Roman citizens above a certain net worth left property to anyone but members of their immediate family. Revenues from the estate tax and from a 1 percent sales tax on auctions went toward the veterans' pension fund.

Low taxes helped the Roman aristocracy increase their wealth, which equalled or exceeded the revenues of the central government. An emperor sometimes replenished his treasury by confiscating the estates of the "super-rich", but in the later period, the [resistance](#) of the wealthy to paying taxes was one of the factors contributing to the collapse of the Empire.

Legal Treatises

Roman law is the [legal](#) system of [ancient Rome](#), including Roman Military Jurisdiction and the legal developments spanning over a thousand years of [jurisprudence](#), from the [12 Tables](#) (449 BC), to the [Corpus Juris Civilis](#) (AD 529) ordered by Eastern Roman emperor [Justinian I](#). The historical importance of Roman law is reflected by the continued use of [Latin legal terminology](#) in legal systems influenced by it.

After the dissolution of the [Western Roman Empire](#), the Justinian Code remained in effect in the Eastern empire, known in the modern era as the [Byzantine Empire](#) (331–1453 AD). From the 7th century onward, the legal language in the East was Greek.

"Roman law" also denotes the legal system applied in most of [Western Europe](#) until the end of the 18th century. In [Germany](#), Roman law practice remained in place longer under the [Holy Roman Empire](#) (963–1806). Roman law thus served as a basis for [legal practice](#) throughout Western continental [Europe](#), as well as in most former colonies of these European nations, including [Latin America](#), and also in [Ethiopia](#). English and North American [common law](#) were influenced also by Roman law, notably in their Latinate legal glossary. Eastern Europe was also influenced by the jurisprudence of the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, especially in countries such as medieval Romania which created a new system, a mixture of Roman and local law. Also, Eastern European law was influenced by the "[Farmer's Law](#)" of the [medieval Byzantine legal system](#) was the ancient legislation that stood at the foundation of [Roman law](#). The Tables consolidated earlier traditions into an enduring set of laws.

The Twelve Tables are sufficiently comprehensive that it has been described as a 'code', although modern scholars consider this characterisation exaggerated. The Tables were a sequence of definitions of various private rights and procedures. They generally took for granted such things as the institutions of the family and various rituals for formal transactions. The provisions were often highly specific and diverse, and lack an intelligible system or order.

The Twelve Tables were said by the Romans to have come about as a result of the long social struggle between patricians and plebeians. After the expulsion of the last king of Rome, [Tarquinius Superbus](#), the [Republic](#) was governed by a hierarchy of [magistrates](#). Initially only [patricians](#) were eligible to become magistrates and this, among other plebeian complaints, was a source of discontent for [plebeians](#). In the context of this unequal status, plebeians would take action to secure concessions for them using the threat of secession. They would threaten to leave the city with the consequence that it would grind to a halt, as the plebeians were Rome's labour force. Tradition held that one of the most important concessions won in this class struggle was the establishment of the Twelve Tables, establishing basic procedural rights for all Roman citizens as against one another. However this tradition cannot be verified, and it the drafting of the Twelve Tables may have been fomented by a desire for self-regulation by the patricians, or for other reasons.

Around 451 BC, the first decemvirate - board of "Ten Men" were appointed to draw up the first ten tables. According to [Livy](#), they sent an embassy to [Greece](#) to study the legislative system of [Athens](#), known as the [Solonian Constitution](#), but also to find out about the legislation of other [Greek](#) cities. Some scholars dispute the veracity of any claim that the Romans imitated the Greeks in this respect or suggest that they visited the Greek cities of [Southern Italy](#), and did not travel all the way to Greece. In 450 BC, the second *decemviri* started work on the last two tables.

The first decemvirate completed the first ten codes in 450 BC. In 449 BC, the second decemvirate completed the last two codes, and after a [secessio plebis](#) to force

the Senate to consider them, the Law of the Twelve Tables was formally promulgated. According to Livy, the Twelve Tables were inscribed on [bronze](#) and posted publicly, so all Romans could read and know them.

The Twelve Tables are no longer extant: although they remained an important source of through the [Republic](#), they gradually became obsolete, eventually being only of historical interest. Some believe that the original tablets must have been destroyed when the [Gauls](#) under [Brennus](#) burnt Rome in 387 BC. [Cicero](#) claimed that he learned them by heart as a boy in school, but that no one did so any longer. What we have of them today are brief excerpts and quotations from these laws in other authors, often in clearly updated language. They are written in an archaic, [laconic](#) Latin. As such, though it cannot be determined whether the quoted fragments accurately preserve the original form, what is present gives some insight into the grammar of [early Latin](#). Some claim that the text was written as such so plebeians could more easily memorize the laws, as literacy was not commonplace during early Rome.

Like most other early codes of law, they were largely [procedural](#), combining strict and rigorous penalties with equally strict and rigorous procedural forms. In most of the surviving quotations from these texts, the original table that held them is not given. Scholars have guessed at where surviving fragments belong by comparing them with the few known attributions and records, many of which do not include the original lines, but paraphrases. It cannot be known with any certainty from what survives that the originals ever were organized this way, or even if they ever were organized by subject at all.

Slavery

The 1st-century BCE Greek historian [Dionysius of Halicarnassus](#) indicates that the Roman institution of slavery began with the legendary founder [Romulus](#) giving [Roman fathers](#) the right to sell their own children into slavery, and kept growing with the expansion of the [Roman state](#). Slave ownership was most widespread throughout the Roman citizenry from the [Second Punic War](#) (218–201 BCE) to the 4th century CE. The Greek geographer [Strabo](#) (1st century CE) records how an enormous slave trade resulted from the collapse of the [Seleucid Empire](#) (100–63 BCE).

The [Twelve Tables](#), Rome's oldest legal code, have brief references to slavery, indicating that the institution was of long standing. In the tripartite division of law by the jurist [Ulpian](#) (2nd century CE), slavery was an aspect of the [ius gentium](#), the customary [international law](#) held in common among all peoples (*gentes*). The "law of nations" was neither [natural law](#), which existed in nature and governed animals as well as humans, nor [civil law](#), which was the body of laws specific to a people. All human beings are born free (*liberi*) under natural law, but slavery was held to be a practice common to all nations, who might then have specific civil laws pertaining to slaves. In ancient warfare, the victor had the right under the *ius gentium* to enslave a defeated population; however, if a settlement had been reached through diplomatic negotiations or formal surrender, the people were [by custom](#) to be spared violence and enslavement.

Slavery in ancient Rome played an important role in society and the economy. Besides manual labor, slaves performed many domestic services, and might be employed at highly skilled jobs and professions. Teachers, accountants, and physicians were often slaves. Greek slaves in particular might be highly educated. Unskilled slaves or those condemned to slavery as punishment, worked on farms, in mines, and at mills. Their living conditions were brutal, and their lives short.

Slaves were considered property under [Roman law](#) and had no [legal personhood](#). Unlike [Roman citizens](#), they could be subjected to corporal punishment, [sexual exploitation](#), torture, and [summary execution](#). The testimony of a slave could not be accepted in a court of law unless the slave was tortured—a practice based on the belief that slaves in a position to be privy to their masters' affairs would be too virtuously loyal to reveal damaging evidence unless coerced. Over time, however, slaves gained increased legal protection, including the right to file complaints against their masters. Attitudes changed in part because of the influence among the educated elite of the [Stoics](#), whose egalitarian views of humanity extended to slaves.

