I

EARLY SOCIETIES

From the Beginning of Time

Writing and City Life

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EARLY SOCIETIES

IN this section, we will read about two themes relating to early societies. The first is about the beginnings of human existence, from the remote past, millions of years ago. You will learn how humans first emerged in Africa and how archaeologists have studied these early phases of history from remains of bones and stone tools.

Archaeologists have made attempts to reconstruct the lives of early people – to find out about the shelters in which they lived, the food they ate by gathering plant produce and hunting animals, and the ways in which they expressed themselves. Other important developments include the use of fire and of language. And, finally, you will see whether the lives of people who live by hunting and gathering today can help us to understand the past.

The second theme deals with some of the earliest cities – those of Mesopotamia, present-day Iraq. These cities developed around temples, and were centres of long-distance trade. Archaeological evidence – remains of old settlements – and an abundance of written material are used to reconstruct the lives of the different people who lived there – craftspeople, scribes, labourers, priests, kings and queens. You will notice how pastoral people played an important role in some of these towns. A question to think about is whether the many activities that went on in cities would have been possible if writing had not developed.

You may wonder as to how people who for millions of years had lived in forests, in caves or temporary shelters and rock shelters began to eventually live in villages and cities. Well, the story is a long one and is related to several developments that took place at least 5,000 years before the establishment of the first cities.

One of the most far-reaching changes was the gradual shift from nomadic life to settled agriculture, which began around 10,000 years ago. As you will see in Theme 1, prior to the adoption of agriculture, people had gathered plant produce as a source of food. Slowly, they learnt more about different kinds of plants – where they grew, the seasons when they bore fruit and so on.

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From this, they learnt to grow plants. In West Asia, wheat and barley, peas and various kinds of pulses were grown. In East and Southeast Asia, the crops that grew easily were millet and rice. Millet was also grown in Africa. Around the same time, people learnt how to domesticate animals such as sheep, goat, cattle, pig and donkey. Plant fibres such as cotton and flax, and animal fibres such as wool were now woven into cloth. Somewhat later, about 5,000 years ago, domesticated animals such as cattle and donkeys were harnessed to ploughs and carts.

These developments led to other changes as well. When people grew crops, they had to stay in the same place till the crops ripened. So, settled life became more common. And with that, people built more permanent structures in which to live.

This was also the time when some communities learnt how to make earthen pots. These were used to store grain and other produce, and to prepare and cook a variety of foods made from the new grains that were cultivated. In fact, a great deal of attention was given to processing foods to make them tasty and digestible.

The way stone tools were made also changed. While earlier methods of making tools continued, some tools and equipment were now smoothened and polished by an elaborate process of grinding. New equipment included mortars and pestles for processing and grinding grain, as well as stone axes and hoes, which were used to clear land for cultivation, as well as for digging the earth to sow seeds.

In some areas, people learnt to tap the ores of metals such as copper and tin. Sometimes, copper ores were collected and used for their distinctive bluish-green colour. This prepared the way for the more extensive use of metal for jewellery and for tools subsequently.

There was also a growing familiarity with other kinds of produce from distant lands (and seas). This included wood, stones, including precious and semi-precious stones, metals and shell, and obsidian (hardened) volcanic lava. Clearly, people were going from place to place, carrying goods and ideas with them.

With increasing trade, the growth of villages and towns, and the movements of people, in place of the small communities of early people there now grew small states. While these changes took place slowly, over several thousand years, the pace quickened with the growth of the first cities. Also, the changes had far-reaching consequences. Some scholars have described this as a revolution, as the lives of people were probably transformed beyond recognition. Look out for continuities and changes as you explore these two contrasting themes in early history.

Remember too, that we have selected only some examples of early societies for detailed study. There were other kinds of early societies, including farming communities and pastoral peoples. And there were other peoples who were hunter-gatherers as well as city dwellers, apart from the examples selected.

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How to Read Timelines

You will find a timeline like this one in every section.
Each of these will indicate some of the major processes and events in world history.

As you study the timelines, remember—

- Processes through which ordinary women and men have shaped history are far more difficult to date than events such as a war between kings.
- Some dates may indicate the beginning of a process, or when it reaches maturation.
- Historians are constantly revising dates in the light of new evidence, or new ways of assessing old data.
- While we have divided the timelines on a geographical basis as a matter of convenience, actual historical developments often transcend these divisions.
- Also, there is a chronological overlap in historical processes.
- Only some landmarks in human history have been shown here – we have highlighted the processes dealt with in the themes that follow, which also have separate timelines.
- Wherever you see a*, you will also find an illustration related to the date along the column.
- Blank spaces do not mean that nothing was happening – sometimes these indicate that we do not as yet know what was happening.
- You will be learning more about South Asian history in general and Indian history in particular next year. The dates selected for South Asia are only indicative of some of the developments in the subcontinent.

TIMELINE I

(6 MYA TO 1 BCE)

This timeline focuses on the emergence of humans and the domestication of plants and animals. It highlights some major technological developments such as the use of fire, metals, plough agriculture and the wheel. Other processes that are shown include the emergence of cities and the use of writing. You will also find mention of some of the earliest empires – a theme that will be developed in Timeline II.

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DATES	AFRICA	EUROPE
6 mya-500,000 BP	*Australopithecus* fossils (5.6 mya) Evidence of use of fire (1.4 mya)	
500,000-150,000 BP	*Homo sapiens* fossils (195,000 BP)	Evidence of use of fire (400,000 BP)
150,000-50,000 BP		
50,000-30,000		*Homo sapiens* fossils (40,000)
30,000-10,000	Paintings in caves/rock shelters (27,500)	Paintings in caves/rock shelters (especially France and Spain)
8000-7000 BCE		
7000-6000	Domestication of cattle and dogs	
6000-5000		Cultivation of wheat and barley (Greece)
5000-4000		
4000-3000	Domestication of donkey, cultivation of millet, use of copper	Use of copper (Crete)
3000-2000	Plough agriculture, first kingdoms, cities, pyramids, calendar, hieroglyphic script*, writing on papyrus (Egypt)	Domestication of horse (eastern Europe)
2000-1900		Cities, palaces, use of bronze, the potter's wheel, development of trade (Crete)
1900-1800		
1800-1700		
1700-1600		Development of a script (Crete)*
1600-1500		
1500-1400	Use of glass bottles (Egypt)	
1400-1300		
1300-1200		
1200-1100		
1100-1000		Use of iron
1000-900		
900-800	City of Carthage established in North Africa by the Phoenicians from West Asia; growing trade around the Mediterranean	
800-700	Use of iron (Sudan)	First Olympic games (Greece, 776 BCE)
700-600	Use of iron (Egypt)	
600-500		Use of coins* (Greece); establishment of the Roman republic (510 BCE)
500-400	Persians invade Egypt	Establishment of a 'democracy' in Athens (Greece)
400-300	Establishment of Alexandria, Egypt (332 BCE), which becomes a major centre of learning	Alexander of Macedonia conquers Egypt and parts of West Asia (336-323 BCE)
300-200		
200-100		
100-1 BCE		

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DATES	ASIA	SOUTH ASIA
6mya-500,000 BP	Use of fire (700,000 BP, China)	Stone age site in Riwat (1,900,000 BP, Pakistan)
500,000-150,000 BP		
150,000-50,000 BP	*Homo sapiens* fossils (100,000 BP, West Asia)	
50,000-30,000 BP		
30,000-10,000 BP	Domestication of dog (14,000, West Asia)	Cave paintings at Bhimbetka (Madhya Pradesh); *Homo sapiens* fossils (25,500 BP, Sri Lanka)
8000-7000 BCE	Domestication of sheep and goat, cultivation of wheat and barley (West Asia)	
7000-6000	Domestication of pig and cattle (West and East Asia)	Early agricultural settlements (Baluchistan)
6000-5000	Domestication of chicken, cultivation of millet and yam (East Asia)	
5000-4000	Cultivation of cotton (South Asia); use of copper (West Asia)	
4000-3000	Use of the potter's wheel, wheel for transport (3600 BCE), writing (3200 BCE, Mesopotamia), use of bronze	Use of copper
3000-2000	Plough agriculture, cities (Mesopotamia); silk-making (China); domestication of horse (Central Asia); cultivation of rice (Southeast Asia)	Cities of the Harappan civilisation, use of script* (c.2700 BCE)
2000-1900	Domestication of water-buffalo (East Asia)	
1900-1800		
1800-1700		
1700-1600		
1600-1500	Cities, writing, kingdoms (Shang dynasty), use of bronze (China)*	
1500-1400	Use of iron (West Asia)	Composition of the *Rig Veda*
1400-1300		
1300-1200		
1200-1100		Use of iron, megaliths (Deccan and South India)
1100-1000	Domestication of the one-humped camel (Arabia)	
1000-900		
900-800		
800-700		
700-600		
600-500	Use of coins (Turkey); Persian empire (546 BCE) with capital at Persepolis; Chinese philosopher Confucius (c. 551 BCE)	Cities and states in several areas, first coins, spread of Jainism and Buddhism
500-400		
400-300		Establishment of the Mauryan empire (c. 321 BCE)
300-200	Establishment of an empire in China (221 BCE), beginning of the construction of the Great Wall	
200-100		
100-1 BCE		

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DATES	AMERICAS	AUSTRALIA / PACIFIC ISLANDS
6 mya-500,000 BP		
500,000-150,000 BP		
150,000-50,000 BP		
50,000-30,000 BP		*Homo sapiens* fossils, earliest indications of sea-faring (45,000 BP)
30,000-10,000 BP	*Homo sapiens* fossils (12,000 BP)	Paintings (20,000 BP)
8000-7000 BCE		
7000-6000	Cultivation of squash	
6000-5000		
5000-4000	Cultivation of beans	
4000-3000	Cultivation of cotton, bottle gourd	
3000-2000	Domestication of guinea pig, turkey, cultivation of maize	
2000-1900	Cultivation of potato, chilli*, cassava, peanut, domestication of llama* and alpaca	
1900-1800		
1800-1700		
1700-1600		
1600-1500		
1500-1400		
1400-1300		
1300-1200		
1200-1100	Olmec settlements around the Gulf of Mexico, early temples and sculpture	Settlements in Polynesia and Micronesia
1100-1000		
1000-900	Development of a hieroglyphic script	
900-800		
800-700		
700-600		
600-500		
500-400		
400-300		
300-200		
200-100		
100-1 BCE		

ACTIVITY

Choose one date from each of the six columns and discuss the possible significance of the process/ event for men and women living in the region.

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THEME 1

FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME

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THIS chapter traces the beginning of human existence. It was 5.6 million years ago (written as mya) that the first human-like creatures appeared on the earth's surface. After this, several forms of humans emerged and then became extinct. Human beings resembling us (henceforth referred to as 'modern humans') originated about 160,000 years ago. During this long period of human history, people obtained food by either scavenging or hunting animals and gathering plant produce. They also learnt how to make stone tools and to communicate with each other.

Although other ways of obtaining food were adopted later, hunting-gathering continued. Even today there are hunter-gatherer societies in some parts of the world. This makes us wonder whether the lifestyles of present-day hunter-gatherers can tell us anything about the past.

Fossils are the remains or impressions of a very old plant, animal or human which have turned into stone. These are often embedded in rock, and are thus preserved for millions of years.

Discoveries of human fossils, stone tools and cave paintings help us to understand early human history. Each of these discoveries has a history of its own. Very often, when such finds were first made, most scholars refused to accept that these fossils were the remains of early humans. They were also sceptical about the ability of early humans to make stone tools or paint. It was only over a period of time that the true significance of these finds was realised.

The evidence for human evolution comes from fossils of species of humans which have become extinct. Fossils can be dated either through direct chemical analysis or indirectly by dating the sediments in which they are buried. Once fossils are dated, a sequence of human evolution can be worked out.

Species is a group of organisms that can breed to produce fertile offspring. Members of one species cannot mate with those of other species to produce fertile offspring.

When such discoveries were first made, about 200 years ago, many scholars were often reluctant to accept that fossils and other finds including stone tools and paintings were actually connected with early forms of humans. This reluctance generally stemmed from their belief in the Old Testament of the Bible, according to which human origin was regarded as an act of Creation by God.

For instance, in August 1856, workmen who were quarrying for limestone in the Neander valley (see Map 2, p. 18), a gorge near the German city of Dusseldorf, found a skull and some skeletal fragments. These were handed over to Carl Fuhlrott, a local schoolmaster and natural historian, who realised that

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they did not belong to a modern human. He then made a plaster cast of the skull and sent it to Herman Schaaffhausen, a professor of anatomy at Bonn University. The following year they jointly published a paper, claiming that this skull represented a form of human that was extinct. At that time, scholars did not accept this view and instead declared that the skull belonged to a person of more recent times.

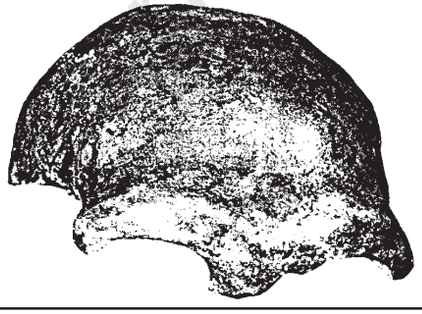
RECOVERING FOSSILS

A painstaking process. The precise location of finds is important for dating.

Shows the equipment used to record the location of finds. The square frame to the left of the archaeologist is a grid divided into 10 cm squares. Placing it over the find spot helps to record the horizontal position of the find. The triangular apparatus to the right is used to record the vertical position.

Shows how a fossil fragment is recovered from the surrounding stone, in this case a variety of limestone, in which it is embedded. As you can see, this requires skill and patience.

24 November 1859, when Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published, marked a landmark in the study of evolution. All 1,250 copies of the first print were sold out the same day. Darwin argued that humans had evolved from animals a long time ago.



The skull of Neanderthal man. Some of those who dismissed the antiquity of the skull regarded it as 'brutish' or that of a 'pathological idiot'.

ACTIVITY 1

Most religions have stories about the creation of human beings which often do not correspond with scientific discoveries. Find out about some of these and compare them with the history of human evolution as discussed in this chapter.

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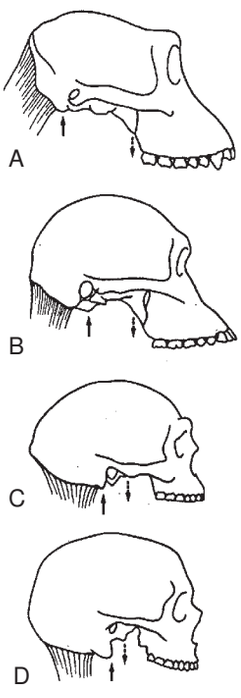
The Story of Human Evolution
(a) The Precursors of Modern Human Beings



Look at these four skulls.
A belongs to an ape.
B belongs to a species known as *Australopithecus* (see below).
C belongs to a species known as *Homo erectus* (literally 'upright man').
D belongs to a species known as *Homo sapiens* (literally 'thinking/wise man'} to which all present-day human beings belong.
List as many similarities and differences that you notice, looking carefully at the brain case, jaws and teeth.

The differences that you notice in the skulls shown in the illustration are some of the changes that came about as a result of human evolution. The story of human evolution is enormously long, and somewhat complicated. There are also many unanswered questions, and new data often lead to a revision and modification of earlier understandings. Let us look at some of the developments and their implications more closely.

It is possible to trace these developments back to between 36 and 24 mya. We sometimes find it difficult to conceptualise such long spans of time. If you consider a page of your book to represent 10,000 years, in itself a vast span of time, 10 pages would represent 100,000 years, and a 100 pages would equal 1 million years. To think of 36 million years, you would have to imagine a book 3,600 pages long! That was when primates, a category of mammals, emerged in Asia and Africa. Subsequently, by about 24 mya, there emerged a subgroup amongst primates, called hominoids. This included apes. And, much later, about 5.6 mya, we find evidence of the first hominids.

Primates are a subgroup of a larger group of mammals. They include monkeys, apes and humans. They have body hair, a relatively long gestation period following birth, mammary glands, different types of teeth, and the ability to maintain a constant body temperature.

While hominids have evolved from hominoids and share certain common features, there are major differences as well. Hominoids have a smaller brain than hominids. They are quadrupeds, walking on all fours, but with flexible forelimbs. Hominids, by contrast, have an upright posture and bipedal locomotion (walking on two feet). There are also marked differences in the hand, which enables the making and use of tools. We will examine the kinds of tools made and their significance more closely later.

Two lines of evidence suggest an African origin for hominids. First, it is the group of African apes that are most closely related to hominids. Second, the earliest hominid fossils, which belong to the genus *Australopithecus*, have been found in East Africa and date back to about 5.6 mya. In contrast, fossils found outside Africa are no older than 1.8 million years.

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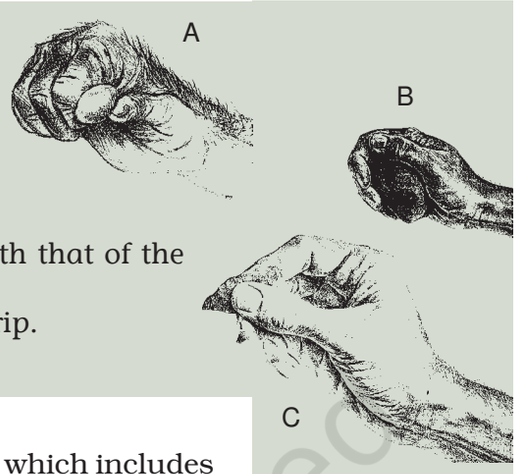
THE EVOLUTION OF THE HAND



A shows the precision grip of the chimpanzee.
B shows the power grip of the human hand.
C shows the precision grip of the hominid.

The development of the power grip probably preceded the precision grip.

Compare the precision grip of the chimpanzee with that of the human hand.

Make a list of the things you do using a precision grip.

What are the things you do using a power grip?

Hominids belong to a family known as Hominidae, which includes all forms of human beings. The distinctive characteristics of hominids include a large brain size, upright posture, bipedal locomotion and specialisation of the hand.

Hominids are further subdivided into branches, known as genus, of which *Australopithecus* and *Homo* are important. Each of these in turn includes several species. The major differences between *Australopithecus* and *Homo* relate to brain size, jaws and teeth. The former has a smaller brain size, heavier jaws and larger teeth than the latter.

Virtually all the names given by scientists to species are derived from Latin and Greek words. For instance, the name *Australopithecus* comes from a Latin word, *'austral'*, meaning 'southern' and a Greek word, *'pithekos'*, meaning 'ape.' The name was given because this earliest form of humans still retained many features of an ape, such as a relatively small brain size in comparison to *Homo,* large back teeth and limited dexterity of the hands. Upright walking was also restricted, as they still spent a lot of time on trees. They retained characteristics

Hominoids are different from monkeys in a number of ways. They have a larger body and do not have a tail. Besides, there is a longer period of infant development and dependency amongst hominoids.

This is a view of the Olduvai Gorge in the Rift Valley, East Africa (see Map 1b, p.14), one of the areas from which traces of early human history have been recovered. Notice the different levels of earth at the centre of the photograph. Each of these represents a distinct geological phase.

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(such as long forelimbs, curved hand and foot bones and mobile ankle joints) suited to life on trees. Over time, as tool making and long-distance walking increased, many human characteristics also developed.

The Discovery of *Australopithecus*, Olduvai Gorge, 17 July 1959

The Olduvai Gorge (see p. 14) was first 'discovered' in the early twentieth century by a German butterfly collector. However, Olduvai has come to be identified with Mary and Louis Leakey, who worked here for over 40 years. It was Mary Leakey who directed archaeological excavations at Olduvai and Laetoli and she made some of the most exciting discoveries. This is what Louis Leakey wrote about one of their most remarkable finds:

'That morning I woke with a headache and a slight fever. Reluctantly, I agreed to spend the day in camp. With one of us out of commission, it was even more vital for the other to continue the work, for our precarious seven-week season was running out. So Mary departed for the diggings with Sally and Toots [two of their dogs] in the Land-Rover [a jeep-like vehicle], and I settled back to a restless day off.

Some time later – perhaps I dozed off – I heard the Land-Rover coming up fast to camp. I had a momentary vision of Mary stung by one of our hundreds of resident scorpions or bitten by a snake that had slipped past the dogs.

The Land-Rover rattled to a stop, and I heard Mary's voice calling over and over: "I've got him! I've got him! I've got him!" Still groggy from the headache, I couldn't make her out. "Got what? Are you hurt?" I asked. "Him, the man! Our man," Mary said. "The one we've been looking for 23 years. Come quick, I've found his teeth!" '

– From 'Finding the World's Earliest Man', by L.S.B. Leakey, *National Geographic*, 118 (September 1960).

The remains of early humans have been classified into different species. These are often distinguished from one another on the basis of differences in bone structure. For instance, species of early humans are differentiated in terms of their skull size and distinctive jaws (see illustration on p.10). These characteristics may have evolved due to what has been called the positive feedback mechanism.

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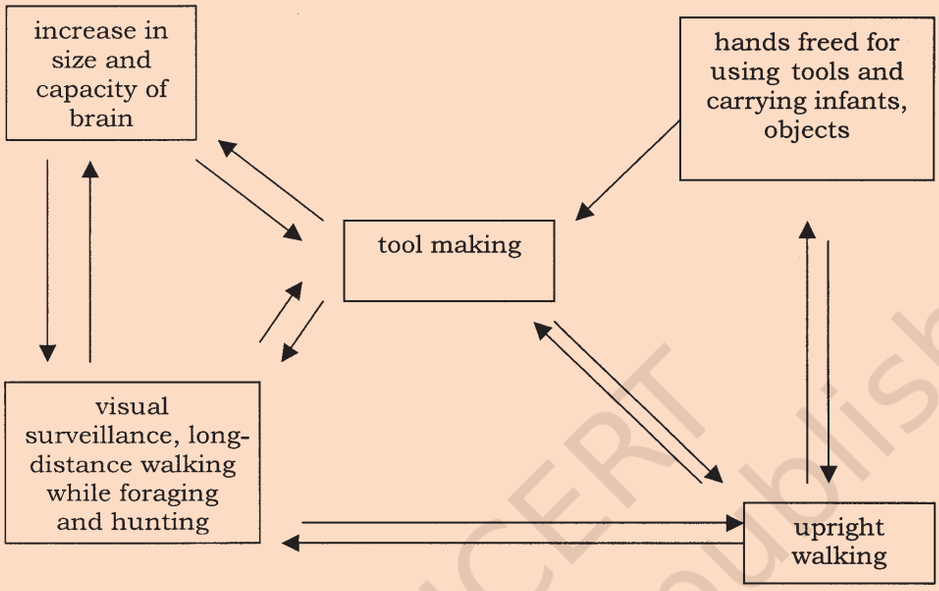
THE POSITIVE FEEDBACK MECHANISM

The arrows pointing towards a box indicate the influences that shaped that particular development.



The arrows pointing away from a box indicate how developments mentioned in the box influenced other processes.

For example, bipedalism enabled hands to be freed for carrying infants or objects. In turn, as hands were used more and more, upright walking gradually became more efficient. Apart from the advantage of freeing hands for various uses, far less energy is consumed while walking as compared to the movement of a quadruped. However, the advantage in terms of saving energy is reversed while running. There is indirect evidence of bipedalism as early as 3.6 mya. This comes from the fossilised hominid footprints at Laetoli, Tanzania (see Section cover). Fossil limb bones recovered from Hadar, Ethiopia provide more direct evidence of bipedalism.

Around 2.5 mya, with the onset of a phase of glaciation (or an Ice Age), when large parts of the earth were covered with snow, there were major changes in climate and vegetation. Due to the reduction in temperatures as well as rainfall, grassland areas expanded at the expense of forests, leading to the gradual extinction of the early forms of *Australopithecus* (that were adapted to forests) and the replacement by species that were better adapted to the drier conditions. Among these were the earliest representatives of the genus *Homo*.

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Homo is a Latin word, meaning 'man', although there were women as well! Scientists distinguish amongst several types of *Homo*. The names assigned to these species are derived from what are regarded as their typical characteristics. So fossils are classified as *Homo habilis* (the tool maker), *Homo erectus* (the upright man), and *Homo sapiens* (the wise or thinking man).

Fossils of *Homo habilis* have been discovered at Omo in Ethiopia and at Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania. The earliest fossils of *Homo erectus* have been found both in Africa and Asia: Koobi Fora and west Turkana, Kenya, Modjokerto and Sangiran, Java. As the finds in Asia belong to a later date than those in Africa, it is likely that hominids migrated from East Africa to southern and northern Africa, to southern and north-eastern Asia, and perhaps to Europe, some time between 2 and 1.5 mya. This species survived for nearly a million years.

MAP 1(a): Africa

MAP 1(b): The East African Rift Valley

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In some instances, the names for fossils are derived from the places where the first fossils of a particular type were found. So fossils found in Heidelberg, a city in Germany, were called *Homo heidelbergensis*, while those found in the Neander valley (see p. 18) were categorised as *Homo neanderthalensis.*

The earliest fossils from Europe are of *Homo heidelbergensis* and *Homo neanderthalensis*. Both belong to the species of archaic (that is, old) *Homo sapiens*. The fossils of *Homo heidelbergensis* (0.8-0.1 mya) have a wide distribution, having been found in Africa, Asia and Europe. The Neanderthals occupied Europe and western and Central Asia from roughly 130,000 to 35,000 years ago. They disappeared abruptly in western Europe around 35,000 years ago.

In general, compared with *Australopithecus*, *Homo* have a larger brain, jaws with a reduced outward protrusion and smaller teeth (see illustration on p. 10). An increase in brain size is associated with more intelligence and a better memory. The changes in the jaws and teeth were probably related to differences in dietary habits.

PEOPLING OF THE WORLD

WHEN	WHERE	WHO
5-1 mya	Sub-Saharan Africa	*Australopithecus,* early *Homo, Homo erectus*
1 mya-40,000 years ago	Africa, Asia and Europe in mid-latitudes	*Homo erectus,* archaic *Homo sapiens, Neanderthals, Homo sapiens sapiens*/modern humans
45,000 years ago	Australia	Modern humans
40,000 years ago to present	Europe in high-latitudes and Asia-Pacific islands	Late Neanderthals, modern humans
	North and South America in deserts, rain forests	

ACTIVITY 2

Plot the changes indicated in the chart above on an outline map of the world. Use different colours for the four time brackets. List the continents where you use (a) a single colour, (b) two colours, (c) more than two colours.

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The Story of Human Evolution
(b) Modern Human Beings

THE EARLIEST FOSSILS OF MODERN HUMANS	
WHERE	**WHEN (years ago)**
ETHIOPIA Omo Kibish	195,000-160,000
SOUTH AFRICA Border Cave Die Kelders Klasies River Mouth	120,000-50,000
MOROCCO Dar es Solton	70,000-50,000
ISRAEL Qafzeh Skhul	100,000-80,000
AUSTRALIA Lake Mungo	45,000-35,000
BORNEO Niah Cave	40,000
FRANCE Cro-Magnon, near Les Eyzies	35,000

If you look at this chart, you will notice that some of the earliest evidence for *Homo sapiens* has been found in different parts of Africa. This raises the question of the centre of human origin. Was there a single centre or were there several?

The issue of the place of origin of modern humans has been much debated. Two totally divergent views have been expounded, one advocating the regional continuity model (with multiple regions of origin), the other the replacement model (with a single origin in Africa).

According to the regional continuity model, the archaic *Homo sapiens* in different regions gradually evolved at different rates into modern humans, and hence the variation in the first appearance of modern humans in different parts of the world. The argument is based on the regional differences in the features of present-day humans. According to those who advocate this view, these dissimilarities are due to differences between the pre-existing *Homo erectus* and *Homo heidelbergensis* populations that occupied the same regions.

The Replacement and Regional Continuity Models

The replacement model visualises the complete replacement everywhere of all older forms of humans with modern humans. In support of this view is the evidence of the genetic and anatomical homogeneity of modern humans. Those who suggest this argue that the enormous similarity amongst modern humans is due to their descent from a population that originated in a single region, which is Africa. The evidence of the earliest fossils of modern humans (from Omo in Ethiopia) also supports the replacement model. Scholars who hold this view suggest that the physical differences observed today among modern humans are the result of adaptation (over a span of thousands of years) by populations who migrated to the particular regions where they finally settled down.

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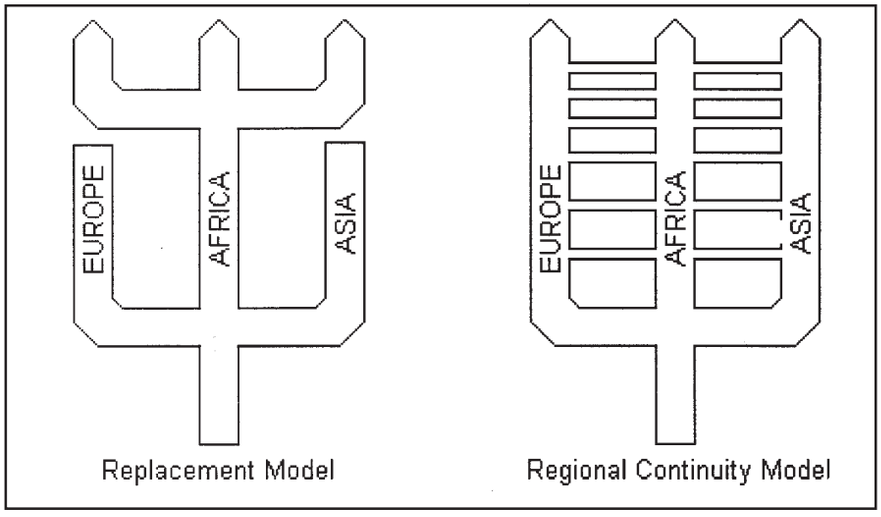

Early Humans: Ways of Obtaining Food

So far, we have been considering the evidence of skeletal remains and seeing how these have been used to reconstruct the histories of the movements of peoples across continents. But, there are other, more routine aspects of human life as well. Let us see how these can be studied.

Early humans would have obtained food through a number of ways, such as gathering, hunting, scavenging and fishing. Gathering would involve collecting plant foods such as seeds, nuts, berries, fruits and tubers. That gathering was practised is generally assumed rather than conclusively established, as there is very little direct evidence for it. While we get a fair amount of fossil bones, fossilised plant remains are relatively rare. The only other way of getting information about plant intake would be if plant remains were accidentally burnt. This process results in carbonisation. In this form, organic matter is preserved for a long span of time. However, so far archaeologists have not found much evidence of carbonised seeds for this very early period.

In recent years, the term hunting has been under discussion by scholars. Increasingly, it is being suggested that the early hominids scavenged or foraged* for meat and marrow from the carcasses of animals that had died naturally or had been killed by other predators. It is equally possible that small mammals such as rodents, birds (and their eggs), reptiles and even insects (such as termites) were eaten by early hominids.

*Foraging means to search for food.

Hunting probably began later – about 500,000 years ago. The earliest clear evidence for the deliberate, planned hunting and butchery of large mammals comes from two sites: Boxgrove in southern England (500,000 years ago) and Schoningen in Germany (400,000 years ago)

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(see Map 2). Fishing was also important, as is evident from the discovery of fish bones at different sites.

MAP 2: Europe

From about 35,000 years ago, there is evidence of planned hunting from some European sites. Some sites, such as Dolni Vestonice (in the Czech Republic, see Map 2), which was near a river, seem to have been deliberately chosen by early people. Herds of migratory animals such as reindeer and horse probably crossed the river during their autumn and spring migrations and were killed on a large scale. The choice of such sites indicates that people knew about the movement of these animals and also about the means of killing large numbers of animals quickly.

Did men and women have different roles in gathering, scavenging, hunting and fishing? We do not really know. Today we find societies that live by hunting and gathering, where women and men undertake a range of different activities, but, as we will see later in the chapter, it is not always possible to suggest parallels with the past.

Early Humans
From Trees, to Caves and Open-air Sites

We are on surer ground when we try to reconstruct the evidence for patterns of residence. One way of doing this is by plotting the distribution of artefacts. For example, thousands of flake tools and hand axes have been excavated at Kilombe and Olorgesailie (Kenya). These finds are dated between 700,000 and 500,000 years ago.

