



**Hum101**

**Name: Shihab Muhtasim (21301610)**

**Section: 02**

**Midterm Examination**

**Answer to question 2**

A monarchical government system is a form of ruling system where a single monarch or a ruler holds supreme power over a certain region he can rule and administer using his authority. The Assyrian Empire ruled with a monarchical government system in the Mesopotamian civilization from around 2000 BCE to 609 BCE. Another monarchical government in Mesopotamia was Persia which came in after the Assyrian empire from 550 BCE to 330 BCE. One of the other mentionable monarchical systems was in Vedic India which emerged after the Indus Valley Civilization. In the case of non-monarchical governments, there was a Greek city called Athens, which was one of the first known democratic systems where direct democracy was applied. Lastly, there was Rome which was a mixed constitution of different government systems which many consider to be the best of all. *This essay aims to conduct a comparative analysis of the monarchical governance system exploring the civilization of ancient Mesopotamia through the Assyrian and Persian empires and non-monarchical governance systems through the lens of ancient Athens and the Roman Empire. Firstly, It will focus on the historical conditions behind the engagement of monarchical and non-monarchical systems in the above-mentioned empires highlighting the religious and cultural influence along with the geographical and socio-political conditions. Secondly, the essay will explore the governance systems by examining their administrative, legal, and military structures. Furthermore, it will discuss the economic conditions and foreign relations of the mentioned empires. Lastly, it will delve into the position of women and explain the gender dynamics in both systems of governance.*

Firstly, an analysis of the historical and geographical conditions along with the influence of religion and culture can draw a comparison based on the reasons behind the emergence of the different government systems. In the case of Mesopotamia, its geographical location was between the Tigris and Euphrates

rivers which provided fertile land for agriculture and a good ecosystem for other resources like fishing, trading and many more which attracted a diverse population to Mesopotamia (Lees, 1952). Consequently, It was important to establish a monarchical system to control a very diverse population which is why the Assyria and Persian empires had this form of government. In the Assyrian empire, the whole population was forced to assimilate into a single culture for easier governance. However, about the Persian empire, Bang (2012) says “Subject peoples were integrated as opposed to assimilated, with ideological emphasis placed upon brotherhood and a shared political superstructure, but by no means uniformity or equality.” It means that even though the Persian empire did not force assimilation, there was still a social hierarchy in the form of a Monarchical government as the huge population needed order and stability. Moreover, in the Sumerian city-states, the temples acted as administrative hubs and religion formed the social order of hierarchy. Subsequently, Mesopotamians viewed kingship as an integral part of their religious beliefs as they were regarded as the god's estate managers (Black, 2009). In fact, In a monarchical system, the monarch is seen as someone chosen by the divine which also legitimates the authority of the king. According to Bang (2012), “The royal titles present the kings as rulers of all lands and people, chosen by divine power to extend order and subjugate chaos.” The titles of Assyrian and Persian kings such as ‘viceroy of divine Assur’, and ‘appointee of divine Enlil’ reflect the divine nature of kingship in the Monarchical government systems. Hence, the religious beliefs of the people of Mesopotamia had a significant influence in justifying the Assyrian and Persian kings as their monarchs. Furthermore, the Mesopotamian culture involved social hierarchy with the king at the top with supreme authority and nobles, priests, scribes, merchants, artisans, and farmers along the hierarchy with slaves at the bottom (Black, 2009). Again, Sumer had different city-states with different kings having the authority

