

Teacher Background Information for Unit 0

- **The Persian Achaemenid Empire** is considered the start of the Classical Era and Second-Wave Empires as they organized their empires in a characteristically new way that no previous empires had; their model was also followed by most major empires afterwards.

Founded by Cyrus the Great, the Persians conquered from the Indus Valley to the Balkan region in eastern Europe. While their religious model still held their emperor as divine, and most adhered to Zoroastrianism, they, for the most part, allowed conquered peoples to maintain their cultures and religions. This made it far easier to assert control, as well as the fact that most places benefited from Persian control. As the Persians expanded, affluence and greater safety generally followed for the conquered regions due to the new policies implemented by the central government in Persepolis (the administrative, religious, economic, and cultural capital of the empire).

They established the first large-scale central administration, with satraps functioning as modern governors—handling local issues and carrying out the laws and order from the imperial capital, as well as calling for aid when necessary. Tax collectors and translators allowed funds to be gathered and sent back to the central government and used for infrastructure and military operations. Soldiers were paid in gold coins, officially minted by the Persian government. This common currency also increased economy productivity as economic transactions became simpler and more numerous without the difficulty of negotiating value from other goods or currencies. They also established the first early large-scale roads to ensure more effective and safer travel, as well as a state mailing system to optimize communication at the time. At the time, they controlled roughly half the world's population, and set a functional model for future empires, even after defeat at the hands of the Greeks and their subsequent conquest by the Hellenistic, Roman, and Arab peoples.

- **Macedonia** was an ancient kingdom on the periphery of Classical Greece. During the reign of the Argead king Philip II (359–336 BC), Macedonia subdued most of the greater area of Greece. With a reformed army containing phalanxes wielding the *sarissa* pike, Philip II defeated the old powers of Athens and Thebes in the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC. Philip II's son Alexander the Great, leading a federation of Greek states, accomplished his father's objective of commanding the whole of Greece when he destroyed Thebes after the city revolted. During Alexander's subsequent campaign of conquest, he overthrew the Achaemenid Empire and conquered territory that stretched as far as the Indus River. For a brief period, his empire was the most powerful in the world – the definitive Hellenistic state, inaugurating the transition to a new period of Ancient Greek civilization. Greek arts and literature flourished in the new conquered lands and advances in philosophy, engineering, and science spread throughout much of the ancient world. Of particular importance were the contributions of Aristotle, tutor to Alexander, whose writings became a keystone of Western philosophy.
- **The Hellenistic Era** covers the period of Mediterranean history between the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC and the emergence of the Roman Empire, as signified by the Battle of Actium in 31 BC and the conquest of Ptolemaic Egypt the following year. During the Hellenistic period, Greek cultural influence and power reached the peak of its geographical expansion, being dominant in the Mediterranean world and most of West and Central Asia even in parts of the Indian subcontinent, experiencing prosperity and progress in the arts, exploration, literature, theatre, architecture, music, mathematics, philosophy, and science. Despite this, it is often considered a period of transition, sometimes even of decadence or degeneration, compared to the enlightenment of the Greek Classical era.

The Hellenistic kingdoms were established throughout south-west Asia (Seleucid Empire, Kingdom of Pergamon), north-east Africa (Ptolemaic Kingdom) and South Asia (Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Indo-Greek Kingdom). The Hellenistic period was characterized by a new wave of Greek colonization^[5] which established Greek cities and kingdoms in Asia and Africa.^[6] This resulted in the export of Greek culture and language to these new realms, spanning as far as modern-day India. These new kingdoms were also influenced by the indigenous cultures, adopting local practices where beneficial, necessary, or convenient. Hellenistic culture thus

represents a fusion of the ancient Greek world with that of Western Asian, Northeastern African, and Southwestern Asian.

- **The Roman Republic** – The Roman Republic emerged in the 6th century BCE, conquered the surrounding Latin city states, and exerting control over most of the Italian peninsula. From there, they focused their efforts on conquering and subjugating the tribal peoples of Gaul and Spain, and began combatting and displacing the more highly-developed Phoenician and Greek colonies around Corsica, Sardinia, and Sicily. Taking notice, they soon came into conflict with the largest other power in the western Mediterranean: Carthage. In their conflict with Carthage and Hannibal in the Punic Wars, Rome suffered humiliating defeats and setbacks, but ultimately learned the value of a strong navy, and utilized it as their main advantage to defeat and annihilate Carthage (literally sowing salt over the destroyed city so nothing could grow there). From there, Rome came into conflict with the long-established and powerful Macedonia and other Hellenistic states, but figured out how to outmaneuver the Greek forces on land and overwhelm them by sea. In conquering the Macedonia and the other Greek states, Rome The Roman Republic was henceforth the primary power in the Mediterranean.
- **The Roman Empire** - The era of Rome as a Republic would end in 27 BCE following the usurpation of power from the Senate by Julius Caesar who now ruled as supreme emperor. The Roman Empire stretched from Spain to western borders of Persia, essentially controlling the entire Mediterranean Sea, and promoting communication and prosperity.

