

# Unit 2: Organization and Reorganization of Human Societies, c. 800 B.C.E. to c. 600 C.E.

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## Stearns, Chapters 2, 3, 4 & 5

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### **Key Concept 2.1 The Development and Codification of Religious and Cultural Traditions**

As states and empires increased in size and contacts between regions multiplied, religious and cultural systems were transformed. Religions and belief systems provided a bond among the people and an ethical code to live by. These shared beliefs also influenced and reinforced political, economic and occupational stratification. Religious and political authority often merged as rulers, some considered divine, used religion, along with military and legal structures, to justify their rule and ensure its continuation. Religions and belief systems could also generate conflict, partly because beliefs and practices varied greatly within and among societies.

*How did religions help strengthen political, economic, and cultural ties within societies?*

*How did religions promote a sense of unity?*

#### **I. Codifications and further developments of existing religious traditions provided a bond among the people and an ethical code to live by.**

- A. The association of monotheism with Judaism was further developed with the codification of the Hebrew Scriptures, which also showed reflected the influence of Mesopotamian cultural and legal traditions. The Assyrian, Babylonian and Roman empires conquered various Jewish states at different points in time. These conquests contributed to the growth of Jewish diaspora communities around the Mediterranean and Middle East.
- B. The core beliefs outlined in the Sanskrit scriptures formed the basis of the Vedic religions—often known as Hinduisms— which contributed to the development of the social and political roles of a caste system and in the importance of multiple manifestations of Brahma to promote teachings about reincarnation.

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Judaism?*

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Hinduism(s)?*

## **II. New belief systems and cultural traditions emerged and spread, often asserting universal truths.**

- A. The core beliefs preached by the historic Buddha and recorded by his followers into sutras and other scriptures were, in part, a reaction to the Vedic beliefs and rituals dominant in South Asia. Buddhism changed over time as it spread throughout Asia, first through the support of the Mauryan Emperor Asoka, and then through the efforts of missionaries and merchants and the establishment of educational institutions to promote its core teachings.
- B. Confucianism's core beliefs and writings originated in the writings and lessons of Confucius and were elaborated by key disciples who sought to promote social harmony by outlining proper rituals and social relationships for all people in China including the rulers.

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Buddhism?*

*How and where did Buddhism spread by 600 CE?*

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Confucianism?*

- C. In the major Daoist writings (such as the *Daodejing*), the core belief of balance between humans and nature assumed that the Chinese political system would be altered indirectly. Daoism also influenced the development of Chinese culture. (such as medical theories and practices, poetry, metallurgy or architecture)
- D. The core beliefs preached by Jesus of Nazareth, and later recorded by his disciples, drew on the basic monotheism of Judaism, and initially rejected Roman and Hellenistic influences. Despite initial Roman imperial hostility, Christianity spread through the efforts of missionaries and merchants through many parts of Afro-Eurasia, and eventually gained Roman imperial support by the time of the emperor Constantine.
- E. The core ideas in Greco-Roman philosophy and science emphasized logic, empirical observation and the nature of political power and hierarchy.

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Daoism?*

*What are the characteristics and core teachings of Christianity?*

*How and where did Christianity spread by 600 CE?*

*What are the main characteristics of Greco-Roman philosophy and science?*

## **III. Belief systems affected gender roles. (such as Buddhism's encouragement of a monastic life and Confucianism's emphasis on filial piety)**

## **IV. Other religious and cultural traditions continued parallel to the codified, written belief systems in core civilizations.**

- A. Shamanism and animism continued to shape the lives of people within and outside of core civilizations, because of their daily reliance on the natural world.

- B. Ancestor veneration persisted in many regions. (such as in Africa, the Mediterranean region, East Asia or the Andean areas)

*How did religions affect gender roles in their respective societies?*

*What other religious and cultural traditions were common by 600 CE?*

*How did humans' reliance on the natural world influence religion?*

*How did humans relate to their deceased ancestors?*

## **V. Artistic expressions, including literature and drama, architecture, and sculpture, show distinctive cultural developments.**

- A. Literature and drama acquired distinctive forms (such as Greek tragedy or Indian epics) that influenced artistic developments in neighboring regions and in later time periods. (such as in Athens, Persia or South Asia)
- B. Distinctive architectural styles can be seen in buildings. (such as those in India, Greece, the Roman empire, and Mesoamerica)
- C. The convergence of Greco-Roman culture and Buddhist beliefs affected the development of unique sculptural developments.