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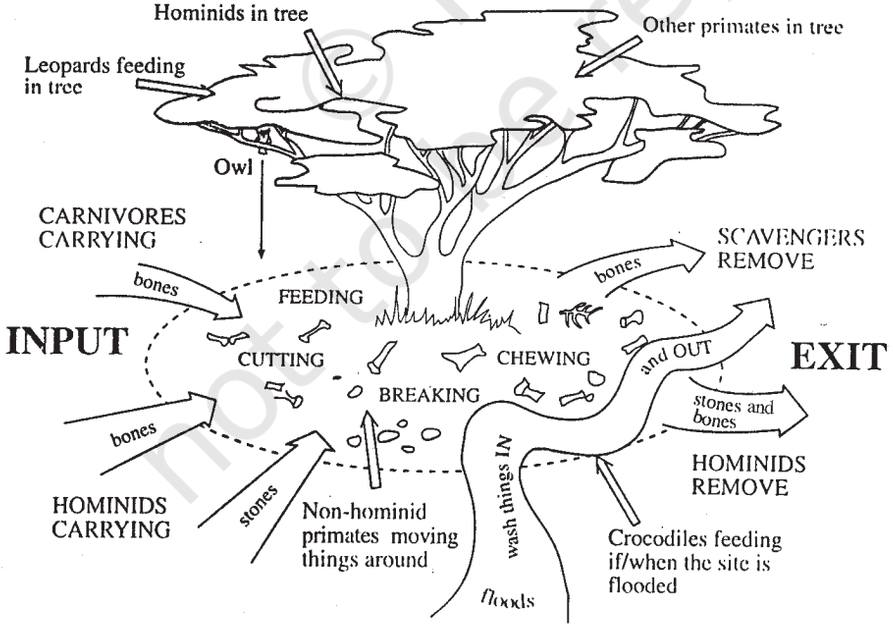
Left: The site of Olorgesailie. The excavators, Mary and Louis Leakey, had a catwalk built around the site for observers. Above: A close-up of tools found at the site, including hand axes.

How did these tools accumulate in one place? It is possible that some places, where food resources were abundant, were visited repeatedly. In such areas, people would tend to leave behind traces of their activities and presence, including artefacts. The deposited artefacts would appear as patches on the landscape. The places that were less frequently visited would have fewer artefacts, which may have been scattered over the surface.

It is also important to remember that the same locations could have been shared by hominids, other primates and carnivores. Look at the diagram below to see how this may have worked.



Archaeologists suggest that early hominids such as Homo habilis *probably consumed most of the food where they found it, slept in different places, and spent much of their time in trees. How would bones have reached the site? How would stones have reached the site? Would bones have survived intact?*

Artefacts are objects that are made by human beings. The term can refer to a wide range of things – tools, paintings, sculpture, engravings.

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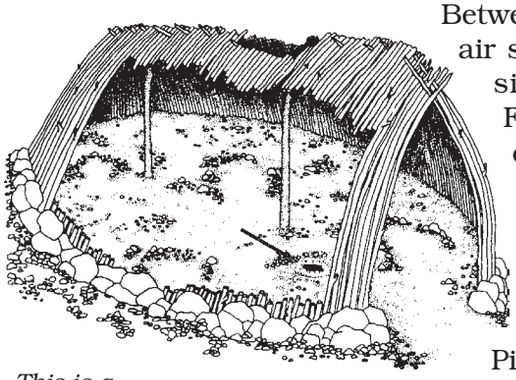


This is a reconstruction of a hut at Terra Amata. The large stone boulders were used to support the sides of the hut. The small scatters of stone on the floor were places where people made stone tools. The black spot marked with an arrow indicates a hearth. In what ways do you think life for those who lived in this shelter would be different from that of the hominids who lived on trees?

Between 400,000 and 125,000 years ago, caves and open-air sites began to be used. Evidence for this comes from sites in Europe. In the Lazaret cave in southern France, a 12x4 metre shelter was built against the cave wall. Inside it were two hearths and evidence of different food sources: fruits, vegetables, seeds, nuts, bird eggs and freshwater fish (trout, perch and carp). At another site, Terra Amata on the coast of southern France, flimsy shelters with roofs of wood and grasses were built for short-term, seasonal visits.

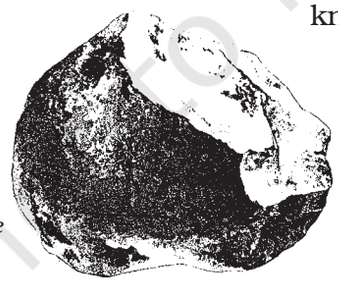
Pieces of baked clay and burnt bone along with stone tools, dated between 1.4 and 1 mya, have been found at Chesowanja, Kenya and Swartkrans, South Africa. Were these the result of a natural bushfire or volcanic eruption? Or were they produced through the deliberate, controlled use of fire? We do not really know.

Hearths, on the other hand, are indications of the controlled use of fire. This had several advantages – fire provided warmth and light inside caves, and could be used for cooking. Besides, fire was used to harden wood, as for instance the tip of the spear. The use of heat also facilitated the flaking of tools. As important, fire could be used to scare away dangerous animals.

Early Humans: Making Tools

To start with, it is useful to remember that the use of tools and tool making are not confined to humans. Birds are known to make objects to assist them with feeding, hygiene and social encounters; and while foraging for food some chimpanzees use tools that they have made.

However, there are some features of human tool making that are not known among apes. As we have seen (see p. 11), certain anatomical and neurological (related to the nervous system) adaptations have led to the skilled use of hands, probably due to the important role of tools in human lives. Moreover, the ways in which humans use and make tools often require greater memory and complex organisational skills, both of which are absent in apes.



Some early tools. These tools were found in Olduvai. The one above is a chopper. This is a large stone from which flakes have been removed to produce a working edge. The one below is a hand axe. Can you suggest what these tools may have been used for?

The earliest evidence for the making and use of stone tools comes from sites in Ethiopia and Kenya (see Map 1). It is likely that the earliest stone tool makers were the *Australopithecus*.

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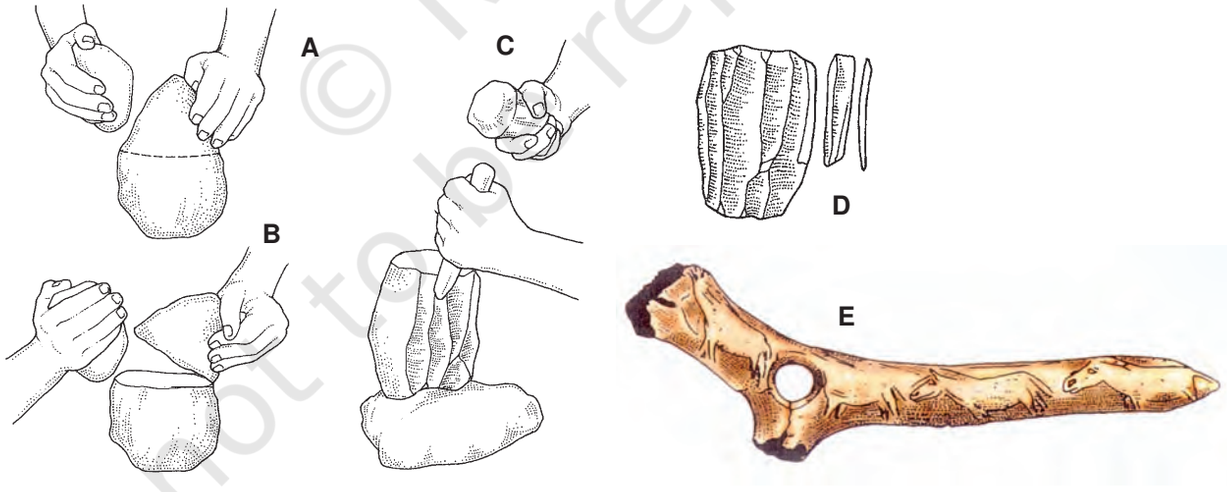
As in the case of other activities, we do not know whether tool making was done by men or women or both. It is possible that stone tool makers were both women and men. Women in particular may have made and used tools to obtain food for themselves as well as to sustain their children after weaning.

About 35,000 years ago, improvements in the techniques for killing animals are evident from the appearance of new kinds of tools such as spear-throwers and the bow and arrow. The meat thus obtained was probably processed by removing the bones, followed by drying, smoking and storage. Thus, food could be stored for later consumption.

A spear-thrower. Note the carving on the handle. The use of the spear-thrower enabled hunters to hurl spears over longer distances. Can you suggest any advantage in using such equipment?

There were other changes, such as the trapping of fur-bearing animals (to use the fur for clothing) and the invention of sewing needles. The earliest evidence of sewn clothing comes from about 21,000 years ago. Besides, with the introduction of the punch blade technique to make small chisel-like tools, it was now possible to make engravings on bone, antler, ivory or wood.

THE PUNCH BLADE TECHNIQUE



(a) The top of a large pebble is removed using a hammer stone.
(b) This produces a flat surface called the striking platform.
(c) This is then struck using a hammer and a punch, made of bone or antler.
(d) This leads to the production of blades that can be used as knives, or modified to serve as chisels or burins which could be used to engrave bone, antler, ivory or wood.
(e) An example of engraving on bone. Note the drawings of animals on it.

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Modes of Communication: Language and Art

Among living beings, it is humans alone that have a language. There are several views on language development: (1) that hominid language involved gestures or hand movements; (2) that spoken language was preceded by vocal but non-verbal communication such as singing or humming; (3) that human speech probably began with calls like the ones that have been observed among primates. Humans may have possessed a small number of speech sounds in the initial stage. Gradually, these may have developed into language.

When did spoken language emerge? It has been suggested that the brain of *Homo habilis* had certain features which would have made it possible for them to speak. Thus, language may have developed as early as 2 mya. The evolution of the vocal tract was equally important. This occurred around 200,000 years ago. It is more specifically associated with modern humans.

A third suggestion is that language developed around the same time as art, that is, around 40,000-35,000 years ago. The development of spoken language has been seen as closely connected with art, since both are media for communication.

Cave Paintings at Altamira

A drawing of a bison at Altamira, northern Spain.

Altamira is a cave site in Spain. The paintings on the ceiling of the cave were first brought to the attention of Marcelino Sanz de Sautuola, a local landowner and an amateur archaeologist, by his daughter Maria in November 1879. The little girl was 'running about in the cavern and playing about here and there', while her father was digging the floor of the cave. Suddenly she noticed the paintings on the ceiling: 'Look, Papa, oxen!' At first, her father just laughed, but soon realised that some sort of paste rather than paint had been used for the paintings and became 'so enthusiastic that he could hardly speak'. He published a booklet the following year, but for almost two decades his findings were dismissed by European archaeologists on the ground that these were too good to be ancient.

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Hundreds of paintings of animals (done between 30,000 and12,000 years ago) have been discovered in the caves of Lascaux and Chauvet, both in France, and Altamira, in Spain. These include depictions of bison, horses, ibex, deer, mammoths, rhinos, lions, bears, panthers, hyenas and owls.

More questions have been raised than answered regarding these paintings. For example, why do some areas of caves have paintings and not others? Why were some animals painted and not others? Why were men painted both individually and in groups, whereas women were depicted only in groups? Why were men painted near animals but never women? Why were groups of animals painted in the sections of caves where sounds carried well?

Several explanations have been offered. One is that because of the importance of hunting, the paintings of animals were associated with ritual and magic. The act of painting could have been a ritual to ensure a successful hunt. Another explanation offered is that these caves were possibly meeting places for small groups of people or locations for group activities. These groups could share hunting techniques and knowledge, while paintings and engravings served as the media for passing information from one generation to the next.

The above account of early societies has been based on archaeological evidence. Clearly, there is much that we still do not know. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, hunter-gatherer societies exist even today. Can one learn anything about past societies from present-day hunter-gatherers? This is a question we will address in the next section.

Early Encounters with Hunter-Gatherers in Africa

The following is an account by a member of an African pastoral group about its initial contact in 1870 with the !Kung San, a hunter-gatherer society living in the Kalahari desert:

> When we first came into this area, all we saw were strange footprints in the sand. We wondered what kind of people these were. They were very afraid of us and would hide whenever we came around. We found their villages, but they were always empty because as soon as they saw strangers coming, they would scatter and hide in the bush. We said: 'Oh, this is good; these people are afraid of us, they are weak and we can easily rule over them.' So we just ruled them. There was no killing or fighting.

You will read more about encounters with hunter-gatherers in Themes 8 and 10.

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Anthropology is a discipline that studies human culture and evolutionary aspects of human biology.

The Hadza

'The Hadza are a small group of hunters and gatherers, living in the vicinity of Lake Eyasi, a salt, rift-valley lake...The country of the eastern Hadza, dry, rocky savanna, dominated by thorn scrub and acacia trees...is rich in wild foods. Animals are exceptionally numerous and were certainly commoner at the beginning of the century. Elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, giraffe, zebra, waterbuck, gazelle, warthog, baboon, lion, leopard, and hyena are all common, as are smaller animals such as porcupine, hare, jackal, tortoise and many others. All of these animals, apart from the elephant, are hunted and eaten by the Hadza. The amount of meat that could be regularly eaten without endangering the future of the game is probably greater than anywhere else in the world where hunters and gatherers live or have lived in the recent past.

Vegetable food – roots, berries, the fruit of the baobab tree, etc. – though not often obvious to the casual observer, is always abundant even at the height of the dry season in a year of drought. The type of vegetable food available is different in the six-month wet season from the dry season but there is no period of shortage. The honey and grubs of seven species of wild bee are eaten; supplies of these vary from season to season and from year to year.

Sources of water are widely distributed over the country in the wet season but are very few in the dry season. The Hadza consider that about 5-6 kilometres is the maximum distance over which water can reasonably be carried and camps are normally sited within a kilometre of a water course.

Part of the country consists of open grass plains but the Hadza never build camps there. Camps are invariably sited among trees or rocks and, by preference, among both.

The eastern Hadza assert no rights over land and its resources. Any individual may live wherever he likes and may hunt animals, collect roots, berries, and honey and draw water anywhere in Hadza country without any sort of restriction...

In spite of the exceptional numbers of game animals in their area, the Hadza rely mainly on wild vegetable matter for their food. Probably as much as 80 per cent of their food by weight is vegetable, while meat and honey together account for the remaining 20 per cent.

Camps are commonly small and widely dispersed in the wet season, large and concentrated near the few available sources of water in the dry season.

There is never any shortage of food even in the time of drought.'

– Written in 1960 by James Woodburn, an anthropologist.

ACTIVITY 3

Why do the Hadza not assert rights over land and its resources? Why do the size and location of camps keep changing from season to season? Why is there never any shortage of food even in times of drought? Can you name any such hunter-gatherer societies in India today?

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Hunter-Gatherer Societies
From the Present to the Past

As our knowledge of present-day hunter-gatherers increased through studies by anthropologists, a question that began to be posed was whether the information about living hunters and gatherers could be used to understand past societies. Currently, there are two opposing views on this issue.

On one side are scholars who have directly applied specific data from present-day hunter-gatherer societies to interpret the archaeological remains of the past. For example, some archaeologists have suggested that the hominid sites, dated to 2 mya, along the margins of Lake Turkana could have been dry season camps of early humans, because such a practice has been observed among the Hadza and the !Kung San.

Ethnography is the study of contemporary ethnic groups. It includes an examination of their modes of livelihood, technology, gender roles, rituals, political institutions and social customs.

On the other side are scholars who feel that ethnographic data cannot be used for understanding past societies as the two are totally different. For instance, present-day hunter-gatherer societies pursue several other economic activities along with hunting and gathering. These include engaging in exchange and trade in minor forest produce, or working as paid labourers in the fields of neighbouring farmers. Moreover, these societies are totally marginalised in all senses – geographically, politically and socially. The conditions in which they live are very different from those of early humans.

Another problem is that there is tremendous variation amongst living hunter-gatherer societies. There are conflicting data on many issues such as the relative importance of hunting and gathering, group sizes, or the movement from place to place.

Also, there is little consensus regarding the division of labour in food procurement. Although today generally women gather and men hunt, there are societies where both women and men hunt and gather and make tools. In any case, the important role of women in contributing to the food supply in such societies cannot be denied. It is perhaps this factor that ensures a relatively equal role for both women and men in present-day hunter-gatherer societies, although there are variations. While this may be the case today, it is difficult to make any such inference for the past.

ACTIVITY 4

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of using ethnographic accounts to reconstruct the lives of the earliest peoples?

Epilogue

For several million years, humans lived by hunting wild animals and gathering wild plants. Then, between 10,000 and 4,500 years ago, people in different parts of the world learnt to domesticate certain plants and animals. This led to the development of farming and pastoralism as a way of life. The shift from foraging to farming was a

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major turning point in human history. Why did this change take place at this point of time?

The last ice age came to an end about 13,000 years ago and with that warmer, wetter conditions prevailed. As a result, conditions were favourable for the growth of grasses such as wild barley and wheat. At the same time, as open forests and grasslands expanded, the population of certain animal species such as wild sheep, goat, cattle, pig and donkey increased. What we find is that human societies began to gradually prefer areas that had an abundance of wild grasses and animals. Now relatively large, permanent communities occupied such areas for most parts of the year. With some areas being clearly preferred, a pressure may have built up to increase the food supply. This may have triggered the process of domestication of certain plants and animals. It is likely that a combination of factors which included climatic change, population pressure, a greater reliance on and knowledge of a few species of plants (such as wheat, barley, rice and millet) and animals (such as sheep, goat, cattle, donkey and pig) played a role in this transformation.

One such area where farming and pastoralism began around 10,000 years ago was the Fertile Crescent, extending from the Mediterranean coast to the Zagros mountains in Iran. With the introduction of agriculture, more people began to stay in one place for even longer periods than they had done before. Thus permanent houses began to be built of mud, mud bricks and even stone. These are some of the earliest villages known to archaeologists.

Farming and pastoralism led to the introduction of many other changes such as the making of pots in which to store grain and other produce, and to cook food. Besides, new kinds of stone tools came into use. Other new tools such as the plough were used in agriculture. Gradually, people became familiar with metals such as copper and tin. The wheel, important for both pot making and transportation, came into use.

About 5,000 years ago, even larger concentrations of people began to live together in cities. Why did this happen? And what are the differences between cities and other settlements? Look out for answers to these and other questions in Theme 2.

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TIMELINE 1 (mya)	
36-24 mya	Primates; Monkeys in Asia and Africa
24 mya	(Superfamily) Hominoids; Gibbons, Asian orang-utan and African apes (gorilla, chimpanzee and bonobo or 'pygmy' chimpanzee)
6.4 mya	Branching out of hominoids and hominids
5.6 mya	*Australopithecus*
2.6-2.5	Earliest stone tools
2.5-2.0	Cooling and drying of Africa, resulting in decrease in woodlands and increase in grasslands
2.5-2.0 mya	*Homo*
2.2 mya	*Homo habilis*
1.8 mya	*Homo erectus*
1.3 mya	Extinction of *Australopithecus*
0.8 mya	'Archaic' *sapiens, Homo heidelbergensis*
0.19-0.16 mya	*Homo sapiens sapiens* (modern humans)

TIMELINE 2 (years ago)	
Earliest evidence of burials	300,000
Extinction of *Homo erectus*	200,000
Development of voice box	200,000
Archaic *Homo sapiens* skull in the Narmada valley, India	200,000-130,000
Emergence of modern humans	195,000-160,000
Emergence of Neanderthals	130,000
Earliest evidence of hearths	125,000
Extinction of Neanderthals	35,000
Earliest evidence of figurines made of fired clay	27,000
Invention of sewing needles	21,000

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The Rift Valley, East Africa.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. Look at the diagram showing the positive feedback mechanism on page 13. Can you list the inputs that went into tool making? What were the processes that were strengthened by tool making?
2. Humans and mammals such as monkeys and apes have certain similarities in behaviour and anatomy. This indicates that humans possibly evolved from apes. List these resemblances in two columns under the headings of (a) behaviour and (b) anatomy. Are there any differences that you think are noteworthy?
3. Discuss the arguments advanced in favour of the regional continuity model of human origins. Do you think it provides a convincing explanation of the archaeological evidence? Give reasons for your answer.
4. Which of the following do you think is best documented in the archaeological record: (a) gathering, (b) tool making, (c) the use of fire?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. Discuss the extent to which (a) hunting and (b) constructing shelters would have been facilitated by the use of language. What other modes of communication could have been used for these activities?
6. Choose any two developments each from Timelines 1 and 2 at the end of the chapter and indicate why you think these are significant.

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THEME 2

WRITING AND CITY LIFE

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CITY life began in Mesopotamia, the land between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers that is now part of the Republic of Iraq. Mesopotamian civilisation is known for its prosperity, city life, its voluminous and rich literature and its mathematics and astronomy. Mesopotamia's writing system and literature spread to the eastern Mediterranean, northern Syria, and Turkey after 2000 BCE, so that the kingdoms of that entire region were writing to one another, and to the Pharaoh of Egypt, in the language and script of Mesopotamia. Here we shall explore the connection between city life and writing, and then look at some outcomes of a sustained tradition of writing.*

In the beginning of recorded history, the land, mainly the urbanised south (see discussion below), was called Sumer and Akkad. After 2000 BCE, when Babylon became an important city, the term Babylonia was used for the southern region. From about 1100 BCE, when the Assyrians established their kingdom in the north, the region became known as Assyria. The first known language of the land was Sumerian. It was gradually replaced by Akkadian around 2400 BCE when Akkadian speakers arrived. This language flourished till about Alexander's time (336-323 BCE), with some regional changes occurring. From 1400 BCE, Aramaic also trickled in. This language, similar to Hebrew, became widely spoken after 1000 BCE. It is still spoken in parts of Iraq.

*The name Mesopotamia is derived from the Greek words *mesos*, meaning middle, and *potamos*, meaning river.

Archaeology in Mesopotamia began in the 1840s. At one or two sites (including Uruk and Mari, which we discuss below), excavations continued for decades. (No Indian site has ever seen such long-term projects.) Not only can we study hundreds of Mesopotamian buildings, statues, ornaments, graves, tools and seals as sources, there are thousands of written documents.

Mesopotamia was important to Europeans because of references to it in the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible. For instance, the Book of Genesis of the Old Testament refers to 'Shimar', meaning Sumer, as a land of brick-built cities. Travellers and scholars of Europe looked on Mesopotamia as a kind of ancestral land, and when archaeological work began in the area, there was an attempt to prove the literal truth of the Old Testament.

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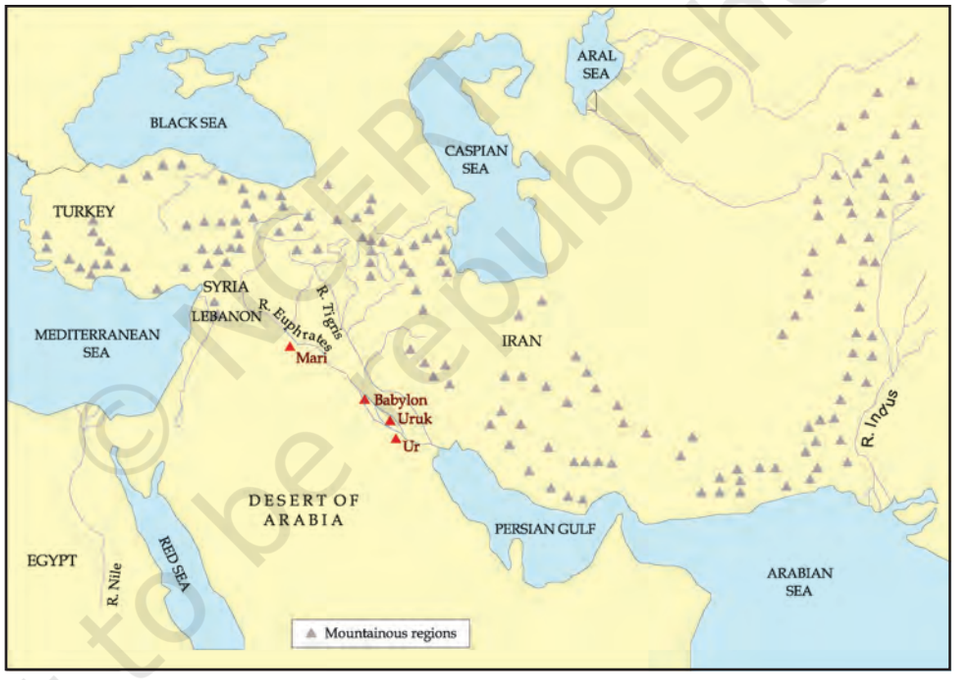
From the mid-nineteenth century there was no stopping the enthusiasm for exploring the ancient past of Mesopotamia. In 1873, a British newspaper funded an expedition of the British Museum to search for a tablet narrating the story of the Flood, mentioned in the Bible.

By the 1960s, it was understood that the stories of the Old Testament were not literally true, but may have been ways of expressing memories about important changes in history. Gradually, archaeological techniques became far more sophisticated and refined. What is more, attention was directed to different questions, including reconstructing the lives of ordinary people. Establishing the literal truth of Biblical narratives receded into the background. Much of what we discuss subsequently in the chapter is based on these later studies.

According to the Bible, the Flood was meant to destroy all life on earth. However, God chose a man, Noah, to ensure that life could continue after the Flood. Noah built a huge boat, an ark. He took a pair each of all known species of animals and birds on board the ark, which survived the Flood. There was a strikingly similar story in the Mesopotamian tradition, where the principal character was called Ziusudra or Utnapishtim.



MAP 1: West Asia

ACTIVITY 1

Many societies have myths about floods. These are often ways of preserving and expressing memories about important changes in history. Find out more about these, noting how life before and after the flood is represented.

Mesopotamia and its Geography

Iraq is a land of diverse environments. In the north-east lie green, undulating plains, gradually rising to tree-covered mountain ranges with clear streams and wild flowers, with enough rainfall to grow crops. Here, agriculture began between 7000 and 6000 BCE. In the north, there is a stretch of upland called a steppe, where animal herding offers people a better livelihood than agriculture – after the winter rains, sheep and goats feed on the grasses and low shrubs that grow here. To the east, tributaries of the Tigris provide routes of

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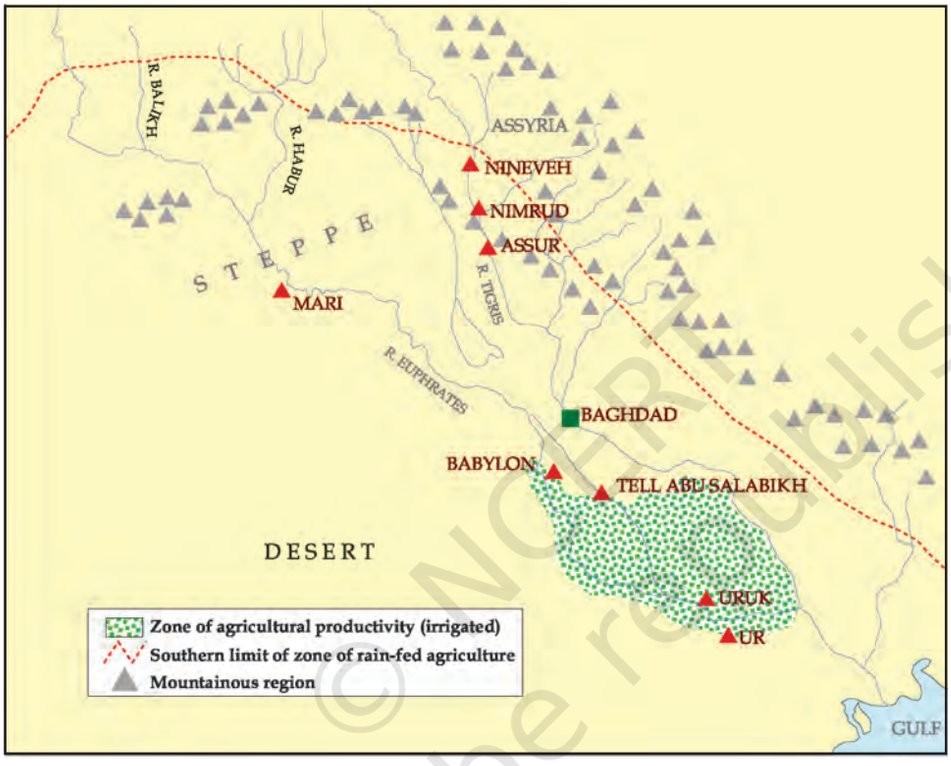
communication into the mountains of Iran. The south is a desert – and this is where the first cities and writing emerged (see below). This desert could support cities because the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, which rise in the northern mountains, carry loads of silt (fine mud). When they flood or when their water is let out on to the fields, fertile silt is deposited.



MAP 2: Mesopotamia: Mountains, Steppe, Desert, Irrigated Zone of the South.

After the Euphrates has entered the desert, its water flows out into small channels. These channels flood their banks and, in the past, functioned as irrigation canals: water could be let into the fields of wheat, barley, peas or lentils when necessary. Of all ancient systems, that of the Roman Empire (Theme 3) included, it was the agriculture of southern Mesopotamia that was the most productive, even though the region did not have sufficient rainfall to grow crops.

Not only agriculture, Mesopotamian sheep and goats that grazed on the steppe, the north-eastern plains and the mountain slopes (that is, on tracts too high for the rivers to flood and fertilise) produced meat, milk and wool in abundance. Further, fish was available in rivers and date-palms gave fruit in summer. Let us not, however, make the mistake of thinking that cities grew simply because of rural prosperity. We shall discuss other factors by and by, but first let us be clear about city life.

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The Significance of Urbanism

Cities and towns are not just places with large populations. It is when an economy develops in spheres other than food production that it becomes an advantage for people to cluster in towns. Urban economies comprise besides food production, trade, manufactures and services. City people, thus, cease to be self-sufficient and depend on the products or services of other (city or village) people. There is continuous interaction among them. For instance, the carver of a stone seal requires bronze tools that he himself cannot make, and coloured stones for the seals that he does not know where to get: his 'specialisation' is fine carving, not trading. The bronze tool maker does not himself go out to get the metals, copper and tin. Besides, he needs regular supplies of charcoal for fuel. The *division of labour* is a mark of urban life.

Further, there must be a social organisation in place. Fuel, metal, various stones, wood, etc., come from many different places for city manufacturers. Thus, organised trade and storage is needed. There are deliveries of grain and other food items from the village to the city, and food supplies need to be stored and distributed. Besides, many different activities have to be coordinated: there must be not only stones but also bronze tools and pots available for seal cutters. Obviously, in such a system some people give commands that others obey, and urban economies often require the keeping of written records.

The earliest cities in Mesopotamia date back to the bronze age, c.3000 BCE. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin. Using bronze meant procuring these metals, often from great distances. Metal tools were necessary for accurate carpentry, drilling beads, carving stone seals, cutting shell for inlaid furniture, etc. Mesopotamian weapons were also of bronze – for example, the tips of the spears that you see in the illustration on p. 38.

The Warka Head

This woman's head was sculpted in white marble at Uruk before 3000 BCE. The eyes and eyebrows would probably have taken lapis lazuli (blue) and shell (white) and bitumen (black) inlays, respectively. There is a groove along the top of the head, perhaps for an ornament. This is a world-famous piece of sculpture, admired for the delicate modelling of the woman's mouth, chin and cheeks. And it was modelled in a hard stone that would have been imported from a distance.

Beginning with the procurement of stone, list all the specialists who would be involved in the production of such a piece of sculpture.

ACTIVITY 2

Discuss whether city life would have been possible without the use of metals.

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Movement of Goods into Cities

However rich the food resources of Mesopotamia, its mineral resources were few. Most parts of the south lacked stones for tools, seals and jewels; the wood of the Iraqi date-palm and poplar was not good enough for carts, cart wheels or boats; and there was no metal for tools, vessels or ornaments. So we can surmise that the ancient Mesopotamians could have traded their abundant textiles and agricultural produce for wood, copper, tin, silver, gold, shell and various stones from Turkey and Iran, or across the Gulf. These latter regions had mineral resources, but much less scope for agriculture. Regular exchanges – possible only when there was a social organisation – to equip foreign expeditions and direct the exchanges were initiated by the people of southern Mesopotamia.

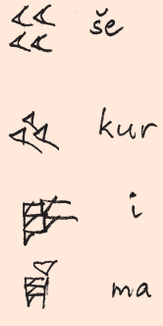
Besides crafts, trade and services, efficient transport is also important for urban development. If it takes too much time, or too much animal feed, to carry grain or charcoal into cities on pack animals or bullock carts, the city economy will not be viable. The cheapest mode of transportation is, everywhere, over water. River boats or barges loaded with sacks of grain are propelled by the current of the river and/or wind, but when animals transport goods, they need to be fed. The canals and natural channels of ancient Mesopotamia were in fact routes of goods transport between large and small settlements, and in the account on the city of Mari later in the chapter, the importance of the Euphrates as a 'world route' will become clear.

Clay tablets c.3200 BCE. Each tablet is 3.5 cm or less in height, with picture-like signs (ox, fish, grain, boat) and numbers ( )

The Development of Writing

All societies have languages in which certain spoken sounds convey certain meanings. This is verbal communication. Writing too is verbal communication – but in a different way. When we talk about writing or a script, we mean that *spoken sounds* are represented in *visible signs*.

The first Mesopotamian tablets, written around 3200 BCE, contained picture-like signs and numbers. These were about 5,000 lists of oxen, fish, bread loaves, etc. – lists of goods that were brought into or distributed from the temples of Uruk, a city in the south. Clearly, writing began when society needed to keep records of transactions – because in city life transactions occurred at different times, and involved many people and a variety of goods.



Cuneiform syllabic signs.