Roman slaves could hold property which, despite the fact that it belonged to their masters, they were allowed to use as if it were their own. Skilled or educated slaves were allowed to earn their own money, and might hope to save enough to buy their freedom. Such slaves were often freed by the terms of their master's will, or for services rendered. A notable example of a high-status slave was [Tiro](#), the secretary of [Cicero](#). Tiro was freed before his master's death, and was successful enough to retire on his own country estate, where he died at the age of 99.

Rome differed from [Greek city-states](#) in allowing freed slaves to become citizens. After [manumission](#), a male slave who had belonged to a Roman citizen enjoyed not only passive freedom from ownership, but active political freedom, including the right to vote. A slave who had acquired liberty was thus a *libertus* in relation to his former master, who then became his patron. As a social class, freed slaves were *libertini*, though later writers used the terms *libertus* and *libertinus* interchangeably. *Libertini* were not entitled to hold [public office](#) or [state priesthoods](#), nor could they achieve legitimate [senatorial rank](#). During the early Empire, however, freedmen held key positions in the government bureaucracy, so much so that [Hadrian](#) limited their participation by law. Any future children of a freedman would be born free, with full rights of citizenship. *Vernae* were slaves born within a household or on a family farm or agricultural estate. There was a stronger social obligation to care for *vernae*, whose epitaphs sometimes identify them as such, and at times they would have been the children of free males of the household. The general Latin word for slave was *servus*.

A major source of slaves had been Roman military expansion during the [Republic](#). The use of former soldiers as slaves led perhaps inevitably to a series of armed rebellions, the [Servile Wars](#), the last of which was led by [Spartacus](#). During the [Pax Romana](#) of the early [Roman Empire](#) (1st-2nd century CE), emphasis was

placed on maintaining stability, and the lack of new territorial conquests dried up this supply line of [human trafficking](#)

Throughout the Roman period many slaves for the Roman market were acquired through warfare. Many captives were either brought back as war [booty](#) or sold to traders, and ancient sources cite anywhere from hundreds to tens of thousands of such slaves captured in *each* war. These wars included every major war of conquest from the Monarchical period to the Imperial period, as well as the Social and Samnite Wars. The prisoners taken or re-taken after the three [Roman Servile Wars](#) also contributed to the slave supply. While warfare during the Republic provided the largest figures for captives, warfare continued to produce slaves for Rome throughout the imperial period.

During the period of Roman imperial expansion, the increase in wealth amongst the Roman elite and the substantial growth of slavery transformed the economy. Although the economy was dependent on slavery, Rome was not the most slave-dependent culture in history. Among the [Spartans](#), for instance, the slave class of [helots](#) outnumbered the free by about seven to one, according to [Herodotus](#).

[Delos](#) in the eastern [Mediterranean](#) was made a free port in 166 BCE and became one of the main market venues for slaves. Multitudes of slaves who found their way to Italy were purchased by wealthy landowners in need of large numbers of slaves to labour on their estates. Historian Keith Hopkins noted that it was land investment and [agricultural production](#) which generated great wealth in Italy, and considered that Rome's military conquests and the subsequent introduction of vast wealth and slaves into Italy had effects comparable to widespread and rapid technological innovations.

[Augustus](#) imposed a 2 percent tax on the sale of slaves, estimated to generate annual revenues of about 5 million [sesterces](#)—a figure that indicates some 250,000 sales. The tax was increased to 4 percent by 43 CE. Slave markets seem to have existed in every city of the Empire, but outside Rome the major centre was [Ephesus](#).

A **slave rebellion** is an armed uprising by [slaves](#). Slave rebellions have occurred in nearly all societies that practice slavery, and are amongst the most feared events for slaveholders. The most successful slave rebellion in history has been led by Roman slave [Spartacus](#), as well as the [thrall](#).

Imperial Contacts

The Romans with their innovations in law and administration could maintain order in a vast empire. The administration of the provinces of the faraway places was controlled by the central government. The imperial government encouraged long distance trade. Necessary infrastructure for the growth of trade and commerce was already prepared by authorities. The famous Roman roads primarily built for the movement of armies were now used for exchange of goods with different parts of the world. Along with the territorial expansion of the Roman Empire, it made contacts with different places like Anatolia, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Britain, Gaul, India, China, and Sri Lanka.

The roman trade with the east, especially India was conducted through both by land and sea. The land route known as the 'Great Central Asian caravan Road'

passed through Anatolia and Persia. The sea trade was from Mediterranean through the Red Sea. With the conquest of Egypt, by Augustus the roman trade and other contacts with the outside world especially with the East increased rapidly. The use of monsoon winds made the sea voyage safer and uninterrupted. In fact, it was pioneered by the Axumites (Ethiopians) from whom the Romans learned its techniques. In many cases the Axumites were used as carriers also.

The first two centuries of Common Era indicate the increase in the trade between Rome with the Asian countries, especially with India. The administration of the Mediterranean basin also helped them. Strabo mentioned of the vast increase in trade ,following the Roman annexation of Egypt indicate that Monsoon was known to them and manipulation of trade Strabo writes: 'I learned that as many as 120 vessels were sailing from Myos Homos to India , whereas formerly, a very few ventured to undertake the voyage and to carry on traffic in Indian merchandise.

The commerce of the Roman Empire was a major sector of the [economy](#) during the early [Republic](#) and throughout most of the [imperial period](#). Fashions and trends in [historiography](#) and in popular culture have tended to neglect the economic basis of the empire in favor of the [lingua franca](#) of [Latin](#) and the exploits of the [Roman legions](#). The language and the legions were supported by trade while being at the same time part of its backbone. Romans were businessmen and the longevity of their empire was due to their commercial [trade](#). Whereas in theory members of the [Roman Senate](#) and their sons were restricted when engaging in trade, the members of the [Equestrian](#) order were involved in businesses, despite their upper class values that laid the emphasis on military pursuits and leisure activities. [Plebeians](#) and freedmen held shop or manned stalls at markets while vast quantities of [slaves](#) did most of the hard work. The slaves were themselves also the subject of commercial transactions. Their high proportion in society and the reality of runaways, the [Servile Wars](#) and minor uprisings, they gave a distinct flavor to Roman commerce.

The intricate, complex, and extensive accounting of Roman trade was conducted with counting boards and the [Roman abacus](#). The abacus, using [Roman numerals](#), was ideally suited to the counting of [Roman currency](#) and tallying of [Roman measures](#).

The Romans knew two types of businessmen, the negotiators and the Mercator's. The negotiators were in part bankers because they lent money on interest. They also bought and sold staples in bulk or did commerce in wholesale quantities of goods. In some instances the argentari are considered as a subset of the negotiators and in others as a group apart. The argentarii acted as agents in public or private auctions, kept deposits of money for individuals, cashed cheques (*prescriptio*) and served as moneychangers. They kept strict books, or tabulae, which were considered as legal proof by the courts. The argentarii sometimes did the same kind of work as the mensarii, who were public bankers appointed by the state. The mercatores were usually plebeians or freedmen. They were present in all the open-air markets or covered shops, manning stalls or hawking goods by the side of the road. They were also present near Roman military camps during campaigns, where

they sold food and clothing to the soldiers and paid cash for any booty coming from military activities.

There is some information on the economy of Roman Palestine from Jewish sources of around the 3rd century AD. Itinerant pedlars (rochel) took spices and perfumes to the rural population. This suggests that the economic benefits of the Empire did reach, at least, the upper levels of the peasantry.

The Forum Cuppedinis in ancient Rome was a market which offered general goods. At least four other large markets specialized in specific goods such as cattle, wine, fish and herbs and vegetables, but the Roman forum drew the bulk of the traffic. All new cities, like Timgad, were laid out according to an orthogonal grid plan which facilitated transportation and commerce. The cities were connected by goods.

