

AS THE WORLD TURNS: BEGINNING OF TIME - 450 CE

Beginning of Time

When looking for a place to begin a World History course, it is good to begin at... well... the beginning. In this case it is the beginning of time. The problem is that we are a little short on details and primary sources of how everything began. What we are left with are the creation stories of the major religions and the leading scientific theory. Based upon these sources, here are the “common themes” that they all share.

- *From Nothing to Something.* There was a point where there as “nothing,” followed by some event, and then the beginning of everything. In the Bible, it was Elohim speaking into the darkness. In the Vedas, it was a lotus flower blooming from the endless dark coils of a snake. To modern Scientist that was a “singularity” that expanded/exploded, creating the universe.
- *Creation Pattern.* They all follow a similar development pattern: Planets, [on earth] sky-land separation, dirt-water separation, fish-animals-birds, and, finally, humans. The ways that this process is explained is different (from evolving microbial to dead body parts becoming land features and creatures) but the pattern/order is the same.



The Great Migration

According to archeologists, the first humans (as in Homo Sapiens) appeared in Central/East Africa. From the heart of Africa, humans began the process of migrating, following food and water sources. According to our best estimates, the pattern went as follows:

- 50,000 BCE: Humanity begins in Central/East Africa
- 40,000 BCE: Humans migrate to Western Africa, as well as North into the Middle East and Europe
- 35,000 BCE: Humans arrive in Southern Africa, as well as East Asia
- 30,000 BCE: Humans navigate water to arrive in Australia
- 20,000 BCE: Humans brave the cold to arrive in Northern Europe and Russia.
- 12,000 BC: Humans cross from Russia to North America (Alaska)
- 11,000 BC: Humans rapidly travel south, spreading across North and (finally) South America

Hunting, Gathering and Herding

As humanity spread across the world, they did so in “Hunting and Gathering” tribes. These consisted of tight-knit family groups that followed their plant and animal food sources. When the food was gone, the tribe migrated (moved) to a new place. If there was too much competition with another tribe for food, they moved. Some tribes developed into herders, where they followed and cared for domesticable animals. The first tribes developed tools and weapons made of stone. To help with the hunt and with military victory, along with fertility in child birth, they identified/developed gods to worship. Overtime, tribes developed common meeting areas to hold annual religious gatherings and to trade goods or exchange sons/daughters in marriage.



Middle East - Part 1 (10,000 BCE - 300 BCE)

Neolithic Revolution & Mesopotamia

Around 10,000 BC hunting and gathering groups began the most significant revolution, or change, in the history of the world: they began to farm. This was not something that happened overnight, but instead took thousands of years. One of the first places where farming developed was in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) between the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys. The abundance of domesticable plants and large mammals, plus the rich soil brought in with the annual floods, made it an ideal location to develop farming (agriculture). With the development of irrigation, or ditches that bring water from rivers to the farms, tribes settled down and invested in growing their own food instead of following it around.

Farming changed everything.

Development of City-States and Society

Families settled down and began to claim fertile land. The collection of farms turned into villages. The villages had two problems. The first problem was that they were easy targets for hungry hunting/gathering tribes (think of it as the ancient version of fast food). The second was that because there is a limited amount of fertile land, competition and fighting developed for who would control it. Farmers joined together to help protect each other. They selected a leader organize to govern and protect them. These actions led the creation of city-states.

By 4,500 BC the first city-states appeared, called the Sumerians. A city-state is an independent city that is run by its own government. A city-state only controls and governs the land and people within the city limits. With the surplus of food, populations grew rapidly, causing people to look for new areas to start new cities. As the good, fertile land was quickly claimed, people had to travel farther away. Soon, city-states were setup throughout the Middle East all along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Kingdoms, as in collections of cities under one government, began to form. As the city-states and kingdoms grew in number, they began to trade with each other. A trade network developed with cities as far away as India.



