

Week 1: Transition and Transformation 250-900

This week we discuss the legacy of the late antiquity which laid the foundations for modern states and the international systems. We will explore the different historical thoughts embedded in our approaches towards the past and present, and the limits of narratives and historical analysis.

Essential Readings:

- WICKHAM, C. (2009). *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000*. United Kingdom: Viking.
- BURBANK, J., & COOPER, F. (2010). *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1g248v9>

Additional Readings:

- Di Cosmo, N., & Maas, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*. Cambridge University Press.
- Belich, J., Darwin, J., Frenz, M. and Wickham, C. eds., 2016. *The prospect of global history*. Oxford University Press. Read the Introduction Chapter
- Iver B. Neumann, *The Steppe Tradition in International Relations: Russians, Turks and European State Building 4000 BCE–2017 CE*

Week 1: Transitions and Transformations Notes by Dr Phacha Phanomvan

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Patterns in World History; what can we learn from the experiences of the ancient world?

Key concept:

- Structures attributed to early modernity has a long run root that extends back into antiquity

Why is history important?

Much of social science tradition stems from the study of history disciplines, for example:

- Ferdinand Braudel's *World System Theory*:
- Marxist and Neo-Marxist Theory:
- Social Evolution

Bias → Theories we know emerged in an imperialist context during the 19th and early 20th century.

- Centred around Austro-Germanic school of thought

- Encultured by pre-17th century Western European Christian views of the world
- Gave rise to Social Evolution theories → Environmental/Christian Determinism
- The roots of 'change' and 'relativism' are drawn from the Greco-Roman tradition

Modern States drew from the Renaissance revival of Greco-Roman concepts. Western historians, directly and indirectly; by intention and vice versa, appoint western civilisation as the 'inheritor' of Greek and Roman civility.

History is an ongoing dialogue between the past and present – E.H Carr

There are two approaches to empirical theory of knowledge:

Empirical Theory of Knowledge: Outside stimuli are separate from one's capacity to process them.

- Positivist: Those who argue that facts point to an absolute conclusion
 - History could be studied as a hard science
 - **E.H Carr argues that this is bias.**
 - Positivists presuppose that history, like the hard sciences, have a dependent variable, the "conclusion"; an independent variable, the "facts"; and a controlled variable, the "objectivity" of the facts.
 - **Humans are notoriously impressionable. People have their own guarded opinions, and these are influenced by others. → For example, if you grow up and live in a Christian society, even if you are not Christian you will be influenced by Christian cultures and views. Shared experiences are often remembered differently by different people.**

Ramifications of assuming subjectivity as the essence of history:

- Easily taken advantage of by anyone (good, bad, intentional, or unintentional)
 - Nation states create origin myths to foster a sense of shared identity and unite disparate groups of people.
 - Demagogues reshape history to serve aims
 - Revisionists make changes to the prevailing historical narrative to serve a political objective.
 - E.H Carr argues that "history is inherently subjective, oftentimes offering an infinity of possible meanings", some historians believe that all interpret

Our perception and analysis of history is dependent on how we think about societal changes and time.

- Linear/progressive thinking, that society moves forward or declines in a linear fashion
 - o Many social evolution theories belong to this category, ie. Marxist Framework
- Ripples of effects
 - o Changes are not necessarily directional or linear, they can recur and are induced by different factors. Phenomena doesn't always have a starting point or origin; many phenomena can happen together.

Important: When we think about perspectives, it's important to consider that there are **no correct or ultimate answers**. **There are outdated, biased, myopic, reductive, or poorly substantiated answers**. What's more important is the weight of an argument + evidence. Even with biases, all arguments will have underlying intellectual historical perspectives; it's important to learn to balance the heritage of an idea and its intellectual history before reaching your own conclusions.

- For example, is it fair to measure all economic scale and sizes according to the GDP or productivity which encapsulates progress under industrialisation standards? I.e → producing more, relying more on maximising resources (without considering economic loss from resource depletion), and you use these constructed indicators as an data to explain economic superiority of one place to another.
 - o Some problems include differences in measurement standards, different concept of employment → for example, Indian weavers traditionally were hired through piece/bulk rates giving producers more bargaining power while English cotton mill weavers were paid by the hour. Chinese paper factory workers had food benefits, wage workers in Industrial Europe had to pay for lunch with wage income.
 - On an accounting book: Bigger profit for European industries + greater volume → greater scale

Introduction to Eurocentric Perspectives:

- The international order was established by European and North American powers. However, the ideas used for explaining societies, its similarities, and differences dates much older than established line of thought.
- Eurocentrism highlights European (and North Atlantic) superiority in arguments surrounding convergence and divergence of societies

Eurocentrism can be divided into the following:

- **Historical-Contextual Eurocentrism:**
 - o The focus on this is on the **historical context of European dominance**, its development, and how historical narratives have been shaped to

favour European achievements and perspectives. It often emphasises the unique development of European societies, particularly in terms of rationality and progress.

