AMSCO Chapter 2

The First Civilizations

1. The Sumerians
2. Tigris and Euphrates River in modern Turkey and Iran formed a valley aka Mesopotamia, Fertile Crescent, cradle of civilization
3. Frequent flooding meant silt on land, fertile soil
4. Warm climate
5. Sumerians started as nomadic pastoralists, settled into Mesopotamia and created Sumerian civilization
6. Sumerian government
7. Cities as large as 10,00 people developed, including Uruk, population 50,000, mostly farmers who worked in nearby fields.
8. City states controlled by independent governments ruled by priests who assigned fields for farming, distributed harvest and managed trade
9. As city states grew in size, competition began for land and water, and stone walls and armies protected cities
10. Soldiers became more powerful than priests, and took the title “king” ruling over a kingdom (kings were also priests, combining government and religion)
11. Sumerian Religion – polytheistic, many gods
12. Gods controlled nature, offerings and prayers to gods for floods, good weather, etc…
13. Temples and altars were built to please the gods (ziggurats)
14. Believed gods punished people in this life, but there was no life after death
15. Sumerian Economy and Trade
16. Agricultural surplus resulted in a division of labor, as fewer people were needed in farming, such as pottery, weaving, metallurgy, crafts
17. Traded with other regions by land and by sea such as gold from Egypt, bead and obsidian from Africa, pearls and copper from India
18. Sumerian Social Structure
19. Division of labor led to social stratification, more classes, and larger gap between rich and poor
20. Nobles, landowners and kings at the top; merchants, farmers and professionals in middle class, hired workers in lower class, slaves at the bottom (up to 40% of the population, prisoners of war and debtors)
21. Women in Sumer – upper class women had freedom to own property and earn income separate from husbands; boys went to school, girls educated at home; marriages arranged by men
22. Cultural and Scientific Contributions
23. For record keeping, world’s first writing system developed, cuneiform (marks carved on a wet clay tablet) and the profession of scribes who could write
24. Invention of carts, plows, sundials, 12 month calendar, number system based on 60 (still used for time and degrees of a circle)
25. Epic of Gilgamesh – oldest written story written on 12 clay tablets in cuneiform; story of a King of Uruk named Gilgamesh
26. Sumerian decline – because of the good climate and water supply, many invaded and eventually defeated the Sumerians
27. Babylonian Empire
28. Persians from modern Iran took over Mesopotamia and built city of Babylon, thus Babylonians. They used the composite bow and arrow. They came to control so much territory with diverse cultures that it was not a kingdom, but an empire
29. King Hammurabi – most powerful king; ruled for 40 years around 1750 BC
30. Abolished local governments, reorganized tax structure
31. Created Code of Hammurabi – system of 282 first written laws for everyone to see
32. Code protected people’s rights, “an eye for an eye”; replaced individual revenge with public system to better control society
33. Babylonian Society and Culture – patriarchal, similar to Sumer; woman could be merchants, traders, scribes; marriages arranged by both parents; women could leave cruel husbands (but not divorce) and take her property
34. Astronomy, astrology
35. Phoenicians
36. Middle East around 3000 BC; sailors with wide trade network across Mediterranean and even into Atlantic
37. Exported timber, textiles and pottery
38. Established a colony in North Africa called Carthage
39. Developed alphabet instead of cuneiform, later modified by Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Hebrews.
40. Hebrews
41. Eventually Israelites and then Jews, lived in present day Israel (then Canaan)
42. Founded by Abraham, who left Mesopotamia to settle in Canaan; Jews, Christians and Muslims are all descended from him
43. Some Hebrews migrated to Egypt due to drought and were enslaved for several hundred years, until Moses led them out of Egypt and back to Canaan; also introduced 20 Commandments
44. Monotheism
45. Division and Diaspora – Hebrews divided into two groups and were conquered and enslaved; many ran or were driven out of homes, beginning first diaspora
46. Many instances of discrimination and diaspora led Jews to populate all areas of the world without having a homeland of their own.