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Mesopotamians wrote on tablets of clay. A scribe would wet clay and pat it into a size he could hold comfortably in one hand. He would

A clay tablet written on both sides in cuneiform. It is a mathematical exercise – you can see a triangle and lines across the triangle on the top of the obverse side. You can see that the letters have been pressed into the clay.

carefully smoothen its surfaces. With the sharp end of a reed cut obliquely, he would press wedge-shaped ('cuneiform*') signs on to the smoothened surface while it was still moist. Once dried in the sun, the clay would harden and tablets would be almost as indestructible as pottery. When a written record of, say, the delivery of pieces of metal had ceased to be relevant, the tablet was thrown away. Once the surface dried, signs could not be pressed on to a tablet: so each transaction, however minor, required a separate written tablet. This is why tablets occur by the hundreds at Mesopotamian sites. And it is because of this wealth of sources that we know so much more about Mesopotamia than we do about contemporary India.

* Cuneiform is derived from the Latin words *cuneus*, meaning 'wedge' and *forma*, meaning 'shape'.

By 2600 BCE or so, the letters became cuneiform, and the language was Sumerian. Writing was now used not only for keeping records, but also for making dictionaries, giving legal validity to land transfers, narrating the deeds of kings, and announcing the changes a king had made in the customary laws of the land. Sumerian, the earliest known language of Mesopotamia, was gradually replaced after 2400 BCE by the Akkadian language. Cuneiform writing in the Akkadian language continued in use until the first century CE, that is, for more than 2,000 years.

The System of Writing

The sound that a cuneiform sign represented was not a single consonant or vowel (such as *m* or *a* in the English alphabet), but syllables (say, *-put-*, or *-la-*, or *-in-*). Thus, the signs that a Mesopotamian scribe had

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to learn ran into hundreds, and he had to be able to handle a wet tablet and get it written before it dried. So, writing was a skilled craft but, more important, it was an enormous intellectual achievement, conveying in visual form the system of sounds of a particular language.

Literacy

Very few Mesopotamians could read and write. Not only were there hundreds of signs to learn, many of these were complex (see p. 33). If a king could read, he made sure that this was recorded in one of his boastful inscriptions! For the most part, however, writing reflected the mode of speaking.

A letter from an official would have to be read out to the king. So it would begin:

> 'To my lord A, speak: … Thus says your servant B: … I have carried out the work assigned to me …'

A long mythical poem about creation ends thus:

> 'Let these verses be held in remembrance and let the elder teach them;
> let the wise one and the scholar discuss them;
> let the father repeat them to his sons;
> let the ears of (even) the herdsman be opened to them.'

The Uses of Writing

The connection between city life, trade and writing is brought out in a long Sumerian epic poem about Enmerkar, one of the earliest rulers of Uruk. In Mesopotamian tradition, Uruk was the city par excellence, often known simply as The City.

Enmerkar is associated with the organisation of the first trade of Sumer: in the early days, the epic says, 'trade was not known'. Enmerkar wanted lapis lazuli and precious metals for the beautification of a city temple and sent his messenger out to get them from the chief of a very distant land called Aratta. 'The messenger heeded the word of the king. By night he went just by the stars. By day, he would go by heaven's sun divine. He had to go up into the mountain ranges, and had to come down out of the mountain ranges. The people of Susa (a city) below the mountains saluted him like tiny mice*. Five mountain ranges, six mountain ranges, seven mountain ranges he crossed…'

The messenger could not get the chief of Aratta to part with lapis lazuli or silver, and he had to make the long journey back and forth, again and again, carrying threats and promises from the king of Uruk. Ultimately, the messenger 'grew weary of mouth'. He got all the messages mixed up. Then, 'Enmerkar formed a clay tablet in his hand, and he wrote the words down. In those days, there had been no writing down of words on clay.'

*The poet means that once the messenger had climbed to a great height, everything appeared small in the valley far below.

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Given the written tablet, 'the ruler of Aratta examined the clay. The spoken words were nails*. His face was frowning. He kept looking at the tablet.'

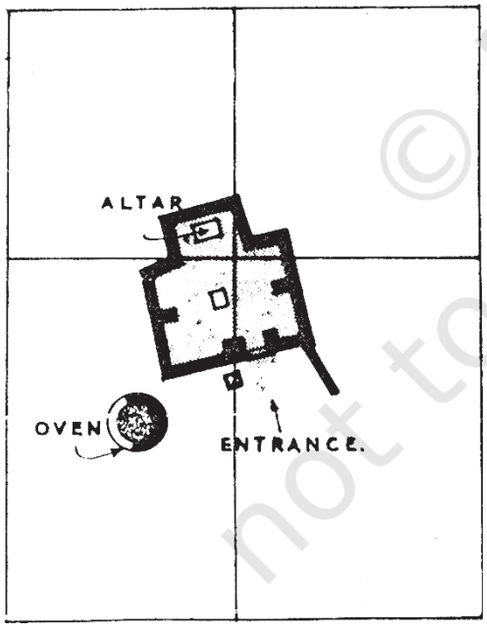
*Cuneiform letters were wedge shaped, hence, like nails.

This should not be taken as the literal truth, but it can be inferred that in Mesopotamian understanding it was kingship that organised trade and writing. This poem also tells us that, besides being a means of storing information and of sending messages afar, writing was seen as a sign of the superiority of Mesopotamian urban culture.

Urbanisation in Southern Mesopotamia: Temples and Kings

From 5000 BCE, settlements had begun to develop in southern Mesopotamia. The earliest cities emerged from some of these settlements. These were of various kinds: those that gradually developed around temples; those that developed as centres of trade; and imperial cities. It is cities of the first two kinds that will be discussed here.

Early settlers (their origins are unknown) began to build and rebuild temples at selected spots in their villages. The earliest known temple was a small shrine made of unbaked bricks. Temples were the residences of various gods: of the Moon God of Ur, or of Inanna the Goddess of Love and War. Constructed in brick, temples became larger over time, with several rooms around open courtyards. Some of the early ones were possibly not unlike the ordinary house – for the temple was the house of a god. But temples always had their outer walls going in and out at regular intervals, which no ordinary building ever had.



The earliest known temple of the south, c.5000 BCE (plan).

The god was the focus of worship: to him or her people brought grain, curd and fish (the floors of some early temples had thick layers of fish bones). The god was also the theoretical owner of the agricultural fields, the fisheries, and the herds of the local community. In time, the processing of produce (for example, oil pressing, grain grinding, spinning, and the weaving of woollen cloth) was also done in the temple. Organiser of production at a level above the household, employer of merchants and keeper of written records of distributions and allotments of grain, plough animals, bread, beer, fish, etc., the temple gradually developed its activities and became the main urban institution. But there was also another factor on the scene.

In spite of natural fertility, agriculture was subject to hazards. The natural outlet channels of the Euphrates would have too much water one year and flood the crops, and sometimes they would change course altogether. As the archaeological record shows, villages were periodically relocated in Mesopotamian history. There were man-made problems as well. Those who lived on the upstream

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A temple of a later period, c.3000 BCE, with an open courtyard and in-and-out façade (as excavated).

stretches of a channel could divert so much water into their fields that villages downstream were left without water. Or they could neglect to clean out the silt from their stretch of the channel, blocking the flow of water further down. So the early Mesopotamian countryside saw repeated conflict over land and water.

When there was continuous warfare in a region, those chiefs who had been successful in war could oblige their followers by distributing the loot, and could take prisoners from the defeated groups to employ as their guards or servants. So they could increase their influence and clout. Such war leaders, however, would be here today and gone tomorrow – until a time came when such leadership came to increase the well-being of the community with the creation of new institutions or practices. In time, victorious chiefs began to offer precious booty to the gods and thus beautify the community's temples. They would send men out to fetch fine stones and metal for the benefit of the god and community and organise the distribution of temple wealth in an efficient way by accounting for things that came in and went out. As the poem about Enmerkar shows, this gave the king high status and the authority to command the community.

We can imagine a mutually reinforcing cycle of development in which leaders encouraged the settlement of villagers close to themselves, to be able to rapidly get an army together. Besides, people would be safe living in close proximity to one another. At Uruk, one of the earliest temple towns, we find depictions of armed heroes and their victims, and careful archaeological surveys have shown that around 3000 BCE, when Uruk grew to the enormous extent of 250 hectares – twice as large as Mohenjo-daro would be in later centuries – dozens of small villages were deserted. There had

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Top: Basalt stele showing a bearded man twice. Note his headband and hair, waistband and long skirt. In the lower scene he attacks a lion with a huge bow and arrow. In the scene above, the hero finally kills the rampant lion with a spear (c.3200 BCE).*

been a major population shift. Significantly, Uruk also came to have a defensive wall at a very early date. The site was continuously occupied from about 4200 BCE to about 400 CE, and by about 2800 BCE it had expanded to 400 hectares.

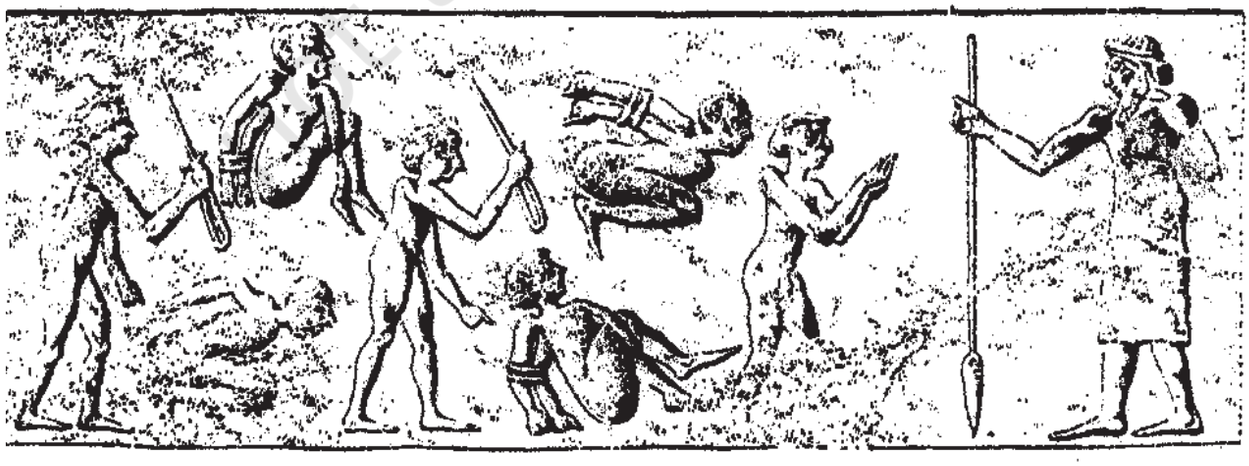
War captives and local people were put to work for the temple, or directly for the ruler. This, rather than agricultural tax, was compulsory. Those who were put to work were paid rations. Hundreds of ration lists have been found, which give, against people's names, the quantities of grain, cloth or oil allotted to them. It has been estimated that one of the temples took 1,500 men working 10 hours a day, five years to build.

With rulers commanding people to fetch stones or metal ores, to come and make bricks or lay the bricks for a temple, or else to go to a distant country to fetch suitable materials, there were also technical advances at Uruk around 3000 BCE. Bronze tools came into use for various crafts. Architects learnt to construct brick columns, there being no suitable wood to bear the weight of the roof of large halls.

Hundreds of people were put to work at making and baking clay cones that could be pushed into temple walls, painted in different colours, creating a colourful mosaic. In sculpture, there were superb achievements, not in easily available clay but in imported stone. And then there was a technological landmark that we can say is appropriate to an urban economy: the potter's wheel. In the long run, the wheel enables a potter's workshop to 'mass produce' dozens of similar pots at a time.

*Steles are stone slabs with inscriptions or carvings.

Impression of a cylinder seal, c.3200 BCE. The bearded and armed standing figure is similar in dress and hairstyle to the hero in the stele shown above. Note three prisoners of war, their arms bound, and a fourth man beseeching the war leader.*



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The Seal – An Urban Artefact

In India, early stone seals were stamped. In Mesopotamia until the end of the first millennium BCE, cylindrical stone seals, pierced down the centre, were fitted with a stick and rolled over wet clay so that a continuous picture was created. They were carved by very skilled craftsmen, and sometimes carry writing: the name of the owner, his god, his official position, etc. A seal could be rolled on clay covering the string knot of a cloth package or the mouth of a pot, keeping the contents safe. When rolled on a letter written on a clay tablet, it became a mark of authenticity. So the seal was the mark of a city dweller's role in public life.

Five early cylinder seals and their impressions.
Describe what you see in each of the impressions. Is the cuneiform script shown on them?

Life in the City

What we have seen is that a ruling elite had emerged: a small section of society had a major share of the wealth. Nothing makes this fact as clear as the enormous riches (jewellery, gold vessels, wooden musical instruments inlaid with white shell and lapis lazuli, ceremonial daggers of gold, etc.) buried with some kings and queens at Ur. But what of the ordinary people?

We know from the legal texts (disputes, inheritance matters, etc.) that in Mesopotamian society the nuclear family* was the norm, although a married son and his family often resided with his parents. The father was the head of the family. We know a little about the procedures for marriage. A declaration was made about the willingness to marry, the bride's parents giving their consent to the marriage. Then a gift was given by the groom's people to the bride's

*A nuclear family comprises a man, his wife and children.

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people. When the wedding took place, gifts were exchanged by both parties, who ate together and made offerings in a temple. When her mother-in-law came to fetch her, the bride was given her share of the inheritance by her father. The father's house, herds, fields, etc., were inherited by the sons.

Let us look at Ur, one of the earliest cities to have been excavated. Ur was a town whose ordinary houses were systematically excavated in the 1930s. Narrow winding streets indicate that wheeled carts could not have reached many of the houses. Sacks of grain and firewood would have arrived on donkey-back. Narrow winding streets and the irregular shapes of house plots also indicate an absence of town planning. There were no street drains of the kind we find in contemporary Mohenjo-daro. Drains and clay pipes were instead found in the inner courtyards of the Ur houses and it is thought that house roofs sloped inwards and rainwater was channelled via the drainpipes into sumps* in the inner courtyards. This would have been a way of preventing the unpaved streets from becoming excessively slushy after a downpour.

*A sump is a covered basin in the ground into which water and sewage flow.

A residential area at Ur, c. 2000 BCE. Can you locate, besides the winding streets, two or three blind alleys?

Yet people seem to have swept all their household refuse into the streets, to be trodden underfoot! This made street levels rise, and over time the thresholds of houses had also to be raised so that no mud would flow inside after the rains. Light came into the rooms not from windows but from doorways opening into the courtyards: this would also have given families their privacy. There were superstitions about houses, recorded in omen tablets at Ur: a raised threshold brought wealth; a front door that did not open towards another house was lucky; but if the main wooden door of a house opened outwards (instead of inwards), the wife would be a torment to her husband!

There was a town cemetery at Ur in which the graves of royalty and commoners have been found, but a few individuals were found buried under the floors of ordinary houses.

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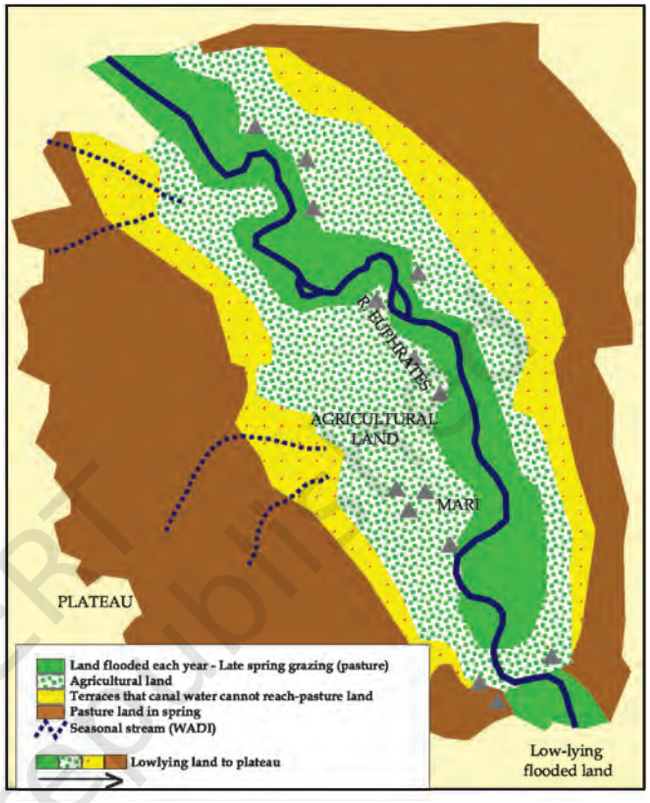
A Trading Town in a Pastoral Zone

MAP 3: The Location of Mari



After 2000 BCE the royal capital of Mari flourished. You will have noticed (see Map 2) that Mari stands not on the southern plain with its highly productive agriculture but much further upstream on the Euphrates. Map 3 with its colour coding shows that agriculture and animal rearing were carried out close to each other in this region. Some communities in the kingdom of Mari had both farmers and pastoralists, but most of its territory was used for pasturing sheep and goats.

Herders need to exchange young animals, cheese, leather and meat in return for grain, metal tools, etc., and the manure of a penned flock is also of great use to a farmer. Yet, at the same time, there may be conflict. A shepherd may take his flock to water across a sown field, to the ruin of the crop. Herdsmen being mobile can raid agricultural villages and seize their stored goods. For their part, settled groups may deny pastoralists access to river and canal water along a certain set of paths.

Through Mesopotamian history, nomadic communities of the western desert filtered into the prosperous agricultural heartland. Shepherds would bring their flocks into the sown area in the summer. Such groups would come in as herders, harvest labourers or hired soldiers, occasionally become prosperous, and settle down. A few gained the power to establish their own rule. These included the Akkadians, Amorites, Assyrians and Aramaeans. (You will read more about rulers from pastoral societies in Theme 5.) The kings of Mari were Amorites whose dress differed from that of the original inhabitants and who respected not only the gods of Mesopotamia but also raised a temple at Mari for Dagan, god of the steppe. Mesopotamian society and culture were thus open to different people and cultures, and the vitality of the civilisation was perhaps due to this intermixture.

A warrior holding a long spear and a wicker shield. Note the dress, typical of Amorites, and different from that of the Sumerian warrior shown on p. 38. This picture was incised on shell, c.2600 BCE.

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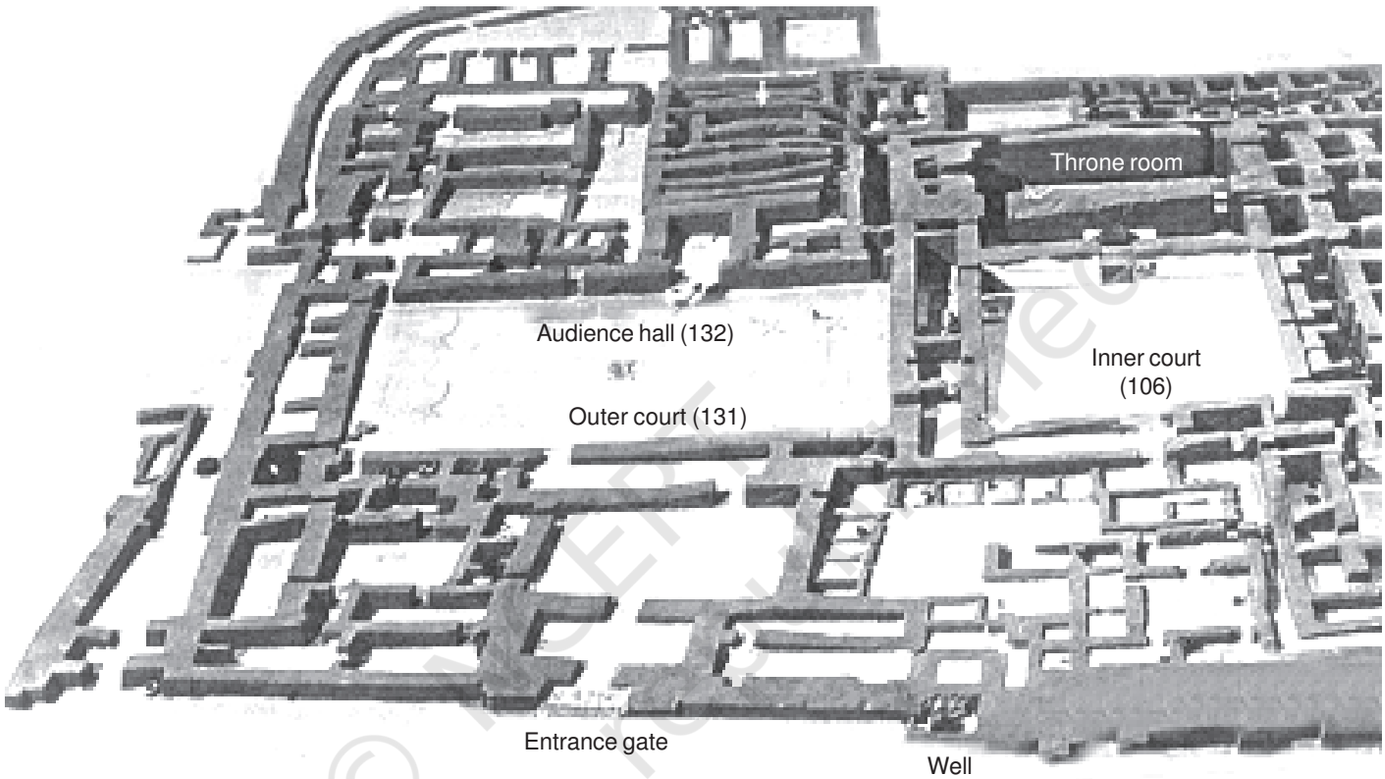
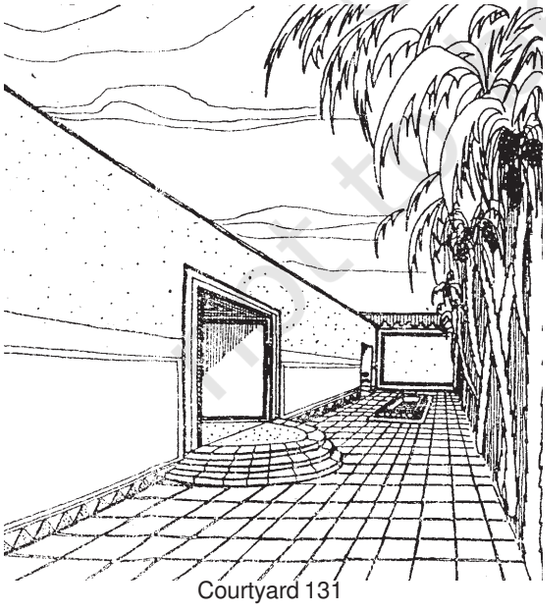
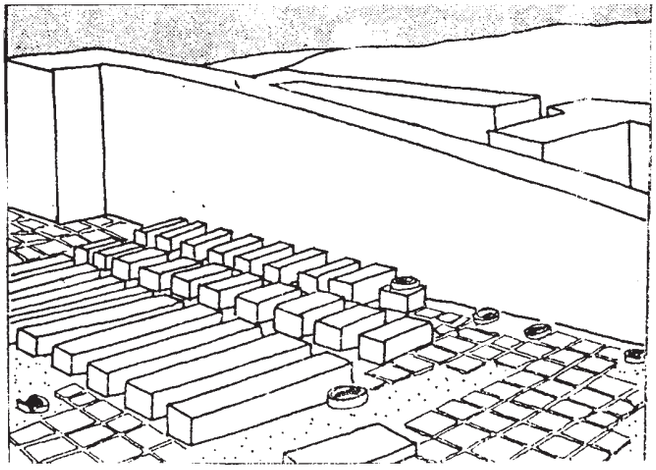
The Palace at Mari of King Zimrilim (1810-1760 BCE)





Courtyard 131



Scribes' office with benches and clay bins for storing tablets

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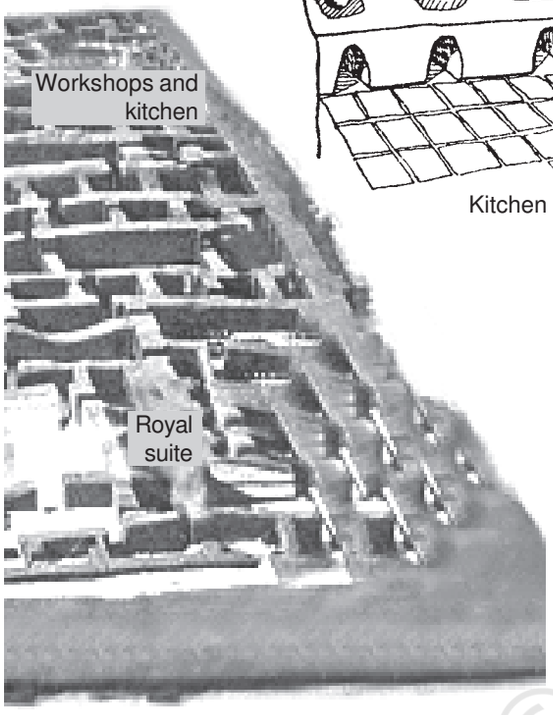
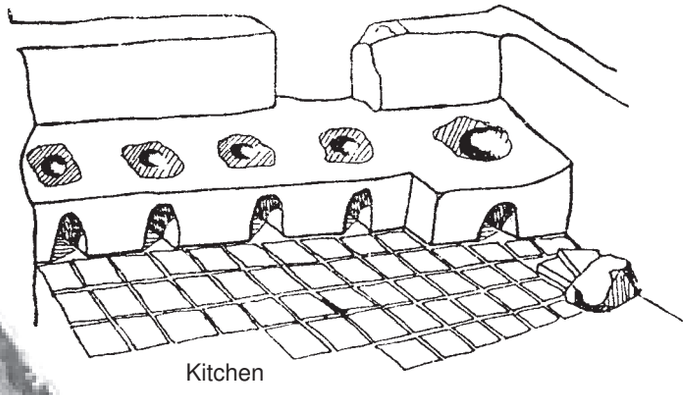
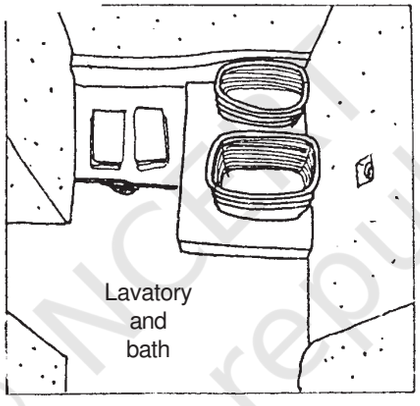
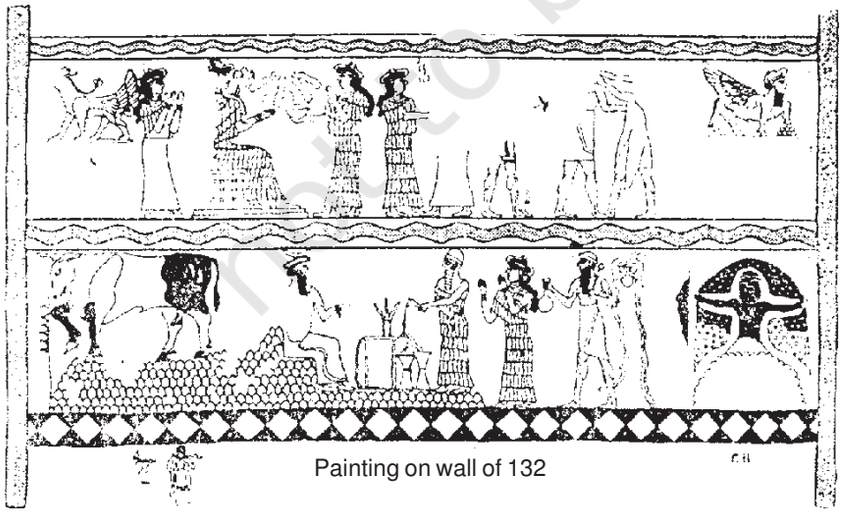



Kitchen




Painting on wall of 132

The Palace at Mari of King Zimrilim (1810-1760 BCE)

The great palace of Mari was the residence of the royal family, the hub of administration, and a place of production, especially of precious metal ornaments. It was so famous in its time that a minor king came from north Syria just to see it, carrying with him a letter of introduction from a royal friend of the king of Mari, Zimrilim. Daily lists reveal that huge quantities of food were presented each day for the king's table: flour, bread, meat, fish, fruit, beer and wine. He probably ate in the company of many others, in or around courtyard **106**, paved white. You will notice from the plan that the palace had only one entrance, on the north. The large, open courtyards such as **131** were beautifully paved. The king would have received foreign dignitaries and his own people in **132**, a room with wall paintings that would have awed the visitors. The palace was a sprawling structure, with 260 rooms and covered an area of 2.4 hectares.

ACTIVITY 3

Trace the route from the entrance to the inner court. What do you think would have been kept in the storerooms?
How has the kitchen been identified?

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The kings of Mari, however, had to be vigilant; herders of various tribes were allowed to move in the kingdom, but they were watched. The camps of herders are mentioned frequently in letters between kings and officials. In one letter, an officer writes to the king that he has been seeing frequent fire signals at night – sent by one camp to another – and he suspects that a raid or an attack is being planned.

Located on the Euphrates in a prime position for trade – in wood, copper, tin, oil, wine, and various other goods that were carried in boats along the Euphrates – between the south and the mineral-rich uplands of Turkey, Syria and Lebanon, Mari is a good example of an urban centre prospering on trade. Boats carrying grinding stones, wood, and wine and oil jars, would stop at Mari on their way to the southern cities. Officers of this town would go aboard, inspect the cargo (a single river boat could hold 300 wine jars), and levy a charge of about one-tenth the value of the goods before allowing the boat to continue downstream. Barley came in special grain boats. Most important, tablets refer to copper from 'Alashiya', the island of Cyprus, known for its copper, and tin was also an item of trade. As bronze was the main industrial material for tools and weapons, this trade was of great importance. Thus, although the kingdom of Mari was not militarily strong, it was exceptionally prosperous.

Excavating Mesopotamian Towns

Today, Mesopotamian excavators have much higher standards of accuracy and care in recording than in the old days, so that few dig huge areas the way Ur was excavated. Moreover, few archaeologists have the funds to employ large teams of excavators. Thus, the mode of obtaining data has changed.

Take the small town at Abu Salabikh, about 10 hectares in area in 2500 BCE with a population less than 10,000. The outlines of walls were at first traced by scraping surfaces. This involves scraping off the top few millimetres of the mound with the sharp and wide end of a shovel or other tool. While the soil underneath was still slightly moist, the archaeologist could make out different colours, textures and lines of brick walls or pits or other features. A few houses that were discovered were excavated. The archaeologists also sieved through tons of earth to recover plant and animal remains, and in the process identified many species of plants and animals and found large quantities of charred fish bones that had been swept out on to the streets. Plant seeds and fibre remained after dung cakes had been burned as fuel and thus kitchens were identified. Living rooms were those with fewer traces. Because they found the teeth of very young pigs on the streets, archaeologists concluded that pigs must have roamed freely here as in any other Mesopotamian town. In fact, one house burial contained some pig bones – the dead person must have been given some pork for his nourishment in the afterlife! The archaeologists also made microscopic studies of room floors to decide which rooms in a house were roofed (with poplar logs, palm leaves, straw, etc.) and which were open to the sky.

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Cities in Mesopotamian Culture

Mesopotamians valued city life in which people of many communities and cultures lived side by side. After cities were destroyed in war, they recalled them in poetry.

The most poignant reminder to us of the pride Mesopotamians took in their cities comes at the end of the Gilgamesh Epic, which was written on twelve tablets. Gilgamesh is said to have ruled the city of Uruk some time after Enmerkar. A great hero who subdued people far and wide, he got a shock when his heroic friend died. He then set out to find the secret of immortality, crossing the waters that surround the world. After a heroic attempt, Gilgamesh failed, and returned to Uruk. There, he consoled himself by walking along the city wall, back and forth. He admired the foundations made of fired bricks that he had put into place. It is on the city wall of Uruk that the long tale of heroism and endeavour fizzles out. Gilgamesh does not say that even though he will die his sons will outlive him, as a tribal hero would have done. He takes consolation in the city that his people had built.

The Legacy of Writing

While moving narratives can be transmitted orally, science requires written texts that generations of scholars can read and build upon. Perhaps the greatest legacy of Mesopotamia to the world is its scholarly tradition of time reckoning and mathematics.

Dating around 1800 BCE are tablets with multiplication and division tables, square- and square-root tables, and tables of compound interest. The square root of 2 was given as:

$$1 + 24/60 + 51/60^2 + 10/60^3$$

If you work this out, you will find that the answer is 1.41421296, only slightly different from the correct answer, 1.41421356. Students had to solve problems such as the following: a field of area such and such is covered one finger deep in water; find out the volume of water.

The division of the year into 12 months according to the revolution of the moon around the earth, the division of the month into four weeks, the day into 24 hours, and the hour into 60 minutes – all that we take for granted in our daily lives – has come to us from the Mesopotamians. These time divisions were adopted by the successors of Alexander and from there transmitted to the Roman world, then to the world of Islam, and then to medieval Europe (see Theme 7 for how this happened).