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By the 1st century, the provinces of the Roman Empire were trading huge volumes of commodities to one another by sea routes. There was an increasing tendency for specialization, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture and mining. Some provinces specialized in producing certain types of goods, such as grain in Egypt and North Africa and [wine](#) and olive oil in Italy, Hispania and Greece.

Knowledge of the Roman economy is extremely patchy. The vast bulk of traded goods, being agricultural, normally leave no direct archaeology. Very exceptionally, as at [Berenice](#), there is evidence of long distance trade in pepper, almonds, hazelnuts, stone pine cones, walnuts, coconuts, apricots and peaches besides the more expected figs, raisins and dates (Cappars). The wine, olive oil and [garum](#) (fermented fish sauce) trades were exceptional in leaving amphorae behind. There is a single reference of the Syrian export of kipi stiff [quince jam](#) or marmalade to Rome.

Even before the republic, the [Roman Kingdom](#) was engaged in regular commerce using the river [Tiber](#). Before the [Punic Wars](#) completely changed the nature of commerce in the Mediterranean, the Roman republic had important commercial exchanges with [Carthage](#). It entered into several commercial and political agreements with its rival city in addition to engaging in simple retail trading. The Roman Empire traded with the [Chinese](#) over the [Silk Road](#).

[Maritime archeology](#) and ancient [manuscripts](#) from [classical antiquity](#) show evidence of vast Roman commercial fleets. The most substantial remains from this commerce are the infrastructure remains of harbors, moles, warehouses and lighthouses at ports such as [Civitavecchia](#), [Ostia](#), [Portus](#), [Leptis Magna](#) and [Caesarea Maritima](#). At Rome itself, [Monte Testaccio](#) is a tribute to the scale of this commerce. As with most [Roman technology](#), the Roman seagoing commercial ships had no significant advances over Greek ships of the 1st century, the provinces of the Roman Empire were trading huge volumes of commodities to one another by sea routes. There was an increasing tendency for specialization, particularly in manufacturing, agriculture and mining. Some provinces specialized in producing certain types of goods, such as grain in Egypt and North Africa and [wine](#) and olive oil in Italy, Hispania and Greece.

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Roman Art

Roman art refers to the visual arts made in [Ancient Rome](#) and in the territories of the [Roman Empire](#). Roman art includes [architecture](#), [painting](#), [sculpture](#) and [mosaic work](#). Luxury objects in [metal-work](#), [gem engraving](#), [ivory carvings](#), and [glass](#), are sometimes considered in modern terms to be minor forms of Roman art, although this would not necessarily have been the case for contemporaries. Sculpture was perhaps considered as the highest form of art by Romans, but figure painting was also very highly regarded. The two forms have had very contrasting rates of survival, with a very large body of sculpture surviving from about the 1st

century BC onwards, though very little from before, but very little painting at all remains, and probably nothing that a contemporary would have considered to be of the highest quality. [Ancient Roman pottery](#) was not a luxury product, but a vast production of "fine wares" in *terra sibilate* were decorated with reliefs that reflected the latest taste, and provided a large group in society with stylish objects at what was evidently an affordable price. [Roman coins](#) were an important means of propaganda, and have survived in enormous numbers. Other perishable forms of art have not survived at all. While the traditional view of the ancient Roman artists is that they often borrowed from, and copied Greek precedents, more recent analysis has indicated that Roman art is a highly creative pastiche relying heavily on Greek models but also encompassing [Etruscan](#), native Italic, and even [Egyptian](#) visual culture. Stylistic eclecticism and practical application are the hallmarks of much Roman art.

[Pliny](#), Ancient Rome's most important historian concerning the arts, recorded that nearly all the forms of art - sculpture, landscape, portrait painting, even genre painting - were advanced in Greek times, and in some cases, more advanced than in Rome. Though very little remains of Greek wall art and portraiture, certainly Greek sculpture and vase painting bears this out. These forms were not likely surpassed by Roman artists in fineness of design or execution. As another example of the lost "Golden Age", he singled out [Peiraikos](#), "whose artistry is surpassed by only a very few ... He painted barbershops and shoemakers' stalls, donkeys, vegetables, and such, and for that reason came to be called the 'painter of vulgar subjects'; yet these works are altogether delightful, and they were sold at higher prices than the greatest [paintings] of many other artists. The Greek antecedents of Roman art were legendary. In the mid-5th century BC, the most famous Greek artists were [Polygnotos](#), noted for his wall murals, and [Apollodoros](#), the originator of [chiaroscuro](#). The development of realistic technique is credited to [Zeuxis and Parrhasius](#), who according to [ancient Greek](#) legend, are said to have once competed in a bravura display of their talents, history's earliest descriptions of [trompe l'oeil](#) painting. In sculpture, Skopas, [Praxiteles](#), [Phidias](#), and [Lysippos](#) were the foremost sculptors. It appears that Roman artists had much Ancient Greek art to copy from, as trade in art was brisk throughout the empire, and much of the Greek artistic heritage found its way into Roman art through books and teaching. Ancient Greek treatises on the arts are known to have existed in Roman times though are now lost. Many Roman artists came from Greek colonies and provinces.

The high number of Roman copies of Greek art also speaks of the esteem Roman artists had for Greek art, and perhaps of its rarer and higher quality. Many of the art forms and methods used by the Romans - such as high and low relief, free-standing sculpture, bronze casting, vase art, [mosaic](#), [cameo](#), coin art, fine jewelry and metalwork, funerary sculpture, perspective drawing, [caricature](#), genre and [portrait painting](#), [landscape painting](#), architectural sculpture, and [trompe l'oeil](#) painting - all were developed or refined by Ancient Greek artists. One exception is the Roman bust, which did not include the shoulders. The traditional head-and-shoulders bust may have been an Etruscan or early Roman form. Virtually every artistic technique and method used by [Renaissance](#) artists 1,900 year later had been demonstrated by

Ancient Greek artists, with the notable exceptions of oil colors and mathematically accurate perspective. Where Greek artists were highly revered in their society, most Roman artists were anonymous and considered tradesmen. There is no recording, as in Ancient Greece, of the great masters of Roman art, and practically no signed works. Where Greeks worshipped the aesthetic qualities of great art and wrote extensively on artistic theory, Roman art was more decorative and indicative of status and wealth, and apparently not the subject of scholars or philosophers.

Owing in part to the fact that the Roman cities were far larger than the Greek city-states in power and population, and generally less provincial, art in Ancient Rome took on a wider, and sometimes more utilitarian, purpose. Roman culture assimilated many cultures and was for the most part tolerant of the ways of conquered peoples. Roman art was commissioned, displayed, and owned in far greater quantities, and adapted to more uses than in Greek times. Wealthy Romans were more materialistic; they decorated their walls with art, their home with decorative objects, and themselves with fine jewellery.

In the Christian era of the late Empire, from 350 to 500 CE, wall painting, mosaic ceiling and floor work, and funerary sculpture thrived, while full-sized sculpture in the round and panel painting died out, most likely for religious reasons. When Constantine moved the capital of the empire to Byzantium (renamed Constantinople), Roman art incorporated Eastern influences to produce the Byzantine style of the late empire. When Rome was sacked in the 5th century, artisans moved to and found work in the Eastern capital. The Church of [Hagia Sophia](#) in [Constantinople](#) employed nearly 10,000 workmen and artisans, in a final burst of Roman art under [Emperor Justinian](#) (527–565 AD), who also ordered the creation of the famous mosaics of [Ravenna](#), one of the vast body of Roman painting we now have only a very few pockets of survivals, with many documented types not surviving at all, or doing so only from the very end of the period. The best known and most important pocket is the wall paintings from [Pompeii](#), [Herculaneum](#) and other sites nearby, which show how residents of a wealthy seaside resort decorated their walls in the century or so before the fatal eruption of [Mount Vesuvius](#) in 79 AD, a [succession of dated styles](#) have been defined and analyzed by modern art historians beginning with [August Mau](#), showing increasing elaboration and sophistication.

