

COMMON FEATURES OF CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS

Mrs. Osborn's APWH Class

The three areas of classical civilizations developed their own beliefs, lifestyles, political institutions, and social structures. However, there were important similarities among them:

- Patriarchal family structures - Like the river valley civilizations that preceded them, the classical civilization valued male authority within families, as well as in most other areas of life.
- Agricultural-based economies - Despite more sophisticated and complex job specialization, the most common occupation in all areas was farming.
- Complex governments - Because they were so large, these three civilizations had to invent new ways to keep their lands together politically. Their governments were large and complex, although they each had unique ways of governing
- Expanding trade base - Their economic systems were complex. Although they generally operated independently, trade routes connected them by both land and sea.

CLASSICAL CIVILIZATIONS

	Culture	Political Organization	Social Structure
Greece (about 800-300BCE)	<p>Most enduring influences come from Athens:</p> <p>Valued education, placed emphasis on importance of human effort, human ability to shape future events</p> <p>Interest in political theory: which form of government is best?</p> <p>Celebration of human individual achievement and the ideal human form</p> <p>Philosophy and science emphasized the use of logic</p> <p>Highly developed form of sculpture, literature, math, written language, and record keeping</p> <p>Polytheism, with gods having very human characteristics</p> <p>Cities relatively small</p> <p>Great seafaring skills, centered around Aegean, but traveling around entire Mediterranean area</p>	<p>No centralized government; concept of polis, or a fortified site that formed the centers of many city states</p> <p>Governing styles varied (Sparta a military state, Athens eventually a democracy for adult males)</p> <p>Athens government first dominated by tyrants, or strong rulers who gained power from military prowess; later came to be ruled by an assembly of free men who made political decisions.</p> <p>Both Athens and Sparta developed strong military organizations and established colonies around the Mediterranean. Sparta theoretically equal; wealth accumulation not allowed</p>	<p>Slavery widely practiced</p> <p>Men separated from women in military barracks until age 30; women had relative freedom; women in Sparta encouraged to be physically fit so as to have healthy babies; generally better treated and more equal to men than women in Athens</p> <p>Athens encouraged equality for free males, but women and slaves had little freedom. Neither group allowed to participate in polis affairs.</p> <p>Social status dependent on land holdings and cultural sophistication</p>

<p>Rome (about 500 BCE to 476 CE, although eastern half continued for another thousand years)</p>	<p>Perfection of military techniques: conquer but don't oppress; division of army into legions, emphasizing organization and rewarding military talent</p> <p>Art, literature, philosophy, science derivative from Greece</p> <p>Superb engineering and architecture techniques; extensive road, sanitation systems; monumental architecture - buildings, aqueducts, bridges</p> <p>Polytheism, derivative from Greeks, but religion not particularly important to the average Roman; Christianity developed during Empire period, but not dominant until very late</p> <p>Great city of Rome - buildings, arenas, design copied in smaller cities</p>	<p>Two eras:</p> <p>Republic - rule by aristocrats, with some power shared with assemblies; Senate most powerful, with two consuls chosen to rule, generally selected from the military</p> <p>Empire - non-hereditary emperor; technically chosen by Senate, but generally chosen by predecessor</p> <p>Extensive colonization and military conquest during both eras</p> <p>Development of an overarching set of laws, restrictions that all had to obey; Roman law sets in place principle of rule of law, not rule by whim of the political leader</p>	<p>Basic division between patricians (aristocrats) and plebeians (free farmers), although a middle class of merchants grew during the empire; wealth based on land ownership; gap between rich and poor grew with time</p> <p>Paterfamilias - male dominated family structure</p> <p>Patron-client system with rich supervising elaborate webs of people that owe favors to them</p> <p>Inequality increased during the empire, with great dependence on slavery during the late empire; slaves used in households, mines, large estates, all kinds of manual labor</p>
<p>China (about 500 BCE to 600 CE)</p>	<p>Confucianism developed during late Zhou; by Han times, it dominated the political and social structure.</p> <p>Legalism and Daoism develop during same era.</p> <p>Buddhism appears, but not influential yet</p> <p>Threats from nomads from the south and west spark the first construction of the Great Wall; clay soldiers, lavish tomb for first emperor Shi Huangdi</p> <p>Chinese identity cemented during Han era: the "Han" Chinese</p> <p>Han - a "golden age" with prosperity from trade along the Silk Road; inventions include water mills, paper, compasses, and pottery and silk-making; calendar with 365.5 days</p> <p>Capital of Xi'an possibly the most sophisticated, diverse city in the world at the time; many other large cities</p>	<p>Zhou - emperor rules by mandate of heaven, or belief that dynasties rise and fall according to the will of heaven, or the ancestors. Emperor was the "son of heaven."</p> <p>Emperor housed in the forbidden city, separate from all others</p> <p>Political authority controlled by Confucian values, with emperor in full control but bound by duty</p> <p>Political power centralized under Shi Huangdi - often seen as the first real emperor</p> <p>Han - strong centralized government, supported by the educated shi (scholar bureaucrats who obtained positions through civil service exams)</p>	<p>Family basic unit of society, with loyalty and obedience stressed</p> <p>Wealth generally based on land ownership; emergence of scholar gentry</p> <p>Growth of a large merchant class, but merchants generally lower status than scholar-bureaucrats</p> <p>Big social divide between rural and urban, with most wealth concentrated in cities</p> <p>Some slavery, but not as much as in Rome</p> <p>Patriarchal society reinforced by Confucian values that emphasized obedience of wife to husband</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">India (to 600 CE)</p>	<p>Aryan religious stories written down into Vedas, and Hinduism became the dominant religion, although Buddhism began in India during this era;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mauryans Buddhist, Guptas Hindu</p> <p>Great epic literature such as the Ramayana and Mahabarata</p> <p>Extensive trade routes within subcontinent and with others; connections to Silk Road, and heart of Indian Ocean trade; coined money for trade</p> <p>So-called Arabic numerals developed in India, employing a 10-based system</p>	<p>Lack of political unity - geographic barriers and diversity of people; tended to fragment into small kingdoms;</p> <p style="text-align: center;">political authority less important than caste membership and group allegiances</p> <p>Mauryan and Gupta Empires formed based on military conquest; Mauryan Emperor Ashoka seen as greatest; converted to Buddhism, kept the religion alive</p> <p>"theater state" techniques used during Gupta - grand palace and court to impress all visitors, conceal political weakness</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Complex social hierarchy based on caste membership (birth groups called jati); occupations strictly dictated by caste</p> <p>Earlier part of time period - women had property rights</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Decline in the status of women during Gupta, corresponding to increased emphasis on acquisition and inheritance of property; ritual of sati for wealthy women (widow cremates herself in her husband's funeral pyre)</p>
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