Whenever solar and lunar eclipses were observed, their occurrence was noted according to year, month and day. So too there were records about the observed positions of stars and constellations in the night sky.

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None of these momentous Mesopotamian achievements would have been possible without writing and the urban institution of schools, where students read and copied earlier written tablets, and where some boys were trained to become not record keepers for the administration, but intellectuals who could build on the work of their predecessors.

We would be mistaken if we think that the preoccupation with the urban world of Mesopotamia is a modern phenomenon. Let us look, finally, at two early attempts to locate and preserve the texts and traditions of the past.

An Early Library

In the iron age, the Assyrians of the north created an empire, at its height between 720 and 610 BCE, that stretched as far west as Egypt. The state economy was now a predatory one, extracting labour and tribute in the form of food, animals, metal and craft items from a vast subject population.

The great Assyrian kings, who had been immigrants, acknowledged the southern region, Babylonia, as the centre of high culture and the last of them, Assurbanipal (668-627 BCE), collected a library at his capital, Nineveh in the north. He made great efforts to gather tablets on history, epics, omen literature, astrology, hymns and poems. He sent his scribes south to find old tablets. Because scribes in the south were trained to read and write in schools where they all had to copy tablets by the dozen, there were towns in Babylonia where huge collections of tablets were created and acquired fame. And although Sumerian ceased to be spoken after about 1800 BCE, it continued to be taught in schools, through vocabulary texts, sign lists, bilingual (Sumerian and Akkadian) tablets, etc. So even in 650 BCE, cuneiform tablets written as far back as 2000 BCE were intelligible – and Assurbanipal's men knew where to look for early tablets or their copies.

Copies were made of important texts such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, the copier stating his name and writing the date. Some tablets ended with a reference to Assurbanipal:

> 'I, Assurbanipal, king of the universe, king of Assyria, on whom the gods bestowed vast intelligence, who could acquire the recondite details of scholarly erudition, I wrote down on tablets the wisdom of the gods … And I checked and collated the tablets. I placed them for the future in the library of the temple of my god, Nabu, at Nineveh, for my life and the well-being of my soul, and to sustain the foundations of my royal throne…'

More important, there was cataloguing: a basket of tablets would have a clay label that read: '*n* number of tablets about exorcism, written by X'. Assurbanipal's library had a total of some 1,000 texts, amounting to about 30,000 tablets, grouped according to subject.

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And, an Early Archaeologist!

A man of the southern marshes, Nabopolassar, released Babylonia from Assyrian domination in 625 BCE. His successors increased their territory and organised building projects at Babylon. From that time, even after the Achaemenids of Iran conquered Babylon in 539 BCE and until 331 BCE when Alexander conquered Babylon, Babylon was the premier city of the world, more than 850 hectares, with a triple wall, great palaces and temples, a ziggurat or stepped tower, and a processional way to the ritual centre. Its trading houses had widespread dealings and its mathematicians and astronomers made some new discoveries.

Nabonidus was the last ruler of independent Babylon. He writes that the god of Ur came to him in a dream and ordered him to appoint a priestess to take charge of the cult in that ancient town in the deep south. He writes: 'Because for a very long time the office of High Priestess had been forgotten, her characteristic features nowhere indicated, I bethought myself day after day …'

Then, he says, he found the stele of a very early king whom we today date to about 1150 BCE and saw on that stele the carved image of the Priestess. He observed the clothing and the jewellery that was depicted. This is how he was able to dress his daughter for her consecration as Priestess.

On another occasion, Nabonidus's men brought to him a broken statue inscribed with the name of Sargon, king of Akkad. (We know today that the latter ruled around 2370 BCE.) Nabonidus, and indeed many intellectuals, had heard of this great king of remote times. Nabonidus felt he had to repair the statue. 'Because of my reverence for the gods and respect for kingship,' he writes, 'I summoned skilled craftsmen, and replaced the head.'

ACTIVITY 4

Why do you think Assurbanipal and Nabonidus cherished early Mesopotamian traditions?

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TIMELINE	
c. 7000-6000 BCE	Beginning of agriculture in the northern Mesopotamian plains
c. 5000 BCE	Earliest temples in southern Mesopotamia built
c. 3200 BCE	First writing in Mesopotamia
c. 3000 BCE	Uruk develops into a huge city, increasing use of bronze tools
c. 2700-2500 BCE	Early kings, including, possibly, the legendary ruler Gilgamesh
c. 2600 BCE	Development of the cuneiform script
c. 2400 BCE	Replacement of Sumerian by Akkadian
2370 BCE	Sargon, king of Akkad
c. 2000 BCE	Spread of cuneiform writing to Syria, Turkey and Egypt; Mari and Babylon emerge as important urban centres
c.1800 BCE	Mathematical texts composed; Sumerian no longer spoken
c.1100 BCE	Establishment of the Assyrian kingdom
c. 1000 BCE	Use of iron
720-610 BCE	Assyrian empire
668-627 BCE	Rule of Assurbanipal
331 BCE	Alexander conquers Bablyon
c. 1st century CE	Akkadian and cuneiform remain in use
1850s	Decipherment of the cuneiform script

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Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. Why do we say that it was *not* natural fertility and high levels of food production that were the causes of early urbanisation?
2. Which of the following were necessary conditions and which the causes, of early urbanisation, and which would you say were the outcome of the growth of cities:
   (a) highly productive agriculture, (b) water transport, (c) the lack of metal and stone, (d) the division of labour, (e) the use of seals, (f) the military power of kings that made labour compulsory?
3. Why were mobile animal herders not necessarily a threat to town life?
4. Why would the early temple have been much like a house?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. Of the new institutions that came into being once city life had begun, which would have depended on the initiative of the king?
6. What do ancient stories tell us about the civilisation of Mesopotamia?

II

EMPIRES

An Empire Across Three Continents

The Central Islamic Lands

Nomadic Empires

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EMPIRES

OVER the two millennia that followed the establishment of empires in Mesopotamia, various attempts at empire-building took place across the region and in the area to the west and east of it.

By the sixth century BCE, Iranians had established control over major parts of the Assyrian empire. Networks of trade developed overland, as well as along the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea.

In the eastern Mediterranean, Greek cities and their colonies benefited from improvements in trade that were the result of these changes. They also benefited from close trade with nomadic people to the north of the Black Sea. In Greece, for the most part, city-states such as Athens and Sparta were the focus of civic life. From among the Greek states, in the late fourth century BCE, the ruler of the kingdom of Macedon, Alexander, undertook a series of military campaigns and conquered parts of North Africa, West Asia and Iran, reaching up to the Beas. Here, his soldiers refused to proceed further east. Alexander's troops retreated, though many Greeks stayed behind.

Throughout the area under Alexander's control, ideals and cultural traditions were shared amongst the Greeks and the local population. The region on the whole became 'Hellenised' (the Greeks were called Hellenes), and Greek became a well-known language throughout. The political unity of Alexander's empire disintegrated quickly after his death, but for almost three centuries after, Hellenistic culture remained important in the area. The period is often referred to as the 'Hellenistic period' in the history of the region, but this ignores the way in which other cultures (especially Iranian culture associated with the old empire of Iran) were as important as – if not often *more* important than – Hellenistic notions and ideas.

This section deals with important aspects of what happened after this.

Small but well-organised military forces of the central Italian city-state of Rome took advantage of the political discord that followed the disintegration of Alexander's empire and established control over North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean from the second century BCE.

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At the time, Rome was a republic. Government was based on a complex system of election, but its political institutions gave some importance to birth and wealth and society benefited from slavery. The forces of Rome established a network for trade between the states that had once been part of Alexander's empire. In the middle of the first century BCE, under Julius Caesar, a high-born military commander, this 'Roman Empire' was extended to present-day Britain and Germany.

Latin (spoken in Rome) was the main language of the empire, though many in the east continued to use Greek, and the Romans had a great respect for Hellenic culture. There were changes in the political structure of the empire from the late first century BCE, and it was substantially Christianised after the emperor Constantine became a Christian in the fourth century CE.

To make government easier, the Roman Empire was divided into eastern and western halves in the fourth century CE. But in the west, there was a breakdown of the arrangements that existed between Rome and the tribes in frontier areas (Goths, Visigoths, Vandals and others). These arrangements dealt with trade, military recruitment and

Ruins at Greek city of Corinth.

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settlement, and the tribes increasingly attacked the Roman administration. Conflicts increased in scale, and coincided with internal dissensions in the empire, leading to the collapse of the empire in the west by the fifth century CE. Tribes established their own kingdoms within the former empire, though, with the prompting of the Christian Church, a Holy Roman Empire was formed from some of these kingdoms from the ninth century CE. This claimed some continuity with the Roman Empire.

Between the seventh century and the fifteenth century, almost all the lands of the eastern Roman Empire (centred on Constantinople) came to be taken over by the Arab empire – created by the followers of the Prophet Muhammad (who founded the faith of Islam in the seventh century) and centred on Damascus – or by its successors (who ruled from Baghdad initially). There was a close interaction between Greek and Islamic traditions in the region. The trading networks of the area and its prosperity attracted the attention of pastoral peoples to the north including various Turkic tribes, who often attacked the cities of the region and established control. The last of these peoples to attack the area and attempt to control it were the Mongols, under Genghis Khan and his successors, who moved into West Asia, Europe, Central Asia and China in the thirteenth century.

All these attempts to make and maintain empires were driven by the search to control the resources of the trading networks that existed in the region as a whole, and to derive benefit from the links of the region with other areas such as India or China. All the empires evolved administrative systems to give stability to trade. They also evolved

The Great Mosque, Damascus, completed in 714.

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different types of military organisation. The achievements of one empire were often taken up by its successor. Over time, the area came to be marked by Persian, Greek, Latin and Arabic above many other languages that were spoken and written.

The empires were not very stable. This was partly due to disputes and conflict over resources in various regions. It was also due to the crisis that developed in relations between empires and pastoral peoples to the north – from whom empires derived support both for their trade and to provide them with labour for production of manufactures and for their armies. It is worth noting that not all empires were city-centric. The Mongol empire of Genghis Khan and his successors is a good example of how an empire could be maintained by pastoral people for a long time and with success.

Religions that appealed to peoples of different ethnic origins, who often spoke different languages, were important in the making of large empires. This was true in the case of Christianity (which originated in Palestine in the early first century CE) and Islam (which originated in the seventh century CE).

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TIMELINE II

(c. 100 BCE TO 1300 CE)

This timeline focuses on kingdoms and empires. Some of these such as the Roman Empire were very large, spreading across three continents. This was also the time when some of the major religious and cultural traditions developed. It was a time when institutions of intellectual activity emerged. Books were written and ideas travelled across continents. Some things that are now part of our everyday lives were used for the first time during this period.

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DATES	AFRICA	EUROPE
100-50 BCE	Bananas introduced from Southeast Asia to East Africa through sea routes	Spartacus leads revolt of about 100,000 slaves (73 BCE)
50-1	Cleopatra, queen of Egypt (51-30 BCE)	Building of Colosseum in Rome
1-50 CE		
50-100		
100-150	Hero of Alexandria makes a machine that runs on steam	Roman Empire at is peak*
150-200	Ptolemy of Alexandria writes a work on geography	
200-250		
250-300		
300-350	Christianity introduced in Axum* (330)	Constantine becomes emperor, establishes city of Constantinople
350-400		Roman Empire divided into eastern and western halves
400-450	Vandals from Europe set up a kingdom in North Africa (429)	Roman Empire invaded by tribes from North and Central Europe
450-500		Conversion of Clovis of Gaul (France) to Christianity (496)
500-550		St Benedict establishes a monastery in Italy (526), St Augustine introduces Christianity in England (596), Gregory the Great (590) lays the foundations of the power of the Roman Catholic Church
550-600		
600-650	Emigration (*hijra*) of some Muslims to Abyssinia (615)	
650-700	Muslim Arabs sign treaty with Nubia, south of Egypt (652)	Bede writes the *History of the English Church and People*
700-750		
750-800		
800-850	Rise of kingdom in Ghana	Charlemagne, king of the Franks, crowned Holy Roman Emperor (800)
850-900		First Russian states founded at Kiev and Novgorod
900-950		Viking raids across western Europe
950-1000		
1000-50		Medical school set up in Salerno, Italy (1030)
1050-1100	Almoravid kingdom (1056-1147) extends from Ghana to southern Spain	William of Normandy invades England and becomes king (1066); proclamation of the first crusade (1095)
1100-50	Zimbabwe (1120-1450) emerges as a centre for production of gold and copper artefacts, and of long-distance trade	
1150-1200	Christian churches established in Ethiopia	Construction of the cathedral of Notre Dame begins (1163)
1200-50	(1200), kingdom of Mali in West Africa, with Timbuktu as a centre of learning	St Francis of Assisi sets up a monastic order, emphasising austerity and compassion (1209); lords in England rebel against the king who signs the Magna Carta, accepting to rule according to law
1250-1300		Establishment of the Hapsburg dynasty that continued to rule Austria till 1918

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DATES	ASIA	SOUTH ASIA
100-50 BCE	Han empire in China, development of the Silk Route from Asia to Europe	Bactrian Greeks and Shakas establish kingdoms in the north-west; rise of the Satavahanas in the Deccan
50-1		Growing trade between South Asia, Southeast and East Asia, and Europe
1-50 CE	Jesus Christ in Judaea, a province of the Roman Empire; Roman invasion of Arabia (24)	
50-100		Establishment of the Kushana state in the northwest and Central Asia
100-150	Paper invented in China (118); development of the first seismograph (132)	
150-200		
200-250	End of Han empire (221); Sasanid rule in Persia (226)	
250-300	Tea at the royal court, China (262), use of the magnetic compass, China (270)	
300-350	Chinese start using stirrups while riding horses*	Establishment of the Gupta* dynasty (320)
350-400		Fa Xian travels from China to India (399)
400-450		
450-500		Aryabhata, astronomer and mathematician
500-550		
550-600	Buddhism introduced in Japan (594); Grand Canal to transport grain built in China (584-618), by 5,000,000 workers over 34 years	Chalukya temples in Badami and Aihole
600-650	Tang dynasty in China (618); Prophet Muhammad goes to Medina; the beginning of the Hijri era (622); collapse of the Sasanian empire (642)	Xuan Zang travels from China to India; Nalanda emerges as an important educational centre
650-700	Umayyad caliphate (661-750)	
700-750	A branch of the Umayyads conquers Spain; Tang dynasty established in China	Arabs conquer Sind (712)
750-800	Abbasid caliphate established and Baghdad becomes a major cultural and commercial centre	
800-850	Khmer state founded in Cambodia (802)	
850-900	First printed book, China (868)	
900-950		
950-1000	Use of paper money in China	
1000-50	Ibn Sina, a Persian doctor, writes a medical text that is followed for centuries	Mahmud of Ghazni raids the north-west; Alberuni travels to India; Rajarajesvara temple built at Thanjavur
1050-1100	Establishment of the Turkish empire by Alp Arsalan (1075)	
1100-50	First recorded display of fireworks in China	Kalhana writes the *Rajatarangini*
1150-1200	Angkor empire, Cambodia, at its height (1180), temple complex at Angkor Wat	
1200-50	Genghis Khan consolidates power (1206)	Establishment of Delhi sultanate (1206)
1250-1300	Qubilai Khan, grandson of Genghis Khan, becomes emperor of China	Amir Khusrau (1253-1325) introduces new forms of poetry and music*; Sun Temple at Konark

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DATES	AMERICAS	AUSTRALIA/PACIFIC ISLANDS
100-50 BCE		
50-1		
1-50 CE		
50-100		
100-150		
150-200		
200-250		
250-300		
300-350	City-state of Teotihuacan established in Mexico, with pyramid temples, Mayan ceremonial centres*, development of astronomy, pictorial script*	
350-400		
400-450		
450-500		
500-550		
550-600		
600-650		
650-700		
700-750		
750-800		
800-850		
850-900		
900-950		
950-1000	First city is built in North America (c.990)	Maori navigator from Polynesia 'discovers' New Zealand
1000-50		
1050-1100		Sweet potato (originally from South America) grown in the Polynesian islands
1100-1150		
1150-1200		
1200-50		
1250-1300		

ACTIVITY

Try and identify at least five events/processes that would have involved the movement of peoples across regions/ continents. What would have been the significance of these events/ processes?

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THEME 3

AN EMPIRE ACROSS THREE CONTINENTS

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THE Roman Empire covered a vast stretch of territory that included most of Europe as we know it today and a large part of the Fertile Crescent and North Africa. In this chapter we shall look at the way this empire was organised, the political forces that shaped its destiny, and the social groups into which people were divided. You will see that the empire embraced a wealth of local cultures and languages; that women had a stronger legal position then than they do in many countries today; but also that much of the economy was run on slave labour, denying freedom to substantial numbers of persons. From the fifth century on, the empire fell apart in the west but remained intact and exceptionally prosperous in its eastern half. The caliphate which you will read about in the next chapter built on this prosperity and inherited its urban and religious traditions.

Roman historians have a rich collection of sources to go on, which we can broadly divide into three groups: (a) texts, (b) documents and (c) material remains. Textual sources include histories of the period written by contemporaries (these were usually called 'Annals', because the narrative was constructed on a year-by-year basis), letters, speeches, sermons, laws, and so on. Documentary sources include mainly inscriptions and papyri. Inscriptions were usually cut on stone, so a large number survive, in both Greek and Latin. The 'papyrus' was a reed-like plant that grew along the banks of the Nile in Egypt and was processed to produce a writing material that was very widely used in everyday life. Thousands of contracts, accounts, letters and official documents survive 'on papyrus' and have been published by scholars who are called 'papyrologists'. Material remains include a very wide assortment of items that mainly archaeologists discover (for example, through excavation and field survey), for example, buildings, monuments and other kinds of structures, pottery, coins, mosaics, even entire landscapes (for example, through the use of aerial photography). Each of these sources can only tell us just so much about the past, and combining them can be a fruitful exercise, but how well this is done depends on the historian's skill!

Papyrus scrolls

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Two powerful empires ruled over most of Europe,North Africa and the Middle East in the period between the birth of Christ and the early part of the seventh century, say, down to the 630s. The two empires were those of Rome and Iran. The Romans and Iranians were rivals and fought against each other for much of their history. Their empires lay next to each other, separated only by a narrow strip of land that ran along the river Euphrates. In this chapter we shall be looking at the Roman Empire, but we shall also refer, in passing, to Rome's rival, Iran.

If you look at the map, you will see that the continents of Europe and Africa are separated by a sea that stretches all the way from Spain in the west to Syria in the east. This sea is called the Mediterranean, and it was the heart of Rome's empire. Rome dominated the Mediterranean and all the regions around that sea in both directions, north as well as south. To the north, the boundaries of the empire were formed by two great rivers, the Rhine and the Danube; to the south, by the huge expanse of

MAP 1: Europe and North Africa

desert called the Sahara. This vast stretch of territory was the Roman Empire. Iran controlled the whole area south of the Caspian Sea down to eastern Arabia, and sometimes large parts of Afghanistan as well. These two superpowers had divided up most of the world that the Chinese called *Ta Ch'in* ('greater Ch'in', roughly the west).

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The Early Empire

The Roman Empire can broadly be divided into two phases, 'early' and 'late', divided by the third century as a sort of historical watershed between them. In other words, the whole period down to the main part of the third century can be called the 'early empire', and the period after that the 'late empire'.

A major difference between the two superpowers and their respective empires was that the Roman Empire was culturally much more diverse than that of Iran. The Parthians and later the Sasanians, the dynasties that ruled Iran in this period, ruled over a population that was largely Iranian. The Roman Empire, by contrast, was a mosaic of territories and cultures that were chiefly bound together by a common system of government. Many languages were spoken in the empire, but for the purposes of administration Latin and Greek were the most widely used, indeed the *only* languages. The upper classes of the east spoke and wrote in Greek, those of the west in Latin, and the boundary between these broad language areas ran somewhere across the middle of the Mediterranean, between the African provinces of Tripolitania (which was Latin speaking) and Cyrenaica (Greek-speaking). All those who lived in the empire were subjects of a single ruler, the emperor, regardless of where they lived and what language they spoke.

The regime established by Augustus, the first emperor, in 27 BCE was called the 'Principate'. Although Augustus was the sole ruler and the only real source of authority, the fiction was kept alive that he was actually only the 'leading citizen' (*Princeps* in Latin), not the absolute ruler. This was done out of respect for the Senate, the body which had controlled Rome earlier, in the days when it was a Republic.* The Senate had existed in Rome for centuries, and had been and remained a body representing the aristocracy, that is, the wealthiest families of Roman and, later, Italian descent, mainly landowners. Most of the Roman histories that survive in Greek and Latin were written by people from a senatorial background. From these it is clear that emperors were judged by how they behaved towards the Senate. The worst emperors were those who were hostile to the senatorial class, behaving with suspicion or brutality and violence. Many senators yearned to go back to the days of the Republic, but most must have realised that this was impossible.

Next to the emperor and the Senate, the other key institution of imperial rule was the army. Unlike the army of its rival in the Persian empire, which was a conscripted** army, the Romans had a paid professional army where soldiers had to put in a minimum of 25 years of service. Indeed, the existence of a paid army was a distinctive feature of the Roman Empire. The army was the largest single organised body in the empire (600,000 by the fourth century) and it certainly had the power to determine the fate of emperors. The soldiers would constantly agitate for better wages and service conditions. These agitations often

*The Republic was the name for a regime in which the reality of power lay with the Senate, a body dominated by a small group of wealthy families who formed the 'nobility'. In practice, the Republic represented the government of the nobility, exercised through the body called the Senate. The Republic lasted from 509 BC to 27 BC, when it was overthrown by Octavian, the adopted son and heir of Julius Caesar, who later changed his name to Augustus. Membership of the Senate was for life, and wealth and office-holding counted for more than birth.

**A conscripted army is one which is forcibly recruited; military service is compulsory for certain groups or categories of the population.

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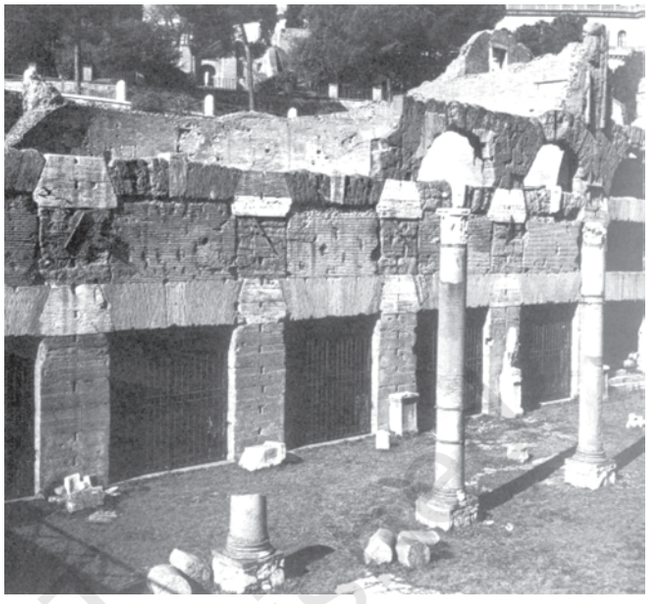
took the form of mutinies, if the soldiers felt let down by their generals or even the emperor. Again, our picture of the Roman army depends largely on the way they were portrayed by historians with senatorial sympathies. The Senate hated and feared the army, because it was a source of often-unpredictable violence, especially in the tense conditions of the third century when government was forced to tax more heavily to pay for its mounting military expenditures.

To sum up, the emperor, the aristocracy and the army were the three main 'players' in the political history of the empire. The success of individual emperors depended on their control of the army, and when the armies were divided, the result usually was civil war*. Except for one notorious year (69 CE), when four emperors mounted the throne in quick succession, the first two centuries were on the whole free from civil war and in this sense relatively stable. Succession to the throne was based as far as possible on family descent, either natural or adoptive, and even the army was strongly wedded to this principle. For example, Tiberius (14-37 CE), the second in the long line of Roman emperors, was not the natural son of Augustus, the ruler who founded the Principate, but Augustus adopted him to ensure a smooth transition.



Shops in Forum Julium, Rome. This piazza with columns was built after 51 BCE, to enlarge the older Roman Forum.

External warfare was also much less common in the first two centuries. The empire inherited by Tiberius from Augustus was already so vast that further expansion was felt to be unnecessary. In fact, the 'Augustan age' is remembered for the *peace* it ushered in after decades of internal strife and centuries of military conquest. The only major campaign of expansion in the early empire was Trajan's fruitless occupation of territory across the Euphrates, in the years 113-17 CE abandoned by his successors.

*Civil war refers to armed struggles for power within the same country, in contrast to conflicts between different countries.

The Emperor Trajan's Dream – A Conquest of India?

'Then, after a winter (115/16) in Antioch marked by a great earthquake, in 116 Trajan marched down the Euphrates to Ctesiphon, the Parthian capital, and then to the head of the Persian Gulf. There [the historian] Cassius Dio describes him looking longingly at a merchant-ship setting off for India, and wishing that he were as young as Alexander.'

– Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East*.

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The Near East. From the perspective of someone who lived in the Roman Mediterranean, this referred to all the territory east of the Mediterranean, chiefly the Roman provinces of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia, and in a looser sense the surrounding territories, for example Arabia.

Much more characteristic was the gradual extension of Roman direct rule. This was accomplished by absorbing a whole series of 'dependent' kingdoms into Roman provincial territory. The Near East was full of such kingdoms*, but by the early second century those which lay west of the Euphrates (towards Roman territory) had disappeared, swallowed up by Rome. (Incidentally, some of these kingdoms were exceedingly wealthy, for example Herod's kingdom yielded the equivalent of 5.4 million *denarii* per year, equal to over 125,000 kg of gold! The *denarius* was a Roman silver coin containing about 4½ gm of pure silver.)

In fact, except for Italy, which was not considered a province in these centuries, *all* the territories of the empire were organised into *provinces* and subject to taxation. At its peak in the second century, the Roman Empire stretched from Scotland to the borders of Armenia, and from the Sahara to the Euphrates and sometimes beyond. Given that there was no government in the modern sense to help them to run things, you may well ask, how was it possible for the emperor to cope with the control and administration of such a vast and diverse set of territories, with a population of some 60 million in the mid-second century? The answer lies in the *urbanisation* of the empire.

The great urban centres that lined the shores of the Mediterranean (Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch were the biggest among them) were the true bedrock of the imperial system. It was through the *cities* that 'government' was able to tax the provincial countrysides which generated much of the wealth of the empire. What this means is that the local upper classes actively collaborated with the Roman state in administering their own territories and raising taxes from them. In fact, one of the most interesting aspects of Roman political history is the dramatic shift in power between Italy and the provinces. Throughout the second and third centuries, it was the *provincial* upper classes who supplied most of the cadre that governed the provinces and commanded the armies. They came to form a new elite of administrators and military commanders who became much more powerful than the senatorial class because they had the backing of the emperors. As this new group emerged, the emperor Gallienus (253-68) consolidated their rise to power by *excluding* senators from military command. We are told that Gallienus forbade senators from serving in the army or having access to it, in order to prevent control of the empire from falling into their hands.

*These were local kingdoms that were 'clients' of Rome. Their rulers could be relied on to use their forces in support of Rome, and in return Rome allowed them to exist.

Pont du Gard, near Nimes, France, first century BCE. Roman engineers built massive aqueducts over three continents to carry water.

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To sum up, in the late first, second and early third centuries the army and administration were increasingly drawn from the provinces, as citizenship spread to these regions and was no longer confined to Italy. But individuals of Italian origin continued to dominate the senate at least till the third century, when senators of provincial origin became a majority. These trends reflected the general decline of Italy within the empire, both political and economic, and the rise of new elites in the wealthier and more urbanised parts of the Mediterranean, such as the south of Spain, Africa and the east. A city in the Roman sense was an urban centre with its own magistrates, city council and a 'territory' containing villages which were under its jurisdiction. Thus one city could not be in the territory of another city, but villages almost always were. Villages could be upgraded to the status of cities, and vice versa, usually as a mark of imperial favour (or the opposite). One crucial advantage of living in a city was simply that it might be better provided for during food shortages and even famines than the countryside.

ACTIVITY 1

Who were the three main players in the political history of the Roman Empire? Write one or two lines about each of them. And how did the Roman emperor manage to govern such a vast territory? Whose collaboration was crucial to this?

Doctor Galen on how Roman Cities Treated the Countryside

'The famine prevalent for many successive years in many provinces has clearly displayed for men of any understanding the effect of malnutrition in generating illness. The city-dwellers, as it was their custom to collect and store enough grain for the whole of the next year immediately after the harvest, carried off all the wheat, barley, beans and lentils, and left to the peasants various kinds of pulse – after taking quite a large proportion of these to the city. After consuming what was left in the course of the winter, the country people had to resort to unhealthy foods in the spring; they ate twigs and shoots of trees and bushes and bulbs and roots of inedible plants…'

– Galen, *On Good and Bad Diet.*

Public baths were a striking feature of Roman urban life (when one Iranian ruler tried to introduce them into Iran, he encountered the wrath of the clergy there! Water was a sacred element and to use it for *public* bathing may have seemed a desecration to them), and urban populations also enjoyed a much higher level of entertainment. For example, one calendar tells us that *spectacula* (shows) filled no less than 176 days of the year!

Amphitheatre at the Roman cantonment town of Vindonissa (in modern Switzerland), first century CE. *Used for military drill and for staging entertainments for the soldiers.*

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The Third-Century Crisis

If the first and second centuries were by and large a period of peace, prosperity and economic expansion, the third century brought the first major signs of internal strain. From the 230s, the empire found itself fighting on several fronts simultaneously. In Iran a new and more aggressive dynasty emerged in 225 (they called themselves the 'Sasanians') and within just 15 years were expanding rapidly in the direction of the Euphrates. In a famous rock inscription cut in three languages, Shapur I, the Iranian ruler, claimed he had annihilated a Roman army of 60,000 and even captured the eastern capital of Antioch. Meanwhile, a whole series of Germanic tribes or rather tribal confederacies (most notably, the Alamanni, the Franks and the Goths) began to move against the Rhine and Danube frontiers, and the whole period from 233 to 280 saw repeated invasions of a whole line of provinces that stretched from the Black Sea to the Alps and southern Germany. The Romans were forced to abandon much of the territory beyond the Danube, while the emperors of this period were constantly in the field against what the Romans called 'barbarians'. The rapid succession of emperors in the third century (25 emperors in 47 years!) is an obvious symptom of the strains faced by the empire in this period.

Gender, Literacy, Culture

One of the more modern features of Roman society was the widespread prevalence of the nuclear family. Adult sons did not live with their families, and it was exceptional for adult brothers to share a common household. On the other hand, slaves *were* included in the family as the Romans understood this. By the late Republic (the first century BCE), the typical form of marriage was one where the wife did not transfer to her husband's authority but retained full rights in the property of her natal family. While the woman's dowry went to the husband for the duration of the marriage, the woman remained a primary heir of her father and became an independent property owner on her father's death. Thus Roman women enjoyed considerable legal rights in owning and managing property. In other words, in law the married couple was not one financial entity but two, and the wife enjoyed complete legal independence. Divorce was relatively easy and needed no more than a notice of intent to dissolve the marriage by either husband or wife. On the other hand, whereas males married in their late twenties or early thirties, women were married off in the late teens or early twenties, so there was an age gap between husband and wife and this would have encouraged a certain inequality. Marriages were generally arranged, and there is no doubt that women were often subject to domination by their husbands. Augustine*, the great Catholic bishop who spent most of his life in North Africa, tells us that his mother was regularly beaten by his father and that most other wives

*Saint Augustine (354-430) was bishop of the North African city of Hippo from 396 and a towering figure in the intellectual history of the Church. Bishops were the most important religious figures in a Christian community, and often very powerful.

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in the small town where he grew up had similar bruises to show! Finally, fathers had substantial legal control over their children – sometimes to a shocking degree, for example, a legal power of life and death in exposing unwanted children, by leaving them out in the cold to die.

What about literacy? It is certain that rates of casual literacy* varied greatly between different parts of the empire. For example, in Pompeii, which was buried in a volcanic eruption in 79 CE, there is strong evidence of widespread casual literacy. Walls on the main streets of Pompeii often carried advertisements, and graffiti were found all over the city.

By contrast, in Egypt where hundreds of papyri survive, most formal documents such as contracts were usually written by professional scribes, and they often tell us that X or Y is unable to read and write. But even here literacy was certainly more widespread among certain categories such as soldiers, army officers and estate managers.