- Marxist Rationality Argument belongs to his school of Eurocentrism.
- Superiority and emphasis of Greco-Roman dominance and inheritance is also part of this argument.
 - I.e. Rome is the only great empire and all else must be compared to Rome.

- **Ideological Eurocentrism:**

- Unique and superior ideology justify European superiority and the imposition of European norms and values on other cultures. It includes the belief that European culture is the pinnacle of human development and that other cultures should aspire to European standards
- Some predecessors of this includes Abrahamic Religion's belief in determinism.
 - These ideas would back up "White man's burden" argument in both the history of religious expansion, missionaries, and conquest.

- **Residual Eurocentrism:**

- This refers to the lingering effects of Eurocentric views that persist even in contemporary thought and practices. It can manifest in subtle ways, influencing policies and attitudes even when there is a conscious effort to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks.
 - Holding European standards as universalist views and perspectives.
 - Example: Mainstream theories in international relations often reflect Eurocentric assumptions about state behaviour, sovereignty, and international norms, which may not be applicable or relevant to non-European contexts. This can limit the field's ability to account for diverse geopolitical realities
 - Tolay, J., 2021. Inadvertent reproduction of Eurocentrism in IR: The politics of critiquing Eurocentrism. Review of International Studies, 47, pp. 692 - 713.

- **Philosophical Eurocentrism:**

- This branch critiques the dominance of European philosophical traditions and the marginalisation of non-European philosophies. It involves the propagation of European concepts of reason and rationality as universal, often leading to the suppression of alternative philosophical perspectives.

- Philosophical Eurocentrism is rooted in discourses surrounding the Age of Enlightenment: all scientific progress and rationality were developed by Europeans. It is also tied to the idea of superior Christian philosophy found in Western Europe.
 - Examples: discussion of political theories by considering only Western Philosophers without mentioning or trivialising contribution of non-Western philosophers.
- **Cultural Eurocentrism:**
 - This involves the interpretation and representation of cultural history through a European lens, often leading to the marginalisation or misrepresentation of non-European cultures in literature, art, and collective memory.
 - Some examples of cultural Eurocentrism can be found in the way we perceive media and usage of material culture, as well as the way we think about cultural development.
 - I.e museums representing non-European cultural objects in a non-contextual manner or with simple categorisation not used with European material culture.
- **Political Eurocentrism:**
 - European political models are the dominant and most sophisticated models. Political eurocentrism excludes non-European political systems and histories. It critiques the tendency to view European political developments as the standard for progress and governance.
- **Economic Eurocentrism:**
 - The only economic development trajectory is those that are shaped and designed to follow the European pathways. This idea emphasise European economic models and theories as universally applicable, often ignoring the economic practices and contributions of non-European societies.
 - Paternalistic Eurocentrism:
 - Marx and some Marxist scholars have been criticized for viewing non-European societies as passive or backward, needing to be transformed by European-style industrialization and revolution. This perspective can be paternalistic, suggesting that non-European societies are incapable of autonomous progress.

The Eight Eurocentric Historians by J.M Blaut

This book highlights the problem presented by key historians whose arguments would come to shape most of the historical approaches that are used to analyse contemporary and past societies. Blaut highlighted the following problems with Eurocentric frameworks:

- **Marginalisation of Non-European Contributions:** These Eurocentric perspectives minimize or ignore the significant achievements and influences of non-European civilizations, creating a biased historical narrative.
- **Reinforcement of Superiority Myths:** By attributing global progress primarily to European innovations and rationality, these views perpetuate myths of inherent European superiority.
- **Distorted World History:** Such perspectives present a distorted view of world history that overlooks the interconnectedness and mutual influences of different regions.

