

Midterm Exam Post-Mortem

A. Identification and Impact

- **Babylonian Captivity** — The forced resettlement of Judeans in Babylon during the 6th century BCE. During this time the Jews rigidified their customs and religion to preserve their identity and avoid the assimilation and subsequent oblivion that befell their fellow Hebrews, the Israelites, in the 8th century.
- **city-state** — A form of community in the ancient world in which an urban center is surrounded by a surrounding agricultural area—all sharing one economy, government, and identity. City-states are politically and economically independent, and each has a patron deity with a temple (god-dwelling) at the heart of the city. City-states normally come in groups (a city-state culture) that share language, culture, and religion but are in fierce rivalry with each other for resources, often leading to inter-city war.
- **cuneiform** — The pictographic writing system developed by the Sumerians during the early Bronze Age. One of the first writing systems, its use spread through Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and elsewhere. Over time its symbols became more abstract, making the system harder to learn and concentrating the wealth of information in the hands of fewer and fewer people.
- **Fertile Crescent** — The crescent-shaped area of agricultural fertility in southwest Asia, including Mesopotamia in the east and Syria and Canaan to the west. This area developed many early civilizations, including Sumer, Babylon, Assyria, Israel, Phoenicia, and Philistia. There was also a great deal of travel, trade, and migration around the crescent, connecting the cultures that grew there.
- **House of Dust** — The Sumerian nickname for their conception of the underworld. The name comes from its inhabitants lamenting their impotence; even for men who were once great and powerful in life, their ability to act comes to nothing. This emphasizes the need to accomplish while alive.
- **ma'at** — The Egyptian concept of balance, harmony, and order. Because the gods of Egypt are benevolent and order and harmony come from them, and the pharaohs are agents of the gods, the pharaohs are expected to provide harmony and balance. This is a main limitation on pharaohs abusing their absolute power.
- **Minoans**— The urban, industrial, sea-trading people inhabiting Crete in the early Bronze Age. Their economy was highly centralized, empowering the few. We know little about their civilization because we cannot read their writing system, Linear A. They were absorbed by the Mycenaean Greeks before the collapse of the Bronze Age.
- **Neolithic Age** — The final period of the Stone Age, covering roughly 10,000 BCE up to the advent of civilization around 3000 BCE. During the Neolithic, there is a shift toward using tools and ingenuity not merely to survive but to create stable communities, including a shift from nomadic, tribal existence to fixed agricultural settlements. It is over this period in which the Agricultural Revolution takes place.
- **paganism** — A form of polytheism, meaning a religion that has many gods. Pagan gods tend to represent the forces of the natural world, such as thunder, crop growth, and hearth fires, and areas of boundary, like crossroads and thresholds. Pagan gods are local, rooted in the territories in which they arose, so that if one traveled from Egypt through Canaan to Babylon, one would leave the domain of Horus, pass through the lands of Ba'al, and arrive in the domain of Marduk.
- **satrap** — Provincial governor in the Persian Empire during the Iron Age. Satraps were go-betweens between subjects and the Great King and were part of a system designed to prevent uprisings through just rule.
- **unintentional bias** — Primary sources offer first-hand testimony, but they must be examined critically because they are, without exception, subject to elements that skew every document away from objective truth. These always include intentional bias (the shaping of an account to convince a reader of the author's opinion); point of view (the author only saw what he or she saw); and unintentional bias (the story any author tells is unconsciously shaped by personal values and customs).
- **Uta-napishti** — The survivor of the Flood in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. For Sumerians the Flood is symbolic of universal death, and his surviving it makes him the exception to human existence. He lives on the edge of the world, far from other humans, suggesting that the Sumerians saw death and community as central to the human identity.

B. Assertion and Examples

1. Discuss the agricultural revolution as a part of the emergence/invention of civilization.

Your answer should discuss the positive and negative ramifications of establishing a community in one place, rather than having a migratory existence, creating a vulnerability to outsiders, and emphasizing the importance of shared identity. Also critical is the need to develop not merely subsistence, but an agricultural surplus that can provide for specialization of labor—an urban population that does not farm. Finally, the innovations in farming and irrigation that make possible surplus food production also stimulate the development of other kinds of tools and technology.

2. Discuss the character of Shamhat in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Shamhat the harlot is sent to encounter Enkidu, the beast-man created by the gods as a counterpart to King Gilgamesh, and to undertake “the work of women.” Over a week-long period of sexual intercourse, Shamhat transforms Enkidu into a civilized man, so that afterward the beasts don’t know him and the gazelles won’t let him run with them. The symbolism is that the “work of women” is to bring about civilization in men, by (a) creating a connection with them through emotional intimacy, and (b) creating future citizens through childbirth and the teaching of customs and morality that come with raising a child. In this way Shamhat acts as both a wife and a mother to Enkidu.

3. Describe the contrasting symbolism of the flood in Sumer and Egypt.

In Sumer, the flood represented destruction and mortality; in Egypt, the flood was the annual gift of fertile soil, representing how nature and the gods provide for and nurture the Egyptian people. Your answer should contrast the Sumerians’ emphasis on striving to accomplish and maintain stability and prosperity (with the capriciousness of nature and the gods not being counted on for help in this effort) with the Egyptians’ expectation of stability and prosperity provided to them by the cycle of nature represented by the Nile’s annual floods and the cycle of custodial leadership represented by the pharaohs’ identification with Horus. Thus, Sumerians expect change, and feel that they each must actively work to create their legacy, while Egyptians expect permanence, and feel that there is no need for the citizen to be an active agent in public affairs, since the future will come to be like the present and the past.