over the area which had a significant influence in forming the Assyrian and Persian empires with a Monarchical government system with a hierarchy of power of the rulers. On the other hand, the establishment of non-monarchical government systems like of the People's Republic of the Roman Empire and the *demokratia* of ancient Athens was due to the cultural, socio-political, and geographical influence of these regions. Firstly, the people of Athens were broken down into territorial units called 'polis' which means citizen-state where it requires the citizens to 'rule and be ruled according to law'. Additionally, they had a direct democracy called *demokratia*, where eligible citizens could directly impact laws and decisions by participating in governance (Black, 2009). Consequently, this nature of active participation and involvement in governance drove the Athenian people to accept this non-monarchical government. Secondly, Greece's waterways, mountains, and natural barriers kept external empires from taking control over Athens. Meanwhile, according to Black (2009), the Greeks formed a community that was united by their shared stories and common factors of culture such as common factors such as language, religion, mythology etc rather than a sacred monarch. Additionally, In Athens, a high portion of people were middle-class merchants involved in trade and craft manufacture, but they were also thinkers who didn't want to give up their shared authority and social responsibility to any one king or monarch. As a result, they had a sense of belongingness to their community which pushed them towards democracy rather than establishing a monarchical system. Furthermore, according to Black (2009), Athens was renowned for its private life where people had the freedom to express any thought they wanted. This cultural nature of Athens was suitable for democracy and not monarchy. Nonetheless, The Roman Empire operated under a republican form of government where people elected representatives to the position of power of management and looking after their wellbeing. It had a mixed government system composed of monarchy, aristocracy,

and democracy which according to Polybius was the best form of constitution as it created a balance between all the forms of government (Black, 2009). Moreover, the Romans had a tradition of completing civic duties and public service which was one of the cultural and social factors that led to the republican Roman Empire. Cicero believed that no social relationship is more serious or dear than that which binds each of us to the *res publica* or the state (Black, 2009). Hence, the Romans had an immense sense of patriotism towards their community which kept them from adopting a monarchial system. As mentioned by Black(2009), “Polybius thought Rome unique because her constitution had developed naturally without external interventions” (Black, 2009). Evidently, In Rome, the diversity of people was not like Mesopotamia and they had a Roman unity which allowed the state to have their government system evolve over time without external monarchs taking over them. Hence, the monarchial governments were mostly formed in states where it lacked unity and had a diversity of people whereas it was more like to be a system with the participation of the population in states where there was a community and ethnic unity. However, geographical locations or military strength played a significant role in establishing a monarchical system or preventing any monarch from taking control. In essence, different parts of the ancient world explored various ideas of governance systems shaped due to different historical, cultural, and geographical factors.

To get proper insights into how power was exercised, it is necessary to examine the administrative structures and military impact of the mentioned empires. In the case of monarchial government, According to Bang (2012), in the Assyrian state that followed the monarchial government system, the “imperial foreign policy was directed from the capital” portraying the significant control of the monarch over the empire which shows a top-down approach in terms of governing where the

king and his inner circle was at the top of power. Additionally, whenever there was an important decision to be taken on a local level, the officials had to get clearance from the court to proceed with the actions signifying how strong control the monarch had. Furthermore, they had “a strict set of guidelines and a clear structure of command” for dealing with other nations which portrays that the monarchical government had organized system implementation for better governance. Moreover, in order to manage this huge territory both empires followed a divide and rule method where in Assyria they gave responsibilities to provincial governors and local powerful leaders such as “the Assyrian nobility, the governors, the priesthood, and the army” who took oaths to be loyal to the king. Similarly, In the Persian empire, they had divisions made through a chain of hierarchy with the king at the top and then came the court, satraps who would look after provinces and sub-satraps to govern in certain areas of the provinces (Farazmahmand, 1998). Furthermore, In order to spread dominance and strength, the monarch of Assyria used art and architectural improvements. Additionally, the king had his influence propagated through treaties with local leaders and foreign agents. The treaties were certain agreements and promises to ensure the powerful local leaders were loyal to the king which would eventually lead to the expansion of his control since the people who followed the local leaders would be under the king’s influence as well. However, the empire made sure to foster rivalries among different states within the empire to prevent them from unifying against the monarch ruling. Despite having control over significant matters in the monarchical government system, both Assyria and Persian empires allowed civil employees and military to have authority in the form of being decentralized on a local level which signifies that the military had significant control over the empire. As mentioned by Bang (2012) “a unifying element in all such strategies was the demonstration of military force” portrays that these empires used military power not just to protect the empire but also to unify