Western Rationality: Max Weber (Ideological and Cultural Eurocentrism)

- **Weber's Argument:** Max Weber posited that the rationality inherent in Western culture, particularly stemming from the Protestant work ethic, was a key factor in the development of capitalism and the economic dominance of the West. He argued that this rationalism led to efficient bureaucratic structures and innovative economic practices unique to Europe.
- **Blaut's Critique:** Blaut argues that Weber's thesis ignores similar rational and ethical developments in non-European societies. He contends that Weber's focus on Western rationality unjustly elevates European achievements and overlooks the global diffusion of rational practices. The argument against the Weberian framework also includes tied in
 - The Weberian framework relied on heavily criticised Marx and Engles Orientalist views on Asian societies.
 - Much of Weber's thesis on Protestant work ethics have been negated even in the European context. There are no significant economic differences between Catholic and Protestant German areas (Weber was a German sociologist), and only a small difference in literacy rates which in the long term did help with urbanisation and greater demands for literacy skills but it made very little difference. → early 20th century production did not necessary require literacy skills.

Inventive and Innovative Europeans: Lynn White Jr.

- **White's Argument:** Europe's technological and industrial advancements are attributed to its unique inventive spirit and culture, particularly during the Middle

Ages. White highlighted innovations such as the heavy plough and the mechanical clock as examples of European ingenuity.

- Blaut's Critique: Blaut criticises White for overlooking the technological contributions of non-European societies and the ways in which these innovations influenced or preceded European developments. He argues that White's view reinforces a narrative of European exceptionalism.
 - o I.e most of European technological inventions relied on importing many non-European science and technology from the Mongols, Chinese, and Islamic societies.

The Tunnel of Time: Robert Brenner

- Brenner's Argument: The internal class struggles within Europe explain the rise of capitalism. Brenner emphasises agricultural productivity and the transition from feudalism to capitalism driven by conflicts between landlords and peasants.
 - o This idea of a sudden *revolution* is adopted by Bisson in your second week's reading list.
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut contends that Brenner's perspective ignores the significant external influences and contributions from other regions that impacted European economic systems. He argues that Brenner's focus on internal European dynamics perpetuates a Eurocentric view of history.
 - o Only Europe is capable and should be accredited for the capacity to change and transform. Transitions are endogenous of Western institutions, while other remains static and requires exogenous interventions. Sure, please provide the text you would like me to correct.

The European Miracle: Eric L. Jones

- Jones' Argument: In his earlier work on European economic transformation Eric L. Jones argued that unique environmental and cultural factors in Europe led to its economic rise and global dominance. He suggested that Europe's climate, geography, and cultural traits provided it with advantages not found in other regions.
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut challenges Jones' argument by highlighting similar favourable conditions in other parts of the world. He argues that Jones' thesis simplifies the complexities of global historical development and unfairly credits Europe with unique advantages.
 - o E.L Jones would later change his position on European economic miracles after focusing his efforts on Chinese economic history, particularly exploring the arguments and long series monograph written by Joseph Needham, who highlighted the industrial revolution-like technological progress made by the Song dynasty in the 12th century.

The March of History: Micheal Mann

- Mann's Argument: This work focuses on how the role of European military and political organisation shaped global history. It solidifies the idea that there were no global history until the rise of European Imperialism, which defined globalisation. He argued that Europe's ability to organise and project power effectively was a key factor in its dominance.
 - o Scholars would later build on the arguments like how European fragmentation and warfare during the Medieval and Early Modern period would define unique European technological, political, and economic advancements. → 30- and 100-years' war
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut criticises Mann for underestimating the organisational capabilities and influences of non-European societies. He argues that Mann's focus on European prowess reinforces a narrative of European superiority in global history and limits the framework of global history to those of the European *known* or historicised experience.

Democratic Europeans: John A. Hall

- Hall's Argument: Hall attributed the development of democracy and modern state institutions primarily to European innovations and practices. He suggested that democratic principles were uniquely developed and refined in Europe → drawing on Greco-Roman traditions and legacies.
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut contends that Hall's viewpoint neglects early forms of democratic practices and statecraft in non-European cultures. He argues that Hall overstates Europe's unique role in the development of democratic governance. It also limits perception of Europe to a democratic pathway regardless of diverging forms of European democracies.
 - o Treats all other forms of institutions as not intrinsic and abnormal in the political development of Europe.

