An Introduction to

Civilization

For Courses in:

Eastern Civilization
South East Asian Civilization
Western Civilization

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“Beyond the Great Wall... You will find no friends...”
Understanding Historical Dates

- **B.C. (BC)** = Before Christ (before the birth of Christ)
- **A.D. (AD)** = Anno Domini (Latin phrase)
  - “In the year of our Lord”
  - The Julian Calendar (AD 525)
  - *Does not actually stand for “After Death”*
- **B.C.E. (BCE)** = Before Common Era
- **C.E. (CE)** = Common Era
  - The Gregorian Calendar
  - *Does not actually [necessarily] stand for “Christian Era”*
- **BP** = Before Present
- **Mya** = Million years ago

The use of **B.C.** and **A.D.** was proposed by the monk Dionysius Exiguus (Dennis the Little) in A.D. 525 to represent the entrance of Christ into the world and as a turning point of history (i.e., the “Julian Calendar”).

The BC and AD, as designated dates, are likely off by as many as 10 years.

**BCE** is the same as **BC**
**CE** is the same as **AD**
BCE and CE avoid reference to Christianity.

*c. = Circa (Latin) = “Around About”*
Early Humans

• Early humans were hunter-gatherers.
• They relied on animals and plants for food.
• They moved constantly in search of their food.
• Early farmers used slash and burn techniques.

After the Ice Ages, people began to domesticate plants and animals and build mud-brick houses, eventually leading to permanent settlements.
‘Civilization’ is an ambiguous concept

Agriculture
Architecture
Art
Astronomy
Coins & Currency
Culture
Economy
Education
Legal systems
Material culture
Mathematics
Metallurgy

Political organization
(organization above the family level)

Pottery
Religion
Science
Society
Technology
Transportation systems
Urbanization and Cities
Writing

What other ways can we identify ‘civilization’?
On the Road to *Civilization*...

- **Old Stone Age** *(Paleolithic)*
  - 2.6 Million years ago — 10,000 BCE
- **New Stone Age** *(Neolithic)*
  - c. 12,000 BCE
  - The rise of farming
- **Bronze Age**
  - The ability to smelt copper and its alloy bronze
  - c. 3,000 BCE
- **Iron Age**
  - The ability to smelt various iron ores
  - c. 1,200 BCE
  - Use of iron for cutting tools and weapons

*The Ages of Man did not begin simultaneously around the world*
How do we study Ancient Civilizations?

- **Archaeology**
- Anthropology
- Architecture & Monuments
- Written records
- Linguistics
- Social theory

What other ways can we study ancient civilizations?
What is Civilization?

• **Civilization** *(n.)*
  – A relatively high level of cultural and technological development
  – Especially in the context of writing and the keeping of written records
  – The **cultural characteristics of a particular time or place**

• **Civilized** *(adj.)*
  – Developed beyond a primitive state
  – **Rationally ordered stage of cultural development**
  – Technically advanced

• **Civil** *(adj.)* (Latin *civilis*)
  – **Social; civil society**
  – The activities, needs, or affairs of people (distinguished from military or religious affairs)
• **Ancient settlements and cities**
  - Organized and sedimentary communities became capable of producing a surplus of raw materials and engaging in trade
  - City planning (grids) are evident, followed by the advent of running water and sewage disposal

• **Agrarian (Agricultural societies)**
  - C. 8,000 BCE
  - The characteristics of farmers and their ways of life
  - Agriculture and animal husbandry

• **Hunter-gatherer**
  - Cultures were sustained through hunting, fishing, and foraging
  - Harvesting of wild grains
The Spread of Agriculture in Prehistory

- Eastern USA (4000-3000 BP)
- Central Mexico (5000-4000 BP)
- Northern South America (5000-4000 BP)
- The Fertile Crescent (11000 BP)
- Sub-Saharan Africa (5000-4000 BP)
- The Yangtze and Yellow River basins (9000 BP)
- New Guinea Highlands (9000-6000 BP)
The World at 4000 Years BP
The World at 3000 Years BP
Great Civilizations of the World