The cultural diversity of the empire was reflected in many ways and at many levels: in the vast diversity of religious cults and local deities; the plurality of languages that were spoken; the styles of dress and costume, the food people ate, their forms of social organisation (tribal/non-tribal), even their patterns of settlement. Aramaic was the dominant language group of the Near East (at least west of the Euphrates), Coptic was spoken in Egypt, Punic and Berber in North Africa, Celtic in Spain and the northwest. But many of these linguistic cultures were purely oral, at least until a script was invented for them. Armenian, for example, only began to be written as late as the fifth century, whereas there was already a Coptic

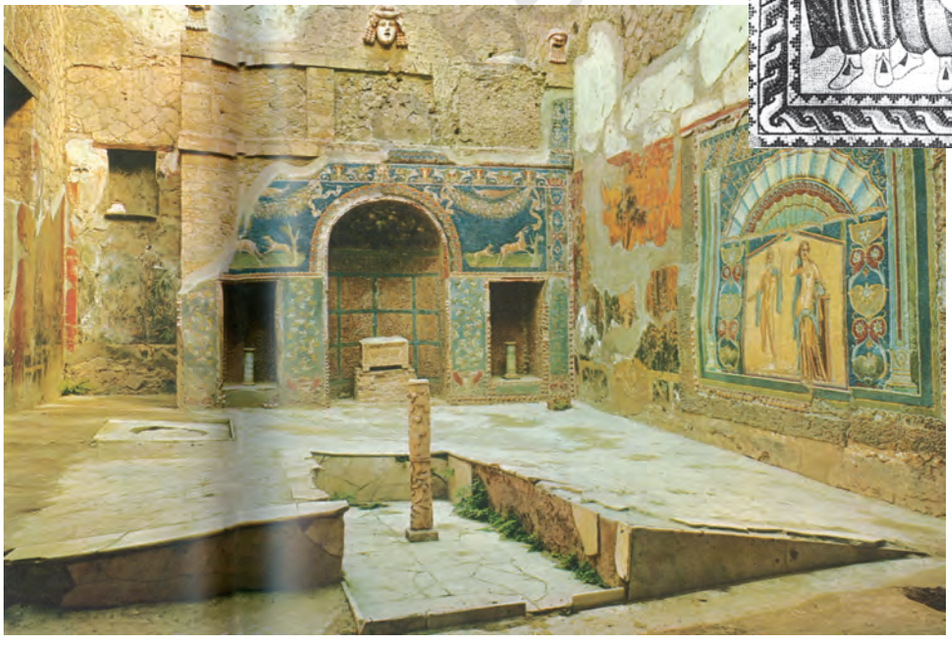
*The use of reading and writing in everyday, often trivial, contexts.

One of the funniest of these graffiti found on the walls of Pompeii says:

'Wall, I admire you for not collapsing in ruins

When you have to support so much boring writing on you.'

Mosaic in Edessa, second century CE. The Syriac inscription suggests that those depicted are the wife of king Abgar and her family.



Pompeii: A wine-merchant's dining-room, its walls decorated with scenes depicting mythical animals.

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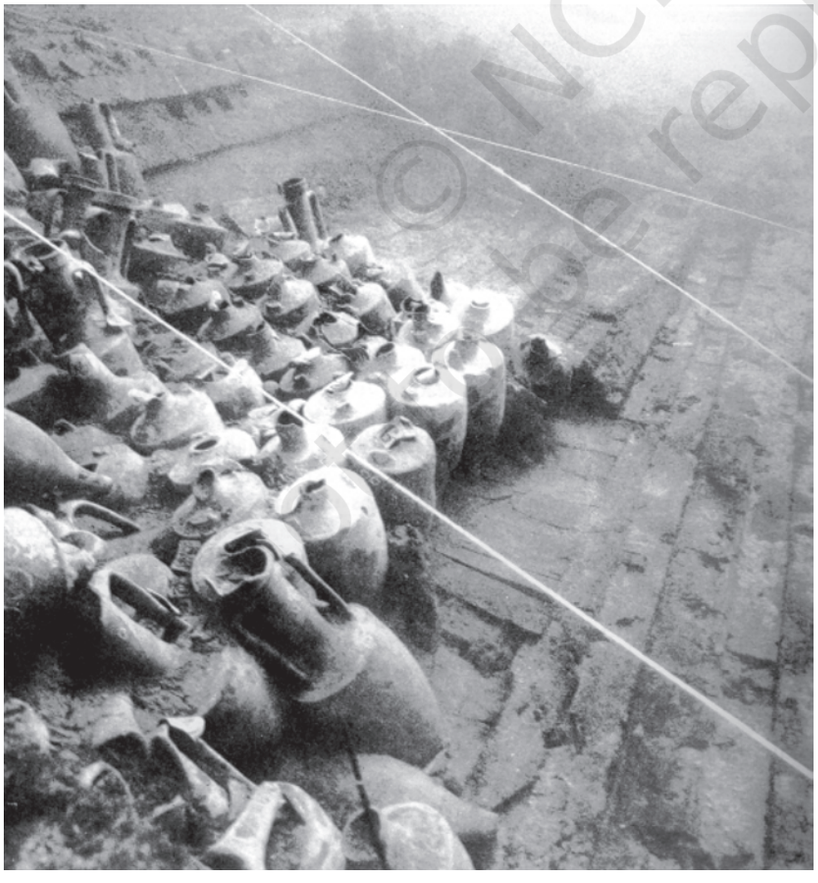
translation of the Bible by the middle of the third century. Elsewhere, the spread of Latin displaced the written form of languages that were otherwise widespread; this happened notably with Celtic, which ceased to be written after the first century.

ACTIVITY 2

How independent were women in the Roman world? Compare the situation of the Roman family with the family in India today.

Economic Expansion

The empire had a substantial economic infrastructure of harbours, mines, quarries, brickyards, olive oil factories, etc. Wheat, wine and olive-oil were traded and consumed in huge quantities, and they came mainly from Spain, the Gallic provinces, North Africa, Egypt and, to a lesser extent, Italy, where conditions were best for these crops. Liquids like wine and olive oil were transported in containers called 'amphorae'. The fragments and sherds of a very large number of these survive (Monte Testaccio in Rome is said to contain the remnants of over 50 million vessels!), and it has been possible for archaeologists to reconstruct the precise *shapes* of these containers, tell us *what* they carried, and say exactly *where* they were made by examining the clay content and matching the finds with clay pits throughout the Mediterranean. In this way we can now say with some confidence that Spanish olive oil, to take just one example, was a vast commercial enterprise that reached its peak in the years 140-160. The Spanish olive oil of this period was mainly carried in a container called 'Dressel 20' (after the archaeologist who first established its form). If finds of Dressel 20 are widely scattered across sites in the Mediterranean, this suggests that Spanish olive oil circulated very widely indeed. By using such evidence (the remains of amphorae of different kinds and their 'distribution maps'), archaeologists are able to show that Spanish producers succeeded in capturing markets for olive oil from their Italian counterparts. This would only have happened if Spanish producers supplied a better quality oil at lower prices. In other words, the big landowners from different



Shipwreck off the south coast of France, first century BCE. The amphorae are Italian, bearing the stamp of a producer near the Lake of Fondi.

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regions *competed* with each other for control of the main markets for the goods they produced. The success of the Spanish olive growers was then repeated by North African producers – olive estates in this part of the empire dominated production through most of the third and fourth centuries. Later, after 425, North African dominance was broken by the East: in the later fifth and sixth centuries the Aegean, southern Asia Minor (Turkey), Syria and Palestine became major exporters of wine and olive oil, and containers from Africa show a dramatically reduced presence on Mediterranean markets. Behind these broad movements the prosperity of individual regions rose and fell depending on how effectively they could organise the production and transport of particular goods, and on the quality of those goods.

The empire included many regions that had a reputation for exceptional fertility. Campania in Italy, Sicily, the Fayum in Egypt, Galilee, Byzacium (Tunisia), southern Gaul (called Gallia Narbonensis), and Baetica (southern Spain) were all among the most densely settled or wealthiest parts of the empire, according to writers like Strabo and Pliny. The best kinds of wine came from Campania. Sicily and Byzacium exported large quantities of wheat to Rome. Galilee was densely cultivated ('every inch of the soil has been cultivated by the inhabitants', wrote the historian Josephus), and Spanish olive oil came mainly from numerous estates (*fundi*) along the banks of the river Guadalquivir in the south of Spain.

On the other hand, large expanses of Roman territory were in a much less advanced state. For example, transhumance* was widespread in the countryside of Numidia (modern Algeria). These pastoral and semi-nomadic communities were often on the move, carrying their oven-shaped huts (called *mapalia*) with them. As Roman estates expanded in North Africa, the pastures of those communities were drastically reduced and their movements more tightly regulated. Even in Spain the north was much less developed, and inhabited largely by a Celtic-speaking peasantry that lived in hilltop villages called *castella*. When we think of the Roman Empire, we should never forget these differences.

We should also be careful not to imagine that because this was the 'ancient' world, their forms of cultural and economic life were necessarily backward or primitive. On the contrary, diversified applications of water power around the Mediterranean as well as advances in water-powered milling technology, the use of hydraulic mining techniques in the Spanish gold and silver mines and the gigantic industrial scale on which those mines were worked in the first and second centuries (with levels of output that would not be reached again till the nineteenth century, some 1,700 years later!), the existence of well-organised commercial and banking networks, and the widespread use of money are *all* indications of how much we tend to *under*-estimate the sophistication of the Roman economy. This raises the issue of labour and of the use of slavery.

ACTIVITY 3

Archaeologists who work on the remains of pottery are a bit like detectives. Can you explain why? Also, what can amphorae tell us about the economic life of the Mediterranean in the Roman period?

*Transhumance is the herdsman's regular annual movement between the higher mountain regions and low-lying ground in search of pasture for sheep and other flocks.

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Controlling Workers

Slavery was an institution deeply rooted in the ancient world, both in the Mediterranean and in the Near East, and not even Christianity when it emerged and triumphed as the state religion (in the fourth century) seriously challenged this institution. It does not follow that the bulk of the labour in the Roman economy was performed by slaves. That may have been true of large parts of Italy in the Republican period (under Augustus there were still 3 million slaves in a total Italian population of 7.5 million) but it was no longer true of the empire as a whole. Slaves were an investment, and at least one Roman agricultural writer advised landowners against using them in contexts where too many might be required (for example, for harvests) or where their health could be damaged (for example, by malaria). These considerations were not based on any sympathy for the slaves but on hard economic calculation. On the other hand, if the Roman upper classes were often brutal towards their slaves, ordinary people did sometimes show much more compassion. See what one historian says about a famous incident that occurred in the reign of Nero.

On the Treatment of Slaves

'Soon afterwards the City Prefect, Lucius Pedanius Secundus, was murdered by one of his slaves. After the murder, ancient custom required that every slave residing under the same roof must be executed. But a crowd gathered, eager to save so many innocent lives; and rioting began. The senate-house was besieged. Inside, there was feeling against excessive severity, but the majority opposed any change (....) [The senators] favouring execution prevailed. However, great crowds ready with stones and torches prevented the order from being carried out. Nero rebuked the population by edict, and lined with troops the whole route along which those condemned were taken for execution.'

– Tacitus (55-117), historian of the early empire.

As warfare became less widespread with the establishment of peace in the first century, the supply of slaves tended to decline and the users of slave labour thus had to turn either to slave breeding* or to cheaper substitutes such as wage labour which was more easily dispensable. In fact, free labour was extensively used on public works at Rome precisely because an extensive use of slave labour would have been too expensive. Unlike hired workers, slaves had to be fed and maintained throughout the year, which increased the cost of holding this kind of labour. This is probably why slaves are not widely found in the agriculture of the later period, at least not in the eastern provinces. On the other hand, they and freedmen, that is, slaves who had been set free by their masters, *were* extensively used as business managers, where, obviously, they were not required in large numbers. Masters often gave their slaves or freedmen capital to run businesses on their behalf or even businesses of their own.

The Roman agricultural writers paid a great deal of attention to the management of labour. Columella, a first-century writer who came from the south of Spain, recommended that landowners should keep a reserve stock of implements and tools, twice as many as they needed, so that production could be continuous, 'for the loss in slave labour-time exceeds the cost of such items'. There was a general presumption

*The practice of encouraging female slaves and their partners to have more children, who would of course also be slaves.

Opp page: Mosaic at Cherchel, Algeria, early third century CE, with agricultural scenes.
Above: Ploughing and sowing.
Below: Working in vineyards.

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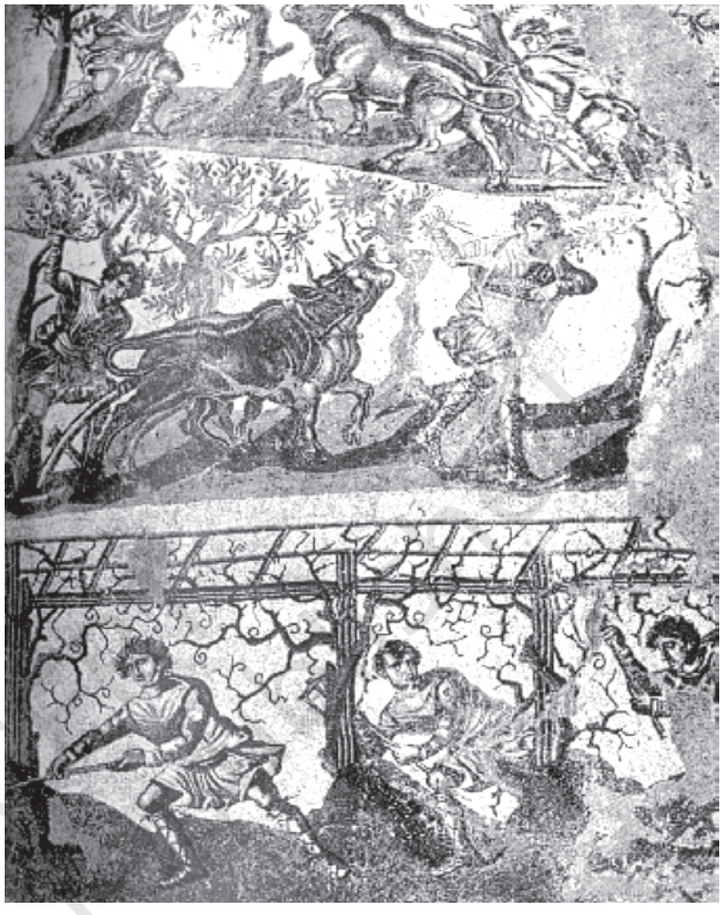
among employers that without supervision no work would ever get done, so supervision was paramount, for both free workers and slaves. To make supervision easier, workers were sometimes grouped into gangs or smaller teams. Columella recommended squads of ten, claiming it was easier to tell who was putting in effort and who was not in work groups of this size. This shows a detailed consideration of the management of labour. Pliny the Elder, the author of a very famous 'Natural History', condemned the use of slave gangs as the worst method of organising production, mainly because slaves who worked in gangs were usually chained together by their feet.



All this looks draconian*, but we should remember that most factories in the world today enforce similar principles of labour control. Indeed, some industrial establishments in the empire enforced even tighter controls. The Elder Pliny described conditions in the frankincense** factories (*officinae*) of Alexandria, where, he tells us, no amount of supervision seemed to suffice. 'A seal is put upon the workmen's aprons, they have to wear a mask or a net with a close mesh on their heads, and before they are allowed to leave the premises, they have to take off all their clothes.' Agricultural labour must have been fatiguing and disliked, for a famous edict of the early third century refers to Egyptian peasants deserting their villages 'in order not to engage in agricultural work'. The same was probably true of most factories and workshops. A law of 398 referred to workers being branded so they could be recognised if and when they run away and try to hide. Many private employers cast their agreements with workers in the form of debt contracts to be able to claim that their employees were in debt to them and thus ensure tighter control over them. An early, second-century writer tells us, 'Thousands surrender themselves to work in servitude, *although they are free.*' In other words, a lot of the poorer families went into debt bondage in order to survive. From one of the recently discovered letters of Augustine we learn that parents sometimes sold their children into servitude for periods of 25 years. Augustine asked a lawyer friend of his whether these children could be liberated once the father died. Rural indebtedness was even more

*Draconian: Harsh (so-called because of an early sixth-century BCE Greek lawmaker called Draco, who prescribed death as the penalty for most crimes!).

**Frankincense – the European name for an aromatic resin used in incense and perfumes. It is tapped from Boswellia trees by slashing the bark and allowing the exuded resins to harden. The best-quality frankincense came from the Arabian peninsula.

widespread; to take just one example, in the great Jewish revolt of 66 CE* the revolutionaries destroyed the moneylenders' bonds to win popular support.

Again, we should be careful not to conclude that the bulk of labour was coerced in these ways. The late-fifth-century emperor Anastasius built the eastern frontier city of Dara in less than three weeks by attracting labour from all over the East by offering high wages. From the papyri we can even form some estimate of how widespread wage labour had become in parts of the Mediterranean by the sixth century, especially in the East.

*A rebellion in Judaea against Roman domination, which was ruthlessly suppressed by the Romans in what is called the 'Jewish war'.

ACTIVITY 4

The text has referred to three writers whose work is used to say something about how the Romans treated their workers. Can you identify them? Reread the section for yourself and describe any two methods the Romans used to control labour.

Social Hierarchies

Let us stand back from the details now and try and get a sense of the social structures of the empire. Tacitus described the leading social groups of the *early* empire as follows: senators (*patres*, lit. 'fathers'); leading members of the equestrian class; the respectable section of the people, those attached to the great houses; the unkempt lower class (*plebs sordida*) who, he tells us, were addicted to the circus and theatrical displays; and finally the slaves. In the early third century when the Senate numbered roughly 1,000, approximately half of all senators still came from Italian families. By the *late* empire, which starts with the reign of Constantine I in the early part of the fourth century, the first two groups mentioned by Tacitus (the senators and the *equites**) had *merged* into a unified and expanded aristocracy, and at least half of all families were of African or eastern origin. This 'late Roman' aristocracy was enormously wealthy but in many ways less powerful than the purely military elites who came almost entirely from non-aristocratic backgrounds. The 'middle' class now consisted of the considerable mass of persons connected with imperial service in the bureaucracy and army but also the more prosperous merchants and farmers of whom there were many in the eastern provinces. Tacitus described this 'respectable' middle class as clients of the great senatorial houses. Now it was chiefly government service and dependence on the State that sustained many of these families. Below them were the vast mass of the lower classes known collectively as *humiliores* (lit. 'lower'). They comprised a rural labour force of which many were permanently employed on the large estates; workers in industrial and mining establishments; migrant workers who supplied much of the labour for the grain and olive harvests and for the building industry; self-employed artisans who, it was said, were better fed than wage labourers; a large mass of casual labourers, especially in the big cities; and of course the many thousands of slaves that were still found all over the western empire in particular.

One writer of the early fifth century, the historian Olympiodorus who was also an ambassador, tells us that the aristocracy based in the City of Rome drew annual incomes of up to 4,000 lbs of gold

*The *equites*, ('knights' or 'horsemen') were traditionally the second most powerful and wealthy group. Originally, they were families whose property qualified them to serve in the cavalry, hence the name. Like senators, most 'knights' were landowners, but unlike senators many of them were shipowners, traders and bankers, that is, involved in business activities.

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from their estates, not counting the produce they consumed directly!

The monetary system of the late empire broke with the silver-based currencies of the first three centuries because the Spanish silver mines were exhausted and government ran out of sufficient stocks of the metal to support a stable coinage in silver. Constantine founded the new monetary system on gold and there were vast amounts of this in circulation throughout late antiquity.

The late Roman bureaucracy, both the higher and middle echelons, was a comparatively affluent group because it drew the bulk of its salary in gold and invested much of this in buying up assets like land. There was of course also a great deal of corruption, especially in the judicial system and in the administration of military supplies. The extortion of the higher bureaucracy and the greed of the provincial governors were proverbial. But government intervened repeatedly to curb these forms of corruption – we only know about them in the first place because of the laws that tried to put an end to them, and because historians and other members of the intelligentsia denounced such practices. This element of 'criticism' is a remarkable feature of the classical world. The Roman state was an authoritarian regime; in other words, dissent was rarely tolerated and government usually responded to protest with violence (especially in the cities of the East where people were often fearless in making fun of emperors). Yet a strong tradition of Roman law had emerged by the fourth century, and this acted as a brake on even the most fearsome emperors. Emperors were *not* free to do whatever they liked, and the law was actively used to protect civil rights. That is why in the later fourth century it was possible for powerful bishops like Ambrose to confront equally powerful emperors when they were excessively harsh or repressive in their handling of the civilian population.

Incomes of the Roman Aristocracy, Early Fifth Century

'Each of the great houses of Rome contained within itself everything which a medium-sized city could hold, a hippodrome, fora, temples, fountains and different kinds of baths... Many of the Roman households received an income of four thousand pounds of gold per year from their properties, not including grain, wine and other produce which, if sold, would have amounted to one-third of the income in gold. The income of the households at Rome of the second class was one thousand or fifteen hundred pounds of gold.'

– Olympiodorus of Thebes.

Late Antiquity

We shall conclude this chapter by looking at the cultural transformation of the Roman world in its final centuries. 'Late antiquity' is the term now used to describe the final, fascinating period in the evolution and break-up of the Roman Empire and refers broadly to the fourth to seventh centuries. The fourth century itself was one of considerable ferment, both cultural and economic. At the cultural level, the period saw momentous developments in religious life, with the emperor Constantine deciding to make Christianity the official religion, and with the rise of Islam in the seventh century. But there were equally important changes in the

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structure of the state that began with the emperor Diocletian (284-305), and it may be best to start with these.

Overexpansion had led Diocletian to 'cut back' by abandoning territories with little strategic or economic value. Diocletian also fortified the frontiers, reorganised provincial boundaries, and separated civilian from military functions, granting greater autonomy to the military commanders (*duces*), who now became a more powerful group. Constantine consolidated some of these changes and added others of his own. His chief innovations were in the monetary sphere, where he introduced a new denomination, the *solidus*, a coin of 4½ gm of pure gold that would in fact outlast the Roman Empire itself. *Solidi* were minted on a very large scale and their circulation ran into millions. The other area of innovation was the creation of a second capital at Constantinople (at the site of modern Istanbul in Turkey, and previously called Byzantium), surrounded on three sides by the sea. As the new capital required a new senate, the fourth century was a period of rapid expansion of the governing classes. Monetary stability and an expanding population stimulated economic growth, and the archaeological record shows considerable investment in rural establishments, including industrial installations like oil presses and glass factories, in newer technologies such as screw presses and multiple water-mills, and in a revival of the long-distance trade with the East.

Part of a colossal statue of Emperor Constantine, 313 CE.

All of this carried over into strong urban prosperity that was marked by new forms of architecture and an exaggerated sense of luxury. The ruling elites were wealthier and more powerful than ever before. In Egypt, hundreds of papyri survive from these later centuries and they show us a relatively affluent society where money was in extensive use and rural estates generated vast incomes in gold. For example, Egypt contributed taxes of over 2½ million *solidi* a year (roughly 35,000 lbs of gold) in the reign of Justinian in the sixth century. Indeed, large parts of the Near Eastern countryside were *more* developed and densely settled in the fifth and sixth centuries than they would be even in the twentieth century! This is the social background against which we should set the cultural developments of this period.

The traditional religious culture of the classical world, both Greek and Roman, had been polytheist. That is, it involved a multiplicity of cults that included both Roman/Italian gods like Jupiter, Juno, Minerva and Mars, as well as numerous Greek and eastern deities worshipped in thousands of temples, shrines and sanctuaries throughout the

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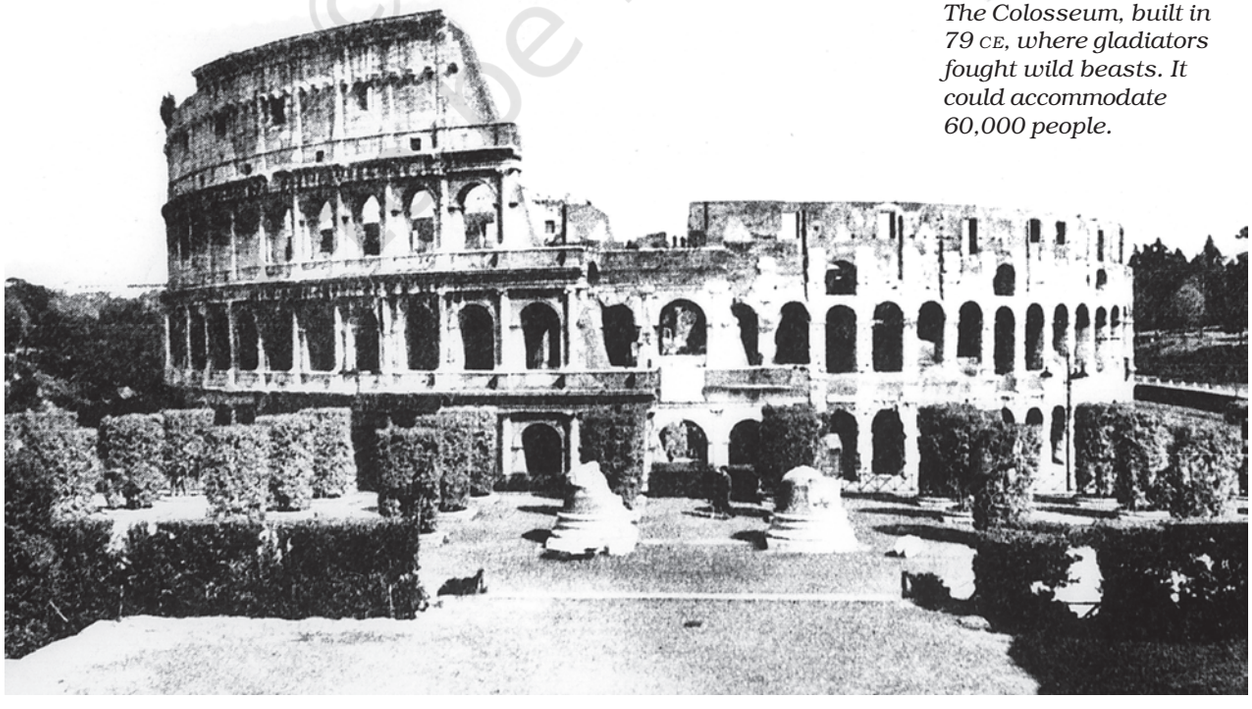
empire. Polytheists had no common name or label to describe themselves. The other great religious tradition in the empire was Judaism. But Judaism was not a monolith* either, and there was a great deal of diversity within the Jewish communities of late antiquity. Thus, the 'Christianisation'** of the empire in the fourth and fifth centuries was a gradual and complex process. Polytheism did not disappear overnight, especially in the western provinces, where the Christian bishops waged a running battle against beliefs and practices *they* condemned more than the Christian laity*** did. The *boundaries* between religious communities were much more fluid in the fourth century than they would become thanks to the repeated efforts of religious leaders, the powerful bishops who now led the Church, to rein in their followers and enforce a more rigid set of beliefs and practices.

The general prosperity was especially marked in the East where population was still expanding till the sixth century, despite the impact of the plague which affected the Mediterranean in the 540s. In the West, by contrast, the empire fragmented politically as Germanic groups from the North (Goths, Vandals, Lombards, etc.) took over all the major provinces and established kingdoms that are best described as 'post-Roman'. The most important of these were that of the Visigoths in Spain, destroyed by the Arabs between 711 and 720, that of the Franks in Gaul (c.511-687) and that of the Lombards in Italy (568-774). These kingdoms foreshadowed the beginnings of a different kind of world that is usually called 'medieval'. In the East, where the empire remained united, the reign of Justinian is the highwater mark of prosperity and imperial ambition. Justinian

*Monolith – literally a large block of stone, but the expression is used to refer to anything (for example a society or culture) that lacks variety and is all of the same type.

**Christianisation – the process by which Christianity spread among different groups of the population and became the dominant religion.

***Laity – the ordinary members of a religious community as opposed to the priests or clergy who have official positions within the community.



The Colosseum, built in 79 CE, where gladiators fought wild beasts. It could accommodate 60,000 people.

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recaptured Africa from the Vandals (in 533) but his recovery of Italy (from the Ostrogoths) left that country devastated and paved the way for the Lombard invasion. By the early seventh century, the war between Rome and Iran had flared up again, and the Sasanians who had ruled Iran since the third century launched a wholesale invasion of all the major eastern provinces (including Egypt). When Byzantium, as the Roman Empire was now increasingly known, recovered these provinces in the 620s, it was just a few years away, literally, from the final major blow which came, this time, from the south-east.

The expansion of Islam from its beginnings in Arabia has been called 'the greatest political revolution ever to occur in the history of the ancient world'. By 642, barely ten years after the Prophet Muhammad's death, large parts of *both* the eastern Roman and Sasanian empires had fallen to the Arabs in a series of stunning confrontations. However, we should bear in mind that those conquests, which eventually (a century later) extended as far afield as Spain, Sind and Central Asia, began in fact with the subjection of the Arab tribes by the emerging Islamic state, first within Arabia and then in the Syrian desert and on the fringes of Iraq. As we will see in Theme 4, the unification of the Arabian peninsula and its numerous tribes was the key factor behind the territorial expansion of Islam.

MAP 2: West Asia

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RULERS	EVENTS	
27 BCE-14 CE Augustus, first Roman emperor 14-37 Tiberius 98-117 Trajan 117-38 Hadrian 193-211 Septimius Severus 241-72 reign of Shapur I in Iran 253-68 Gallienus 284-305 the 'Tetrarchy'; Diocletian main ruler 312-37 Constantine 309-79 reign of Shapur II in Iran 408-50 Theodosius II (compiler of the famous 'Theodosian Code') 490-518 Anastasius 527-65 Justinian 531-79 reign of Khusro I in Iran 610-41 Heraclius	27 BCE	'Principate' founded by Octavian, now calls himself Augustus
	c. 24-79	Life of the Elder Pliny; dies in the volcanic eruption of Vesuvius, which also buries the Roman town of Pompeii
	66-70	The great Jewish revolt and capture of Jerusalem by Roman forces
	c. 115	Greatest extent of the Roman Empire, following Trajan's conquests in the East
	212	All free inhabitants of the empire transformed into Roman citizens
	224	New dynasty founded in Iran, called 'Sasanians' after ancestor Sasan
	250s	Persians invade Roman territories west of the Euphrates
	258	Cyprian bishop of Carthage executed
	260s	Gallienus reorganises the army
	273	Caravan city of Palmyra destroyed by Romans
	297	Diocletian reorganises empire into 100 provinces
	c. 310	Constantine issues new gold coinage (the 'solidus')
	312	Constantine converts to Christianity
	324	Constantine now sole ruler of empire; founds city of Constantinople
	354-430	Life of Augustine, bishop of Hippo
	378	Goths inflict crushing defeat on Roman armies at Adrianople
	391	Destruction of the Serapeum (temple of Serapis) at Alexandria
	410	Sack of Rome by the Visigoths
	428	Vandals capture Africa
	434-53	Empire of Attila the Hun
	493	Ostrogoths establish kingdom in Italy
	533-50	Recovery of Africa and Italy by Justinian
	541-70	Outbreaks of bubonic plague
	568	Lombards invade Italy
	c. 570	Birth of Muhammad
	614-19	Persian ruler Khusro II invades and occupies eastern Roman territories
	622	Muhammad and companions leave Mecca for Medina
	633-42	First and crucial phase of the Arab conquests; Muslim armies take Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq and parts of Iran
	661-750	Umayyad dynasty in Syria
	698	Arabs capture Carthage
	711	Arab invasion of Spain

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Mosaic at Ravenna, 547 CE, showing Emperor Justinian.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. If you had lived in the Roman Empire, where would you rather have lived – in the towns or in the countryside? Explain why.
2. Compile a list of some of the towns, cities, rivers, seas and provinces mentioned in this chapter, and then try and find them on the maps. Can you say something about any three of the items in the list you have compiled?
3. Imagine that you are a Roman housewife preparing a shopping list for household requirements. What would be on the list?
4. Why do you think the Roman government stopped coining in silver? And which metal did it begin to use for the production of coinage?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. Suppose the emperor Trajan had actually managed to conquer India and the Romans had held on to the country for several centuries. In what ways do you think India might be different today?
6. Go through the chapter carefully and pick out some basic features of Roman society and economy which you think make it look quite modern.

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THEME 4

THE CENTRAL ISLAMIC LANDS

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AS we enter the twenty-first century, there are over 1 billion Muslims living in all parts of the world. They are citizens of different nations, speak different languages, and dress differently. The processes by which they became Muslims were varied, and so were the circumstances in which they went their separate ways. Yet, the Islamic community has its roots in a more unified past which unfolded roughly 1,400 years ago in the Arabian peninsula. In this chapter we are going to read about the rise of Islam and its expansion over a vast territory extending from Egypt to Afghanistan, the core area of Islamic civilisation from 600 to 1200. In these centuries, Islamic society exhibited multiple political and cultural patterns. The term Islamic is used here not only in its purely religious sense but also for the overall society and culture historically associated with Islam. In this society not everything that was happening originated directly from religion, but it took place in a society where Muslims and their faith were recognised as socially dominant. Non-Muslims always formed an integral, if subordinate, part of this society as did Jews in Christendom.