Regarding society, elites were known as patricians, and their loyalty was held by scaling tax cuts and exemptions—sufficient for the short term, but detrimental for long-term state success (and it would be a leading cause in the demise of, at least, the Western Roman Empire). Plebeians were the lower class, along with slaves, and constituted most of the population. As is the formula for all known societies, wealth and power shifted disproportionately to the patricians over time, and resulted in several rebellions and uprisings (such as the Spartacus Rebellion in the 1st-century BCE). While patriarchal institutions were the norm for Rome and all other societies at the time, women did enjoy some expansion of rights, as although considered property, were not allowed to be arbitrarily killed by their husbands, as well as gaining some property rights later in the empires existence. Militaristically, Roman borders were advanced with Roman legion military might, until stretched too far for a Classical Empire to realistically control. Supply lines were protected along the route and on the borders by forts, and soldiers were rewarded with conquered lands (a problem later, as Roman conquests began to stall).

Politically, Romans adopted many of the successful Persian models, using governors to handle local matters and enforce imperial law. Rome was the political, religious, economic, and cultural center, with a complex road and Mediterranean Sea Trade Network centered towards it. Conquered peoples were incorporated fully as Roman citizens, enjoying the same privileges as Romans, and, other than those who opposed Roman rule after conquest, were allowed to maintain their religion and privilege (a notable exception being the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish Diaspora in the 1st century CE, as well as the persecution of Christians). Rome would continue to persecute Christians until its acceptance by emperors such as Constantine, and its official state status with the Edict of Thessalonica in 380 CE.

Rome would suffer long term from its taxing practices from elites, its lack of rewards for soldiers once expansion stopped, its massive size, internal rebellions, and invading Germanic and Hunnic peoples from Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Before its fall, it divided into two empires in 330 CE, with the West remaining Roman until its conquest in the 5th century CE, and the Eastern Roman Empire continuing under the Greeks (still calling themselves Romans) until their fall to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 CE.

- **Hinduism**, codified by the Vedas (Sanskrit), which preserved the oral traditions of the Vedic religions after the arrival of the Indo-Aryans, and inclusion of the written Upanishads, as part of the Vedas, central to Hindu beliefs and spiritual core, most notably about Brahman. Brahman—the pervasive, eternal, creative principle that is permanent, does not change, and is the root of all change—an ultimate being or state of being. One's soul (atman) is intertwined, and one need to fulfill their dharma—behaviors that maintain the natural order of the universe, reincarnation of the soul, and a social and political caste system. In this caste system, four classes

(varnas) exist: Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (kings and warriors), Vaishyas (farmers, traders, artisans), and Shudras (laborers and servants), with an unmentioned 'untouchable' varna.

These groups are based on birth, and their professions and status inherited. Within these varnas are jatis, which are akin to subclasses, in which these groups are ranked socially and politically. There is no social mobility—the jatis you are born into was earned in your previous life. One must work to fulfill their role to hopefully achieve good karma, and have their soul ascend the caste system in their next life.

- **Buddhism**, originating in the 6th and 5th centuries BCE in India, Buddhism was a reaction to Vedic beliefs. It rejected the idea of Brahman, the atman, and the concept of dharma and the caste system. Buddhism held that life was suffering, and that in order to escape the suffering and endless cycle of rebirth, one had to achieve nirvana: a complete state of restraint and self-control that no longer crave or cling to impermanent states or things.

Buddhism quickly branched into schools and spread throughout the Indian subcontinent in the form of monasteries. Monks and missionaries spread the teachings of Buddhism, which were particularly appealing to those trapped in the lower varnas and jatis for their lifetime. The Maurya Empire (322 BCE – 185 BCE), under Ashoka, attempted to adopt and spread Buddhism, building such structures as stupas, to nourish Buddhist thought. The teachings themselves did not supplant the imbedded Hindu traditions, and Buddhism spread to East and Southeast Asia as trade route developed in the Classical and Post-Classical Eras.