Euro-Environmentalism: David Landes

- Diamond's Argument: Diamond suggested that geographical and environmental factors gave Europeans significant advantages in developing advanced societies. He argued that Europe's geography facilitated agricultural and technological advancements that other regions could not match.
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut argues that Diamond's thesis downplays the environmental challenges and innovations of non-European societies. He contends that Diamond's view perpetuates a narrative of inevitable European superiority.
 - o This is also heavily tied to Cultural/Religious Determinism → God gave Europeans the best land so that they can innovate or take over

anything that is necessary to dominate. *the idea also extends to choices for White settlements during the colonial period*

The Empire Strikes Back: Jared Diamond

- Landes' Argument: Landes focused on cultural and intellectual factors within Europe that led to its rise and sustained dominance. He emphasised the importance of European values, work ethic, and intellectual traditions in fostering economic and technological progress. → Weberian style + White+ others
- Blaut's Critique: Blaut contends that Landes' arguments ignore the global context and the contributions of other civilisations to the intellectual and cultural developments in Europe. He argues that Landes' view reinforces a Eurocentric narrative by attributing global progress primarily to European innovations.

Civilisation Recast by Stephan Feuchtwang and Michael Rowlands (Archaeologist and Anthropologist)

The book tries to break away from Eurocentric frameworks on assessing civilisation and reconceptualise how we categorise societies and perceptions imposed by linear models.

Key ideas:

- Civilisation is self-fashioning by choices in restraints and rejections. Groups of humans tend to formulate rules on what defines their sense of self, collective self, and what they want to do and not do based on evolving and collective experiences. Thus, the limits of categorisation are bounded by what they choose to reject rather than adopt.
 - This is observed by how civilisations are formed, maintained, and transformed through the long run process of assimilation and interaction with other civilisations.
 - Civilisation stands in opposition to chaos, such as the breakdown of social order and brutalisation of human relations. At the same time, civilisation is also destroyed by chaos, marked by a loss of cultural and social framework that defines human societies.
 - Material modes of learning and self-fashioning are transformed by interactions and assimilations from other civilisations over long durations. → for example, changing language and diet patterns over time.
 - This means that civilisation is dynamic and interactive, unlike the traditional models that defines civilisational development as being static and linear.

Marking of Antiquities and Ancient Empires:

Where does the chain of history begin? For some scholars like *Andre Gunder Frank* systems like capitalism can go back as far as 5000 years, while others see it as more recent phenomena.

Path dependency is a concept from the social sciences that explains how the historical paths taken by institutions, technologies, and cultures influence their current and future trajectories. In the context of global antiquity, path dependency highlights how decisions and developments from ancient times continue to shape contemporary society.

- **Stability and Predictability:** Path dependency provides stability and predictability in social, economic, and political systems. The established practices and institutions offer a framework within which societies operate.
- **Resistance to Change:** While path dependency can ensure stability, it can also lead to resistance to change. Institutions and practices rooted in ancient traditions may be slow to adapt to new circumstances.
- **Cultural Continuity:** Path dependency ensures the continuity of cultural identities and practices, preserving the heritage of ancient civilizations.
- **Innovation and Adaptation:** Understanding path dependency allows for innovation and adaptation within established frameworks. By recognising the historical roots of contemporary practices, societies can better navigate changes and integrate new ideas.

Most of the foundation of the world system we know of can be traced back to antiquity. Some aspects of antiquity that we inherited includes:

- **Legal and Political Systems:** Modern legal codes and political institutions draw heavily from ancient practices, particularly Roman law and Greek democratic principles.
 - Bureaucracy system
 - Urban organisation
 - Public works
 - Property rights, legal contracts, and personal liability have their roots in ancient legal traditions.
 - Boundaries and borders
- **Economic systems:** Today's global trade networks and economic systems are descendants of these early trade routes. The concept of currency and monetary systems has evolved from ancient coinage practices. This also includes ideas of investments, commercial contracts, and even debates on resource management.

- Literary and Philosophical Heritage: Classical literature and philosophy continue to be studied and revered, forming the bedrock of modern education and thought, particularly western style scholarship.
 - Writing systems
 - Democratic principles from ancient Greece underpin modern democratic systems. The Roman Republic and Empire's governance models influenced the structure of modern states, including concepts of citizenship and republicanism.
- Architectural and Engineering Innovations: Ancient architectural styles and engineering techniques influence contemporary construction and urban planning and city organisation.
 - We still live on ancient cities, much of the designs and pattern of settlements and how we manage structures still affects us today.
- Scientific Foundations: Early scientific and mathematical principles developed in antiquity underpin modern scientific research and education.
- Cultural and Religious Traditions: Many cultural practices, religious beliefs, and ethical systems trace their origins to ancient civilisations, continuing to shape societies globally.