Our understanding of the history of the central Islamic lands between 600 and 1200 is based on chronicles or *tawarikh* (which narrate events in order of time) and semi-historical works, such as biographies (*sira*), records of the sayings and doings of the Prophet (*hadith*) and commentaries on the Quran (*tafsir*). The material from which these works were produced was a large collection of eyewitness reports (*akhbar*) transmitted over a period of time either orally or on paper. The authenticity of each report (*khabar*) was tested by a critical method which traced the chain of transmission (*isnad*) and established the reliability of the narrator. Although the method was not foolproof, medieval Muslim writers were more careful in selecting their information and understanding the motives of their informants than were their contemporaries in other parts of the world. On controversial issues, they reproduced different versions of the same event, as they found in their sources, leaving the task of judgement to their readers. Their description of events closer to their own times is more systematic and analytical and less of a collection of *akhbar*. Most of the chronicles and semi-historical works are

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in Arabic, the best being the *Tarikh* of Tabari (d. 923) which has been translated into English in 38 volumes. Persian chronicles are few but they are quite detailed in their treatment of Iran and Central Asia. Christian chronicles, written in Syriac (a dialect of Aramaic*), are fewer but they throw interesting light on the history of early Islam. Besides chronicles, we have legal texts, geographies, travelogues and literary works, such as stories and poems.

*Aramaic is a language related to Hebrew and Arabic. It has also been used in Ashokan inscriptions.

Documentary evidence (fragmentary pieces of writing, such as official orders or private correspondence) is the most valuable for writing histories because it does not consciously refer to events and persons. It comes almost entirely from Greek and Arabic papyri (good for administrative history) and the Geniza records. Some evidence has emerged from archaeological (excavations done at desert palaces), numismatic (study of coins) and epigraphic (study of inscriptions) sources which is of great value for economic history, art history, and for establishing names and dates.

Proper histories of Islam began to be written in the nineteenth century by university professors in Germany and the Netherlands. Colonial interests in the Middle East and North Africa encouraged French and British researchers to study Islam as well. Christian priests too paid close attention to the history of Islam and produced some good work, although their interest was mainly to compare Islam with Christianity. These scholars, called Orientalists, are known for their knowledge of Arabic and Persian and critical analysis of original texts. Ignaz Goldziher was a Hungarian Jew who studied at the Islamic college (al-Azhar) in Cairo and produced path-breaking studies in German of Islamic law and theology. Twentieth-century historians of Islam have largely followed the interests and methods of Orientalists. They have widened the scope of Islamic history by including new topics, and by using allied disciplines, such as economics, anthropology and statistics, have refined many aspects of Orientalist studies. The historiography of Islam is a good example of how religion can be studied with modern historical methods by those who may not share the customs and beliefs of the people they are studying.

The Rise of Islam in Arabia: Faith, Community and Politics

During 612-32, the Prophet Muhammad preached the worship of a single God, Allah, and the membership of a single community of believers (*umma*). This was the origin of Islam. Muhammad was an Arab by language and culture and a merchant by profession. Sixth-century Arab culture was largely confined to the Arabian peninsula and areas of southern Syria and Mesopotamia.

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The Arabs were divided into tribes* (*qabila*), each led by a chief who was chosen partly on the basis of his family connections but more for his personal courage, wisdom and generosity (*murawwa*). Each tribe had its own god or goddess, who was worshipped as an idol (*sanam*) in a shrine. Many Arab tribes were nomadic (Bedouins), moving from dry to green areas (oases) of the desert in search of food (mainly dates) and fodder for their camels. Some settled in cities and practised trade or agriculture. Muhammad's own tribe, Quraysh, lived in Mecca and controlled the main shrine there, a cube-like structure called Kaba, in which idols were placed. Even tribes outside Mecca considered the Kaba holy and installed their own idols at this shrine, making annual pilgrimages (*hajj*) to the shrine. Mecca was located on the crossroads of a trade route between Yemen and Syria which further enhanced the city's importance (see Map p. 82). The Meccan shrine was a sanctuary (*haram*) where violence was forbidden and protection given to all visitors. Pilgrimage and commerce gave the nomadic and settled tribes opportunities to communicate with one another and share their beliefs and customs. Although the polytheistic Arabs were vaguely familiar with the notion of a Supreme God, Allah (possibly under the influence of the Jewish and Christian tribes living in their midst), their attachment to idols and shrines was more immediate and stronger.

Around 612, Muhammad declared himself to be the messenger (*rasul*) of God who had been commanded to preach that Allah alone should be worshipped. The worship involved simple rituals, such as daily prayers (*salat*), and moral principles, such as distributing alms and abstaining from theft. Muhammad was to found a community of believers (*umma*) bound by a common set of religious beliefs. The community would bear witness (*shahada*) to the existence of the religion before God as well as before members of other religious communities. Muhammad's message particularly appealed to those Meccans who felt deprived of the gains from trade and religion and were looking for a new community identity. Those who accepted the doctrine were called Muslims. They were promised salvation on the Day of Judgement (*qiyama*) and a share of the resources of the community while on earth. The Muslims soon faced considerable opposition from affluent Meccans who took offence to the rejection of their deities and found the new religion a threat to the status and prosperity of Mecca. In 622, Muhammad was forced to migrate with his followers to Medina. Muhammad's journey from Mecca (*hijra*) was a turning point in the history of Islam, with the year of his arrival in Medina marking the beginning of the Muslim calendar.

*Tribes are societies organised on the basis of blood relationships. The Arab tribes were made up of clans or combinations of large families. Unrelated clans also merged to make a tribe stronger. Non-Arab individuals *(mawali)* became members through the patronage of prominent tribesmen. Even after converting to Islam, the *mawali* were never treated as equals by the Arab Muslims and had to pray in separate mosques.

A thirteenth century painting from 'Ajaibul Makhluqat' depicting the artist's imagination of the Archangel Gabriel (Jibril) *who brought messages to Muhammad. The first word he spoke was 'recite'* (iqra) *from which has come the word Quran. In Islamic cosmology, angels are one of the three intelligent forms of life in the Universe. The other two are humans and jinns.*

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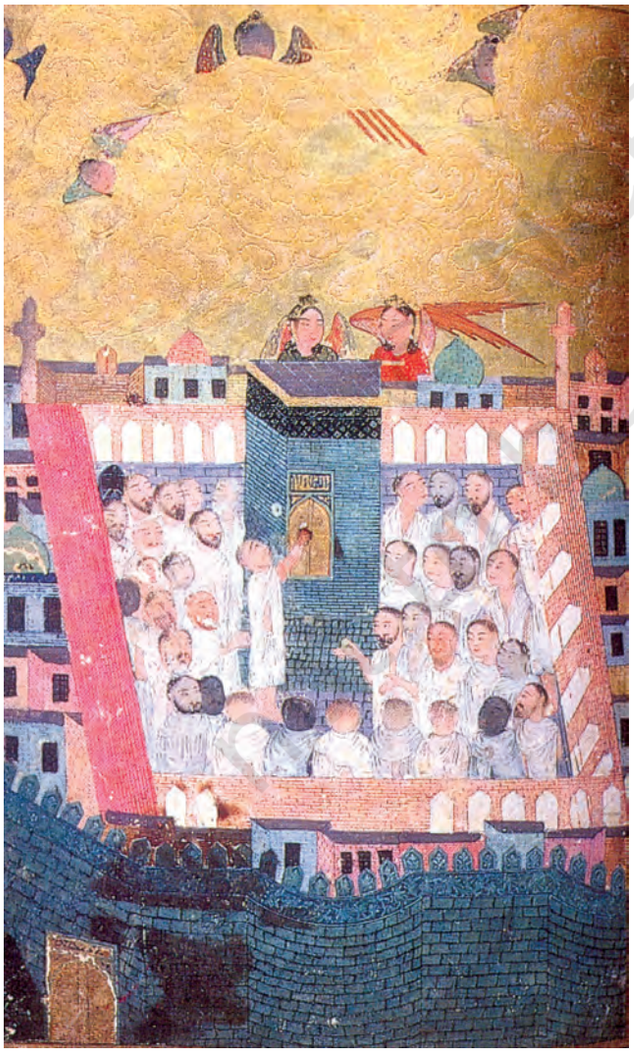
Islamic Calendar

The Hijri era was established during the caliphate of Umar, with the first year falling in 622 CE. A date in the Hijri calendar is followed by the letters AH.

The Hijri year is a lunar year of 354 days, 12 months (Muharram to Dhul Hijja) of 29 or 30 days. Each day begins at sunset and each month with the sighting of the crescent moon. The Hijri year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year. Therefore, none of the Islamic religious festivals, including the Ramazan fast, Id and *hajj*, corresponds in any way to seasons. There is no easy way to match the dates in the Hijri calendar with the dates in the Gregorian calendar (established by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582 CE). One can calculate the rough equivalents between the Islamic (H) and Gregorian Christian (C) years with the following formulae:

$$(H \times 32 / 33) + 622 = C$$
$$(C - 622) \times 33 / 32 = H$$



Pilgrims at the Kaba, illustration from a fifteenth-century Persian manuscript.

The survival of a religion rests on the survival of the community of believers. The community has to be consolidated internally and protected from external dangers. Consolidation and protection require political institutions such as states and governments which are either inherited from the past, borrowed from outside or created from scratch. In Medina, Muhammad created a political order from all three sources which gave his followers the protection they needed as well as resolved the city's ongoing civil strife. The *umma* was converted into a wider community to include polytheists and the Jews of Medina under the political leadership of Muhammad. Muhammad consolidated the faith for his followers by adding and refining rituals (such as fasting) and ethical principles. The community survived on agriculture and trade, as well as an alms tax (*zakat*). In addition, the Muslims organised expeditionary raids on Meccan caravans and nearby oases. These raids provoked reactions from the Meccans and caused a breach with the Jews of Medina. After

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a series of battles, Mecca was conquered and Muhammad's reputation as a religious preacher and political leader spread far and wide. Muhammad now insisted on conversion as the sole criterion for membership of the community. In the harsh conditions of the desert, the Arabs attached great value to strength and solidarity. Impressed by Muhammad's achievements, many tribes, mostly Bedouins, joined the community by converting to Islam. Muhammad's alliances began to spread until they embraced the whole of Arabia. Medina became the administrative capital of the emerging Islamic state with Mecca as its religious centre. The Kaba was cleansed of idols as Muslims were required to face the shrine when offering prayers. In a short space of time, Muhammad was able to unite a large part of Arabia under a new faith, community and state. The early Islamic polity, however, remained a federation of Arab tribes and clans for a long time.

The Caliphate: Expansion, Civil Wars and Sect Formation

After Muhammad's death in 632, no one could legitimately claim to be the next prophet of Islam. As a result, his political authority was transferred to the *umma* with no established principle of succession. This created opportunities for innovations but also caused deep divisions among the Muslims. The biggest innovation was the creation of the institution of caliphate, in which the leader of the community (*amir al-muminin*) became the deputy (*khalifa*) of the Prophet. The first four caliphs (632-61) justified their powers on the basis of their close association with the Prophet and continued his work under the general guidelines he had provided. The twin objectives of the caliphate were to retain control over the tribes constituting the *umma* and to raise resources for the state.

Following Muhammad's death, many tribes broke away from the Islamic state. Some even raised their own prophets to establish communities modelled on the *umma*. The first caliph, Abu Bakr, suppressed the revolts by a series of campaigns. The second caliph, Umar, shaped the *umma's* policy of expansion of power. The caliph knew that the *umma* could not be maintained out of the modest income derived from trade and taxes. Realising that rich booty (*ghanima*) could be obtained from expeditionary raids, the caliph and his military commanders mustered their tribal strength to conquer lands belonging to the Byzantine Empire in the west and the Sasanian empire in the east. At the height of their power, the Byzantine and Sasanian empires ruled vast territories and commanded huge resources to pursue their political and commercial interests in Arabia. The Byzantine Empire promoted Christianity and the Sasanian empire patronised Zoroastrianism, the ancient religion of Iran. On the eve of the Arab invasions, these two empires had declined in strength due to religious conflicts and revolts by the aristocracy. This made it

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MAP 1: The Islamic Lands

easier for the Arabs to annex territories through wars and treaties. In three successful campaigns (637-642), the Arabs brought Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt under the control of Medina. Military strategy, religious fervour and the weakness of the opposition contributed to the success of the Arabs. Further campaigns were launched by the third caliph, Uthman, to extend the control to Central Asia. Within a decade of the death of Muhammad, the Arab-Islamic state controlled the vast territory between the Nile and the Oxus. These lands remain under Muslim rule to this day.

In all the conquered provinces, the caliphs imposed a new administrative structure headed by governors (*amirs*) and tribal chieftains (*ashraf*). The central treasury (*bait al-mal*) obtained its revenue from taxes paid by Muslims as well as its share of the booty from raids. The caliph's soldiers, mostly Bedouins, settled in camp cities at the edge of the desert, such as Kufa and Basra, to remain within reach of their natural habitat as well as the caliph's command. The ruling class and soldiers received shares of the booty and monthly payments (*ata*). The non-Muslim population retained their rights to property and religious practices on payment of taxes (*kharaj* and *jiziya*). Jews and Christians were declared protected subjects of the state (*dhimmis*) and given a large measure of autonomy in the conduct of their communal affairs.

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Political expansion and unification did not come easily to the Arab tribesmen. With territorial expansion, the unity of the *umma* became threatened by conflicts over the distribution of resources and offices. The ruling class of the early Islamic state comprised almost entirely the Quraysh of Mecca. The third caliph, Uthman (644-56), also a Quraysh, packed his administration with his own men to secure greater control. This further intensified the Meccan character of the state and the conflict with the other tribesmen. Opposition in Iraq and Egypt, combined with opposition in Medina, led to the assassination of Uthman. With Uthman's death, Ali became the fourth caliph.

The rifts among the Muslims deepened after Ali (656-61) fought two wars against those who represented the Meccan aristocracy. Ali established himself at Kufa and defeated an army led by Muhammad's wife, Aisha, in the Battle of the Camel (657). He was, however, not able to suppress the faction led by Muawiya, a kinsman of Uthman and the governor of Syria. Ali's second battle, at Siffin (northern Mesopotamia), ended in a truce which split his followers into two groups: some remained loyal to him, while others left the camp and came to be known as Kharjis. Soon after, Ali was assassinated by a Kharji in a mosque at Kufa. After his death, his followers paid allegiance to his son, Hussain, and his descendants. Muawiya made himself the next caliph in 661, founding the Umayyad dynasty which lasted till 750.

After the civil wars, it appeared as if Arab domination would disintegrate. There were also signs that the tribal conquerors were adopting the sophisticated culture of their subjects. It was under the Umayyads, a prosperous clan of the Quraysh tribe, that a second round of consolidation took place.

The Umayyads and the Centralisation of Polity

The conquest of large territories destroyed the caliphate based in Medina and replaced it with an increasingly authoritarian polity. The Umayyads implemented a series of political measures which consolidated their leadership within the *umma*. The first Umayyad caliph, Muawiya, moved his capital to Damascus and adopted the court ceremonies and administrative institutions of the Byzantine Empire. He also introduced hereditary succession and persuaded the leading Muslims to accept his son as his heir. These innovations were adopted by the caliphs who followed him, and allowed the Umayyads to retain power for 90 years and the Abbasids, for two centuries.

The Umayyad state was now an imperial power, no longer based directly on Islam but on statecraft and the loyalty of Syrian troops. There were Christian advisers in the administration, as well as Zoroastrian scribes and bureaucrats. However, Islam continued to provide legitimacy to their rule. The Umayyads always appealed for

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The Dome of the Rock, built over a rocky mound by Abd al-Malik, is the earliest major work of Islamic architecture. Created as a monument to the Muslim presence in the city of Jerusalem, it acquired a mystical association connected with the Night Journey of the Prophet to Heaven (miraj).

unity and suppressed rebellions in the name of Islam. They also retained their Arab social identity. During the reign of Abd al-Malik (685-705) and his successors, both the Arab and Islamic identities were strongly emphasised. Among the measures Abd al-Malik took were the adoption of Arabic as the language of administration and the introduction of an Islamic coinage. The gold *dinar* and silver *dirham* that had been circulating in the caliphate were copies of Byzantine and Iranian coins (*denarius* and *drachm*), with symbols of crosses and fire altars and Greek and Pahlavi (the language of Iran) inscriptions. These symbols were removed and the coins now carried Arabic inscriptions. Abd al-Malik also made a highly visible contribution to the development of an Arab-Islamic identity, by building the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

Abd al-Malik's Coinage Reform

The three coin specimens show the transition from Byzantine to Arab-Islamic coinage. On the second coin, the bearded and long-haired caliph is dressed in traditional Arab robes and is holding a sword. It is the first extant portrait of a Muslim. It is also unique because later there developed an antipathy towards the representation of living beings in art and craft. Abd al-Malik's reform of coinage was linked with his reorganisation of state finances. It proved so successful that for hundreds of years, coins were struck according to the pattern and weight of the third specimen.

Byzantine gold solidus (denarius aureus) *showing the emperor Heraclius and his two sons.*

Portrait gold dinar *struck by Abd al-Malik with his name and image.*

The reformed dinar was purely epigraphic. It carries the kalima*: 'There is no God but Allah and He has no partner* (sharik)'

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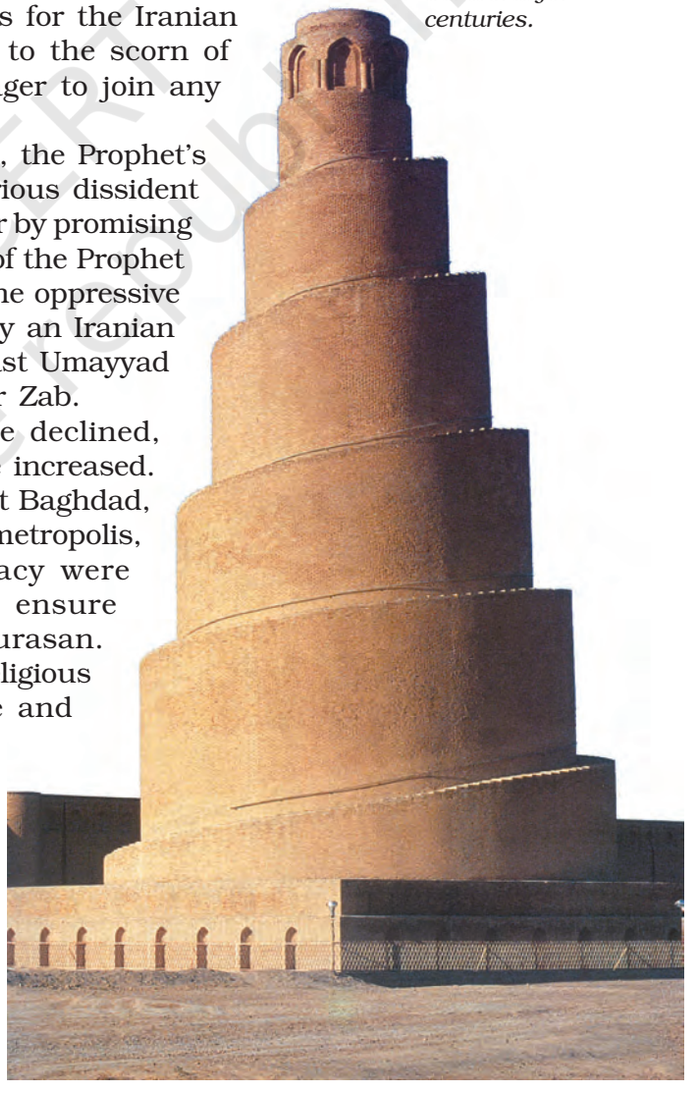
The Abbasid Revolution

For their success in centralising the Muslim polity, the Umayyads paid a heavy price. A well-organised movement, called *dawa*, brought down the Umayyads and replaced them with another family of Meccan origin, the Abbasids, in 750. The Abbasids portrayed the Umayyad regime as evil and promised a restoration of the original Islam of the Prophet. The revolution led not only to a change of dynasty but changes in the political structure and culture of Islam.

The Abbasid uprising broke out in the distant region of Khurasan (eastern Iran), a 20-day journey from Damascus on a fast horse. Khurasan had a mixed Arab-Iranian population which could be mobilised for various reasons. The Arab soldiers here were mostly from Iraq and resented the dominance of the Syrians. The civilian Arabs of Khurasan disliked the Umayyad regime for having made promises of tax concessions and privileges which were never fulfilled. As for the Iranian Muslims (*mawali*), they were exposed to the scorn of the race-conscious Arabs and were eager to join any campaign to oust the Umayyads.

The Abbasids, descendants of Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, mustered the support of the various dissident groups and legitimised their bid for power by promising that a messiah (*mahdi*) from the family of the Prophet (*ahl al-bayt*) would liberate them from the oppressive Umayyad regime. Their army was led by an Iranian slave, Abu Muslim, who defeated the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan, in a battle at the river Zab.

Under Abbasid rule, Arab influence declined, while the importance of Iranian culture increased. The Abbasids established their capital at Baghdad, near the ruins of the ancient Iranian metropolis, Ctesiphon. The army and bureaucracy were reorganised on a non-tribal basis to ensure greater participation by Iraq and Khurasan. The Abbasid rulers strengthened the religious status and functions of the caliphate and patronised Islamic institutions and scholars. But they were forced by the needs of government and empire to retain the centralised nature of the state. They maintained the magnificent imperial architecture and elaborate court ceremonials of the Umayyads. The regime which took pride in having brought down the monarchy found itself compelled to establish it again.



The Great Mosque of al-Mutawwakil in Samarra (the second Abbasid capital) built in 850. The minar is 50 metres high, and is made of brick. Inspired by Mesopotamian architectural traditions, this was the largest mosque in the world for centuries.

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ACTIVITY 1

Identify the changing locations of the caliphate's capital. Which would you say was most centrally situated?

Break-up of the Caliphate and the Rise of Sultanates

The Abbasid state became weaker from the ninth century because Baghdad's control over the distant provinces declined, and because of conflict between pro-Arab and pro-Iranian factions in the army and bureaucracy. In 810, a civil war broke out between supporters of Amin and Mamun, sons of the caliph Harun al-Rashid, which deepened the factionalism and created a new power bloc of Turkish slave officers (*mamluk*). Shiism once again competed with Sunni orthodoxy for power. A number of minor dynasties arose, such as the Tahirids and Samanids in Khurasan and Transoxiana (Turan or lands beyond the Oxus), and the Tulunids in Egypt and Syria. Abbasid power was soon limited to central Iraq and western Iran. That too was lost in 945 when the Buyids, a Shiite clan from the Caspian region of Iran (Daylam), captured Baghdad. The Buyid rulers assumed various titles, including the ancient Iranian title *shahanshah* (king of kings), but not that of caliph. They kept the Abbasid caliph as the symbolic head of their Sunni subjects.

The decision not to abolish the caliphate was a shrewd one, because another Shiite dynasty, the Fatimids, had ambitions to rule the Islamic world. The Fatimids belonged to the Ismaili sub-sect of Shiism and claimed to be descended from the Prophet's daughter, Fatima, and hence, the sole rightful rulers of Islam. From their base in North Africa, they conquered Egypt in 969 and established the Fatimid caliphate. The old capital of Egypt, Fustat, was replaced by a new city, Qahira (Cairo), founded on the day of the rise of the planet Mars (*Mirrikh*, also called *al-Qahir*). The two rival dynasties patronised Shiite administrators, poets and scholars.

Between 950 and 1200, Islamic society was held together not by a single political order or a single language of culture (Arabic) but by common economic and cultural patterns. Unity in the face of political divisions was maintained by the separation between state and society, the development of Persian as a language of Islamic high culture, and the maturity of the dialogue between intellectual traditions. Scholars, artists and merchants moved freely within the central Islamic lands and assured the circulation of ideas and manners. Some of these also percolated down to the level of villages due to conversion. The Muslim population, less than 10 per cent in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, increased enormously. The identity of Islam as a religion and a cultural system separate from other religions became much sharper, which made conversion possible and meaningful.

A third ethnic group was added to the Arabs and Iranians, with the rise of the Turkish sultanates in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The Turks were nomadic tribes from the Central Asian steppes (grasslands) of Turkistan (north-east of the Aral Sea up to the borders of China) who gradually converted to Islam (see Theme 5). They were skilled riders and warriors and entered the Abbasid, Samanid and Buyid

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administrations as slaves and soldiers, rising to high positions on account of their loyalty and military abilities. The Ghaznavid sultanate was established by Alptegin (961) and consolidated by Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030). Like the Buyids, the Ghaznavids were a military dynasty with a professional army of Turks and Indians (one of the generals of Mahmud was an Indian named Tilak). But their centre of power was in Khurasan and Afghanistan and for them, the Abbasid caliphs were not rivals but a source of legitimacy. Mahmud was conscious of being the son of a slave and was especially eager to receive the title of Sultan from the caliph. The caliph was willing to support the Sunni Ghaznavid as a counterweight to Shiite power.

The Saljuq Turks entered Turan as soldiers in the armies of the Samanids and Qarakhanids (non-Muslim Turks from further east). They later established themselves as a powerful group under the leadership of two brothers, Tughril and Chaghri Beg. Taking advantage of the chaos following the death of Mahmud of Ghazni, the Saljuqs conquered Khurasan in 1037 and made Nishapur* their first capital. The Saljuqs next turned their attention to western Persia and Iraq (ruled by the Buyids) and in 1055, restored Baghdad to Sunni rule. The caliph, al-Qaim, conferred on Tughril Beg the title of Sultan in a move that marked the separation of religious and political authority. The two Saljuq brothers ruled together in accordance with the tribal notion of rule by the family as a whole. Tughril (d. 1064) was succeeded by his nephew, Alp Arsalan. During Alp Arsalan's reign, the Saljuq empire expanded to Anatolia (modern Turkey).

*An important Perso-Islamic centre of learning and the birthplace of Umar Khayyam.

From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, there was a series of conflicts between European Christians and the Arab states. This is discussed below. Then, at the start of the thirteenth century, the Muslim world found itself on the verge of a great disaster. This was the threat from the Mongols, the last but most decisive of all nomadic assaults on settled civilisations (see Theme 5).

The Crusades

In medieval Islamic societies, Christians were regarded as the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitab*) since they had their own scripture (the New Testament or *Injil*). Christians were granted safe conduct (*aman*) while venturing into Muslim states as merchants, pilgrims, ambassadors and travellers. These territories also included those which were once held by the Byzantine Empire, notably the Holy Land of Palestine. Jerusalem was conquered by the Arabs in 638 but it was ever-present in the Christian imagination as the place of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. This was an important factor in the formation of the image of Muslims in Christian Europe.

Hostility towards the Muslim world became more pronounced in the eleventh century. Normans, Hungarians and some Slavs had

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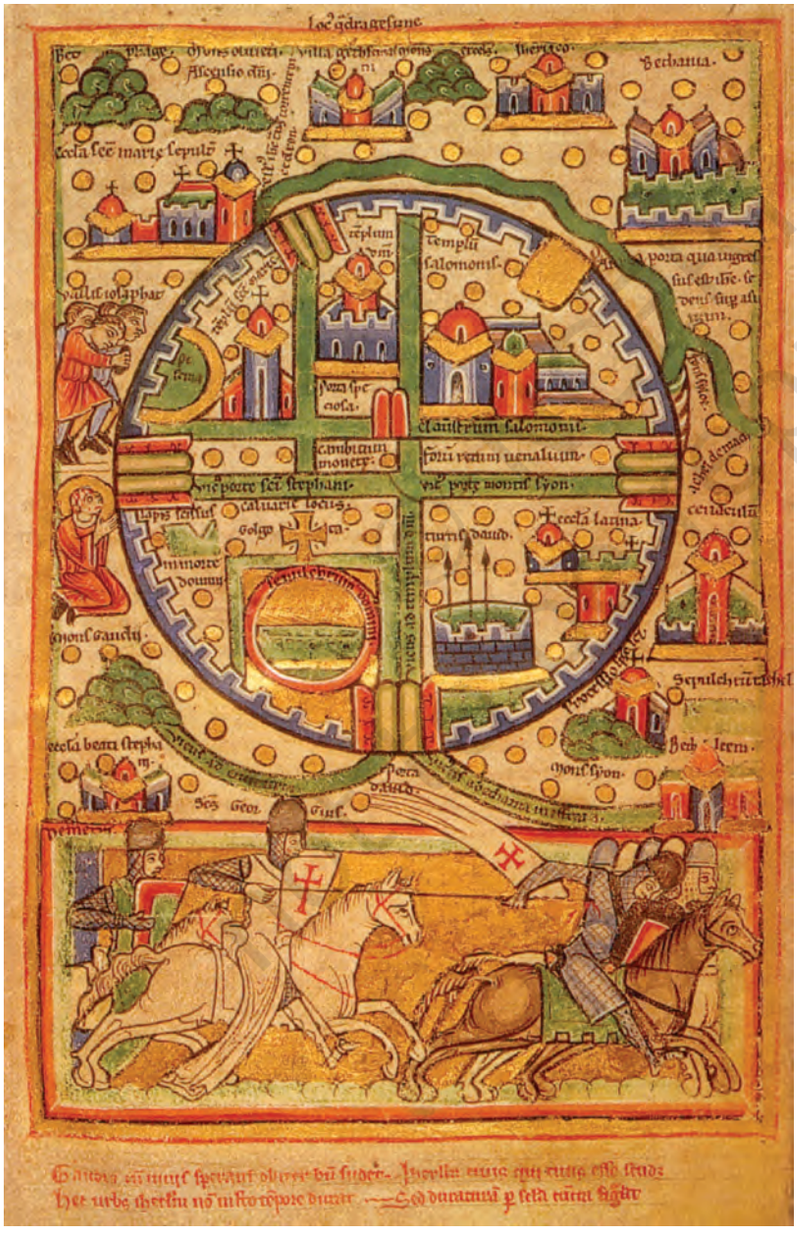
been converted to Christianity, and the Muslims alone remained as the main enemy. There was also a change in the social and economic organisation of western Europe in the eleventh century which contributed to the hostility between Christendom and the Islamic world. The clergy and the warrior class (the first two orders – see Theme 6) were making efforts to ensure political stability as well as economic growth based on agriculture and trade. The possibilities of military confrontation between competing feudal principalities and a return to economic organisation based on plunder were contained by the Peace of God movement. All military violence was forbidden inside certain areas, near places of worship, during certain periods considered sacred in the Church's calendar, and against certain vulnerable social groups, such as churchmen and the common people. The Peace of God deflected the aggressive tendencies of feudal society away from the Christian world and towards the 'enemies' of God. It built a climate in which fighting against the infidels (non-believers) became not only permissible but also commendable.

Aleppo, a Hittite, Assyrian and Hellenistic site, which was occupied by the Arabs in 636. It was fought over for the next 1,000 years; note the Crusaders seen in action.
–Nasuh al-Matraki's Itinerary, *1534-36.*



The death in 1092 of Malik Shah, the Saljuq sultan of Baghdad, was followed by the disintegration of his empire. This offered the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, a chance to regain Asia Minor and northern Syria. For Pope Urban II, this was an opportunity to revive the spirit of Christianity. In 1095, the Pope joined the Byzantine emperor in calling for a war in the name of God to liberate the Holy Land. Between 1095 and 1291, western European Christians planned and fought

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wars against Muslim cities on the coastal plains of the eastern Mediterranean (Levant). These wars were later designated as Crusades*.

**The Pope ordered the ceremonial granting of crosses to those who had sworn to fight.*

In the first crusade (1098-99), soldiers from France and Italy captured Antioch in Syria, and claimed Jerusalem. Their victory was accompanied by the slaughter of Muslims and Jews in the city, chronicled by both Christians and Muslims. Muslim writers referred to the arrival of the Christians (called *ifrinji* or *firangi*) as a Frankish invasion. The Franks quickly established four crusader states in the region of Syria-Palestine. Collectively, these territories were known as Outremer (the land overseas) and later crusades were directed at its defence and expansion.

The Outremer survived well for some time, but when the Turks captured Edessa in 1144, an appeal was made by the Pope for a second crusade (1145-49). A combined German and French army made an attempt to capture Damascus but they were defeated and forced to return home. After this, there was a gradual erosion of the strength of Outremer. Crusader zeal gave way to living in luxury and to battles over territory among the Christian rulers. Salah al-Din (Saladin) created an Egypto-Syrian empire and gave the call for *jihad* or holy war against the Christians, and defeated them in 1187. He regained Jerusalem, nearly a century after the first crusade. Records of the time indicate that Salah al-Din's treatment of the Christian population was humane, in marked contrast to the way in which Christians had earlier dealt with Muslims and Jews. Although he gave custody of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to the Christians, a number of churches were turned into mosques, and Jerusalem once again became a Muslim city.

The loss of the city prompted a third crusade in 1189, but the crusaders gained little except for some coastal towns in Palestine and free access to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims. The Mamluks, the rulers of Egypt, finally drove the crusading Christians from all of Palestine in 1291. Europe gradually lost military interest in Islam and focused on its internal political and cultural development.