- **The Maurya Empire** (322-185 BCE) is the first successful large-scale attempt to unify the Indian subcontinent. While short-lived compared to some of the other Classical Empires, it is well-known for its prosperity after unifying much of modern-day India. Most notable of its rulers was Ashoka, who attempted to make Buddhism the official religion on India, funding monasteries and stupas throughout India during his reign. However, the cultural hold of Hinduism and the caste system proved to be too strong of an influence, as Buddhism did not have a lasting hold, and spread elsewhere along the Indian Ocean Trade Network and Silk Road to Southeast and East Asia respectively.
- **The Gupta Empire** (3rd century CE – 550 CE) is famous for its prominence and affluence. Responsible for the peace, stability, and economic prosperity that brought on the Golden Age of India—based on the achievements of Indians in the fields of science, technology, engineering, art, dialectic, literature, logic, mathematics, astronomy, religion, and philosophy—Indian culture flourished. Many works of Hindu art, architecture, literature, and novels were produced, such as the Kama Sutra. Indians were also responsible for our foundational mathematical numeral and decimal system. The Gupta Empire would succumb to the weakening brought by Hunnic invaders, and local kingdom's resistance to central authority, as well as the problems that had and still do plague Indian unity: the caste systems stringent hold on society, as well as the immense amount of cultural and linguistic diversity in the Indian subcontinent.
- **The Warring States Period** was an era in ancient Chinese history characterized by warfare, as well as bureaucratic and military reforms and consolidation; it concluded with the Qin wars of conquest that saw the annexation of all other contender states, which ultimately led to the Qin state's victory in 221 BCE as the first unified Chinese empire, known as the Qin dynasty. The Warring States era also overlaps with the second half of the Eastern Zhou dynasty, though the Chinese sovereign, known as the king of Zhou, ruled merely as a figurehead and served as a backdrop against the machinations of the warring states.
- **Legalism**, meaning "house of administrative methods" or "standards/law" the Fa "school" represents several branches of what have been termed realist statesmen, or "men of methods, who played foundational roles in the construction of the bureaucratic Chinese empire, with their teachings coming to temporary overt power as an ideology with the ascension of the Qin Dynasty. In the Western world, the philosophy has often been compared to Machiavellianism, and considered akin to an ancient Chinese philosophy of Realpolitik, emphasizing a realist project of consolidating the wealth and power of the state and its autocrat, with the goal of achieving order, security and stability.

Though the origins of the Chinese administrative system cannot be traced to any one person, the administrator Shen Buhai (c. 400 BCE – c. 337 BCE) may have had more influence than any other on the construction of the merit system, and might be considered its founder, if not valuable as a rare pre-modern example of abstract theory of administration. Concerned largely with administrative and sociopolitical innovation, Shang Yang (390–338 BCE) was a leading reformer of his time. His numerous reforms transformed the peripheral Qin state into a militarily powerful and strongly centralized kingdom. Much of Legalism was "the development of certain ideas" that lay behind his reforms, which would help lead to Qin's ultimate conquest of the other states of China in 221 BCE.

- **Confucianism** is a system of thought and behavior originating in ancient China. Various described as tradition, a philosophy, a religion, a humanistic or rationalistic religion, a way of governing, or simply a way of life, Confucianism developed from what was later called the Hundred Schools of Thought from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius (551–479 BCE). With particular emphasis on the importance of the family and social harmony, rather than on an otherworldly source of spiritual values, the core of Confucianism is humanistic. Confucianism transcends the dichotomy between religion and humanism, considering the ordinary activities of human life—and especially human relationships—as a manifestation of the sacred. The worldly concern of Confucianism rests upon the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor, especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue in a morally organized world. It contains within it a system of ritual norms and propriety that determines how a person should properly act in everyday life in harmony with the law of Heaven.

Confucianism's elaboration by key disciples, and its state-sanctioning of rulers such as Wudi of the Han Dynasty (1st century BCE), promoted social harmony and outlining social relationships. In response to the chaos and destruction of the Warring States Period, Confucianism advocated a centralized, harmonious state, with rituals, traditions, and loyalty and respect between the social hierarchy. It also emphasized education, beginning a traditional of the examination system—a rigorous Confucian test—for government officials. This same harmony, loyalty, and respect was to be embodied in the patriarchal household, respect for parents and ancestors (filial piety), and provide a social mold and standard that promoted unity, order, and peace.