*How did art and culture develop to 600 CE?*

*What literary works influenced later eras?*

*How did different societies' architectural styles develop?*

*What examples of syncretism reflect the Classical Era to 600 CE?*

## **Key Concept 2.2 The Development of States and Empires**

As the early states and empires grew in number, size and population, they frequently competed for resources and came into conflict with one another. In quest of land, wealth, and security, some empires expanded dramatically. In doing so, they built powerful military machines and administrative institutions that were capable of organizing human activities over long distances, and they created new groups of military and political elites to manage their affairs. As these empires expanded their boundaries, they also faced the need to develop policies and procedures to govern their relations with ethnically and culturally diverse populations: sometimes to integrate them within an imperial society and sometimes to exclude them. In some cases, these empires became victims of their own successes. By expanding boundaries too far, they created political, cultural and administrative difficulties that they could not manage. They also experienced environmental, social and economic problems when they over-exploited their lands and subjects and permitted excessive wealth to concentrate in the hands of privileged classes.

**I. The number and size of imperial societies grew dramatically by imposing political unity on areas where there had previously been competing states. NOTE:**

Students should know the location and names of the key states and empires below.

- A. Southwest Asia: Persian Empires (such as Achaemenid, Parthian or Sassanid)
- B. East Asia: Qin and Han dynasties
- C. South Asia: Maurya and Gupta Empires
- D. Mediterranean region: Phoenicia and its colonies, Greek city-states and colonies, and Hellenistic and Roman Empires
- E. Mesoamerica: Teotihuacan, Maya city states
- F. Andean South America: Moche

*What is an “empire,” and what were empires’ common characteristics during the Classical Era?*

*How did the number & size of Classical empires compare to the Ancient Era?*

*What were the most influential of the Classical Era empires?*

**II. Empires and states developed new techniques of imperial administration based, in part, on the success of earlier political forms.**

- A. In order to organize their subjects the rulers created administrative institutions including centralized governments, elaborate legal systems, and bureaucracies. (such as in China, Persia, Rome or South Asia )
- B. Imperial governments projected military power over larger areas using a variety of techniques including: diplomacy; developing supply lines; building fortifications, defensive walls, and roads; and drawing new groups of military officers and soldiers from the local populations or conquered peoples.
- C. Much of the success of empires rested on their promotion of trade and economic integration by building and maintaining roads and issuing currencies.

*What techniques did Classical empires create to administer their territories?*

*What new political methods were created in order to rule the larger empires in the Classical Era?*

*How did imperial governments let their population know that the government was “in charge?”*

*What role did trade play in creating and maintaining empires?*

**III. Unique social and economic dimensions developed in imperial societies in Afro-Eurasia and the Americas.**

- A. Cities served as centers of trade, public performance of religious rituals, and political administration for states and empires (such as Persepolis, Chang’an, Pataliputra, Athens, Carthage, Rome, Alexandria, Constantinople or Teotihuacan.)

- B. The social structures of all empires displayed hierarchies that included cultivators, laborers, slaves, artisans, merchants, elites or caste groups.
- C. Imperial societies relied on a range of methods to maintain the production of food and provide rewards for the loyalty of the elites including corvée, slavery, rents and tributes, peasant communities and family and household production.
- D. Patriarchy continued to shape gender and family relations in all imperial societies of this period.