**Egyptian** (Egypt, Africa)

**Sumerian** (Iraq, *Mesopotamia*, Central Asia)  
**Persian** (Iran, Central Asia)

**Greek** (Greece, Western Europe)  
**Roman** (Italy and the greater Mediterranean)

**Chinese** (China, East Asia)  
**Khmer** (Cambodia, Southeast Asia)

**Indus River Valley** (Pakistan, South Asia)

**Aztec** (Mexico, Central America)  
**Mayan** (Central America)  
**Incan** (Andean Mountains, South America)

Can you name some other ancient civilizations of the world?
Ancient Egypt (c. 5000 BP)

- The Nile River flooded every year providing fertile farmland in the desert.

- The Egyptians developed irrigation and other techniques to control Nile floodwaters.
Mesopotamia (c. 5000 BP)

- “The land between the two rivers”
  - The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers

- Provided water and transportation

- Yearly flooding created rich soil allowing for agriculture and early civilizations

Cuneiform: ‘Sumerian’ was the earliest written language in Mesopotamia
• c.2300-c.1900 BC
  – Indus Valley civilization *(mature)*
• c.1900-c.520 BC
  – No records. Indo-Aryan migrations.
• c.520-c.326 BC
  – Persian Empire Under direct Persian control and/or local control under Persian suzerainty.
• c.326-c.305 BC
  – Occupied by Alexander the Great and Macedonian generals
Indian Caste System

Organized Indians into four classes

- Brahmins
  - Teachers, scholars and priests

- Kshatriyas
  - Kings and warriors

- Vaishyas
  - Traders

- Sudras
  - Agriculturists, service providers, and some artisan groups
Yellow & Yangtze Rivers of China
(c. 5000 BP) (c. 7000 BP)?
Mainland Southeast Asia

- Irrawaddy
- Salween
- Chao Phraya
- Mekong
Irrawaddy River
**The Axial Age**

**800 BCE – 200 BCE**

Ancient civilizations around the world simultaneously and independently transformed

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Karl Jaspers (1883-1969)  
German historical philosopher

- The profound emergence of male sages, prophets, religious reformers and philosophers  
  - China, India, Iran, Israel and Greece.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Bronze Age</th>
<th>Iron Age</th>
<th>Middle Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mideast</td>
<td>Mesopotamia</td>
<td>Sui and Liao</td>
<td>Sassanid Caliphates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Ancient Egypt</td>
<td>Kingdom of Kush</td>
<td>Axumite Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med/Europe</td>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>Phoenicia</td>
<td>Ancient Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indus</td>
<td>Indus Valley</td>
<td>Iron Age India</td>
<td>Indo-Greeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Sovereigns and Emperors</td>
<td>Ancient China</td>
<td>Imperial China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Americas</td>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>Classic</td>
<td>Precolombian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.Americas</td>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>Formative</td>
<td>Classic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Americas</td>
<td>Archaic</td>
<td>Preclassic</td>
<td>Classic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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-3000 -2500 -2000 -1500 -1000 -500 0 500 1000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>SAGE/THINKER AND TIME PERIOD</th>
<th>PHILOSOPHY/RELIGION</th>
<th>DISTINCTIVE IDEAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
<td>Jewish sages, ca. 700-500 BCE</td>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>Monotheistic; trials of faith; punishment for sins; covenant with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
<td>Zoroaster, ca. 600 BCE</td>
<td>Zoroastrianism</td>
<td>Eternal conflict between good and evil (dualism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Gautama Siddharta, a 560 BCE</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Meditation; karma; Four Noble Truths; escaping desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mahavira, ca 559 BCE</td>
<td>Jainism</td>
<td>Sanctity of life; nonviolence (ahimsa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Pythagoras, 550 BCE</td>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>Geometrical and mathematical ideas; ratios; ideas that numbers are real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Confucius, ca 500 BCE</td>
<td>Secular Philosophy</td>
<td>Loyalty to God, state, and family; importance of ethics and right behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Parmenides, ca 425 BCE</td>
<td>Rationalism</td>
<td>Objects of thought are more real than sense perception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mozi, ca 400 BCE</td>
<td>Secular Philosophy</td>
<td>Universal love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Zeno, ca. 390</td>
<td>Stoicism</td>
<td>Nature is morally neutral; happiness is achieved by accepting misfortune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Plato and Aristotle, ca. 380 BCE</td>
<td>Secular Philosophy</td>
<td>Logic; science; political thought</td>
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<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Nyaya school, 350 BCE</td>
<td>Rationalism</td>
<td>Logic; reason as an extraordinary perception conferred by God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Laozi, ca 300 BCE</td>
<td>Daoism</td>
<td>Detachment from world; quest for immortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Epicurus, ca 280 BCE</td>
<td>Skepticism</td>
<td>Centrality of matter; soul is not immortal; if God exists he is indifferent to human affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Xunzi, ca 250 BCE</td>
<td>Secular Philosophy</td>
<td>Human goodness can be attained through progress and freedom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Han Feizi, ca. 225 BCE</td>
<td>Legalism</td>
<td>Only good is the good of the state; law and order more important than tyranny and injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
<td>Jesus, ca 30 CE</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>Importance of faith, divine love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Axial Age (5th Century BCE)