Starting in the 3rd century AD and finishing by about 400 we have a large body of paintings from the [Catacombs of Rome](#), by no means all Christian, showing the later continuation of the domestic decorative tradition in a version adapted - probably not greatly adapted - for use in burial chambers, in what was probably a rather humbler social milieu than the largest houses in Pompeii. Much of [Nero's](#) palace in Rome, the [Domus Aurea](#), survived as grottos and gives us examples which we can be sure represent the very finest quality of wall-painting in its style, and which may well have represented significant innovation in style. There are a number of other parts of painted rooms surviving from Rome and elsewhere, which somewhat help to fill in the gaps of our knowledge of wall-painting. From [Roman Egypt](#) there are a large number of what are known as [Fayum mummy portraits](#), bust portraits on wood added to the outside of [mummies](#) by a Romanized middle-class;

despite their very distinct local character they are probably broadly representative of Roman style in painted portraits, which are otherwise entirely lost.

Nothing remains of the Greek paintings imported to Rome during the 4th and 5th centuries, or of the painting on wood done in Italy during that period. In sum, the range of samples is confined to only about 200 years out of the about 900 years of Roman history, and of provincial and decorative painting. Most of this wall painting was done using the *secco* ("dry") method, but some [fresco](#) paintings also existed in Roman times. There is evidence from mosaics and a few inscriptions that some Roman paintings were adaptations or copies of earlier Greek works. However, adding to the confusion is the fact that inscriptions may be recording the names of immigrant Greek artists from Roman times, not from Ancient Greek originals that were copied. The Romans entirely lacked a tradition of figurative vase-painting comparable to that of the Ancient Greeks, which the Etruscans had emulated.

Roman architecture developed different aspects of [Ancient Greek architecture](#) and newer technologies such as the arch and the dome to create a new [architectural](#) style. Roman architecture flourished throughout the [Empire](#) during the [Pax Romana](#). Its use of new materials, particularly concrete, was an important feature.

Roman Architecture covers the period from the establishment of the [Roman Republic](#) in 509 BC to about the 4th century AD, after which it becomes reclassified as [Late Antique](#) or [Byzantine architecture](#). Most of the many surviving examples are from the later imperial period. Roman architectural style continued to influence building in the former empire for many centuries, and the style used in Western Europe beginning about 1000 is called [Romanesque architecture](#) to reflect this dependence on basic Roman forms. The Ancient Romans were responsible for significant developments in housing and public hygiene, for example their public and private baths and latrines, under-floor heating in the form of the [hypocaust](#), [mica](#) glazing and piped hot and cold water.

Factors such as wealth and high population densities in cities forced the ancient Romans to discover new architectural solutions of their own. The use of [vaults](#) and [arches](#), together with a sound knowledge of building materials, enabled them to achieve unprecedented successes in the construction of imposing structures for public use. Examples include the [aqueducts of Rome](#), the [Baths of Diocletian](#) and the [Baths of Caracalla](#), the [basilicas](#) and [Colosseum](#). These were reproduced at smaller scale in most important towns and cities in the Empire. Some surviving structures are almost complete, such as the [town walls](#) of [Lugo](#) in [Hispania Tarraconensis](#), now northern Spain.

The Ancient Romans intended that public buildings should be made to impress, as well as perform a public function. The Romans did not feel restricted by [Greek aesthetic axioms](#) alone in achieving these objectives. The [Pantheon](#) is an example of this, particularly in the version rebuilt by [Hadrian](#), which remains perfectly preserved, and which over the centuries has served, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, as the inspiration for countless public buildings. The same emperor left his mark on the landscape of northern Britain when he built a wall

to mark the limits of the empire, and after further conquests in [Scotland](#), the [Antonine Wall](#) was built to replace [Hadrian's Wall](#).

The [Romans](#) were indebted to their [Etruscan](#) neighbors and forefathers who supplied them with a wealth of knowledge essential for future architectural solutions, such as the use of [hydraulics](#) and the construction of arches. The Romans absorbed Greek Architectural influence both directly and indirectly. The influence is evident in many ways; for example, in the introduction and use of the [Triclinium](#) in Roman villas as a place and manner of dining. The Romans were also known to employ Greek craftsmen and engineers to construct Roman buildings.

Architectural features

The Roman use of the [arch](#) and their improvements in the use of [concrete](#) and bricks facilitated the building of the many [aqueducts](#) throughout the [empire](#), such as the [Aqueduct of Segovia](#) and the eleven aqueducts in Rome itself, including the [Aqua Claudia](#) and [Anio Novus](#). The same concepts produced numerous bridges, some of which are still in daily use, for example the [Puente Romano](#) at [Mérida](#) in Spain, and the [Pont Julien](#) and the bridge at [Vaison-la-Romaine](#), both in Provence, France.

The [dome](#) permitted construction of [vaulted ceilings](#) without crossbeams and made possible large covered public space such as [public baths](#) and [basilicas](#). The Romans based much of their [architecture](#) on the dome, such as Hadrian's [Pantheon](#) in the city of Rome, the [Baths of Diocletian](#) and the [Baths of Caracalla](#).

The use of arches that spring directly from the tops of columns was a Roman development, seen from the 1st century AD, that was very widely adopted in medieval Western, [Byzantine](#) and [Islamic architecture](#). The Romans first adopted the arch from the Etruscans, and implemented it in their own building. An arch transmits load evenly and is still commonly used in architecture today.

Although concrete had been used on a minor scale in Mesopotamia, Roman architects perfected [Roman concrete](#) and used it in buildings where it could stand on its own and support a great deal of weight. Though most would consider [concrete](#) the Roman contribution most relevant to the modern world, the Empire's style of architecture can still be seen throughout Europe and North America in the arches and domes of many [governmental](#) and [religious](#) buildings.

Science

Ancient Rome boasted impressive technological feats, using many advancements that were lost in the Middle Ages and not rivaled again until the 19th and 20th centuries. An example of this is Insulated glazing, which wasn't invented again until the 1930s. Many practical Roman innovations were adopted from earlier Greek designs. Advancements were often divided and based on craft. Artisans guarded technologies as trade secrets.

Roman civil engineering and military engineering constituted a large part of Rome's technological superiority and legacy, and contributed to the construction of hundreds of roads, bridges, aqueducts, baths, theaters and arenas. Many monuments, such as the Colosseum, Pont du Gard, and Pantheon, remain as testaments to Roman engineering and culture.

The Romans were renowned for their architecture, which is grouped with Greek traditions into "Classical architecture". Although there were many differences from Greek architecture, Rome borrowed heavily from Greece in adhering to strict, formulaic building designs and proportions. Aside from two new orders of columns, composite and Tuscan, and from the dome, which was derived from the Etruscan arch, Rome had relatively few architectural innovations until the end of the Republic.

In the 1st century BC, Romans started to use concrete, widely. Concrete was invented in the late 3rd century BC. It was powerful cement derived from pozzolana, and soon supplanted marble as the chief Roman building material and allowed many daring architectural schemata.