4. Discuss the impact of trade on ancient culture.

Your answer should discuss the role trade played in shaping specific societies. One approach would be to discuss entrepreneurial trade as practiced by the Phoenicians, as contrasted with the centralized trade of the Minoan and Mycenaean palace cities. With the former, growth is achieved by individual traders taking risks on new markets, new trade routes, and new goods. If the risk doesn’t pay off, only one trader/enterprise is affected, but if the trade is profitable, those profits push back into the economy through the trader’s spending of their profits and through taxes. A responsible and expanding economy is thus encouraged as traders seek new risks searching for profit. The contrast is with centralized trade, in which all production and trade is controlled by the ruling elite; centralized trade tends to limit risk and thus expansion and creates vulnerability through lack of adaptation.

5. Discuss the role of monumental building in the ancient world.

Your answer should explore the general purposes of monumental building—to demonstrate the economic and political (and by implication military) power of a community to its inhabitants and to foreigners, to attract the presence and beneficence of patron deities in monumental temples, to reinforce the superior standing of rulers and the elite, to employ the masses and keep them occupied, and to attract the skilled and influential by demonstrating a city’s cultural preeminence. Your answer should also discuss variations on these themes in the monumental buildings characteristic of different societies—ziggurats in Mesopotamia, pyramids in Egypt, the so-called Tower of Babel, the Hebrew Temple in Jerusalem, the temples of the Greeks, the walls of various great cities, etc.

6. Discuss the challenges of empire in the ancient world.

Your answer should contrast different empires we have studied, identifying aspects that made them more or less successful. Examples include the Akkadian Empire, which was dependent on Sargon’s forceful personality and deals with local kings, and did not long survive his death; the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which ruled oppressively using standing armies, destruction of city walls, and resettlement, provoking rebellion by subject peoples defending their identities; and the Persian Empire, which established systematic rule based on ensuring prosperity for subject lands as well as Persian elites, preventing corruption, and tolerating local customs so that people felt better off ruled by Persia.

7. Discuss the relationship between the mortal and the divine in ancient societies.

Your answer should contrast different cultures and their relationship with the gods. Key examples include Egypt, where the gods are benevolent and nurturing, and the people expect cycles and permanence; Sumer, where the gods are not trusted and mortals must provide their own future; and Israel/Judea, where one god forms a relationship with the people rather than the land, reinforcing a community identity separate from all others.

C. Multiple Choice

- Newly emerging urban civilizations seem to require all of the following... EXCEPT:
 - ~~metalworking~~
 - ~~long distance trade~~
 - monotheism
 - ~~a writing system~~
- The people of the Sumerian city-states did not
 - ~~build temples~~
 - ~~write literature~~
 - ~~fight each other~~
 - trust their gods
- The New Kingdom pharaoh Akhenaten was known for his
 - religious reform
 - ~~athletic prowess~~
 - ~~bachelor lifestyle~~
 - ~~submissive personality~~
- The Bronze Age Babylonian lawgiver whose Code ensured a consistent application of justice in the Old Babylonian Empire was
 - ~~Humbaba~~
 - ~~Horus~~
 - Hammurabi
 - ~~Hatshepsut~~
- The Iron Age sea-traders credited with spreading alphabetic writing along their Mediterranean trade routes were
 - the Phoenicians
 - ~~the Philistines~~
 - ~~the Hebrews~~
 - ~~the Aramaeans~~
- The Iron Age Neo-Assyrian Empire was known for all of the following... EXCEPT:
 - ~~They brutally oppressed their subject peoples and carried off their wealth to benefit the Assyrian elite~~
 - They established a successful empire through tolerance of local customs and careful government by satraps
 - ~~They deported the northern Israelites from their lands, then resettled those lands with outsiders~~
 - ~~They were brought down by the rebellion of its conquered peoples~~
- Indo-European invaders from the north who admired, emulated, and absorbed the prosperous indigenous city-state cultures they encountered included all of the following... EXCEPT:
 - ~~the Mycenaean Greeks~~
 - ~~the Hittites~~
 - ~~the Persians~~
 - the Akkadians
- The shift from bronze to iron changes everything because iron is
 - more common
 - ~~more expensive~~
 - ~~more attractive~~
 - ~~more digestible~~

D. Map

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|--------------------------|-------|
| 1. Aegean Sea | C |
| 2. Anatolia | H |
| 3. Assyrians | M |
| 4. Babylon | L |
| 5. Black Sea | D |
| 6. Canaan | P |
| 7. Carthage | A |
| 8. Euphrates River | O |
| 9. Hittites | H |
| 10. Indo-Europ. homeland | E |
| 11. Jerusalem | R |
| 12. Lower Egypt | S |
| 13. Medes | I |
| 14. Mediterranean Sea | B |
| 15. Memphis | S |
| 16. Mesopotamia | M/L/K |
| 17. Minoans | F |
| 18. Nile River | T |
| 19. Persians (Pars) | J |
| 20. Philistines | R |
| 21. Sumer | K |
| 22. Troy | G |
| 23. Tyre | P |
| 24. Upper Egypt | U |