The Crusades left a lasting impact on two aspects of Christian-Muslim relations. One was the harsher attitude of the Muslim state towards its Christian subjects which resulted from the bitter memories of the conflict as well as the needs for security in areas of mixed populations. The other was the greater influence of Italian mercantile communities (from Pisa, Genoa and Venice) in the trade between the East and the West even after the restoration of Muslim power.

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Franks in Syria

The treatment of the subjugated Muslim population differed among the various Frankish lords. The earliest of the crusaders, who settled down in Syria and Palestine, were generally more tolerant of the Muslim population than those who came later. In his memoirs, Usama ibn Munqidh, a twelfth-century Syrian Muslim, has something interesting to say about his new neighbours:

'Among the Franks there are some who have settled down in this country and associated with Muslims. These are better than the newcomers, but they are exceptions to the rule, and no inference can be drawn from them.

Here is an example. Once I sent a man to Antioch on business. At that time, Chief Theodore Sophianos [an eastern Christian] was there, and he and I were friends. He was then all powerful in Antioch. One day he said to my man, "One of my Frankish friends has invited me. Come with me and see how they live." My man told me: "So I went with him, and we came to the house of one of the old knights, those who had come with the first Frankish expedition. He had already retired from state and military service, and had a property in Antioch from which he lived. He produced a fine table, with food both tasty and cleanly served. He saw that I was reluctant to eat, and said: "Eat to your heart's content, for I do not eat Frankish food. I have Egyptian women cooks and eat nothing but what they prepare, nor does swine flesh ever enter my house." So I ate, but with some caution, and we took our leave.

A crusader castle in Syria. Built during the crusades (1110), it was an important base to attack Arab-controlled areas. The towers and aqueducts were built by the Mamluk sultan, Baybars, when he captured it in 1271.

Later I was walking through the market, when suddenly a Frankish woman caught hold of me and began jabbering in their language, and I could not understand what she was saying. A crowd of Franks collected against me, and I was sure that my end had come. Then, suddenly, that same knight appeared and saw me, and came up to that woman, and asked her: "What do you want of this Muslim?" She replied: "He killed my brother Hurso." This Hurso was a knight of Afamiya who had been killed by someone from the army of Hama. Then the knight shouted at her and said, "This man is a *burjasi* [bourgeois, that is, a merchant]. He does not fight or go to war." And he shouted at the crowd and they dispersed; then he took my hand and went away. So the effect of that meal that I had was to save me from death.'

– *Kitab al-Itibar.*

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Economy: Agriculture, Urbanisation and Commerce

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the settled populations in the newly conquered territories. The Islamic state made no changes in this. Land was owned by big and small peasants and, in some cases, by the state. In Iraq and Iran, land existed in fairly large units cultivated by peasants. The estate owners collected taxes on behalf of the state during the Sasanian as well as Islamic periods. In areas that had moved from a pastoral to a settled agricultural system, land was the common property of the village. Finally, big estates that were abandoned by their owners after the Islamic conquests were acquired by the state and handed over mainly to the Muslim elites of the empire, particularly members of the caliph's family.

The state had overall control of agricultural lands, deriving the bulk of its income from land revenue once the conquests were over. The lands conquered by the Arabs that remained in the hands of the owners were subject to a tax (*kharaj*), which varied from half to a fifth of the produce, according to the conditions of cultivation. On land held or cultivated by Muslims, the tax levied was one-tenth (*ushr*) of the produce. When non-Muslims started to convert to Islam to pay lower taxes, this reduced the income of the state. To address the shortfall, the caliphs first discouraged conversions and later adopted a uniform policy of taxation. From the tenth century onwards, the state authorised its officials to claim their salaries from agricultural revenues from territories, called *iqtas* (revenue assignments).

Grain harvesting; the labourers' lunch is being brought on a tray.
–Arabic version of the Pseudo-Galen's Book of Antidotes, *1199 (see the story of Doctor Galen, p. 63).*

Agricultural prosperity went hand in hand with political stability. In many areas, especially in the Nile valley, the state supported irrigation systems, the construction of dams and canals, and the digging of wells (often equipped with waterwheels or *noria*), all of which were crucial for good harvests. Islamic law gave tax concessions to people who brought land under cultivation. Through peasant initiatives and state support, cultivable land expanded and productivity rose, even in the absence of major technological changes. Many new crops such as cotton, oranges, bananas, watermelons, spinach and brinjals (*badinjan*) were grown and even exported to Europe.

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Islamic civilisation flourished as the number of cities grew phenomenally. Many new cities were founded, mainly to settle Arab soldiers (*jund*) who formed the backbone of the local administration. Among this class of garrison-cities, called *misr* (the Arabic name for Egypt), were Kufa and Basra in Iraq, and Fustat and Cairo in Egypt. Within half a century of its establishment as the capital of the Abbasid caliphate (800), the population of Baghdad had reached around 1 million. Alongside these cities were older towns such as Damascus, Isfahan and Samarqand, which received a new lease of life. Their size and population surged, supported by an expansion in the production of foodgrains and raw materials such as cotton and sugar for urban manufactures. A vast urban network developed, linking one town with another and forming a circuit.

At the heart of the city were two building complexes radiating cultural and economic power: the congregational mosque (*masjid al-jami*), big enough to be seen from a distance, and the central marketplace (*suq*), with shops in a row, merchants' lodgings (*fanduq*) and the office of the money-changer. The cities were homes to administrators (*ayan* or eyes of the state), and scholars and merchants (*tujjar*) who lived close to the centre. Ordinary citizens and soldiers had their living quarters in the outer circle, each fitted with its own mosque, church or synagogue (Jewish temple), subsidiary market and public bath (*hammam*), an important meeting place. At the outskirts were the houses of the urban poor, a market for green vegetables and fruits brought from the countryside, caravan stations and 'unclean' shops, such as those dealing in tanning or butchering. Beyond the city walls were inns for people to rest when the city gates were shut and cemeteries. There were variations on this typology depending on the nature of the landscape, political traditions and historical events.

A boat sailing to Basra. The crew are Indian and the passengers Arab. The transport of goods and passengers by water was cheaper, quicker and safer in pre-modern times. Illustration from the Maqamat *written by Hariri (twelfth-century manuscript). The* Maqamat *(Assemblies) were a genre of popular Arabic literature in which a narrator tells stories of a trickster and his escapades.*

Political unification and urban demand for foodstuffs and luxuries enlarged the circuit of exchange. Geography favoured the Muslim empire, which spread between the trading zones of the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. For five centuries, Arab and Iranian traders monopolised the maritime trade between China, India and Europe. This trade passed through two major routes, namely, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. High-value goods suitable for long-distance trade, such as spices, textile, porcelain and gunpowder, were shipped from India and China to the Red Sea ports of Aden and Aydhab and the Gulf ports of Siraf and Basra.

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From here, the merchandise was carried overland in camel caravans to the warehouses (*makhazin*, origin of the word magazine which has a similar collection of articles) of Baghdad, Damascus and Aleppo for local consumption or onward transmission. The caravans passing through Mecca got bigger whenever the *hajj* coincided with the sailing seasons (*mawasim*, origin of the word monsoon) in the Indian Ocean. At the Mediterranean end of these trade routes, exports to Europe from the port of Alexandria were handled by Jewish merchants, some of whom traded directly with India, as can be seen from their letters preserved in the Geniza collection. However, from the tenth century, the Red Sea route gained greater importance due to the rise of Cairo as a centre of commerce and power and growing demand for eastern goods from the trading cities of Italy.

ACTIVITY 2

Describe a morning scene in Basra.

Paper, Geniza Records and History

In the central Islamic lands, written works were widely circulated after the introduction of paper. Paper (made from linen) came from China, where the manufacturing process was a closely guarded secret. In 751, the Muslim governor of Samarqand took 20,000 Chinese invaders as prisoners, some of whom were good at making paper. For the next 100 years, Samarqand paper remained an important export item. Since Islam prohibited monopolies, paper began to be manufactured in the rest of the Islamic world. By the middle of the tenth century, it had more or less replaced papyrus, the writing material made from the inner stem of a plant that grew freely in the Nile valley. Demand for paper increased, and Abd al-Latif, a doctor from Baghdad (see his depiction of the ideal student on p. 98) and a resident of Egypt between 1193 and 1207, reported how Egyptian peasants robbed graves to obtain mummy wrappings made of linen to sell to paper factories.

Paper also facilitated the writing of commercial and personal documents of all kinds. In 1896, a huge collection of medieval Jewish documents was discovered in a sealed room (Geniza, pronounced *ghaniza*) of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fustat. The documents had been preserved thanks to the Jewish practice of not destroying any piece of writing that contained the name of God. The Geniza was found to contain over a quarter of a million manuscripts and fragments dating back as far as the mid-eighth century. Most of the material dated from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, that is, from the Fatimid, Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods. These included personal letters between merchants, family and friends, contracts, promises of dowry, sale documents, laundry lists, and other trivia. Most of the documents were written in Judaeo-Arabic, a version of Arabic written in Hebrew characters that was commonly used by Jewish communities throughout the medieval Mediterranean. The Geniza documents provide rich insights into personal and economic experiences as also into Mediterranean and Islamic culture. The documents also suggest that the business skills and commercial techniques of merchants of the medieval Islamic world were more advanced than those of their European counterparts. Goitein wrote a multi-volume history of the Mediterranean from Geniza records, and Amitav Ghosh was inspired by a Geniza letter to tell the story of an Indian slave in his book, *In an Antique Land*.

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Towards the eastern end, caravans of Iranian merchants set out from Baghdad along the Silk Route to China, via the oasis cities of Bukhara and Samarqand (Transoxiana), to bring Central Asian and Chinese goods, including paper. Transoxiana also formed an important link in the commercial network which extended north to Russia and Scandinavia for the exchange of European goods, (mainly fur) and Slavic captives (hence the word, slave). Islamic coins, used for the payment of these goods, were found in hoards discovered along the Volga river and in the Baltic region. Male and female Turkish slaves (*ghulam*) too were purchased in these markets for the courts of the caliphs and sultans.

The fiscal system (income and expenditure of the state) and market exchange increased the importance of money in the central Islamic lands. Coins of gold, silver and copper (*fulus*) were minted and circulated, often in bags sealed by money-changers, to pay for goods and services. Gold came from Africa (Sudan) and silver from Central Asia (Zarafshan valley). Precious metals and coins also came from Europe, which used these to pay for its trade with the East. Rising demand for money forced people to release their accumulated reserves and idle wealth into circulation. Credit combined with currencies to oil the wheels of commerce. The greatest contribution of the Muslim world to medieval economic life was the development of superior methods of payment and business organisation. Letters of credit (*sakk*, origin of the word cheque) and bills of exchange (*suftaja*) were used by merchants and bankers to transfer money from one place or individual to another. The widespread use of commercial papers freed merchants from the need to carry cash everywhere and also made their journeys safer. The caliph too used the *sakk* to pay salaries or reward poets and minstrels.

Although it was customary for merchants to set up family businesses or employ slaves to run their affairs, formal business arrangements (*muzarba*) were also common in which sleeping partners entrusted capital to travelling merchants and shared profits and losses in an agreed proportion. Islam did not stop people from making money so long as certain prohibitions were respected. For instance, interest-bearing transactions (*riba*) were unlawful, although people circumvented usury in ingenious ways (*hiyal*), such as borrowing money in one type of coin and paying in another while disguising the interest as a commission on currency exchange (the origin of the bill of exchange).

Many tales from the *Thousand and One Nights (Alf Layla wa Layla)* give us a picture of medieval Islamic society, featuring characters such as sailors, slaves, merchants and money-changers.

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Learning and Culture

As the religious and social experiences of the Muslims deepened through contact with other people, the community was obliged to reflect on itself and confront issues pertaining to God and the world. What should be the ideal conduct of a Muslim in public and private? What is the object of Creation and how does one know what God wants from His creatures? How can one understand the mysteries of the universe? Answers to such questions came from learned Muslims who acquired and organised knowledge of different kinds to strengthen the social identity of the community as well as to satisfy their intellectual curiosity.

For religious scholars (*ulama*), knowledge (*ilm*) derived from the Quran and the model behaviour of the Prophet (*sunna*) was the only way to know the will of God and provide guidance in this world. The *ulama* in medieval times devoted themselves to writing *tafsir* and documenting Muhammad's authentic *hadith*. Some went on to prepare a body of laws or *sharia* (the straight path) to govern the relationship of Muslims with God through rituals (*ibadat*) and with the rest of the humanity through social affairs (*muamalat*). In framing Islamic law, jurists also made use of reasoning (*qiyas*) since not everything was apparent in the Quran or *hadith* and life had become increasingly complex with urbanisation. Differences in the interpretation of the sources and methods of jurisprudence led to the formation of four schools of law (*mazhab*) in the eight and ninth centuries. These were the Maliki, Hanafi, Shafii and Hanbali schools, each named after a leading jurist (*faqih*), the last being the most conservative. The *sharia* provided guidance on all possible legal issues within Sunni society, though it was more precise on questions of personal status (marriage, divorce and inheritance) than on commercial matters or penal and constitutional issues.

Courtyard of Mustansiriya Madrasa of Baghdad, founded in 1233. The madrasa was a college of learning for students who had finished their schooling in maktab. *Madrasas were attached to mosques but big madrasas had a mosque attached to them.*

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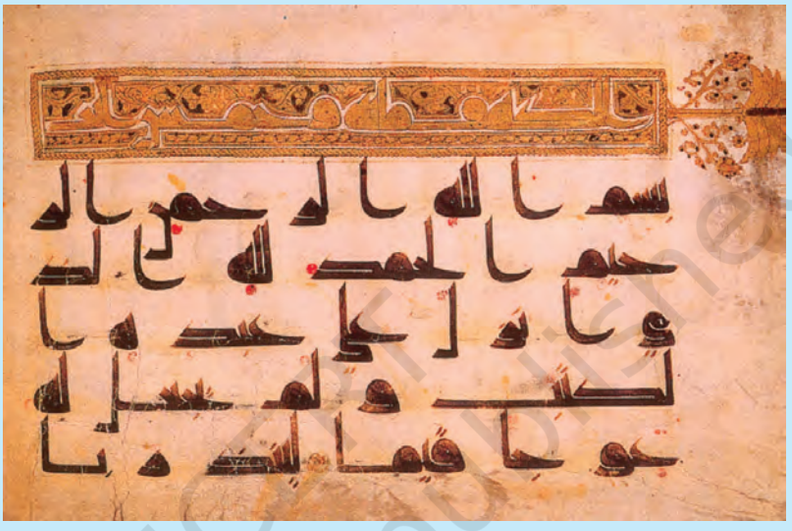
The Quran

'And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean were ink
with seven oceans behind it to add to its supply,
yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted in the writing.'

(Quran, chapter 31, verse 27)



Page from a Quran written on vellum in the ninth century. It is the beginning of Sura 18, 'al-Kahf' (The Cave) which refers to Moses. The angular Kufi script has vowel signs in red for the correct pronunciation of the language.

The Quran is a book in Arabic divided into 114 chapters (*suras*) and arranged in descending order of length, the shortest being the last. The only exception to this is the first *sura* which is a short prayer (*al-fatiha* or opening). According to Muslim tradition, the Quran is a collection of messages (revelations) which God sent to the Prophet Muhammad between 610 and 632, first in Mecca and then in Medina. The task of compiling these revelations was completed some time in 650. The oldest complete Quran we have today dates from the ninth century. There are many fragments which are older, the earliest being the verses engraved on the Dome of the Rock and on coins in the seventh century.

The use of the Quran as a source material for the history of early Islam has posed some problems. The first is that it is a scripture, a text vested with religious authority. Theologians generally believed that as the speech of God (*kalam allah*), it has to be understood literally, but rationalists among them gave wider interpretations to the Quran. In 833, the Abbasid caliph al-Mamun imposed the view (in a trial of faith or *mihna*) that the Quran is God's creation rather than His speech. The second problem is that the Quran very often speaks in metaphors and, unlike the Old Testament (*Tawrit*), it does not narrate events but only refers to them. Medieval Islamic scholars thus had to make sense of many verses with the help of *hadith.* Many *hadith* were written to help the reading of the Quran.

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Before it took its final form, the *sharia* was adjusted to take into account the customary laws (*urf*) of the various regions as well as the laws of the state on political and social order (*siyasa sharia*). Customary laws, however, retained their strength in large parts of the countryside and continued to bypass the *sharia* in matters such as the inheritance of land by daughters. In most regimes, the ruler or his officials dealt routinely with matters of state security and sent only selected cases to the *qazi* (judge). The *qazi*, appointed by the state in each city or locality, often acted as an arbitrator in disputes, rather than as a strict enforcer of the *sharia*.

A group of religious-minded people in medieval Islam, known as Sufis, sought a deeper and more personal knowledge of God through asceticism (*rahbaniya*) and mysticism. The more society gave itself up to material pursuits and pleasures, the more the Sufis sought to renounce the world (*zuhd*) and rely on God alone (*tawakkul*). In the eighth and ninth centuries, ascetic inclinations were elevated to the higher stage of mysticism (*tasawwuf*) by the ideas of pantheism and love. Pantheism is the idea of oneness of God and His creation which implies that the human soul must be united with its Maker. Unity with God can be achieved through an intense love for God (*ishq*), which the woman-saint Rabia of Basra (d. 891) preached in her poems. Bayazid Bistami (d. 874), an Iranian Sufi, was the first to teach the importance of submerging the self (*fana*) in God. Sufis used musical concerts (*sama*) to induce ecstasy and stimulate emotions of love and passion.

Sufism is open to all regardless of religious affiliation, status and gender. Dhulnun Misri (d. 861), whose grave can still be seen near the Pyramids in Egypt, declared before the Abbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil, that he 'learnt true Islam from an old woman, and true chivalry from a water carrier'. By making religion more personal and less institutional, Sufism gained popularity and posed a challenge to orthodox Islam.

An alternative vision of God and the universe was developed by Islamic philosophers and scientists under the influence of Greek philosophy and science. During the seventh century, remnants of late Greek culture could still

Painting of whirling dervishes, Iranian manuscript, 1490. Of the four men dancing, only one is shown with his hands in the 'correct' position. Some have succumbed to vertigo and are being led away.

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be found in the Byzantine and Sasanian empires, although they were slowly dying. In the schools of Alexandria, Syria and Mesopotamia, once part of Alexander's empire, Greek philosophy, mathematics and medicine were taught along with other subjects. The Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs commissioned the translation of Greek and Syriac books into Arabic by Christian scholars. Translation became a well-organised activity under al-Mamun, who supported the Library cum Institute of Science (Bayt al-Hikma) in Baghdad where the scholars worked. The works of Aristotle, the *Elements* of Euclid and Ptolemy's *Almagest* were brought to the attention of Arabic-reading scholars. Indian works on astronomy, mathematics and medicine were also translated into Arabic during the same period. These works reached Europe and kindled interest in philosophy and science.

ACTIVITY 3

Comment on this passage. Would it be relevant to a student today?

The Ideal Student

Abd al-Latif, a twelfth-century legal and medical scholar of Baghdad, talks to his ideal student:

'I commend you not to learn your sciences from books unaided, even though you may trust your ability to understand. Resort to teachers for each science you seek to acquire; and should your teacher be limited in his knowledge take all that he can offer, until you find another more accomplished than he. You must venerate and respect him. When you read a book, make every effort to learn it by heart and master its meaning. Imagine the book to have disappeared and that you can dispense with it, unaffected by its loss. One should read histories, study biographies and the experiences of nations. By doing this, it will be as though, in his short life space, he lived contemporaneously with peoples of the past, was on intimate terms with them, and knew the good and bad among them. You should model your conduct on that of the early Muslims. Therefore, read the biography of the Prophet and follow in his footsteps. You should frequently distrust your nature, rather than have a good opinion of it, submitting your thoughts to men of learning and their works, proceeding with caution and avoiding haste. He who has not endured the stress of study will not taste the joy of knowledge. When you have finished your study and reflection, occupy your tongue with the mention of God's name, and sing His praises. Do not complain if the world turns its back on you. Know that learning leaves a trail and a scent proclaiming its possessor; a ray of light and brightness shining on him, pointing him out.'

– Ahmad ibn al Qasim ibn Abi Usaybia, *Uyun al Anba.*

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The study of new subjects promoted critical inquiry and had a profound influence on Islamic intellectual life. Scholars with a theological bent of mind, such as the group known as Mutazila, used Greek logic and methods of reasoning (*kalam*) to defend Islamic beliefs. Philosophers (*falasifa*) posed wider questions and provided fresh answers. Ibn Sina (980-1037), a doctor by profession and a philosopher, did not believe in the resurrection of the body on the Day of Judgement. This was met with strong opposition from theologians. His medical writings were widely read. The most influential was *al-Qanun fil Tibb (Canon of Medicine)*, a million-word manuscript that lists 760 drugs sold by the pharmacists of his day and includes notes on his own experiments conducted in hospitals (*bimaristan*). The *Canon* points out the importance of dietetics (healing through dietary regulation), the influence of the climate and environment on health and the contagious nature of some diseases. The *Canon* was used as a textbook in Europe, where the author was known as Avicenna (see Theme 7). Just before his death, the scientist and poet Umar Khayyam was said to be reading the *Canon*. His gold toothpick was found between two pages of the chapter on metaphysics.

In medieval Islamic societies, fine language and a creative imagination were among the most appreciated qualities in a person. These qualities raised a person's communication to the level of *adab*, a term which implied literary and cultural refinement. *Adab* forms of expressions included poetry (*nazm* or orderly arrangement) and prose (*nathr* or scattered words) which were meant to be memorised and used when the occasion arose. The most popular poetic composition of pre-Islamic origin was the ode (*qasida*), developed by poets of the Abbasid period to glorify the achievements of their patrons. Poets of Persian origin revitalised and reinvented Arabic poetry and challenged the cultural hegemony of the Arabs. Abu Nuwas (d. 815), who was of Persian origin, broke new ground by composing classical poetry on new themes such as wine and male love with the intention of celebrating pleasures forbidden by Islam. After Abu Nuwas, the poets addressed the object of their passion in the masculine, even if the latter was a woman. Following the same tradition, the Sufis glorified the intoxication caused by the wine of mystical love.

By the time the Arabs conquered Iran, Pahlavi, the language of the sacred books of ancient Iran, was in decay. A version of Pahlavi, known as New Persian, with a huge Arabic vocabulary, soon developed. The formation of sultanates in Khurasan and Transoxiana took New Persian to great cultural heights. The Samanid court poet Rudaki (d. 940) was considered the father of New Persian poetry, which included new forms such as the short lyrical poem (*ghazal*) and the quatrain (*rubai,* plural *rubaiyyat*). The *rubai* is a four-line stanza in which the first two lines set the stage, the third is finely poised, and the fourth delivers the point. In contrast to its form, the subject matter of the *rubai* is unrestricted. It can be used to express the beauty of a beloved, praise

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a patron, or express the thoughts of the philosopher. The *rubai* reached its zenith in the hands of Umar Khayyam (1048-1131), also an astronomer and mathematician, who lived at various times in Bukhara, Samarqand and Isfahan.

Dimna is talking to the lion (asad) *in this miniature painting of a thirteenth-century Arabic manuscript.*

At the beginning of the eleventh century, Ghazni became the centre of Persian literary life. Poets were naturally attracted by the brilliance of the imperial court. Rulers, too, realised the importance of patronising arts and learning for enhancing their prestige. Mahmud of Ghazni gathered around him a group of poets who composed anthologies (*diwans*) and epic poetry (*mathnavi*). The most outstanding was Firdausi (d. 1020), who took 30 years to complete the *Shahnama (Book of Kings)*, an epic of 50,000 couplets which has become a masterpiece of Islamic literature. The *Shahnama* is a collection of traditions and legends (the most popular being that of Rustam), which poetically depicts Iran from Creation up until the Arab conquest. It was in keeping with the Ghaznavid tradition that Persian later became the language of administration and culture in India.

The catalogue (*Kitab al-Fihrist*) of a Baghdad bookseller, Ibn Nadim (d. 895), describes a large number of works written in prose for the moral education and amusement of readers. The oldest of these is a collection of animal fables called *Kalila wa Dimna* (the names of the two jackals who were the leading characters) which is the Arabic translation of a Pahlavi version of the *Panchtantra*. The most widespread and lasting literary works are the stories of hero-adventurers such as Alexander (al-Iskandar) and Sindbad, or those of unhappy lovers such as Qays (known as Majnun or the Madman). These have developed over the centuries into oral and written traditions. The *Thousand and One Nights* is another collection of stories told by a single narrator, Shahrzad, to her husband night after night. The collection was originally in Indo-Persian and was translated into Arabic in Baghdad in the eighth century. More stories were later added in Cairo during the Mamluk period. These stories depict human beings of different types – the generous, the stupid, the gullible, the crafty – and were told to educate and entertain. In his *Kitab al-Bukhala (Book of Misers)*, Jahiz of Basra (d. 868) collected amusing anecdotes about misers and also analysed greed.

From the ninth century onwards, the scope of *adab* was expanded to include biographies, manuals of ethics (*akhlaq*), Mirrors for Princes (books on statecraft) and, above all, history (*tarikh*) and geography.

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The tradition of history writing was well established in literate Muslim societies. History books were read by scholars and students as well as by the broader literate public. For rulers and officials, history provided a good record of the glories and achievements of a dynasty as well as examples of the techniques of administration. In the two major historical works, *Ansab al-Ashraf (Genealogies of the Nobles)* of Baladhuri (d. 892) and *Tarikh al-Rusul wal Muluk (History of Prophets and Kings)* of Tabari, the whole of human history was treated with the Islamic period as the focal point. The tradition of local history writing developed with the break-up of the caliphate. Books were written in Persian about dynasties, cities or regions to explore the unity and variety of the world of Islam.

Geography and travel (*rihla*) constituted a special branch of *adab*. These combined knowledge from Greek, Iranian and Indian books with the observations of merchants and travellers. In mathematical geography, the inhabited world was divided into seven climes *(singular iqlim)* parallel with the Equator, corresponding to our three continents. The exact position of each city was determined astronomically. Muqaddasi's (d. 1000) descriptive geography, *Ahsan al-Taqasim (The Best Divisions)* is a comparative study of the countries and peoples of the world and a treasure trove of exotic curiosities. Geography and general history were combined in *Muruj al-Dhahab* (*Golden Meadows*) of Masudi (written in 943) to illustrate the wide variety of worldly cultures. Alberuni's famous *Tahqiq ma lil-Hind (History of India*) was the greatest attempt by an eleventh-century Muslim writer to look beyond the world of Islam and observe what was of value in another cultural tradition.

Mosaic floor in the bath-house of the palace at Khirbat al-Mafjar, Palestine, eighth century. Imagine the caliph enthroned on the tree; the scene below depicts peace and war.

By the tenth century, an Islamic world had emerged which was easily recognisable by travellers. Religious buildings were the greatest external symbols of this world. Mosques, shrines and tombs from Spain to Central Asia showed the same basic design – arches, domes, minarets and open courtyards – and expressed the spiritual and practical needs of Muslims. In the first Islamic century, the mosque acquired a distinct architectural form (roof supported by pillars) which transcended regional variations. The mosque had an open courtyard (*sahn*) where a fountain or pond was placed, leading to a vaulted hall which could accommodate long lines of worshippers and the prayer leader (*imam*). Two special features were located

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inside the hall: a niche (*mihrab*) in the wall indicating the direction of Mecca (*qibla*), and a pulpit (*minbar*, pronounced *mimbar*) from where sermons were delivered during noon prayers on Friday. Attached to the building was the minaret, a tower used to call the faithful to prayer at the appointed times and to symbolise the presence of the new faith. Time was marked in cities and villages by the five daily prayers and weekly sermons.

The same pattern of construction – of buildings built around a central courtyard (*iwan*) – appeared not only in mosques and mausoleums but also in caravanserais, hospitals and palaces. The Umayyads built 'desert palaces' in oases, such as Khirbat al-Mafjar in Palestine and Qusayr Amra in Jordan, which served as luxurious residences and retreats for hunting and pleasure. The palaces, modelled on Roman and Sasanian architecture, were lavishly decorated with sculptures, mosaics and paintings of people. The Abbasids built a new imperial city in Samarra amidst gardens and running waters which is mentioned in the stories and legends revolving round Harun al-Rashid. The great palaces of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad or the Fatimids in Cairo have disappeared, leaving only traces in literary texts.

The rejection of representing living beings in the religious art of Islam promoted two art forms: calligraphy (*khattati* or the art of beautiful writing) and arabesque (geometric and vegetal designs). Small and big inscriptions, usually of religious quotations, were used to decorate architecture. Calligraphic art has been best preserved in manuscripts of the Quran dating from the eighth and ninth centuries. Literary works, such as the *Kitab al-Aghani* (*Book of Songs*), *Kalila wa Dimna*, and *Maqamat* of Hariri, were illustrated with miniature paintings. In addition, a wide variety of illumination techniques were introduced to enhance the beauty of a book. Plant and floral designs, based on the idea of the garden, were used in buildings and book illustrations.

The history of the central Islamic lands brings together three important aspects of human civilisation: religion, community and politics. We can see them as three circles which merge and appear as one in the seventh century. In the next five centuries the circles separate. Towards the end of our period, the influence of Islam over state and government was minimal, and politics involved many things which had no sanction in religion (kingship, civil wars, etc.). The circles of religion and community overlapped. The Muslim community was united in its observance of the *sharia* in rituals and personal matters. It was no more governing itself (poltics was a separate circle) but it was defining its religious identity. The only way the circles of religion and community could have separated was through the progressive secularisation of Muslim society. Philosophers and Sufis advocated this, suggesting that civil society should be made autonomous, and rituals be replaced by private spirituality.

The Islamic decorative genius found full expression in the art of metal objects that are among the best-preserved specimens. This mosque lamp from fourteenth-century Syria has the Light verse inscribed on it.

*'God is the Light (*nur*) of the heavens and the earth*
*His light is like a niche (*mishkat*) with a lamp (*misbah*)*
The lamp is in a glass which looks as if it were a glittering star
*Kindled from a blessed olive (*zaitun*) tree that is neither eastern nor western*
*Whose oil would always shine even if no fire (*nar*) touched it'*

(Quran, chapter 24, verse 35).

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ACTIVITY 4

Which of the pictures in the chapter do you like best and why?

595	Muhammad marries Khadija, a wealthy Meccan trader who later supports Islam
610-12	Muhammad has first revelation; first public preaching of Islam (612)
621	First agreement at Aqaba with Medinan converts
622	Migration from Mecca to Medina. Arab tribes of Medina (*ansar*) shelter Meccan migrants (*muhajir*)
632-61	Early caliphate; conquests of Syria, Iraq, Iran and Egypt; civil wars
661-750	Umayyad rule; Damascus becomes the capital
750-945	Abbasid rule; Baghdad becomes the capital
945	Buyids capture Baghdad; literary and cultural efflorescence
1063-92	Rule of Nizamul mulk, the powerful Saljuq *wazir* who established a string of *madrasas* called Nizamiyya; killed by Hashishayn (Assassins)
1095-1291	Crusades; contacts between Muslims and Christians
1111	Death of Ghazali, influential Iranian scholar who opposed rationalism
1258	Mongols capture Baghdad

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. What were the features of the lives of the Bedouins in the early seventh century?
2. What is meant by the term 'Abbasid revolution'?
3. Give examples of the cosmopolitan character of the states set up by Arabs, Iranians and Turks.
4. What were the effects of the Crusades on Europe and Asia?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. How were Islamic architectural forms different from those of the Roman Empire?
6. Describe a journey from Samarqand to Damascus, referring to the cities on the route.

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THEME 5

NOMADIC EMPIRES

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THE term 'noma1dic empires' can appear contradictory: nomads are arguably quintessential wanderers, organised in family assemblies with a relatively undifferentiated economic life and rudimentary systems of political organisation. The term 'empire', on the other hand, carries with it the sense of a material location, a stability derived from complex social and economic structures and the governance of an extensive territorial dominion through an elaborate administrative system. But the juxtapositions on which these definitions are framed may be too narrowly and ahistorically conceived. They certainly collapse when we study some imperial formations constructed by nomadic groups.

In Theme 4 we studied state formations in the central Islamic lands whose origins lay in the Bedouin nomadic traditions of the Arabian peninsula. This chapter studies a different group of nomads: the Mongols of Central Asia who established a transcontinental empire under the leadership of Genghis Khan, straddling Europe and Asia during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Relative to the agrarian-based imperial formations in China, the neighbouring nomads of Mongolia may have inhabited a humbler, less complex, social and economic world. But the Central Asian nomadic societies were not insulated 'islands' that were impervious to historical change. These societies interacted, had an impact on and learnt from the larger world of which they were very much a part.

This chapter studies the manner in which the Mongols under Genghis Khan adapted their traditional social and political customs to create a fearsome military machine and a sophisticated method of governance. The challenge of ruling a dominion spanning a melange of people, economies, and confessional systems meant that the Mongols could not simply impose their steppe traditions over their recently annexed territories. They innovated and compromised, creating a nomadic empire that had a huge impact on the history of Eurasia even as it changed the character and composition of their own society forever.