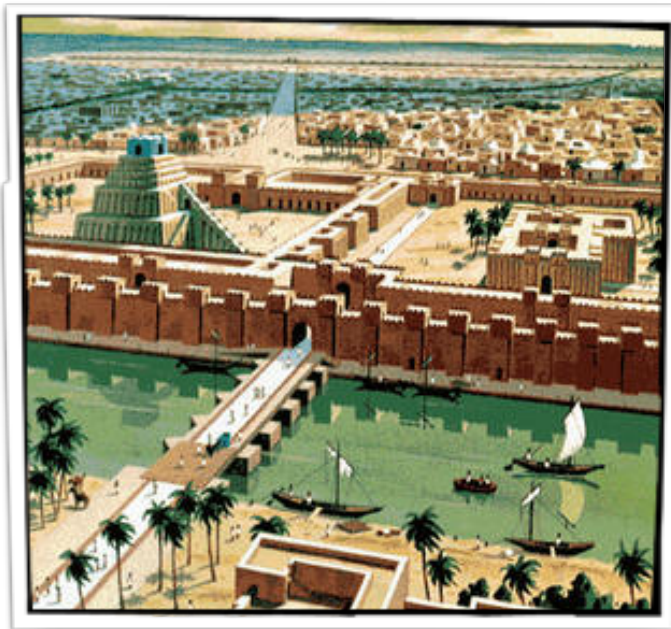
The increase in trade led to the development of the first written language, Cuneiform. Cuneiform was a series of wedges in clay that was used to keep track of sales and trade agreements. Soon, writing was used to record histories, important messages, stories, and poetry. A later kingdom, The Phoenicians, transformed language further by creating the first alphabet; a set of letters that can be rearranged to create words.



Age of Empires

Around 2200 BCE, Sargon of Akkad led his army to begin conquering surrounding city-states, building the first empire. An Empire is created when one people group conquers and rules over another or other people groups. This set off the Age of Empires, where a seemingly endless number of people groups attempted to conquer as much land as possible and control it for as long as possible. At first the empires were small and regional. But by 2000 BC, empires were conquering thousands of miles of territory. Famous empires like the Hittites, Assyrians and Babylonians ruled over the Middle East for hundreds of years. Each empire lost its power when the next great kingdom developed the next great technology, using it to rise to military and political greatness. Sometimes, geography played a role, as draughts and famines would cause there to be food shortage, weakening/ collapsing the empire. By 300 BC, the Persian Empire was in the height of its glory, ruling from Egypt to Greece, and as far east as Afghanistan and continuing to expand west-ward.

As the empires grew, the governments became more complex. They developed bureaucracies, or support staffs, to help them rule over the lands and people they conquered. They also developed new laws. Most famous of the legal codes was Hammurabi's Code. Hammurabi was king of Babylon in 1770s. He created the first set fixed rules and put copies throughout the empire to unify the people and to create order.



With more expansive empires came great advancements in technology and architecture. Palaces became bigger and more exquisite in their decorations. Cities built massive walls for protection. City planning began to involve channeling water from rivers into the cities for people to drink and for plumbing to take peoples' natural waste out of the city. City were developed around organized planned layouts. Tools were made out of bronze and then iron. Deadly weapons were developed, like chariots, bow and arrows, catapults, and siege towers.

Religions became more complex, as well. Gods were worshipped in extensive temple complexes. Statues were built 30 to 50 feet tall out of bronze. Written language allowed for the creation of official religious texts to record the words from the gods and their prophets. Priests led elaborate ceremonies with music, costumes and massive sacrifices of animal or human life (or both).

In a mere 10,000 years, societies in the Middle East developed from wandering tribes and chasing food to massive empires, controlling thousands of miles of land and ruling over the people of the entire region.

Africa (4,000 BC - 300 BC)

Egypt

In North-East Africa flows the Nile River, the longest river in the world. The Nile River was followed by the first humans who migrated north and has played a vital role in the history of the region because of how robust yet predictable its flood patterns. Along the Nile, a civilization flourished for almost 3,000 years: the Egyptians.

The story of Egypt follows very closely with the Middle East. Egypt was one of the first river valley civilizations, founded soon after the Mesopotamians. The Egyptians were able to transplant the domesticable plants and animals from Mesopotamia, to grow along the extremely fertile Nile River. The Egyptians developed a complex system of government and writing soon after the Sumerians, as well.