A key turning point in ancient to modern history is the *long Axial Age*, some suggest that Axial age that occurred in different places during different times. The Axial Age argument, proposed by Karl Jasper, defines a turning point in history through the lens of collective 'transcendentalism' across Eurasia. Whereby crucial intellectual, moral, and political changes took place in the core five regions across Eurasia: Greece, Israel-Palestine, Iran, and India to China. This resulted in changes in ideas towards fairness and equity, universal rights and freedom, representation, balanced, democratic governance, and the notion that no one is above the law.

- Jasper argued this by looking at the collective emergence of political and religious ideology. The establishment of world religion, which dominated legal philosophy became the market of transcendentalism which still affects us today.

The 'historiography' of the Late Antiquity and Medievalism helps us think about the concept of how linearity provides us with binary perception of the ancient, medieval, renaissance, or even 'early' modern branding. The processes of how we see and perceive the past is written by historians and dominated by 20th century European thinkers whose vision culminated into the challenged writings established by Max Weber, Karl Marx, Marc Bloch, and Ferdinand Braudel. These views were established in an age when there was much less access to historical resources, organised archives, archaeological material culture, and perhaps most important of all the writings of the early 20th century was perhaps still infused by the very same linear

primitivist views of the past, entrenched in both secular and non-secular Christianised academic thinking. Yet, it is also the gaps presented between 'disciplines', and historians view the past the dominates narratives on primitivism and superiority of societies. Yes, history is written by historians – mostly bored white men with too much time and privilege – and not the usually what society perceive to be 'winners'.

- This is eloquently argued by Jairus Banaji on his revisions of the Late Antiquity and Medieval history writing and primitivism as:
 - o *the deadweight of other, earlier generations who looked on the past with the patronising attitudes of the world in unbridled expansion. The triumph of capitalism was also the downgrading of every preceding epoch with its supposedly increasing **primitive** forms of technology and social interactions, and its inability to achieve a rational organisation of the world.*

Expansionism and Pastoralism

- The world was at its peak in the 1st century CE with large empires and complex urban system.
- Rome was at its peak of its territorial expansion, the Han empire stretches to unify the Huanghe plain and encroaches into the Yangtze delta, extending as far west as the central Asia, South Asia was dominated by the Satavahanas and Kushans. Large cities were starting to emerge everywhere, by the 4th century CE. The global economy more than doubled.
- World population rose from roughly 150 million to over 375 million.

The Roman Empire

Rome's sophisticated administrative and fiscal systems have had a lasting impact on modern society. The complex bureaucracy of the Roman Empire, with its emphasis on organization and record-keeping, has influenced the development of contemporary government bureaucracy. In addition, Rome's fiscal practices, including taxation, monetary systems, and urban administration, have also left their mark on modern society, providing a framework for the development of contemporary practices.

The following are Roman Empire inheritance

1. **Administrative and Fiscal Systems**
2. **Legal Traditions**
3. **Urban Infrastructure**
4. **Military Organisation**
5. **Cultural and Religious Continuity:**
6. **Economic Structures**
7. **Demographic and Economic Impact**

The Roman Empire can be separated into four periods: Kingdom of Rome, Republic of Rome, Roman Empire (and Pax Romana), and Kingdom of Romans (also known as the Byzantine Empire)

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The Romans, for a very long period in historiographical traditions, highlighted the benefits of strong centralised state system towards the economy and stability.

- This was even more so during the Roman Empire or Pax Romana phase where the imperial government + senate system was aggressively expanding public works and reforming tax systems.

1. Administrative and Fiscal Systems:

1. Inheritance: The complex bureaucratic and fiscal systems of the Roman Empire, including tax collection and administrative structures, were foundational for the governance of successor states.

- Romans managed their administration through magistrate and principate system. The Roman magistrates were elected officials that administered the Roman Kingdom, Roman Republic, and the Roman Empire.
- Magistrate had major potestas (major power), there were dictators who are endowed with power to solve specific issues. There were also censors and consuls.
 - Structurally, the Roman Magistrate during the Roman Republic was governed on democratic principles, but not everyone had a say....slaves and women were excluded, citizenship did not fully integrate conquered population, only patricians could be elected to government offices despite inclusiveness in assemblies. Different groups held power as comitia curiata and comitia populi tributa or plebis over time.
 - Not much emphasis on public work
 - Pax Romana (Roman Empire) saw the increase of civil participation, women gained full rights and more protection under the law. Slaves can buy freedom and freemen can buy full citizenship. Powerful and benevolent emperors created new social programs, while a huge emphasis was placed on public infrastructure
 - The Roman Empire served as a model for 'the significance of strong state-led development discourse', many empires and powerful states are measured against the Roman Empire. Emphasising that

empires can be strong and grow economically under a strong central government.