Also in the 1st century BC, Vitruvius wrote *De architectura*, possibly the first complete treatise on architecture in history. In late 1st century BC, Rome also began to use glassblowing soon after its invention in Syria about 50 BC. Mosaics took the Empire by storm after samples were retrieved during Lucius Cornelius Sulla's campaigns in Greece.

Concrete made possible the paved, durable Roman roads, many of which were still in use a thousand years after the fall of Rome. The construction of a vast and efficient travel network throughout the Empire dramatically increased Rome's power and influence. It was originally constructed to allow Roman legions to be rapidly deployed. But these highways also had enormous economic significance, solidifying Rome's role as a trading crossroads - the origin of the saying "all roads lead to Rome". The Roman government maintained way stations that provided refreshments to travelers at regular intervals along the roads, constructed bridges where necessary, and established a system of horse relays for couriers that allowed a dispatch to travel up to 800 kilometers (500 mi) in 24 hours.

The Romans constructed numerous aqueducts to supply water to cities and industrial sites and to aid in their agriculture. The city of Rome was supplied by 11 aqueducts with a combined length of 350 kilometres (220 mi). Most aqueducts were constructed below the surface, with only small portions above ground supported by arches. Sometimes, where valleys deeper than 50 metres (165 ft) had to be crossed, inverted siphons were used to convey water across a valley.

The Romans also made major advancements in sanitation. Romans were particularly famous for their public baths, called *thermae*, which were used for both hygienic and social purposes. Many Roman houses came to have flush toilets and indoor plumbing, and a complex sewer system, the *Cloaca Maxima*, was used to drain the local marshes and carry waste into the Tiber River.

Some historians have speculated that lead pipes in the sewer and plumbing systems led to widespread lead poisoning, which contributed to the decline in birth rate and general decay of Roman society leading up to the fall of Rome. However, lead content would have been minimized because the flow of water from aqueducts could not be shut off; it ran continuously through public and private outlets into the drains, and only a few taps were in use. Other authors have raised similar objections

to this theory, also pointing out that Roman water pipes were thickly coated with deposits that would have prevented lead from leaching into the water.

Philosophy

A final level of [education](#) was philosophical study. The study of philosophy is distinctly Greek, but was undertaken by many Roman students. To study philosophy, a student would have to go to a center of philosophy where philosophers taught, usually abroad in Greece. An understanding of a philosophical school of thought could have done much to add to Cicero's vaunted knowledge of 'that which is great', but could only be pursued by the very wealthiest of Rome's elite. Romans regarded philosophical education as distinctly Greek, and instead focused their efforts on building schools of law and rhetoric. The single most important philosophy in Rome was Stoicism, which originated in Hellenistic Greece. The contents of the philosophy were particularly amenable to the Roman world view, especially since the Stoic insistence on acceptance of all situations, including adverse ones, seemed to reproduce what the Romans considered their crowning achievement: virtues, or "manliness," or "toughness." The centerpiece of Stoic philosophy was the concept of the *logos*. The universe is ordered by God and this order is the *logos*, which means "rational order" or "meaning" of the universe.

After the death of Zeno, the Stoic school was headed by Cleanthes and Chrysippus, and its teachings were carried to Rome in 155 by Diogenes of Babylon. Stoic ideas appear in the greatest work of Roman literature, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and later the philosophy was adopted by Seneca (c. 1-65 A.D.), Lucan, Epictetus, and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Stoicism is perhaps the most significant philosophical school in the Roman Empire, and much of our contemporary views and popular mythologies about Romans are derived from Stoic principles.

This is actually not a philosophical school, but one could generally group a number of Hellenistic schools under this rubric, including the Second Academy, the Second Sophistic, the Cynics, the Skeptics, and so on, and, for the most part, the Stoics as well. What are important for our purposes are that all these schools to some degree or another espoused the idea that human beings cannot arrive at certain truth about anything.

Basically, life became this great guessing game: the lot of humanity is to be cast into a twilight world in which all that we know and think is either false or occupies some middle position between the false and the true. This comes to dominate thought in late antiquity; the first philosophical attacks Christianity levels against the thought of antiquity are refutations of skeptical principles. Of all the philosophies of antiquity, this is perhaps the most familiar to you: the skeptic principle of doubting everything became, in the modern era, the fundamental basis of the scientific method.

For the Roman, this larger good came to mean the spread of law across the face of the planet; this law was to be spread through Roman imperial conquest and was called the Law of Nations. The grand design for history, then, was the spread of the Roman Empire and her laws.

Therefore, each and every function a Roman undertook for the state, whether as a farmer or foot-soldier, a philosopher or emperor, partook of this larger purpose or meaning of world history. The central values of this complex are officious, or "duty," which is the responsibility to perform the functions into which you have been born to the best of your abilities, and pietas, or "respect for authority." Each station in life has its duties; every situation in life has duties or obligations incumbent on it.

The primary duty one owes is to the state; since God is using the Roman state to further law and civilization, performing one's duty is a religious act. The principal being to which one owes respect is, of course, God; since God is working out his will in history by using the Roman state and Roman officials, the respect one shows for Roman authorities is also a respect shown for God and the logos.

Roman literature

Roman literature, written in the Latin language, remains an enduring legacy of the culture of ancient Rome. Some of the earliest extant works are historical epics telling of the early military history of Rome, followed (as the Republic expanded) by poetry, comedies, histories and tragedies.

Latin literature drew heavily on the traditions of other cultures, particularly the more matured literary tradition of [Greece](#), and the strong influence of earlier Greek authors is readily apparent. Few works remain of Early and Old Latin, although a few of the plays of Plautus and Terence have come down to us.

The "Golden Age of Roman Literature" is usually considered to cover the period from about the start of the 1st Century BCE up to the mid-1st Century CE. [Catullus](#) pioneered the naturalization of Greek lyric verse forms into Latin in his very personal poetry. The Hellenizing tendencies of Golden Age Latin reached their apex in the epic poetry of [Vergil](#), the odes and satires of [Horace](#) and the elegiac couplets of [Ovid](#).

The "Silver Age of Roman Literature" extends into the 2nd Century CE, a period during which the eloquent, sometimes bombastic, poetry of [Seneca the Younger](#) and [Lucan](#) gave way to the more restrained, classicized style of [Pliny the Younger](#)'s letters and the powerful satires of [Juvenal](#).

Roman literature written after the mid-2nd Century CE is often disparaged and largely ignored, and Medieval Latin was usually dismissed as "Dog-Latin". However, long after the Roman Empire had fallen, the Latin language continued to play a central role in Western European civilization.

Roman literature is a greatly varied subject matter, nonetheless because it is such a broad and varied theme which forces us into making a vast number of simplistic generalizations. It's breadth can be understood not only in terms of the great variety of production which surely existed at the time a minor fragment of which has made it down to us through the ages but also the vast time period and geography included within the term "ancient Rome"

Cicero, A new man - made a great political career and was recognized as "father of the nation" for his role against the Catiline conspiracy. He wrote a great body of work, and given the generally positive view of him taken by the later Christians good volumes of his work have made it down to us.

MODULE IV

The decline of the [Ancient](#) World

The decline of the [Roman Empire](#) is one of the events traditionally marking the end of [Classical Antiquity](#) and the beginning of the European [Middle Ages](#). Throughout the 5th century, the Empire's territories in Western Europe and northwestern Africa, including Italy, fell to various invading or indigenous peoples in what is sometimes called the [Migration period](#). Although the eastern half still survived with borders essentially intact for several centuries (until the [Muslim conquests](#)), the Empire as a whole had initiated major cultural and political transformations since the [Crisis of the Third Century](#), with the shift towards a more openly [autocratic](#) and ritualized form of government, the adoption of [Christianity](#) as the [state religion](#), and a general rejection of the traditions and values of Classical Antiquity. While traditional historiography emphasized this break with Antiquity by using the term "[Byzantine Empire](#)" instead of Roman Empire, recent schools of history offer a more nuanced view, seeing mostly continuity rather than a sharp break. The Empire of [Late Antiquity](#) already looked very different from [classical Rome](#).