the people of the empire as they felt more connected through a shared identity by the protection provided by the military. Hence, the administrative structure played a significant role in the monarchical government system because without proper management and monopolizing the monarch would not have been able to take control of the vast empire with a diverse population. On the other hand, In non-monarchical systems such as Athens, the administrative structure of democracy was formed by the active participation of citizens in decision-making through central institutions like the assembly where every citizen except the slaves and women had a right to attend and directly participate in the governance. Moreover, there was an administrative body known as the Council of 500 which was a steering committee to manage the assembly where 50 members were chosen randomly from each of the ten tribes of Athens in rotation. Additionally, there were People's courts with large juries with up to 6000 members selected from the citizens with the responsibility for hearing lawsuits (Black, 2009). Hence, as the chosen jury and council members served for a limited time, it let other citizens take part in governance serving the purpose of democracy. Additionally, the collaborative governance management between the council and assembly was essential for the functioning of the democracy of Athens properly. According to Pritchard (2010), Athenians really beefed up their democracy by giving people more say in public matters, how justice was handled, and keeping an eye on officials. Consequently, this move towards more public involvement helped strengthen Athenian democracy. The big involvement of citizens made them feel like they owned the city-state and were responsible for how it was run. Accordingly, in the Athenian democracy citizens are the ones ruling the state rather than some individuals like in a monarchical system. Here the citizens have more freedom and right to participate in governance, whereas in Monarchical systems the states are in complete control of the monarch and his officials. Moreover, they

served justice through institutions like juries against crime whereas, in the monarchical system, justice was served through legal codes outlined by the king which was served by the local officials. Even though in monarchical empires the military armed with soldiers was mostly used as a form of dominance, the Athenian navy was important for defending Athens against external threats as the state's power was the navy manned by common people. Thus, *demokracia* shows simplicity in governance, but Monarchical systems portray a wide range of management and politics. Similar to Athens, the Roman Republic was a mixed constitution that had assemblies such as the 'Comitia Centuriata and the Comitia Tributa' with Roman citizens who had the right to participate in politics. These citizens elected magistrates from the elites of Rome as their representatives for governance where a senate composed of former executive and judicial officials acted as advisors to the elected magistrates (Black, 2009). Being a mixed constitution, there are similarities between the Roman Republic to both democracy, where citizens can have a say; as well as to the monarchical system with individuals holding the power over states. Furthermore, the Roman military was well structured with the division of legions of around 5000 soldiers. It was a disciplined army that played an important role in the expansion of the Roman Republic to the empire. The military impact of the Roman empire can be compared with the Assyrian army where military strength played a significant role in spreading dominance. Therefore, factors like administration, legislation, military, and citizen participation in a governance system are shaped by the circumstances and conditions of certain cultures and locations as well as the community of the controllers.

Exploring the trading systems and foreign relations of Persia and Rome sheds light on how these empires under different government systems maintained their



economy and had an impact on other societies. One of the key reasons for the expansion of the Roman empire was the colonization of other regions and the extraction of wealth and resources. They extracted wealth and resources from their conquered territories not only for economic gain but also for funding the government and military (Black, 2009). In 88 when Asia which was the richest in terms of resources had lost to the Romans, Sulla the general of Rome took resources from the temples of Rome (Barlow, 1980). This indicates that the Roman government was highly dependent on extracting resources from other countries so when they couldn't take wealth from them they had to run the empire using their sacred resources. Moreover, Cicero was a prominent figure in the Roman economy as he helped expand the economy of Rome. According to (RAUH, 1986), In around 45 BC Tullius owed Cicero money and he had financial interactions with figures such as Caesar, L. Egnatius Rufus, and many more. Moreover, Concordia Ordinum by Cicero enhanced the economy as it brought together the "political (senatorial) and commercial ('knightly') upper classes" (Black, 2009). This encouraged a powerful group to be formed by aligning the interests of both parties and thus expanding the economy facilitating trade and commerce. Hence, we can see significant progress in the economy in non-monarchial empires like Rome with certain individuals, the military, and the government playing important roles. However, In the Persian empire, merchant's sons most likely turned out to be merchants as well inheriting the resources holding most of the capital of Persia for which they had great importance in the economy (Gilbar, 1979). Hence, they held a lot of financial resources for which the economy depended on them. Moreover, 33 percent of the total exports were sent to Asia whereas 24 percent was imported by Russia which portrays a big reliability of the economy in export to these two states (Gilbar, 1979). Furthermore, 85 percent of the economy was in agriculture production with the active participation of the population with the remaining