2. Significance: These systems ensured continuity in governance and economic management, facilitating the transition from Roman to post-Roman societies

2. Legal Traditions:

1. Inheritance: Roman law, with its emphasis on codified statutes and legal precedents, significantly influenced the legal systems of medieval European states.

- Roman law served as a foundation for civil code system, many concepts derived under the Roman Law were used during the Medieval period, and modern period!

- **Codified Law:** The roman codification influenced the development of civil law systems in Europe and beyond, forming the basis for modern legal codes. Codes were separated into areas such as property rights, contracts, and obligations
 - They even had investment bond and share contracts!
- The Roman legal procedure had legal advocacy and legal procedures, where representatives argued cases before a judge. This is still a tradition in the modern context.
- The Principles of Jus Gentium (Laws of Nations) is a legal principle and practice that were applied to the interactions between Roman citizens and non-Romans, as well as peoples and nations under Roman rule.
 - Conceived during the Roman Empire, when Rome came in contact with many different people and nations as it expanded (I.e territories like Judea, Hispania, Germania, and Gaul. This includes management of relationships with the Parthian empire where they needed trade, military treaties, and prisoner exchange agreements).
 - Jus Gentium relied on a principle that were considered universal and rational, but also reflecting what the Romans thought to be common to all human societies → justice, equity, and natural law.
 - Jus Civile (civil law for Romans) is different from Jus Gentium. Jus Gentium is more flexible and adaptable to diverse cultural and legal context.
 - For example, Eastern Roman Empire (territories in Anatolia) spoke Greek and had different culture than territories in Gaul.

2.**Significance:** This legal continuity provided a stable framework for resolving disputes and administering justice, impacting European legal traditions for centuries.

3. Urban Infrastructure:

1.**Inheritance:** The extensive network of roads, aqueducts, and urban centers built by the Romans continued to be used and maintained by subsequent states.

- Many construction technologies such as urban sanitary system (urban pipes) and heating, as well as hydro-power were refined and constructed across the Roman Empire (they didn't invent the technology, most public urban infrastructures were inherited from the Greeks, Babylonians, and Egyptians, but the romans increased their productivity and efficiency). The romans also invented concrete.

2.**Significance:** This infrastructure facilitated trade, communication, and military movements, contributing to the economic and political stability of medieval Europe

4. Military Organization:

1.**Inheritance:** Roman military organization and strategies were adopted and adapted by successor states, influencing medieval military practices.

2.**Significance:** The disciplined and hierarchical structure of Roman legions provided a model for medieval armies, contributing to the success of military campaigns and the defence of territories

5. Cultural and Religious Continuity:

1.**Inheritance:** The spread of Christianity during the Roman Empire laid the foundation for the Christianization of Europe, with the Roman Church playing a central role in medieval society.

2.**Significance:** The continuity of religious institutions and practices provided spiritual and ideological cohesion, influencing social and political life throughout the Middle Ages

6. Economic Structures:

1.**Inheritance:** The Roman emphasis on trade and economic integration within the Mediterranean basin influenced the economic policies of medieval states.

- The romans popularised minting technology and invented many financial devices including bond investment and contracts that were designed to help manage risk from trade and infrastructure investments.

Significance: Trade networks and economic practices established during the Roman period persisted, fostering economic growth and stability in successor states.

Other contributions included demographic patterns that were transformed from push and pull migration during the empire and during its phase of fragmentation.

Roman imperial strategy and ideology remained very much a large part of its claimed inheritors, even modern superpowers like the United States. --> the influence of Luttwark's work on US foreign policy during the cold war.

Sinosphere: Empire building Han Dynasty (206 BE -220CE)

China had a more rapid state consolidation pattern than the Romans, the foundation of the Han Dynasty marked a huge turning point in Chinese history.