The Roman Empire emerged from the [Roman Republic](#) when [Julius Caesar](#) and [Augustus Caesar](#) transformed it from a republic into a monarchy. Rome reached its zenith in the 2nd century, and then fortunes slowly declined (with many revivals and restorations along the way). The reasons for the decline of the Empire are still debated today, and are likely multiple. Historians infer that the population appears to have diminished in many provinces—especially Western Europe—from the diminishing size of fortifications built to protect the cities from [barbarian](#) incursions from the 3rd century on. Some historians even have suggested that parts of the periphery were no longer inhabited because these fortifications were restricted to the center of the city only. Tree rings suggest "distinct drying" beginning in 250.

By the late 3rd century, the city of [Rome](#) no longer served as an effective capital for the [Emperor](#) and various cities were used as new administrative capitals. Successive emperors, starting with [Constantine](#), privileged the eastern city of [Byzantium](#), which he had entirely rebuilt after a siege. Later renamed [Constantinople](#), and protected by formidable walls in the late 4th and early 5th centuries, it was to become the largest and most powerful city of Christian [Europe](#) in the [Early Middle Ages](#). Since the Crisis of the Third Century, the Empire was intermittently ruled by more than one emperor at once (usually two), presiding over different regions. At first a haphazard form of power sharing, this eventually settled on an East-West administrative division between the [Western Roman Empire](#) (centered on Rome, but now usually presided from other seats of power such as [Trier](#), [Milan](#), and especially [Ravenna](#)), and the [Eastern Roman Empire](#) (with its capital initially in [Nicomedia](#), and later Constantinople). The [Latin](#)-speaking west, under dreadful demographic crisis, and the wealthier [Greek](#)-speaking east, also began to diverge politically and culturally. Although this was a gradual process, still incomplete when Italy came under the rule of barbarian chieftains in the last quarter of the 5th century, it deepened further afterward, and had lasting consequences for the medieval history of Europe.

Throughout the 5th century, Western emperors were usually figureheads, while the Eastern emperors maintained more independence. For most of the time, the actual rulers in the West were military strongmen who took the titles of [magister militum](#), [patrician](#), or both, such as [Stilicho](#), [Aetius](#), and [Ricimer](#). Although Rome was no longer the capital in the West, it remained the West's largest city and its economic center. But the city was [sacked by rebellious Visigoths in 410](#) and [by the Vandals in 455](#), events that shocked contemporaries and signaled the disintegration of Roman authority. [Saint Augustine](#) wrote [The City of God](#) partly as an answer to critics who blamed the sack of Rome by the Visigoths on the abandonment of the traditional [pagan](#) religions.

In June 474, [Julius Nepos](#) became Western Emperor but in the next year the *magister militum* [Orestes](#) revolted and made his son [Romulus Augustus](#) emperor. Romulus, however, was not recognized by the Eastern Emperor [Zeno](#) and so was technically a usurper, Nepos still being the legal Western Emperor. Nevertheless, Romulus Augustus is often known as the last Western Roman Emperor. In 476, after being refused lands in Italy, Orestes' Germanic mercenaries under the leadership of the chieftain [Odoacer](#) captured and executed Orestes and took [Ravenna](#), the Western Roman capital at the time, deposing Romulus Augustus. The whole of Italy was quickly conquered, and Odoacer was granted the title of patrician by Zeno, effectively recognizing his rule in the name of the Eastern Empire. Odoacer returned the Imperial insignia to Constantinople and ruled as King in Italy. Following Nepos' death [Theodoric the Great](#), King of the [Ostrogoths](#), conquered Italy with Zeno's approval.

Meanwhile, much of the rest of the Western provinces were conquered by [waves of Germanic invasions](#), most of them being disconnected politically from the East altogether and continuing a slow decline. Although Roman political authority in the West was lost, Roman culture would last in most parts of the former Western provinces into the 6th century and beyond.

The first invasions disrupted the West to some degree, but it was the [Gothic War](#) launched by the Eastern Emperor [Justinian](#) in the 6th century, and meant to reunite the Empire, that eventually caused the most damage to Italy, as well as straining the Eastern Empire militarily. Following these wars, Rome and other Italian cities would fall into severe decline (Rome itself was almost completely abandoned). Another blow came with the [Persian invasion of the East](#) in the 7th century, immediately followed by the [Muslim conquests](#), especially of [Egypt](#), which curtailed much of the key trade in the Mediterranean on which Europe depended.

The Empire was to live on in the East for many centuries, and enjoy periods of recovery and cultural brilliance, but its size would remain a fraction of what it had been in classical times. It became an essentially regional power, centered on [Greece](#) and [Anatolia](#). Modern historians tend to prefer the term *Byzantine Empire* for the eastern, medieval stage of the Roman Empire.

The various theories and explanations for the fall of the Roman Empire in the West may be very broadly classified into four schools of thought, although the classification is not without overlap:

The tradition positing general malaise goes back to [Edward Gibbon](#) who argued that the edifice of the Roman Empire had been built on unsound foundations to begin with. According to Gibbon, the fall was - in the final analysis - inevitable. On the other hand, Gibbon had assigned a major portion of the responsibility for the decay to the influence of Christianity, and is often, though perhaps unjustly, seen as the founding father of the school of meno-causal explanation.

On the other hand, the school of catastrophic collapse holds that the fall of the Empire had not been a pre-determined event and need not be taken for granted. Rather, it was due to the combined effect of a number of adverse processes, many of them set in motion by the [Migration of the Peoples](#) that together applied too much stress to the Empire's basically sound structure.

Finally, the transformation school challenges the whole notion of the 'fall' of the Empire, asking to distinguish between the fall into disuse of a particular political dispensation, anyway unworkable towards its end, and the fate of the Roman civilization which under-girded the Empire. According to this school, drawing its basic premise from the [Pirenne thesis](#), the Roman world underwent a gradual (though often violent) series of transformations, morphing into the medieval world.

Causes of the Decline

1. Invasions by Barbarian tribes

The most straightforward theory for Western Rome's collapse pins the fall on a string of military losses sustained against outside forces. Rome had tangled with Germanic tribes for centuries, but by the 300s "barbarian" groups like the Goths had encroached beyond the Empire's borders. The Romans weathered a Germanic uprising in the late fourth century, but in 410 the Visigoth King Alaric successfully sacked the city of Rome. The Empire spent the next several decades under constant threat before "the Eternal City" was raided again in 455, this time by the Vandals. Finally, in 476, the Germanic leader Odoacer staged a revolt and deposed the Emperor Romulus Augustulus. From then on, no Roman emperor would ever again rule from a post in Italy, leading many to cite 476 as the year the Western Empire suffered its deathblow.

2. Economic troubles and overreliance on slave labor

Even as Rome was under attack from outside forces, it was also crumbling from within thanks to a severe financial crisis. Constant wars and overspending had significantly lightened imperial coffers, and oppressive taxation and inflation had widened the gap between rich and poor. In the hope of avoiding the taxman, many members of the wealthy classes had even fled to the countryside and set up independent fiefdoms. At the same time, the empire was rocked by a labor deficit. Rome's economy depended on slaves to till its fields and work as craftsmen, and its military might had traditionally provided a fresh influx of conquered peoples to put to work. But when expansion ground to a halt in the second century, Rome's supply of slaves and other war treasures began to dry up. A further blow came in the fifth century, when the Vandals claimed North Africa and began disrupting the empire's

trade by prowling the Mediterranean as pirates. With its economy faltering and its commercial and agricultural production in decline, the Empire began to lose its grip on Europe.