47. Geography of Africa – includes a mild Mediterranean climate, a desert zone, a rain forest zone, and a savanna zone with flat grasslands
48. Ancient Egypt – Nile flows from interior of Africa northward to Mediterranean; it flooded annually and predictably, providing rich soil for farming
49. Introduction of Agriculture and Pastoralism
50. 6000 BCE farming and herding began – wheat and barley, gourds, melons, sorghum, donkeys, cattle; papyrus for eventual writing system
51. Desertification began around 5000 BCE and the Sahara grew larger
52. Egyptians dug irrigation canals to spread flood waters (copied from Sumerians
53. Transportation and Trade
54. Nile River and southward winds enabled Egyptians to travel on the Nile in both directions, providing for trade with both Africa and Mesopotamia
55. Deserts on both sides provided protection from invasion.
56. Early Governments
57. Strong leaders united towns and eventually kingdoms of lower Egypt in the north and Upper Egypt in the south
58. 3100 BCE King Menes united them and established the capital at Memphis
59. Old Kingdom – 2660-2160 BCE
60. Strong central government developed under a pharaoh, who held both religious and political power.
61. Pyramids built to preserve and honor bodies of the pharaohs after death, mummified and buried with material goods
62. Pharaohs owned all land, but began to give to government officials who then passed it on from father to son, resulting in a class of nobles
63. Drought and stronger nobles challenged pharaoh’s power, and Old Kingdom collapsed in 100 years of civil war.
64. Middle Kingdom (2040-1786 BCE)
65. 2040 BCE Mentuhotep took control, unified Egypt again under one central government based in Thebes
66. Pharaohs encouraged loyalty by having statues of themselves as wise and caring leaders built, giving rise to a renewal of art, religion and literature.
67. Huge irrigation project increased farmable land
68. Hyksos from Syria, with chariots and better bows and arrows, defeated Middle Kingdom pharaohs
69. New Kingdom (1570-1070 BCE)
70. Using new technology, pharaohs expanded territory to both the north and the south, gaining access to bronze and wood.
71. Akhenaton tried to move Egypt to monotheism, but failed, in around 1350 BCE.
72. Ramses the Great ruled for 67 years, from @ 1290 BCE, and expanded empire into Southwest Asia (Middle East)
73. Hittites, who had iron tools and weapons, eventually were able to push the decline of the New Kingdom, along with attacks from Libyans, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians, and Romans
74. Egyptian Society
75. Complex hierarchy, with royals, nobles, priests, then artisans, then lower class of farmers, and finally slaves (foreign prisoners of war)
76. All but slaves were citizens and equal under the law.
77. Woman could own property, make contracts, divorce, go to court (Hatshepsut and Cleopatra even became pharaohs)
78. Religion
79. Polytheism – sun god Ra, god of life and death Osiris, goddess of nature Isis
80. Statues and small idols, prayers and offerings
81. Life after death for pharaohs only at first, eventually for every human and even animals, as long as body preserved through mummification
82. Continuous Egyptian Culture – intact during all three periods, despite invasions
83. Egyptian Writing – hieroglyphics, symbols written on papyrus (type of plant); Book of the Dead told story of THAT dead person, put in coffins
84. Scientific Contributions
85. Pyramids and temples, engineering
86. Number system based on 10, used fractions, geometry
87. Calendar with 365 days, tracked stars and flooding
88. Mummification, set broken bones, stitch wounds, honey to avoid infection
89. Nubia, Kush and Axum – ancient kingdoms south of Egypt, smaller
90. Nubia – traded gold, ivory, cattle, etc…; served as mercenaries; more irrigation due to less regular flooding; built pyramids, worshipped some Egyptian gods and some of their own; hieroglyphics and alphabet
91. Kush – independent from Egypt by 1000 BCE; traded with Rome, India and Arabia; exported slaves and gold, mined iron ore; declined in part because of deforestation
92. Axum – Ethiopia today; wheat, barley, millet; colony on Red Sea called Adulis; converted to Christianity through trade with Rome
93. Indus Valley Civilizations – Dravidians established two main cities: Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro; most information from archeological finds shows division of labor, social hierarchy, municipal sewar system