1. It restored stability and unity to the Huanghe states after almost two decades of harsh Legalist policies that imposed strict laws, heavy taxation, forced labour, and brutal suppression of dissent. These harsh policies led to widespread revolts, fragmentation, and warlordism (they had a lot of human sacrifices). Liu Bang, the founder of the Han Dynasty, emerged as a unifier in the civil war and immediately adopted more moderate and humane regime.
2. Confucianism was selected as the official state ideology, shifting from the Legalist brutal approach to "moral leadership, benevolence, and respect for tradition"
3. The Han Dynasty refined the centralised bureaucratic system introduced by the Qin to make it more effective and sustainable. They curbed the inhuman practice supported by the legalist schools (i.e practices like grilling people on heated metal as capital punish ended). Officials were appointed according to skills, moral character, and education rather than ability to enforce the emperor's will and strict adherence to the law.
4. Bureaucratic traditions were centralised like the Qin but had greater flexibility at the local level, authorities were delegated from the emperors to local officials' alike magistrates, who were given some discretion to adapt policies to local circumstances.
5. Large taxation reforms. The Han made tax more equitable and sustainable, imposing the equal field system to make sure no particular group of people can hoard land and benefits. They reduce the tax burden on peasants and implemented policies that promoted agricultural productivity. → grain distribution and granary reserves to help with famines and natural disasters
6. Instead of focusing on building roads to unify military control, the Han Dynasty focused on unification but allowed flexible participation → they instigated standardised script and currency but allowed regional variations
7. The Han Dynasty saw many technological scientific and technological advancements → invention of paper, improvements in metallurgy, and developments in astronomy and medicine (the silk road and early contact with the Romans started prospering under the Han dynasty)

The Han Dynasty was one of the most prosperous and influential dynasties in Chinese history. In this presentation, we will explore the key characteristics of the Han Dynasty and its enduring legacies.

- The Han Dynasty was characterised by a centralised government and a sophisticated civil service system. The emperor held absolute power (in theory), supported by a bureaucracy of trained officials. The civil service system was based on meritocracy, with candidates selected through rigorous examinations. These institutions allowed the Han Dynasty to maintain stability and promote the well-being of its people.

The Sinosphere inherited the following from the Han Dynasty:

1. Confucianism

- Confucianism became the dominant philosophical and ethical system in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. It influenced the structure of these societies, particularly in terms of governance, family relationships, education, and social order. Confucian texts became central to education and civil service exams in these countries, like the role they played in China.

2. Bureaucratic Governance and Meritocracy

- The civil service examination system, based on Confucian classics, was adopted by Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. This system created a class of scholar-officials who governed these societies and played a crucial role in maintaining the administrative efficiency and stability of these states. The English took civil service administration model from China in the 17th century, and started adapting it for the English empire.

3. Legal and Political Institutions

- Legal codes in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam were heavily influenced by Han legal principles. These legal systems emphasised social harmony, hierarchical relationships, and the moral responsibilities of rulers and subjects. The idea of a centralised state governed by a codified legal system was also inherited from the Han.

4. Cultural and Educational Systems

- Education systems in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam were modelled on the Han system, with a strong focus on Confucian literature and moral education. The written script, based on Chinese characters, was also adopted, deeply influencing the languages and literary traditions of these countries.

Calendar and Timekeeping

- The Lunar calendar, as refined during the Han Dynasty, was adopted by Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. This calendar influenced agricultural practices, religious festivals, and administrative activities in these countries, and remains culturally significant today.

6. Technological and Scientific Knowledge

These technological and scientific innovations were transmitted to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, where they were further developed and integrated into local practices. For example, paper-making technology, which originated during the Han, became widespread in the Sinosphere, revolutionizing communication and record-keeping.

- Paper making techniques developed by the Han dynasty jump started chronical traditions, it also helped with establishing standardisation, dissemination of knowledge, and bureaucracy.

7. Buddhism and Religious Practices

- Although Buddhism was not indigenous to China, it began to take root during the Han Dynasty, particularly through the Silk Road, and was integrated with Confucian and Daoist practices. -> Buddhism spread from China to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, becoming a major religious and cultural force in these countries. The integration of Buddhism with Confucianism and local traditions in these regions reflects the syncretic religious practices that began during the Han period.
- Translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese
- Buddhism blended with Daoist and Confucian traditions during the Han Dynasty
- Syncretism led to the development of uniquely Chinese forms of Buddhism that had ethical teachings from Daoism and Confucianism
 - o Part of the emergence of transcendentalism as a thought

8. Military Strategies and Organisation

Military practices and strategies from the Han Dynasty influenced the development of military systems in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam. The organisation of armies, military tactics, and the construction of fortifications in these countries were often modelled on Han precedents.