3. The rise of the Eastern Empire

The fate of Western Rome was partially sealed in the late third century, when the Emperor Diocletian divided the Empire into two halves – the Western Empire seated in the city of Milan, and the Eastern Empire in Byzantium, later known as Constantinople. The division made the empire more easily governable in the short term, but over time the two halves drifted apart. East and West failed to adequately work together to combat outside threats, and the two often squabbled over resources and military aid. As the gulf widened, the largely Greek-speaking Eastern Empire grew in wealth while the Latin-speaking West descended into economic crisis. Most importantly, the strength of the Eastern Empire served to divert Barbarian invasions to the West. Emperors like Constantine ensured that the city of Constantinople was fortified and well guarded, but Italy and the city of Rome – which only had symbolic value for many in the East – were left vulnerable. The Western political structure would finally disintegrate in the fifth century, but the Eastern Empire endured in some form for another thousand years before being overwhelmed by the Ottoman Empire in the 1400s.

4. Overexpansion and military overspending

At its height, the Roman Empire stretched from the Atlantic Ocean all the way to the Euphrates River in the Middle East, but its grandeur may have also been its downfall. With such a vast territory to govern, the empire faced an administrative and logistical nightmare. Even with their excellent road systems, the Romans were unable to communicate quickly or effectively enough to manage their holdings. Rome struggled to marshal enough troops and resources to defend its frontiers from local rebellions and outside attacks, and by the second century the Emperor Hadrian was forced to build his famous wall in Britain just to keep the enemy at bay. As more and more funds were funneled into the military upkeep of the empire, technological advancement slowed and Rome's civil infrastructure fell into disrepair.

5. Government corruption and political instability

If Rome's sheer size made it difficult to govern, ineffective and inconsistent leadership only served to magnify the problem. Being the Roman emperor had always been a particularly dangerous job, but during the tumultuous second and third centuries it nearly became a death sentence. Civil war thrust the empire into chaos, and more than 20 men took the throne in the span of only 75 years, usually after the murder of their predecessor. The Praetorian Guard – the emperor's personal bodyguards – assassinated and installed new sovereigns at will, and once even auctioned the spot off to the highest bidder. The political rot also extended to the Roman Senate, which failed to temper the excesses of the emperors due to its own widespread corruption and incompetence. As the situation worsened, civic pride waned and many Roman citizens lost trust in their leadership.

6. The arrival of the Huns and the migration of the Barbarian tribes

The Barbarian attacks on Rome partially stemmed from a mass migration caused by the Huns' invasion of Europe in the late fourth century. When these Eurasian warriors rampaged through northern Europe, they drove many Germanic tribes to the borders of the Roman Empire. The Romans grudgingly allowed members of the Visigoth tribe to cross south of the Danube and into the safety of Roman territory, but they treated them with extreme cruelty. According to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, Roman officials even forced the starving Goths to trade their children into slavery in exchange for dog meat. In brutalizing the Goths, the Romans created a dangerous enemy within their own borders. When the oppression became too much to bear, the Goths rose up in revolt and eventually routed a Roman army and killed the Eastern Emperor Valens during the Battle of Adrianople in A.D. 378. The shocked Romans negotiated a flimsy peace with the barbarians, but the truce unraveled in 410, when the Goth King Alaric moved west and sacked Rome. With the Western Empire weakened, Germanic tribes like the Vandals and the Saxons were able to surge across its borders and occupy Britain, Spain and North Africa.

7. Christianity and the loss of traditional values

The decline of Rome dovetailed with the spread of Christianity, and some have argued that the rise of a new faith helped contribute to the empire's fall. The Edict of Milan legalized Christianity in 313, and it later became the state religion in 380. These decrees ended centuries of persecution, but they may have also eroded the traditional Roman values system. Christianity displaced the polytheistic Roman religion, which viewed the emperor as having a divine status, and also shifted focus away from the glory of the state and onto a sole deity. Meanwhile, popes and other church elders took an increased role in political affairs, further complicating governance. The 18th-century historian Edward Gibbon was the most famous proponent of this theory, but his take has since been widely criticized. While the spread of Christianity may have played a small role in curbing Roman civic virtue, most scholars now argue that its influence paled in comparison to military, economic and administrative factors.

8. Weakening of the Roman legions

For most of its history, Rome's military was the envy of the ancient world. But during the decline, the makeup of the once mighty legions began to change. Unable to recruit enough soldiers from the Roman citizenry, emperors like Diocletian and Constantine began hiring foreign mercenaries to prop up their armies. The ranks of the legions eventually swelled with Germanic Goths and other barbarians, so much so that Romans began using the Latin word "barbarus" in place of "soldier." While these Germanic soldiers of fortune proved to be fierce warriors, they also had little or no loyalty to the empire, and their power-hungry officers often turned against their Roman employers. In fact, many of the barbarians who sacked the city of Rome and brought down the Western Empire had earned their military stripes while serving in the Roman legions.

There were certain theories put forward by some scholars and historians related to the Decline of the Roman Empire.

Edward Gibbon

The **decline of the Roman Empire** is a historical theme that was introduced by historian [Edward Gibbon](#) in his book [The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire](#) (1776). He started an ongoing [historiographical](#) discussion about what caused the [Fall of the Western Roman Empire](#), and the reduced power of the remaining Eastern Empire, in the 4th–5th centuries. Gibbon was not the first to speculate on why the Empire collapsed, but he was the first to give a well-researched and well-referenced account. Many theories of causality have been explored. In 1984, [Alexander Demandt](#) enumerated 210 different theories on why Rome fell, and new theories emerged thereafter. Gibbon himself explored ideas of internal decline (the disintegration of political, economic, military, and other social institutions, civil wars) and of [attacks from outside the Empire](#). "From the eighteenth century onward," historian [Glen Bowersock](#) wrote, "we have been obsessed with the fall: it has been valued as an archetype for every perceived decline, and, hence, as a symbol for our own fears."

There is no consensus on a date for the start of the Decline. Gibbon started his account in 98. The year 376 is taken as pivotal by many modern historians. In that year there was an unmanageable influx of Goths and other barbarians into the Balkan provinces, and the situation of the Western Empire generally worsened thereafter, with recoveries being incomplete and temporary. Significant events include the [Battle of Adrianople](#) in 378, the death of [Theodosius I](#) in 395 (the last time the Roman Empire was politically unified), the [crossing of the Rhine](#) in 406 by [Germanic tribes](#), the execution of [Stilicho](#) in 408, the [sack of Rome](#) in 410, the death of [Constantius III](#) in 421, the death of [Aetius](#) in 454, and the [second sack of Rome](#) in 455, with the death of [Majorian](#) in 461 marking the end of the last opportunity for recovery.

Gibbon took September 4, 476 as a convenient marker for the [final dissolution of the Western Roman Empire](#), when [Romulus Augustus](#), the last [Emperor of the Western Roman Empire](#), was deposed by [Odoacer](#), a Germanic chieftain. Some modern historians question the significance of the year 476 for its end. [Julius Nepos](#), the Western emperor recognized by the [Eastern Roman Empire](#), continued to rule in [Dalmatia](#), until he was assassinated in 480. The [Ostrogothic](#) rulers of [Italia](#) considered themselves upholders of the direct line of Roman tradition, and the Eastern emperors considered themselves the sole rightful Roman rulers of a united empire. Roman cultural traditions continued throughout the territory of the Western Empire, and a recent school of interpretation argues that the great political changes can more accurately be described as a complex cultural transformation, rather than a fall.