*What unique social and economic characteristics existed in empires?*

*What function did imperial cities perform?*

*What social classes and occupations were common in empires?*

*What labor systems provided the workers for Classical Empires?*

*Describe the gender and family structures of Classical Era empires.*

**IV. The Roman, Han, Persian, Mauryan, and Gupta empires created political, cultural, and administrative difficulties that they could not manage, which eventually led to their decline, collapse and transformation into successor empires or states.**

- A. Through excessive mobilization of resources, imperial governments caused environmental damage (such as deforestation, desertification, soil erosion or silted rivers) and generated social tensions and economic difficulties by concentrating too much wealth in the hands of elites.
- B. External problems resulted from security issues along their frontiers, including the threat of invasions. (such as between Han China and Xiongnu; Gupta and the White Huns; or between Romans, and their northern and eastern neighbors)

*What caused Classical Empires to decline, collapse, or transform into something else?*

*What were the environmental and social weaknesses of Classical Empires?*

*What external weaknesses contributed to the end of Classical Empires?*

## **Key Concept 2.3 Emergence of Trans-regional Networks of Communication and Exchange**

With the organization of large-scale empires, the volume of long-distance trade increased dramatically. Much of this trade resulted from the demand for raw materials and luxury goods. Land and water routes linked many regions of the Eastern Hemisphere, while somewhat later separate networks connected the peoples and societies of the Americas. Exchanges of people, technology, religious and cultural beliefs, food crops, domesticated animals and disease pathogens developed alongside the trade in goods across far-flung networks of communication and exchange.

*How did Classical era trade networks compare to Ancient era networks?*

*What forces contributed to the changes between the two eras?*

*What was commonly traded along these trade networks?*

### **I. Land and water routes became the basis for trans-regional trade, communication and exchange networks in the Eastern Hemisphere, while somewhat later separate networks connected the peoples and societies of the Americas.**

You should know how factors including the climate and location of the routes, the typical trade goods, and the ethnicity of people involved shaped the distinctive features of the following trade routes.

- A. Eurasian Silk Roads
- B. Trans-Saharan caravan routes
- C. Indian Ocean sea lanes
- D. Mediterranean sea lanes

*How did trade & communication networks develop by 600 CE?*

### **II. New technologies facilitated long-distance communication and exchange.**

- A. New technologies (such as yokes, saddles or stirrups) permitted the use of domesticated pack animals (such as horses, oxen, llamas or camels) to transport goods across longer routes.
- B. Innovations in maritime technologies (such as the lateen sail or dhow ships) as well as advanced knowledge of the monsoon winds stimulated exchanges along maritime routes from East Africa to East Asia.

*What technologies enabled long-distance overland and maritime trade?*

### **III. Alongside the trade in goods, exchanges of people, technology, religious and cultural beliefs, food crops, domesticated animals and disease pathogens developed across far-flung networks of communication and exchange.**

- A. The spread of crops, including rice and cotton from South Asia to the Middle East, encouraged changes in farming and irrigation techniques. (such as the development of the qanat system)
- B. The spread of disease pathogens diminished urban populations and contributed to the decline of some empires (such as Rome or China)

C. Religious and cultural traditions were transformed as they spread including Chinese culture, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism.

*Besides the physical goods, what intangibles also traveled along trade networks?*

*What crops spread along Classical Era trade networks?*

*What effects did diseases have on Classical empires?*

*What was the relationship between trade networks and religions?*

### **Comparative Issues to think about:**

- ❖ Compare major religious and philosophical systems including some underlying similarities in cementing a social hierarchy, e.g., Hinduism contrasted with Confucianism.
- ❖ Compare the role of women in different belief systems – Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, and Hinduism.
- ❖ Understand how and why the collapse of empire was more severe in Western Europe than it was in the eastern Mediterranean or in China.
- ❖ Compare the caste system to other systems of social inequality devised by early and Classical civilizations, including slavery.
- ❖ Compare the development of traditions and institutions in major civilizations e.g., Indian, Chinese, and Greek.
- ❖ Describe interregional trading systems, e.g., the Indian Ocean trade.

## IDENTIFICATIONS

**Confucius:** major Chinese philosopher born in 6th century B.C.E.; sayings collected in *Analects*; philosophy based on the need for restoration of social order through the role of superior men.

**Laozi (also spelled Lao Zi, Lao Tzu, or Lao Tse):** Chinese Daoist philosopher; taught that governments were of secondary importance and recommended retreat from society into nature.

**Daoism:** philosophy associated with Laozi; individual should seek alignment with Dao or cosmic force.

**Qin (pronounced chin):** dynasty (221–207 B.C.E.) founded at the end of the Warring States period.

**Shi Huangdi:** first emperor of the Qin (China); founder of Qin dynasty through conquest and consolidation of the warring states.