- Establishment of Tuntian or military colonies in the border regions -> the goal was to protect agricultural productions and farmlands instead of just cities
- Development of a mixed diplomacy and military strategy -> heqin (marriage alliance policy) to secure peace and trade deals with the Xiongnu

The Indian Subcontinent

Unlike the Han Dynasty and the Romans, the Indian Subcontinent saw many distinctive empires with more diverse cultural and political organisation. Antiquity in the Indian Subcontinent was marked by the establishment of the Mauryan Empire (322-185 BCE) under the Emperor Ashoka. While the Empire was short lived, Ashoka became the first Emperor to instigate centralised bureaucratic administration. Ashoka embraced and championed Buddhism and promoted non-violence, moral governance, and religious tolerance. He was responsible to spreading Buddhism across Asia and beyond (Buddhism entered Persia and Arabia). The Mauryan created treaties on governance, including a corpus of text on moral responsibilities of each person including the emperor, law, taxation and domestic governance, as well as a guide on how to treat different foreign and tributaries under the empire.

- The subsequent Sunga Empire (185-75 BCE) continued the Mauryan practice but was more decentralised. They revived Brahminism and the Sanskrit language (Ashoka promoted Bengali language like Pali and Prakrit)
- The Satavahana (1st century BCE to 3rd century CE) established a decentralised ruler system → carried on Arthashastra view of state being functions of the human body.
 - Satavahana Empire was ruled by a hereditary kingship, with some queens assuming power in the absence of a male heir. They ruled using a governor known as maharathi or mahabhoja → mostly from the royal family or high-ranking nobles
 - While the central government exercising overarching controls, local rulers and chieftains were granted a significant degree of autonomy in local affairs and usage of taxation.
 - Governance divided into aharas (districts) and nagaras (towns and cities), each ahara was administered by officials responsible for maintaining law and order → also ensure granary distribution during disasters and managing agricultural production
 - Taxation was complex, they had commercial tax, land tax, sea tax etc. → taxes were kept low and no direct income tax
 - Dharmashastra inspired the Satavahana legal system + local customs
 - Complex land ownership and royal land grant system with documentation through copper plates, lands could be inherited, leased, and sold. Some lands were exempted from taxation, such as temple land.
 - Communal land was used for collective activities such as grazing, agriculture, and other purposes.
 - Village headmen or council managed land and resolved disputes related to land ownership.

The End of Antiquity and its perseverance.....

The wind of change.....too much expansion always stresses an empire resources and administrative capacities, but the Han Dynasty would make a brutal mistake....

The Steppes is a large fertile pastoral plain, it gave rise to unique cultures that relied on highly effective mobile settlements and warlord culture. They controlled key military resources like salt, iron, and large animals that were essential for transportation like horses, mules, and camels. During the 2nd century CE, the Han Dynasty launched a series of campaigns against the Xiongnu Empire, a large influential empire that controlled the semi-nomadic group in the north and western part of China. The Hexi corridor which was controlled by the Qiang became a battle ground. The Qiang turned against the Xiongnu, and with the combined forces of the Qiang and Han Dynasty invasion the Xiongnu began to push westwards.

The collapse of the Xiongnu Empire in 89 CE led to fragmentation in the steppes and the western regions of China. Han Dynasty newly gained territories became a bureaucracy and military nightmare. The Qiang dispersed into several hordes and expanded into the Yangui Plateau. They formulated the Tubo kingdom, but for most part relied on a series of raids across the plains and steppes, forcing other groups to seek new lands and refuge.

- Climate crisis led to a series of pastoral production stress, leading to land grabbing and constant conflicts. → reinforces ongoing problematic Han authority and fragmented the Han Empire into different interest groups
- The Qiang raiding activities created a Chain reaction that would displace other groups such as the Yuezhi and the Huns
 - By the 4th century, the Hun reached the borders of the Roman empires, disrupting the Germanic tribes living in the region. This triggered the Goths, Vandals, Visigoths, Ostrogoths and Alans to flee westward seeking refuge in new lands.
 - Domino effect
 - While the Roman empire originally granted land for refuge to the Visigoths, the empire was experiencing a series of economic inflation, population decline, shortage of taxes, and military capacity were stretched.
 - Romans relied on Germanic tribes as allied troops to help defend parts of its borders, but Roman officials mistreated these allied tribes. In 378 the Visigoths rebelled and defeated the Roman army, this would mark the beginning of raids by other Germanic tribes.

In 410 CE, Rome as the capital of the Roman Empire came to an end as it burned for days during the final raid.