In [The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire](#) (1776–88), [Edward Gibbon](#) famously placed the blame on a loss of [civic virtue](#) among the Roman citizens. They gradually entrusted the role of defending the Empire to [barbarian mercenaries](#) who eventually turned on them. Gibbon held that [Christianity](#) contributed to this shift by making the populace less interested in the worldly *here-and-now* because it was willing to wait for the rewards of [heaven](#). In discussing Barbarism and Christianity I have actually been discussing the Fall of Rome.

Vegetius on military decline

Writing in the 5th century, the Roman historian [Vegetius](#) pleaded for reform of what must have been a greatly weakened army. The historian [Arther Ferrill](#) has suggested that the Roman Empire – particularly the military – declined largely as a result of an influx of Germanic mercenaries into the ranks of the legions. This "Germanization" and the resultant cultural dilution or "barbarization" led not only to a decline in the standard of drill and overall military preparedness within the Empire, but also to a decline of loyalty to the Roman government in favor of loyalty to commanders. .

Arnold J. Toynbee and James Burke

In contrast with the declining empire theories, historians such as [Arnold J. Toynbee](#) and [James Burke](#) argue that the Roman Empire itself was a rotten system from its inception, and that the entire Imperial era was one of steady decay of institutions founded in [Republican](#) times. In their view, the Empire could never have lasted longer than it did without radical reforms that no Emperor could implement. The Romans had no budgetary system and thus wasted whatever resources they had available. The economy of the Empire was a [Raubwirtschaft](#) or plunder economy based on [looting](#) existing resources rather than producing anything new. The Empire relied on riches from conquered territories (this source of revenue ending, of course, with the end of Roman territorial expansion) or on a pattern of tax collection that drove small-scale farmers into destitution (and onto a [dole](#) that required even more exactions upon those who could not escape taxation), or into dependency upon a landed élite exempt from taxation. With the cessation of tribute from conquered territories, the full cost of their military machine had to be borne by the citizenry.

An economy based upon slave labor precluded a middle class with buying power. The Roman Empire produced few exportable goods. Material innovation, whether through entrepreneurialism or technological advancement, all but ended long before the final dissolution of the Empire. Meanwhile the costs of military defense and the pomp of Emperors continued. Financial needs continued to increase, but the means of meeting them steadily eroded. In the end, due to economic failure, even the armor and weaponry of soldiers became so obsolete that the enemies of the Empire had better armor and weapons as well as larger forces. The decrepit social order offered so little to its subjects that many saw the barbarian invasion as liberation from onerous obligations to the ruling class.

By the late 5th century the barbarian conqueror [Odoacer](#) had no use for the formality of an Empire upon deposing [Romulus Augustus](#) and chose neither to assume the title of Emperor himself nor to select a puppet, although legally he kept the lands as a commander of the Eastern Empire and maintained the Roman institutions such as the [consulship](#). The formal end of the Roman Empire on the West in AD 476 thus corresponds with the time in which the Empire and the title Emperor no longer had value.

Michael Rostovtzeff, Ludwig von Mises, and Bruce Bartlett

Historian [Michael Rostovtzeff](#) and economist [Ludwig von Mises](#) both argued that unsound economic policies played a key role in the impoverishment and decay

of the Roman Empire. According to them, by the 2nd century AD, the Roman Empire had developed a complex [market economy](#) in which trade was relatively free. [Tariffs](#) were low and laws controlling the prices of foodstuffs and other commodities had little impact because they did not fix the prices significantly below their market levels. After the 3rd century, however, [debasement](#) of the currency (i.e., the minting of coins with diminishing content of [gold](#), [silver](#), and [bronze](#)) led to [inflation](#). The [price control](#) laws then resulted in prices that were significantly below their free-market equilibrium levels. It should, however, be noted that [Constantine](#) initiated a successful [reform of the currency](#) which was completed before the barbarian invasions of the 4th century, and that thereafter the currency remained sound everywhere that remained within the empire until at least the 11th century - at any rate for gold coins.

According to Rostovtzeff and Mises, artificially low prices led to the scarcity of foodstuffs, particularly in [cities](#), whose inhabitants depended on trade to obtain them. Despite laws passed to prevent migration from the cities to the countryside, urban areas gradually became depopulated and many Roman citizens abandoned their specialized trades to practice [subsistence agriculture](#). This, coupled with increasingly oppressive and arbitrary [taxation](#), led to a severe net decrease in trade, [technical](#) innovation, and the overall wealth of the Empire.

[Bruce Bartlett](#) traces the beginning of debasement to the reign of [Nero](#). He claims that the emperors increasingly relied on the army as the sole source of their power, and therefore their economic policy was driven more and more by a desire to increase military funding in order to buy the army's loyalty. By the 3rd century, according to Bartlett, the monetary economy had collapsed. But the imperial government was now in a position where it had to satisfy the demands of the army at all costs. Failure to do so would result in the army forcibly deposing the emperor and installing a new one. Therefore, being unable to increase monetary taxes, the Roman Empire had to resort to direct requisitioning of physical goods anywhere it could find them - for example taking food and cattle from farmers. The result, in Bartlett's view, was social chaos, and this led to different responses from the authorities and from the common people. The authorities tried to restore order by requiring free people (i.e. non-slaves) to remain in the same occupation or even at the same place of employment. Eventually, this practice was extended to force children to follow the same occupation as their parents. So, for instance, farmers were tied to the land, and the sons of soldiers had to become soldiers themselves. Many common people reacted by moving to the countryside, sometimes joining the estates of the wealthy and in general trying to be self-sufficient and interact as little as possible with the imperial authorities. Thus, according to Bartlett, Roman society began to dissolve into a number of separate estates that operated as closed systems, provided for all their own needs and did not engage in trade at all. These were the beginnings of feudalism.

Transition to Medieval

The decline and fall of Western Roman Empire towards the end of the 5th century has been interpreted by historians to mark the end of the ancient period and the beginning of the medieval period. More recent scholars offer a more nuanced

view from the traditional historical narrative. However, equating the beginning of the medieval period with that of the emergence of feudalism has become a problem of debate. The transition debate regarding the transition from ancient to medieval is still an ongoing problem among the historians.

A Study of History, Arnold J Toynbee, supported the view that the end of the ancient Roman Empire was the end of the ancient period and it marked the transition from the ancient to the middle ages in Europe. He started that the ancient Roman Empire itself was one of steady decay of institution founded in the republican times. The Romans had no budgetary system and thus wasted whatever resources they had available. The economy of the empire was plunder economy based on looting existing resources rather than producing anything new. An economy based upon slave labour precluded and the pomp of the emperors also contributed for the decline.

The Annals historian and the author of 'Feudal Society', Marc Bloch pointed out that the Western Europe was subjected to a series of invasions. In the 5 th century the German tribes attacked and destroyed in to pieces. This created great feel insecurity among the people. It also disrupted the economy of Rome. so everyone searching for security and subsistence. It marked the transition to a new formation called feudalism.

The author of 'Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism' and 'Lineage to absolute State' argued that in classical Greco-Roman age, slavery appears as the dominant mode of production and the transition to feudalism is seen in terms of change from slave society into a serf based society, caused by combination of the production introduced by the Germanic invasions on the Roman empire. He looked at the rise of feudalism as a long drawn process occurring at the base of the society. It arose a consequence of a mighty clash between two social systems, each in a process of transition.