**Legalism:** Chinese school of political philosophy that stressed the need for the absolute power of the emperor enforced through strict application of laws.

**Great Wall:** Chinese defensive fortification built to keep out northern nomadic invaders; began during the reign of Shi Huangdi. Significant example of early government coordinated action

**Han:** dynasty succeeding the Qin ruled from 202 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.

**Himalayan Mountains:** region marking the northern border of the Indian subcontinent.

**The Vedas (Rig Veda most well-known):** ancient scriptures or revelation (Shruti) of the Indo-Aryans which become part of the Hindu teachings. **Shiva and Vishnu:** the most important Hindu deities.

**Sanskrit:** the classical and sacred Indian language.

**Varnas:** the categories organizing Indian society into a functional hierarchy.

**Untouchables:** lowest caste in Indian society; performed tasks that were considered polluting (street sweeping, removal of human waste, tanning).

**Upanishads:** later books of the Vedas; combined sophisticated and sublime philosophical ideas.



**Karma:** the sum of merits accumulated by an individual; determined the caste one would be born into in the next life.

**Samsara (aka Reincarnation):** the cycle of successive rebirth of the soul according to merits earned in previous lives.

**Mahabharata (which includes the *Bhagavad Gita*), Ramayana:** Indian epics, deeply imbued with Hindu teachings.

**Buddha:** creator of a major Indian and Asian religion; born in the 6th century b.c.e.; taught that enlightenment could be achieved only by abandoning desires for earthly things.

**Nirvana:** the Buddhist state of enlightenment; a state of tranquility.

**Maurya dynasty:** established in Indian subcontinent in 4th century b.c.e. following the invasion of Alexander the Great.

**Chandragupta Maurya:** founder of the Mauryan dynasty, the first empire in the Indian subcontinent; first centralized government since Harappan civilization.

**Ashoka:** grandson of Chandragupta Maurya; extended conquests of the dynasty; converted to Buddhism and sponsored its spread throughout his empire.

**Stupas (also called Ashoka Pillars):** stone shrines built at direction of Ashoka to house relics of the Buddha; preserved Buddhist architectural forms.

**Gupta dynasty:** built an empire in the 3rd century c.e. that included all but southern Indian regions; less centralized than Mauryan Empire.

**Cyrus the Great:** (c. 576 or 590–529 b.c.e.); founded Persian Empire by 550 b.c.e.; successor state to Mesopotamian empires.

**Zoroastrianism:** Persian religion that saw material existence as a battle between the forces of good and evil; stressed the importance of moral choice; a last judgment decided the eternal fate of each person.

**Hellenism:** culture derived from the Greek civilization that flourished between 800 and 400 b.c.e.

***Iliad* and *Odyssey*:** Greek epic poems attributed to Homer; defined relations of gods and humans that shaped Greek mythology.

**Polis:** city-state form of government typical of Greek political organization from 800 to 400 b.c.e.

**Aristotle:** Greek philosopher; teacher of Alexander; taught that knowledge was based upon observation of phenomena in material world.

**Stoics:** Hellenistic philosophers; they emphasized inner moral independence cultivated by strict discipline of the body and personal bravery.

**Sophocles:** Greek writer of tragedies; author of *Oedipus Rex*.

**Socrates:** Athenian philosopher of late 5th century b.c.e.; condemned to death for “corrupting” minds of Athenian young; usually seen as the father of western philosophy.

**Direct democracy:** literally, rule of the people—in Athens it meant all free male citizens; all decisions emanated from the popular assembly without intermediation of elected representatives.

**Pericles:** Athenian political leader during 5th century b.c.e.; guided development of Athenian Empire.

**Olympic games:** one of the pan-Hellenic rituals observed by all Greek city-states; involved athletic competitions and ritual celebrations.

**Persian Wars:** 5th century b.c.e. wars between the Persian Empire and Greek city-states; Greek victories allowed Greek civilization to define identity.

**Peloponnesian War:** war from 431 to 404 b.c.e. between Athens and Sparta for domination in Greece; the Spartans won but failed to achieve political unification in Greece.