- **The Qin Dynasty** was the first dynasty of Imperial China, lasting from 221 to 206 BC. Named for its heartland in Qin state (modern Gansu and Shaanxi), the dynasty was founded by Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor of Qin. The strength of the Qin state was greatly increased by the Legalist reforms of Shang Yang in the fourth century BC, during the Warring States period. In the mid and late third century BC, the Qin state carried out a series of swift conquests, first ending the powerless Zhou dynasty and eventually conquering the other six of the Seven Warring States.

The Qin sought to create a state unified by structured centralized political power and a large military supported by a stable economy. The central government moved to undercut aristocrats and landowners to gain direct administrative control over the peasantry, who comprised the overwhelming majority of the population and labor force. This allowed ambitious projects involving three hundred thousand peasants and convicts, such as connecting walls along the northern border, eventually developing into the Great Wall of China, and a massive new national road system, as well as the city-sized Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor guarded by the life-sized Terracotta Army.

The Qin introduced a range of reforms such as standardized currency, weights, measures and a uniform system of writing, which aimed to unify the state and promote commerce. Additionally, its military used the most recent weaponry, transportation and tactics, though the government was heavy-handedly bureaucratic. Han Confucians portrayed the legalistic Qin dynasty as a monolithic tyranny, notably citing a purge known as the burning of books and burying of scholars although some modern scholars dispute the veracity of these accounts.

- **The Han Dynasty** was the second imperial dynasty of China (202 BCE – 220 CE), established by the rebel leader Liu Bang and ruled by the House of Liu. Preceded by the short-lived Qin dynasty (221–206 BCE) and a warring interregnum known as the Chu–Han contention (206–202 BCE), it was briefly interrupted by the Xin

dynasty (9–23 CE) established by the usurping regent Wang Mang, and was separated into two periods—the Western Han (202 BC–9 CE) and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE)—before being succeeded by the Three Kingdoms period (220–280 CE). Spanning over four centuries, the Han dynasty is considered a golden age in Chinese history, and influenced the identity of the Chinese civilization ever since. Modern China's majority ethnic group refers to themselves as the "Han Chinese", the Sinitic language is known as "Han language", and the written Chinese is referred to as "Han characters".

The emperor was at the pinnacle of Han society. He presided over the Han government but shared power with both the nobility and appointed ministers who came largely from the scholarly gentry class. The Han Empire was divided into areas directly controlled by the central government using an innovation inherited from the Qin known as commanderies, and a number of semi-autonomous kingdoms. These kingdoms gradually lost all vestiges of their independence, particularly following the Rebellion of the Seven States. From the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) onward, the Chinese court officially sponsored Confucianism in education and court politics. This policy endured until the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1912 CE.

The Han dynasty saw an age of economic prosperity and witnessed a significant growth of the money economy first established during the Zhou dynasty (c. 1050–256 BCE). The coinage issued by the central government mint in 119 BCE remained the standard coinage of China until the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). The period saw a number of limited institutional innovations. To finance its military campaigns and the settlement of newly conquered frontier territories, the Han government nationalized the private salt and iron industries in 117 BCE, but these government monopolies were repealed during the Eastern Han dynasty. Science and technology during the Han period saw significant advances, including the process of papermaking, the nautical steering ship rudder, the use of negative numbers in mathematics, the raised-relief map, the hydraulic-powered armillary sphere for astronomy, and a seismometer employing an inverted pendulum that could be used to discern the cardinal direction of distant earthquakes.

The Xiongnu, a nomadic steppe confederation, defeated the Han in 200 BCE and forced the Han to submit as a de facto inferior and vassal partner for several decades, but continued their military raids on the Han borders. Emperor Wu launched several military campaigns against them. The ultimate Han victory in these wars eventually forced the Xiongnu to accept vassal status as Han tributaries. These campaigns expanded Han sovereignty and control into the Tarim Basin of Central Asia, divided the Xiongnu into two separate confederations, and helped establish the vast trade network known as the Silk Road, which reached as far as the Mediterranean world. The territories north of Han's borders were quickly overrun by the nomadic Xianbei confederation. Emperor Wu also launched successful military expeditions in the south, annexing Nanyue in 111 BCE and Dian in 109 BCE, and in the Korean Peninsula where the Xuantu and Lelang Commanderies were established in 108 BCE. After 92 CE, the palace eunuchs increasingly involved themselves in court politics, engaging in violent power struggles between the various consort clans of the empresses and empresses dowager, causing the Han's ultimate downfall. Imperial authority was also seriously challenged by large Daoist religious societies which instigated the Yellow Turban Rebellion and the Five Pecks of Rice Rebellion. Following the death of Emperor Ling (r. 168–189 CE), the palace eunuchs suffered wholesale massacre by military officers, allowing members of the aristocracy and military to become warlords and divide the empire.