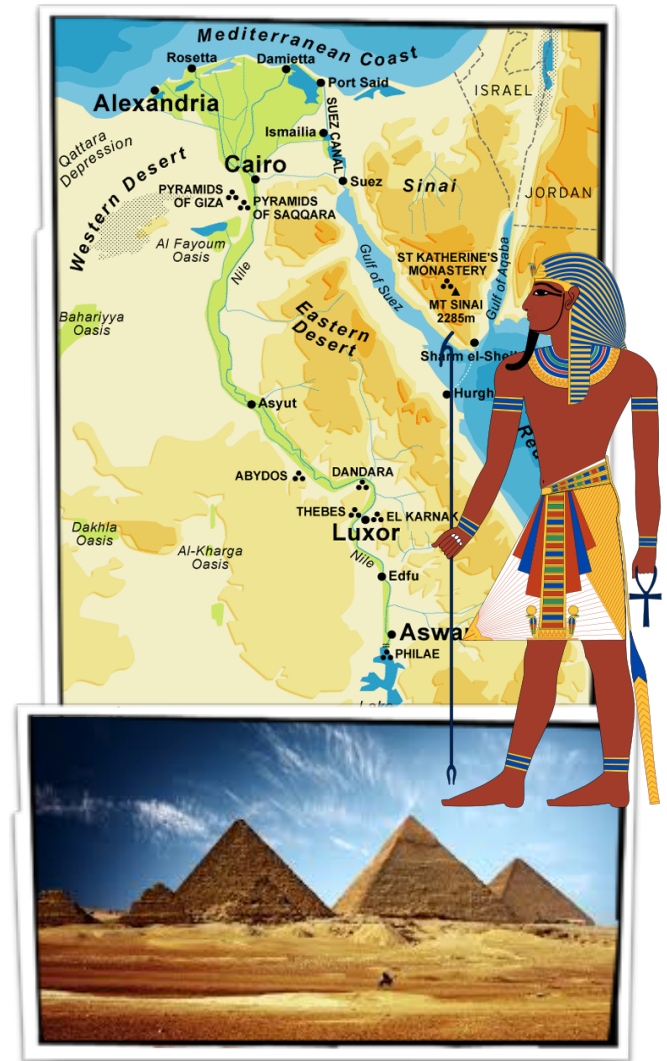
While the Middle East saw perpetual competition and ongoing wars between rising and falling empires, the Egyptians were remarkably stable. Their civilization lasted 3,000 years (minus two disastrous droughts) before finally being defeated by the Assyrians. A couple factors led to their remarkable success.

- First, they had an abundant and dependable food and water supply, thanks to the Nile River.
- Second, they were protected by natural barriers. To the South and West was the world's largest desert: the Sahara Desert. To the North was the Mediterranean Sea. To the East was the Red Sea. Only a small strip of land connected Egypt to the Middle East and that made the Egyptian land easy to defend.
- Third, the Egyptians developed a powerful government system that allowed them to keep peace and order: the god-king. To the Egyptians, the Pharaoh served as their king who was also a living god. To disobey the Pharaoh was to disobey an actual god, putting your life at stake in both this life and in the afterlife. This tied religion in with politics in a very profound way that would be copied and emulated for centuries to come.

Egypt served as an economic and cultural powerhouse during its 3,000 year reign. The pyramids, tombs of the Pharaohs, were both an engineering marvel as well as a sign of a well organized society. The temple complexes and their pillars were duplicated throughout the Mediterranean. Their art, pottery, and literature was traded and distributed throughout the Middle East and Europe. Their religion, in particular their view of the after life, has been emulated in other major world religions. Needless to say, even when the Egyptians were defeated by the Assyrians and Persians, their cultural influence continued on.

The Rest of Africa (until ~200 AD)

While Central Africa was the birth place of Humanity, non-Egypt parts of Africa were poorly equipped ecologically to develop agriculture and advanced societies. Only West Africa had a handful of domesticable plants and there are zero native domesticable large mammals. The massive Sahara Desert kept the plants, animals, technology and culture of Egypt from reaching the rest of Africa. These natural barriers hampered Africans' early development, limiting the people to being hunting and gathering tribes.



ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Read & Update the Content Matrix
- 2) Fill out this chart with the the strengths/positives and weaknesses/negatives of each region.

Region	Strengths	Weaknesses
Africa		
Middle East		

- 3) Create an impact chart. As you read you are to evaluate each area on the level of impact the people in that region had on the world culturally, militarily, and economically.
 - Rate each area as to how impactful you believe them to be at the Beginning of Time (**B**), at 300 BCE (■) and at 300 CE (▲).
 - Draw arrows to show whether they grew or shrunk in impact and influence.
 - If there is change, ask yourself “What caused them to grow or shrink or stagnate in their influence?” and make note of it on your chart.

How to rate each region:

- Local: Mainly Hunter/Gatherers and Small Villages; people barely impacting those outside of their small circles.
- Regional: Kingdoms, Small Empires.
- Continental: Large empire(s) that span across/impact/consume most of the continent.
- Inter-Continental: Massive empire(s) that span across/impact/consume multiple continents.
- Global: Massive empire(s) that span across/impact/consume most of the world.

Examples