**Macedon:** kingdom of northern Greece; originally loosely organized under kings; became centralized under Philip II; conquered Greek city-states weakened from Peloponnesian War

**Philip II:** ruled Macedon from 359 to 336 b.c.e.; founder of centralized kingdom; conquered Greece.

**Alexander the Great:** (r. 336–323 b.c.e.); son and successor of Philip II; conquered Persian Empire and advanced to borders of India; attempted to combine Greek and Persian culture.

**Hellenistic culture:** culture associated with the spread of Greek influence and intermixture with other cultures as a result of Macedonian conquests.

**Consuls:** two chief executives of the Roman republic; elected annually by the assembly dominated by the aristocracy.

**Carthage:** founded by the Phoenicians in Tunisia; became a major empire in the western Mediterranean; fought the Punic wars with Rome for Mediterranean dominance; defeated and destroyed by the Romans.

**Punic Wars:** three wars (264–146 b.c.e.) between Rome and the Carthaginians; saw the transformation of Rome from a land to a sea power.

**Hannibal:** Carthaginian general during the second Punic War; invaded Italy but failed to conquer Rome.

**Republic:** the balanced political system of Rome from circa 510 to 47 b.c.e.; featured an aristocratic senate, a panel of magistrates, and popular assemblies.

**Julius Caesar:** general responsible for the conquest of Gaul; brought army back to Rome and overthrew republic; assassinated in b.c.e. by conservative senators.

**Octavian:** later took name of **Augustus**; Julius Caesar's grandnephew and adopted son; defeated conservative senators after Caesar's assassination; became first Roman emperor.

**Cicero:** conservative senator and Stoic philosopher; one of the great orators of his day.

**Vergil:** a great Roman epic poet during the Golden Age of Latin literature; author of the *Aeneid*.

**Axum:** a state in the Ethiopian highlands; received influences from the Arabian peninsula; converted to Christianity.

**Shinto :** religion of the early Japanese court; included the worship of numerous gods and spirits associated with the natural world.

**Pastoral nomads:** any of the many peoples, from the steppes of Asia that herded animals; transhumant migrants.

**Celts:** early migrants into western Europe; organized into small regional kingdoms; had mixed agricultural and hunting economies.

**Germans:** peoples from beyond the northern borders of the Roman Empire; had mixed agricultural and pastoral economies; moved into the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries c.e.

**Slavs:** Indo-European peoples who ultimately dominated much of eastern Europe; formed regional kingdoms by the 5th century c.e.

**Olmec:** cultural tradition that arose at San Lorenzo and La Venta in Mexico circa 1200 b.c.e.; featured irrigated agriculture, urbanism, elaborate religion, beginnings of calendrical and writing systems.

**Polynesia:** islands contained in a rough triangle with its points at Hawaii, New Zealand, and Easter Island.

**Yellow Turbans:** Chinese Daoists who launched a revolt in 184 c.e, promising a golden age to be brought about by divine magic.

**Sui:** dynasty succeeding the Han; grew from strong rulers in northern China; reunited China.

**Tang:** dynasty succeeding the Sui in 618 c.e

**Rajput:** regional military princes in India following the collapse of the Gupta Empire.

**Diocletian:** Roman emperor (284–305 c.e); restored later empire by improved administration and tax collection.

**Constantine:** Roman emperor (321–337 c.e); established his capital at Constantinople; used Christianity to unify the empire.

**Byzantine Empire:** eastern half of the Roman Empire; survived until 1453; retained Mediterranean, especially Hellenistic, culture.

**Mahayana:** version of Buddhism popular in China; emphasized Buddha's role as a savior.

**Bodhisattvas:** Buddhist holy men who refused advance toward *nirvana* to receive prayers of the living to help them reach holiness.

**Pope:** Bishop of Rome; head of the Catholic church in western Europe.

**Caesaropapism:** the idea of combining the power of secular government with the religious power, or making it superior to, the spiritual authority of the Church, centered first in the Byzantine Empire

**Augustine:** North African Christian theologian; made major contributions in incorporating elements of classical philosophy into Christianity. Made a saint in the Catholic church.

**Benedict:** founder of monasticism in the former western half of the Roman Empire; established the Benedictine rule in the 6th century.