- **Zoroastrianism** is one of the world's oldest continuously practiced religions, based on the teachings of the Iranian-speaking prophet Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism has a dualistic cosmology of good and evil and an eschatology, predicting the ultimate conquest of evil. With possible roots dating back to the Second Millennium BCE, Zoroastrianism enters written history in the 5th century BCE. It served as the state religion of the ancient Iranian empires for more than a millennium, from around 600 BCE to 650 CE, but declined from the 7th century CE onwards following the Muslim conquest of Persia of 633–654 CE and subsequent persecution of the Zoroastrian people.

Zoroastrianism exalts an uncreated and benevolent deity of wisdom, Ahura Mazda, as its supreme being. The unique historical features of Zoroastrianism, such as its monotheism, messianism, judgment after death, heaven and hell, and free will may have influenced other religious and philosophical systems,

including Second-Temple Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Gnosticism, and even Buddhism. Zoroastrianism is also thought to have been profoundly influential on the Persian Empire during the Classical Era—most notably the state's mission to provide for the good of the public for the sake of being Good.

- **Second-Temple Judaism** is Judaism between the construction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, c. 515 BCE, and its destruction by the Romans in 70 CE. The development of the Hebrew Bible canon, the synagogue, Jewish apocalyptic expectations for the future, and the rise of Christianity can all be traced to the Second Temple period. The period of the First Temple ended in 586 BCE when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple of Solomon, and deported the elite of the population to Babylon (the "Babylonian exile"). In 539 BCE Babylon itself fell to the Persian conqueror Cyrus, and in 538 BCE the exiles were permitted to return to Yehud medinata, as the Persian province of Judah was known.

Early Christianity emerged within Second Temple Judaism during the 1st century, the key difference being the Christian belief that Jesus was the resurrected Jewish Messiah. The first Christians (the disciples or followers of Jesus) were essentially all ethnically Jewish or Jewish proselytes. In other words, Jesus was Jewish, preached to the Jewish people and called from them his first disciples. Jewish Christians regarded "Christianity" as an affirmation of every aspect of contemporary Judaism, with the addition of one extra belief — that Jesus was the Messiah. The doctrines of the apostles of Jesus brought the Early Church into conflict with some Jewish religious authorities (Acts records dispute over the resurrection of the dead, which was rejected by the Sadducees, see also Persecution of Christians in the New Testament), and possibly later led to Christians' expulsion from synagogues.

- **Christianity** is an Abrahamic monotheistic religion based on the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Its adherents, known as Christians, believe that Jesus is the Christ, whose coming as the Messiah was prophesied in the Hebrew Bible, called the Old Testament in Christianity, and chronicled in the New Testament. Christianity began as a Second Temple Judaic sect in the 1st century in the Roman province of Judea. Jesus' apostles and their followers spread around the Levant, Europe, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Transcaucasia, Egypt, and Ethiopia, despite initial persecution. It soon attracted gentile God-fearers, which led to a departure from Jewish customs, and, after the Fall of Jerusalem, CE 70 which ended the Temple-based Judaism, Christianity slowly separated from Judaism. Emperor Constantine the Great decriminalized Christianity in the Roman Empire by the Edict of Milan (313 CE), later convening the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) where Early Christianity was consolidated into what would become the State church of the Roman Empire (380 CE).

With the decline and fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the papacy became a political player, first visible in Pope Leo's diplomatic dealings with Huns and Vandals. The church also entered into a long period of missionary activity and expansion among the various tribes. While Arianists instituted the death penalty for practicing pagans (see the Massacre of Verden, for example), what would later become Catholicism also spread among the Hungarians, the Germanic, the Celtic, the Baltic and some Slavic peoples.

Christianity succeeded in spreading largely because it required potential converts to make a decision that was exclusive and final. If they chose to join the church, they had to abandon all previous religious commitments and associations. For the Christian faith, it was all or nothing, so as it fed its own growth, it devoured the competition. Even though early Christianity was a grassroots movement, throughout its first three centuries it recognized fully the importance of converting influential supporters. At the beginning, this simply meant converting an adult male who was head of his household—the *paterfamilias*. In the Roman world, the *paterfamilias* chose the family's religion. If you converted him, you got his wife, children and slaves in the package. Even if it was a small family—a husband, wife and two children—the conversion of one person meant the conversion of four. That multiplier effect went a long way toward achieving the needed 3 percent annual growth rate. This same practice also applied to the state level where the focus became the conversion of local leaders, and, inevitably, their subjects over time.