- Great break between ordinary human existence and “cosmic order”
  - Each culture questioned and reinterpreted their previous cosmologies

- The closely timed changes in China, India, Palestine and Greece
  - regions that are widely separated from each other
  - too remarkable to be dismissed as accidental

Plato (424 – 348 BCE)
Aristotle (384–322 BCE)
The Axial Age (6th Century BCE)

Major advances in the world's political, philosophical, and religious systems

- Emergence of new ideas, worldviews and values
- Radical changes in humanity’s spiritual development and basic religious concepts
- Major source of most of our present-day faith traditions
- New beginning (more than just an incorporation of mankind’s traditional rituals and beliefs)
The Axial Age (5th Century BCE)

• Great advances in religion, philosophy, science, democracy, and many forms of art
• Occurred independently and almost simultaneously
• China, India, the Middle East, and Greece
• Spiritual foundations were laid which humanity still uses today
• Great religious leaders rose to prominence attracting a mass following
• Eagerness for discovering the fundamental principles of existence and the implications they had on human life and behavior
Huntington proposed that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the 21st Century.
Civilization in the Chinese Context
Civilized vs. Barbarian

- **Cooked (Sinicized)**
  - shufan 熟番
- **Raw (Barbarian)**
  - shengfan 生番

Nei Ren (inner-persons)
Wai Ren (outer-persons)

In Weicheng, the central town, it rains lightly in the morning. All the houses and the willows look fresh after the rain. I suggest you have another cup of wine, because as soon as you leave Yangguan Pass, there are no friends.”

*Tang Dynasty Poem by Wang Wei*
Han-centric cosmos

Zhongguo Middle Kingdom

Great Wall is Here
Thanks for your time and attention!
ANIMISM \( (n.) \)

- The idea that an immaterial force animates the universe.
  - Inanimate objects, such as hills, trees, rocks, rivers, and other elements of the natural landscape, possess souls and can help or hinder human efforts on earth.
- The belief that the existence of individual spirits that inhabit natural objects and phenomena.
- The belief in the existence of spiritual beings that are separable or separate from bodies.

*Indigenous belief systems*
ETHNIC RELIGION

• A religion that is particular to one, culturally distinct, group of people.
  – Do not actively seek converts
    • e.g. through evangelism or missionary work

Universalizing vs. Ethnic

Taiwan Aborigines