sectors being service and handcrafted goods (Gilbar, 1979). Hence, in monarchical empires like Persia, the economy depended on the active population and their participation in the economy, unlike the Roman Empire where they mostly depended on colonization. The government usually imposed extreme taxation on the citizens of Persia to run the economy. Hence, the Persian empire was mostly dependent in terms of economic sustainability on the population whereas non-monarchical Rome was dependent on outside nations and military strength.

Delving into the position of women and the gender dynamics in both government systems using the example of Vedic India, which maintained the monarchical government structure and the non-monarchical system through the example of ancient Athens, opens doors for analyzing the impact of these ruling systems on women and the gender dynamics that existed. According to Hughes (1995), Athens was a phallocratic society where male citizens had dominance and authority over women. Additionally, Athens was known for its misogyny towards women as they were looked down upon. Even though they could get educated, it was only for the purpose they were thought to be good for which was childbearing. "In ancient Athens, women in wealthy families were confined inside their homes all their lives" stated by Hughes (1995) expresses how women were restricted from freedom and dominated by men. In fact, due to rules and laws made by men like Aristotle, women were treated like slaves mostly forced into prostitution for the benefit of Athens as they wanted to attract sailors and merchants to their port. Women like Neaera mentioned by (Hughes, 1995) provide a glimpse of how Athens being a democratic state, dominated half of its citizens like most of the Monarchical systems. An interpretation of this situation of women could be because of how the male citizens felt powerful to be able to participate in the law and enforce their authority and power on women. However, the influence of intellects

like Aristotle and Cicero played a significant role in increasing the dominance. Similar to Athens, in monarchical governance empires like Vedic India formed by the Ariyans and pre-existing Indians with the king as the central figure of governance, women were treated as subjects to male figures as described in the Laws of Manu mentioned by Hughes (1995) which was the foundation of social, moral, and legal codes of governing Vedic India. The laws of Manu enforce that a female is subject to male figures such as her father, husband, and sons throughout her life. Moreover, widows were expected to keep from remarrying after their husbands died and those without sons were seen as servants to their in-laws. Additionally, women throughout their lives had no property rights as any wealth they obtained would go to the male figures in their lives. Furthermore, some religious texts such as Sita from Ramayan influenced the belief of women being obedient and loyal to their husbands. In contrast to that, traditional tales like Carpenter's Wife portray how society took it as deceitful and immoral when women did not meet the expectations of men. Hence, in societies like Vedic India, where religion was one of the biggest driving forces, women's dominance in religious beliefs had a major impact. Furthermore, in most monarchical systems, the administrative structures were operated by men even in Vedic India where it was the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and Dalits (Patnaik, 2017). Hence, the political power dynamics naturally turned into the subordination of women. Additionally, limiting the participation of women in certain activities ensures no threat to the male figures in terms of monarchical governance which could be another reason why they were marginalized. Even in non-monarchical governments like Athens, male dominance and establishment of their authority exploited women from freedom.

In conclusion, this essay explores the monarchical and non-monarchical government systems by drawing a comparative analysis between empires like Assyria, Persia, Vedic India, Athens, and Rome. Moreover, it provides a broad analysis of how the empires formed and the reasons behind the emergence of the ruling systems in these empires based on several factors. Moreover, it draws comparisons between the operations, economic conditions, and gender dynamics of these systems using the examples of the mentioned empires leaving us with the analysis of the two different societies of the ancient world.

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