94. Agriculture and the Environment
95. Very few farmers, food must have come from rural regions; trade by land and by sea with Sumer and Egypt
96. Deforestation, soil erosion, floods, earthquakes may all have contributed to decline
97. Aryan Migration and Interactions – Indo-European people from Central Asia that settled in Indus region beginning in 1500 BCE. Nomadic warriors, brought horses and chariots to India
98. Importance of Clans
99. Male chief, committee of members gave advice, no central government
100. Eventually shifted from nomadic to settled farmers of wheat and barley
101. Early trade through barter, then through silver and copper coins
102. Aryan Language – Sanskrit; used for story telling; eventually developed into Hindi
103. Aryan Religious Traditions – Vedas (knowledge) are collection of hymns, poems and songs; Riga-Veda most famous, outlines proper behavior for Brahmins (priests)
104. Aryan and Dravidian Beliefs
105. Late Vedic Age 800-400 BCE mixed Aryan and Dravidian beliefs into new concepts in the Upanishads, collection of religious thought
106. brahma (soul that connects all creatures)
107. dharma(righteous duties)
108. karma (fate in the next life)
109. moksha (eternal peace and unity with brahma)
110. Upanishads is foundational text of Hinduism, blends Aryan and Dravidian religious values, and reflects caste system
111. China’s First Civilization
112. Two rivers, Yellow and Yangtze, flooding provides silt and fertile soil, moderate climate
113. Gobi Desert and Himalayan mountains isolate and protect
114. Rice, soybeans and millet, chickens and pigs, silk, copper, jade
115. China’s First Rulers
116. Yu, first leader, organized trade, flooding, defense
117. Yu’s son, Qi began Xia dynasty, 400 years, no written record
118. Shang Dynasty – 1750 BCE overthrew Xia king. Established an empire through economic and religious power.
119. Economy, Technology, and Trade
120. Farming, and artisans
121. Bronze, copper, tin, weapons and armor strong
122. Religion
123. Polytheistic, gods controlled nature, sun, moon, clouds, wind
124. Oracle bones held inscriptions to the gods on shells or bones
125. Ancestor veneration and belief that ancestors could speak to the gods on people’s behalf
126. Belief in afterlife
127. Cultural and Scientific Contributions
128. Pictograph writing system, standard measurements, calendar
129. Bronze castings, ivory carvings, silk, pottery, musical instruments
130. End of Shang Dynasty – military man Wu takes over from weak kings and establishes Zhou dynasty
131. The Zhou Dynasty – 900 year dynasty, first 200 years were Golden Age
132. Centralized power
133. Mandate of Heaven – leaders power was bestowed and could be taken by gods; lost of god’s favor justified overthrowing emperors
134. Government – Large territory divided into regions under the control of relatives or friends of the king, like city-states
135. Local rulers had autonomy and paid taxes to king, sometimes forming alliances and creating basics of feudalism
136. Local rulers began to seek own power and sieze iron and bronze weapons
137. Trade and Agriculture
138. Coins of copper, internal and foreign trade
139. Iron tools, irrigation, plows, more food, more people
140. Farming was communal, as was a public works labor requirement
141. Urbanization – artisans, metal workers, merchants, administrators, soldiers, scribes
142. Zhou achievements – crossbow, iron sword, mounted cavalry, plows, irrigation, roads
143. Decline of Zhou Dynasty – local leaders revolting, invasions from west
144. First American Civilizations
145. Maize became one of first crops, along with beans, potatoes, peppers, pumpkin, cotton and tobacco
146. Chavin – Peru, near Lima, with temples made from granite and limestone not native, thus obtained by trade
147. Most grew cotton and relied on llamas for food, wool and transportation
148. Irrigation systems, temples, gold, silver and copper metallurgy, cotton
149. Olmec – central Mexico, primarily agricultural, corn, bean, squash, avocados
150. Human head carvings of basalt, pyramids, mosaics, ball game with sacrifice
151. Calendar, number system w zero, glyphs for writing
152. Pacific Peoples
153. Austronesian Speakers – likely from southern China, migrated by boat from island to island.
154. Easter Island – large statues, sweet potatoes