The steppe dwellers themselves usually produced no literature, so our knowledge of nomadic societies comes

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mainly from chronicles, travelogues and documents produced by city-based litterateurs. These authors often produced extremely ignorant and biased reports of nomadic life. The imperial success of the Mongols, however, attracted many literati. Some of them produced travelogues of their experiences; others stayed to serve Mongol masters. These individuals came from a variety of backgrounds – Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Turkish and Muslim. Although not always familiar with Mongol customs, many of them produced sympathetic accounts – even eulogies – that challenged and complicated the otherwise hostile, city-based tirade against the steppe marauders. The history of the Mongols, therefore, provides interesting details to question the manner in which sedentary societies usually characterised nomads as primitive barbarians*.

Perhaps the most valuable research on the Mongols was done by Russian scholars starting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the Tsarist regime consolidated its control over Central Asia. This work was produced within a colonial milieu and was largely survey notes produced by travellers, soldiers, merchants and antiquarian scholars. In the early twentieth century, after the extension of the soviet republics in the region, a new Marxist historiography argued that the prevalent mode of production determined the nature of social relations. It placed Genghis Khan and the emerging Mongol empire within a scale of human evolution that was witnessing a transition from a tribal to a feudal mode of production: from a relatively classless society to one where there were wide differences between the lord, the owners of land and the peasant. Despite following such a deterministic interpretation of history, excellent research on Mongol languages, their society and culture was carried out by scholars such as Boris Yakovlevich Vladimirtsov. Others such as Vasily Vladimirovich Bartold did not quite toe the official line. At a time when the Stalinist regime was extremely wary of regional nationalism, Bartold's sympathetic and positive assessment of the career and achievements of the Mongols under Genghis Khan and his successors got him into trouble with the censors. It severely curtailed the circulation of the work of the scholar and it was only in the 1960s, during and after the more liberal Khruschev era, that his writings were published in nine volumes.

The transcontinental span of the Mongol empire also meant that the sources available to scholars are written in a vast number of languages. Perhaps the most crucial are the sources in Chinese, Mongolian, Persian and Arabic, but vital materials are also available in Italian, Latin, French and Russian. Often the same text was produced in two languages with differing contents. For example, the Mongolian and Chinese versions of the earliest narrative on Genghis Khan, titled *Mongqol-un niuèa tobèa'an* (*The Secret History of the*

*The term 'barbarian' is derived from the Greek *barbaros* which meant a non-Greek, someone whose language sounded like a random noise: 'bar-bar'. In Greek texts, barbarians were depicted like children, unable to speak or reason properly, cowardly, effeminate, luxurious, cruel, slothful, greedy and politically unable to govern themselves. The sterotype passed to the Romans who used the term for the Germanic tribes, the Gauls and the Huns. The Chinese had different terms for the steppe barbarians but none of them carried a positive meaning.

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Mongols) are quite different and the Italian and Latin versions of Marco Polo's travels to the Mongol court do not match. Since the Mongols produced little literature on their own and were instead 'written about' by literati from foreign cultural milieus, historians have to often double as philologists to pick out the meanings of phrases for their closest approximation to Mongol usage. The work of scholars like Igor de Rachewiltz on *The Secret History of the Mongols* and Gerhard Doerfer on Mongol and Turkic terminologies that infiltrated into the Persian language brings out the difficulties involved in studying the history of the Central Asian nomads. As we will notice through the remainder of this chapter, despite their incredible achievements there is much about Genghis Khan and the Mongol world empire still awaiting the diligent scholar's scrutiny.

Introduction

In the early decades of the thirteenth century the great empires of the Euro-Asian continent realised the dangers posed to them by the arrival of a new political power in the steppes of Central Asia: Genghis Khan (d. 1227) had united the Mongol people. Genghis Khan's political vision, however, went far beyond the creation of a confederacy of Mongol

MAP 1: The Mongol Empire

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tribes in the steppes of Central Asia: he had a mandate from God to rule the world. Even though his own lifetime was spent consolidating his hold over the Mongol tribes, leading and directing campaigns into adjoining areas in north China, Transoxiana, Afghanistan, eastern Iran and the Russian steppes, his descendants travelled further afield to fulfil Genghis Khan's vision and create the largest empire the world had ever seen.

It was in the spirit of Genghis Khan's ideals that his grandson Mongke (1251-60) warned the French ruler, Louis IX (1226-70): 'In Heaven there is only one Eternal Sky, on Earth there is only one Lord, Genghis Khan, the Son of Heaven... When by the power of the Eternal Heaven the whole world from the rising of the sun to its setting shall be at one in joy and peace, then it will be made clear what we are going to do: if when you have understood the decree of the Eternal Heaven, you are unwilling to pay attention and believe it, saying, "Our country is far away, our mountains are mighty, our sea is vast", and in this confidence you bring an army against us, we know what we can do. He who made easy what was difficult and near what was far off, the Eternal Heaven knows.'

These were not empty threats and the 1236-41 campaigns of Batu, another grandson of Genghis Khan, devastated Russian lands up to Moscow, seized Poland and Hungary and camped outside Vienna. In the thirteenth century it did seem that the Eternal Sky was on the side of the Mongols and many parts of China, the Middle East and Europe saw in Genghis Khan's conquests of the inhabited world the 'wrath of God', the beginning of the Day of Judgement.

The Capture of Bukhara

Juwaini, a late-thirteenth-century Persian chronicler of the Mongol rulers of Iran, carried an account of the capture of Bukhara in 1220. After the conquest of the city, Juwaini reported, Genghis Khan went to the festival ground where the rich residents of the city were and addressed them: 'O people know that you have committed great sins, and that the great ones among you have committed these sins. If you ask me what proof I have for these words, I say it is because I am the punishment of God. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you'... Now one man had escaped from Bukhara after its capture and had come to Khurasan. He was questioned about the fate of the city and replied: 'They came, they [mined the walls], they burnt, they slew, they plundered and they departed.'

ACTIVITY 1

Assume that Juwaini's account of the capture of Bukhara is accurate. Imagine yourself as a resident of Bukhara and Khurasan who heard the speeches. What impact would they have had on you?

How did the Mongols create an empire that dwarfed the achievements of the other 'World Conqueror', Alexander? In a pre-industrial age of

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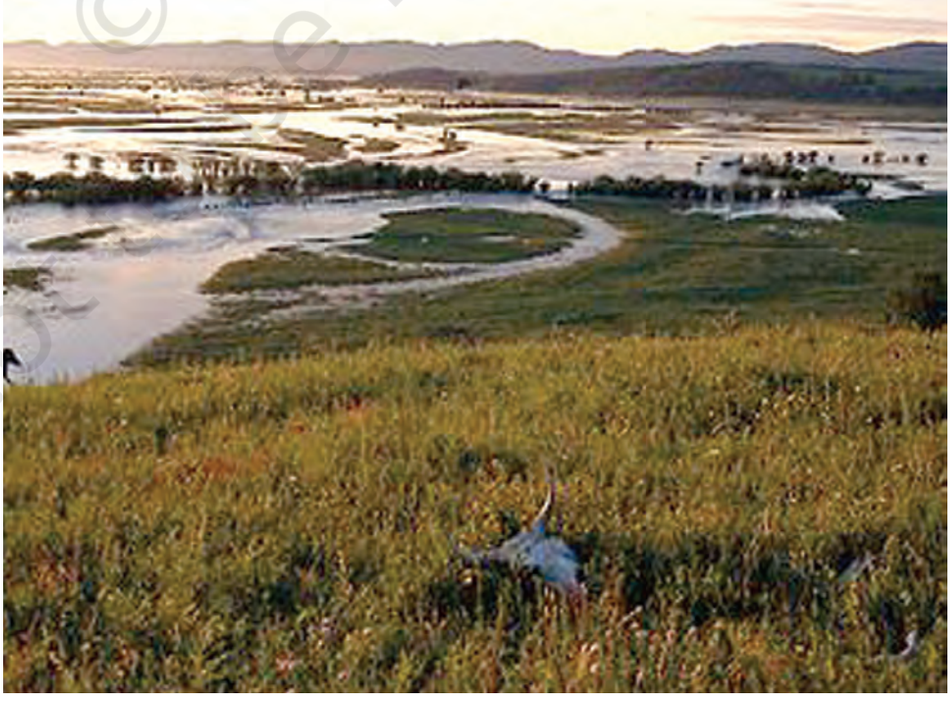
poor technological communications, what skills were deployed by the Mongols to administer and control such a vast dominion? For someone so self-confidently aware of his moral, divinely-dispensed right to rule, how did Genghis Khan relate to the diverse social and religious groups that comprised his dominion? In the making of his imperium what happened to this plurality? We need to start our discussion, however, with a humbler set of questions to better comprehend the social and political background of the Mongols and Genghis Khan: who were the Mongols? Where did they live? Who did they interact with and how do we know about their society and politics?

Social and Political Background

The Mongols were a diverse body of people, linked by similarities of language to the Tatars, Khitan and Manchus to the east, and the Turkic tribes to the west. Some of the Mongols were pastoralists while others were hunter-gatherers. The pastoralists tended horses, sheep and, to a lesser extent, cattle, goats and camels. They nomadised in the steppes of Central Asia in a tract of land in the area of the modern state of Mongolia. This was (and still is) a majestic landscape with wide horizons, rolling plains, ringed by the snow-capped Altai mountains to the west, the arid Gobi desert in the south and drained by the Onon and Selenga rivers and myriad springs from the melting snows of the hills in the north and the west. Lush, luxuriant grasses for pasture and considerable small game were available in a good season. The hunter-gatherers resided to the north of the



Onon river plain in flood.

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pastoralists in the Siberian forests. They were a humbler body of people than the pastoralists, making a living from trade in furs of animals trapped in the summer months. There were extremes of temperature in the entire region: harsh, long winters followed by brief, dry summers. Agriculture was possible in the pastoral regions during short parts of the year but the Mongols (unlike some of the Turks further west) did not take to farming. Neither the pastoral nor the hunting-gathering economies could sustain dense population settlements and as a result the region possessed no cities. The Mongols lived in tents, *gers*, and travelled with their herds from their winter to summer pasture lands.

Ethnic and language ties united the Mongol people but the scarce resources meant that their society was divided into patrilineal lineages; the richer families were larger, possessed more animals and pasture lands. They therefore had many followers and were more influential in local politics. Periodic natural calamities – either unusually harsh, cold winters when game and stored provisions ran out or drought which parched the grasslands – would force families to forage further afield leading to conflict over pasture lands and predatory raids in search of livestock. Groups of families would occasionally ally for offensive and defensive purposes around richer and more powerful lineages but, barring the few exceptions, these confederacies were usually small and short-lived. The size of Genghis Khan's confederation of Mongol and Turkish tribes was perhaps matched in size only by that which had been stitched together in the fifth century by Attila (d. 453).

Unlike Attila, however, Genghis Khan's political system was far more durable and survived its founder. It was stable enough to counter larger armies with superior equipment in China, Iran and eastern Europe. And, as they established control over these regions, the Mongols administered complex agrarian economies and urban settlements – sedentary societies – that were quite distant from their own social experience and habitat.

Although the social and political organisations of the nomadic and agrarian economies were very different, the two societies were hardly foreign to each other. In fact, the scant resources of the steppe lands drove Mongols and other Central Asian nomads to trade and barter with their sedentary neighbours in China. This was mutually beneficial to both parties: agricultural produce and iron utensils from China were exchanged for horses, furs and game trapped in the steppe. Commerce was not without its tensions, especially as the two groups unhesitatingly applied military pressure to enhance profit. When the Mongol lineages allied they could force their Chinese neighbours to offer better terms and trade ties were sometimes discarded in favour of outright plunder. This relationship would alter when the Mongols were in disarray. The Chinese would then confidently assert their influence in the steppe. These frontier wars were more debilitating to settled societies. They dislocated agriculture and plundered cities. Nomads, on the other hand, could retreat away from the zone of conflict with

Listed below are some of the great Central Asian steppe confederacies of the Turks and Mongol people. They did not all occupy the same region and were not equally large and complex in their internal organisation. They had a considerable impact on the history of the nomadic population but their impact on China and the adjoining regions varied.

Hsiung-nu (200 BCE) (Turks)

Juan-juan (400 CE) (Mongols)

Epthalite Huns (400 CE) (Mongols)

T'u-chueh (550 CE) (Turks)

Uighurs (740 CE) (Turks)

Khitan (940 CE) (Mongols)

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marginal losses. Throughout its history, China suffered extensively from nomad intrusion and different regimes – even as early as the eighth century BCE – built fortifications to protect their subjects. Starting from the third century BCE, these fortifications started to be integrated into a common defensive outwork known today as the 'Great Wall of China' a dramatic visual testament to the disturbance and fear perpetrated by nomadic raids on the agrarian societies of north China.

The Great Wall of China.

The Career of Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan was born some time around 1162 near the Onon river in the north of present-day Mongolia. Named Temujin, he was the son of Yesugei, the chieftain of the Kiyat, a group of families related to the Borjigid clan. His father was murdered at an early age and his mother, Oelun-eke, raised Temujin, his brothers and step-brothers in great hardship. The following decade was full of reversals – Temujin was captured and enslaved and soon after his marriage, his wife, Borte, was kidnapped, and he had to fight to recover her. During these years of hardship he also managed to make important friends. The young Boghurchu was his first ally and remained a trusted friend; Jamuqa, his blood-brother (*anda*), was another. Temujin also restored old alliances with the ruler of the Kereyits, Tughril/Ong Khan, his father's old blood-brother.

Through the 1180s and 1190s, Temujin remained an ally of Ong Khan and used the alliance to defeat powerful adversaries like Jamuqa, his old friend who had become a hostile foe. It was after defeating him

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that Temujin felt confident enough to move against other tribes: the powerful Tatars (his father's assassins), the Kereyits and Ong Khan himself in 1203. The final defeat of the Naiman people and the powerful Jamuqa in 1206, left Temujin as the dominant personality in the politics of the steppe lands, a position that was recognised at an assembly of Mongol chieftains (*quriltai*) where he was proclaimed the 'Great Khan of the Mongols' (*Qa'an*) with the title Genghis Khan, the 'Oceanic Khan' or 'Universal Ruler'.

Just before the *quriltai* of 1206, Genghis Khan had reorganised the Mongol people into a more effective, disciplined military force (*see following sections*) that facilitated the success of his future campaigns. The first of his concerns was to conquer China, divided at this time into three realms: the Hsi Hsia people of Tibetan origin in the north-western provinces; the Jurchen whose Chin dynasty ruled north China from Peking; the Sung dynasty who controlled south China. By 1209, the Hsi Hsia were defeated, the 'Great Wall of China' was breached in 1213 and Peking sacked in 1215. Long-drawn-out battles against the Chin continued until 1234 but Genghis Khan was satisfied enough with the progress of his campaigns to return to his Mongolian homeland in 1216 and leave the military affairs of the region to his subordinates.

After the defeat in 1218 of the Qara Khita who controlled the Tien Shan mountains north-west of China, Mongol dominions reached the Amu Darya, and the states of Transoxiana and Khwarazm. Sultan Muhammad, the ruler of Khwarazm, felt the fury of Genghis Khan's rage when he executed Mongol envoys. In the campaigns between 1219 and 1221 the great cities – Otrar, Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Gurganj, Merv, Nishapur and Herat – surrendered to the Mongol forces. Towns that resisted were devastated. At Nishapur, where a Mongol prince was killed during the siege operation, Genghis Khan commanded that the 'town should be laid waste in such a manner that the site could be ploughed upon; and that in the exaction of vengeance [for the death of the prince] not even cats and dogs should be left alive'.

Estimated Extent of Mongol Destruction

All reports of Genghis Khan's campaigns agree at the vast number of people killed following the capture of cities that defied his authority. The numbers are staggering: at the capture of Nishapur in 1220, 1,747,000 people were massacred while the toll at Herat in 1222 was 1,600,000 people and at Baghdad in 1258, 800,000. Smaller towns suffered proportionately: Nasa, 70,000 dead; Baihaq district, 70,000; and at Tun in the Kuhistan province, 12,000 individuals were executed.

How did medieval chroniclers arrive at such figures?

Juwaini, the Persian chronicler of the Ilkhans stated that 1,300,000 people were killed in Merv. He reached the figure because it took thirteen days to count the dead and each day they counted 100,000 corpses.

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Opp. page: 'Barbarians' as imagined by a European artist.

Mongol forces in pursuit of Sultan Muhammad pushed into Azerbaijan, defeated Russian forces at the Crimea and encircled the Caspian Sea. Another wing followed the Sultan's son, Jalaluddin, into Afghanistan and the Sindh province. At the banks of the Indus, Genghis Khan considered returning to Mongolia through North India and Assam, but the heat, the natural habitat and the ill portents reported by his Shaman soothsayer made him change his mind.

Genghis Khan died in 1227, having spent most of his life in military combat. His military achievements were astounding and they were largely a result of his ability to innovate and transform different aspects of steppe combat into extremely effective military strategies. The horse-riding skills of the Mongols and the Turks provided speed and mobility to the army; their abilities as rapid-shooting archers from horseback were further perfected during regular hunting expeditions which doubled as field manoeuvres. The steppe cavalry had always travelled light and moved quickly, but now it brought all its knowledge of the terrain and the weather to do the unimaginable: they carried out campaigns in the depths of winter, treating frozen rivers as highways to enemy cities and camps. Nomads were conventionally at a loss against fortified encampments but Genghis Khan learnt the importance of siege engines and naphtha bombardment very quickly. His engineers prepared lightportable equipment, which was used against opponents with devastating effect.

c. 1167	Birth of Temujin
1160s-70s	Years spent in slavery and struggle
1180s-90s	Period of alliance formation
1203-27	Expansion and triumph
1206	Temujin proclaimed Genghis Khan, 'Universal Ruler' of the Mongols
1227	Death of Genghis Khan
1227-60	Rule of the three Great Khans and continued Mongol unity
1227-41	Ogodei, son of Genghis Khan
1246-49	Guyuk, son of Ogodei
1251-60	Mongke, son of Genghis Khan's youngest son, Toluy
1236-42	Campaigns in Russia, Hungary, Poland and Austria under Batu, son of Jochi, Genghis Khan's eldest son
1253-55	Beginning of fresh campaigns in Iran and China under Mongke
1258	Capture of Baghdad and the end of the Abbasid caliphate. Establishment of the Il-Khanid state of Iran under Hulegu, younger brother of Mongke. Beginning of conflict between the Jochids and the Il-Khans

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1260	Accession of Qubilai Khan as Grand Khan in Peking; conflict amongst descendants of Genghis Khan; fragmentation of Mongol realm into independent lineages – Toluy, Chaghatai and Jochi (Ogodei's lineage defeated and absorbed into the Toluyid) Toluyids: Yuan dynasty in China and Il-Khanid state in Iran; Chaghataids in steppes north of Transoxiana and 'Turkistan'; Jochid lineages in the Russian steppes, described as the 'Golden Horde' by observers
1257-67	Reign of Berke, son of Batu; reorientation of the Golden Horde from Nestorian Christianity towards Islam. Definitive conversion takes place only in the 1350s. Start of the alliance between the Golden Horde and Egypt against the Il-Khans
1295-1304	Reign of Il-Khanid ruler Ghazan Khan in Iran. His conversion from Buddhism to Islam is followed gradually by other Il-Khanid chieftains
1368	End of Yuan dynasty in China
1370-1405 and marries	Rule of Timur, a Barlas Turk who claimed Genghis Khanid descent through the lineage of Chaghatai. Establishes a steppe empire that assimilates part of the dominions of Toluy (excluding China), Chaghatai and Jochi. Proclaims himself 'Guregen' – 'royal son-in- law' – a princess of the Genghis Khanid lineage
1495-1530	Zahiruddin Babur, descendant of Timur and Genghis Khan, succeeds to Timurid territory of Ferghana and Samarqand, is expelled, captures Kabul and in 1526 seizes Delhi and Agra; founds the Mughal empire in India
1500	Capture of Transoxiana by Shaybani Khan, descendant of Jochi's youngest son, Shiban. Consolidates Shaybani power (Shaybanids also described as Uzbeg, from whom Uzbekistan, today, gets its name) in Transoxiana and expels Babur and other Timurids from the region
1759	Manchus of China conquer Mongolia
1921	Republic of Mongolia

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The Mongols after Genghis Khan

We can divide Mongol expansion after Genghis Khan's death into two distinct phases: the first which spanned the years 1236-42 when the major gains were in the Russian steppes, Bulghar, Kiev, Poland and Hungary. The second phase including the years 1255-1300 led to the conquest of all of China (1279), Iran, Iraq and Syria. The frontier of the empire stabilised after these campaign.

The Mongol military forces met with few reversals in the decades after 1203 but, quite noticeably, after the 1260s the original impetus of campaigns could not be sustained in the West. Although Vienna, and beyond it western Europe, as well as Egypt was within the grasp of Mongol forces, their retreat from the Hungarian steppes and defeat at the hands of the Egyptian forces signalled the emergence of new political trends. There were two facets to this: the first was a consequence of the internal politics of succession within the Mongol family where the descendants of Jochi and Ogodei allied to control the office of the great Khan in the first two generations. These interests were more important than the pursuit of campaigns in Europe. The second compulsion occurred as the Jochi and Ogodei lineages were marginalised by the Toluyid branch of Genghis Khanid descendants. With the accession of Mongke, a descendant of Toluy, Genghis Khan's youngest son, military campaigns were pursued energetically in Iran during the 1250s. But as Toluyid interests in the conquest of China increased during the 1260s, forces and supplies were increasingly diverted into the heartlands of the Mongol dominion. As a result, the Mongols fielded a small, understaffed force against the Egyptian military. Their defeat and the increasing preoccupation with China of the Toluyid family marked the end of western expansion of the Mongols. Concurrently, conflict between the Jochid and Toluyid descendants along the Russian-Iranian frontier diverted the Jochids away from further European campaigns.

The suspension of Mongol expansion in the West did not arrest their campaigns in China which was reunited under the Mongols. Paradoxically, it was at the moment of its greatest successes that internal turbulence between members of the ruling family manifested itself. The next section discusses the factors that led to some of the greatest successes of the Mongol political enterprise but also inhibited its progress.

Social, Political and Military Organisation

Among the Mongols, and many other nomadic societies as well, all the able-bodied, adult males of the tribe bore arms: they constituted the armed forces when the occasion demanded. The unification of the different Mongol tribes and subsequent campaigns against diverse people introduced new members into Genghis Khan's army complicating the composition of this relatively small, undifferentiated body into an

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incredibly heterogeneous mass of people. It included groups like the Turkic Uighurs, who had accepted his authority willingly. It also included defeated people, like the Kereyits, who were accommodated in the confederacy despite their earlier hostility.

Genghis Khan worked to systematically erase the old tribal identities of the different groups who joined his confederacy. His army was organised according to the old steppe system of decimal units: in divisions of 10s, 100s, 1,000s and [notionally] 10,000 soldiers. In the old system the clan and the tribe would have coexisted within the decimal units. Genghis Khan stopped this practice. He divided the old tribal groupings and distributed their members into new military units. Any individual who tried to move from his/her allotted group without permission received harsh punishment. The largest unit of soldiers, approximating 10,000 soldiers (*tuman*) now included fragmented groups of people from a variety of different tribes and clans. This altered the old steppe social order integrating different lineages and clans and providing them with a new identity derived from its progenitor, Genghis Khan.

The new military contingents were required to serve under his four sons and specially chosen captains of his army units called *noyan*. Also important within the new realm were a band of followers who had served Genghis Khan loyally through grave adversity for many years. Genghis Khan publicly honoured some of these individuals as his 'blood-brothers' (*anda*); yet others, freemen of a humbler rank, were given special ranking as his bondsmen (*naukar*), a title that marked their close relationship with their master. This ranking did not preserve the rights of the old clan chieftains; the new aristocracy derived its status from a close relationship with the Great Khan of the Mongols.

In this new hierarchy, Genghis Khan assigned the responsibility of governing the newly conquered people to his four sons. These comprised the four *ulus*, a term that did not originally mean fixed territories. Genghis Khan's lifetime was still the age of rapid conquests and expanding domains, where frontiers were still extremely fluid. For example, the eldest son, Jochi, received the Russian steppes but the farthest extent of his territory, *ulus*, was indeterminate: it extended as far west as his horses could roam. The second son, Chaghatai, was given the Transoxianian steppe and lands north of the Pamir mountains adjacent to those of his brother. Presumably, these lands would shift as Jochi marched westward. Genghis Khan had indicated that his third son, Ogodei, would succeed him as the Great Khan and on accession the Prince established his capital at Karakorum. The youngest son, Toluy, received the ancestral lands of Mongolia. Genghis Khan envisaged that his sons would rule the empire collectively, and to underline this point, military contingents (*tama*) of the individual princes were placed in each *ulus*. The sense of a dominion shared by the members of the family was underlined at the assembly of chieftains, *quriltais*, where all decisions relating to the family or the state for the forthcoming season – campaigns, distribution of plunder, pasture lands and succession – were collectively taken.

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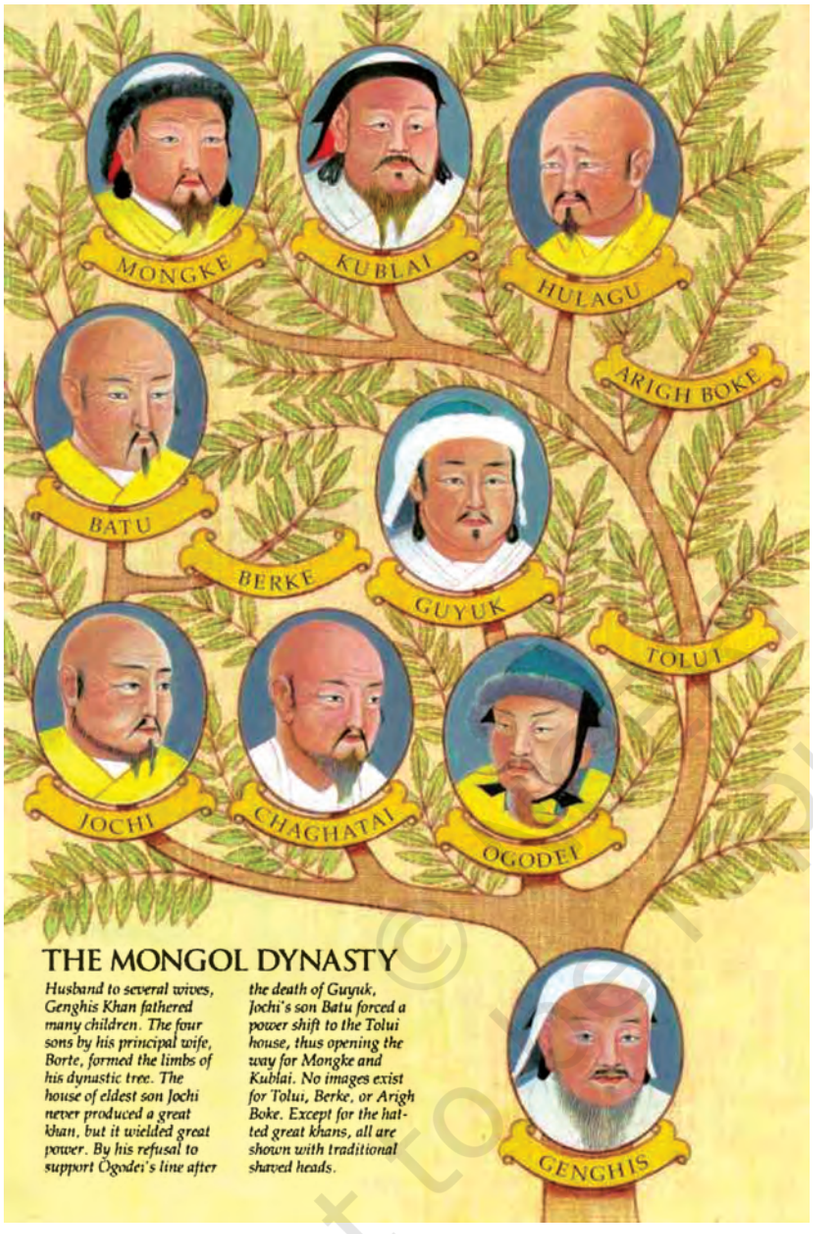

Family tree of Genghis Khan.

Genghis Khan had already fashioned a rapid courier system that connected the distant areas of his regime. Fresh mounts and despatch riders were placed in outposts at regularly spaced distances. For the maintenance of this communication system the Mongol nomads contributed a tenth of their herd – either horses or livestock – as provisions. This was called the *qubcur* tax, a levy that the nomads paid willingly for the multiple benefits that it brought. The courier system (*yam*) was further refined after Genghis Khan's death and its speed and reliability surprised travellers. It enabled the Great Khans to keep a check on developments at the farthest end of their regime across the continental landmass.

The conquered people, however, hardly felt a sense of affinity with their new nomadic masters. During the campaigns in the first half of the thirteenth century, cities were destroyed, agricultural lands laid waste, trade and handicraft production disrupted. Tens of thousands of people – the exact figures are lost in the exaggerated reports of the time – were killed, even more enslaved. All classes of people, from the elites to the peasantry suffered. In the resulting instability, the underground canals, called *qanats*, in the arid Iranian plateau could no longer receive periodic maintenance. As they fell into disrepair, the desert crept in. This led to an ecological devastation from which parts of Khurasan never recovered.

Once the dust from the campaigns had settled, Europe and China were territorially linked. In the peace ushered in by Mongol conquest

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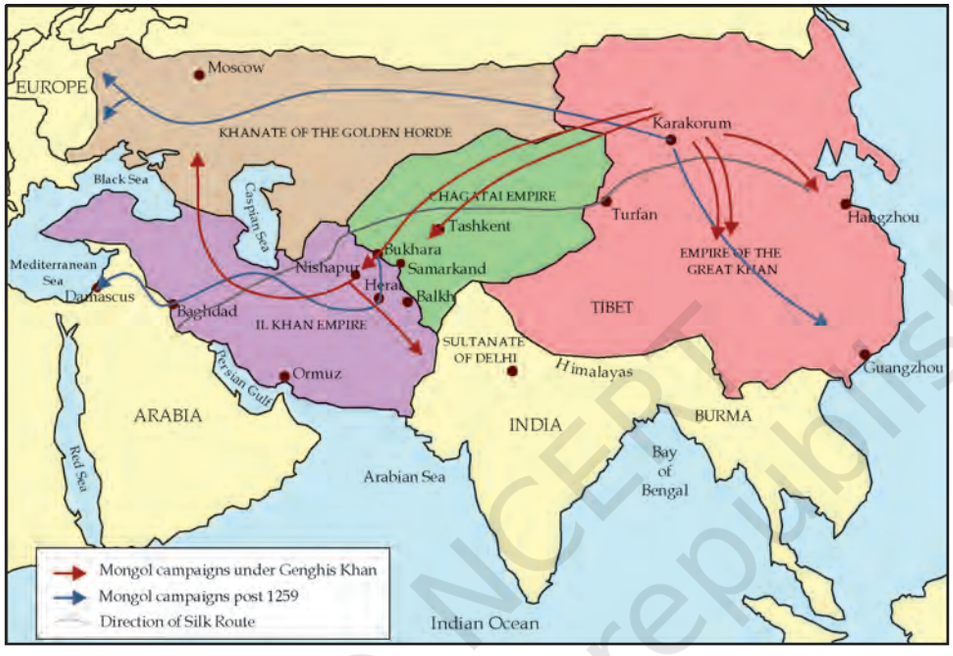
(Pax Mongolica) trade connections matured. Commerce and travel along the Silk Route reached its peak under the Mongols but, unlike before, the trade routes did not terminate in China.

They continued north into Mongolia and to Karakorum, the heart of the new empire. Communication and ease of travel was vital to retain the coherence of the Mongol regime and travellers were given



MAP 2: The Mongol Campaigns

a pass (*paiza* in Persian; *gerege* in Mongolian) for safe conduct. Traders paid the *baj* tax for the same purpose, all acknowledging thereby the authority of the Mongol Khan.

The contradictions between the nomadic and sedentary elements within the Mongol empire eased through the thirteenth century. In the 1230s, for example, as the Mongols waged their successful war against the Chin dynasty in north China, there was a strong pressure group within the Mongol leadership that advocated the massacre of all peasantry and the conversion of their fields into pasture lands. But by the 1270s, when south China was annexed to the Mongol empire after the defeat of the Sung dynasty, Genghis Khan's grandson, Qubilai Khan (d. 1294), appeared as the protector of the peasants and the cities. In the 1290s, the Mongol ruler of Iran, Ghazan Khan (d. 1304), a descendant of Genghis Khan's youngest son Toluy, warned family members and other generals to avoid pillaging the peasantry. It did not lead to a stable prosperous realm, he advised in a speech whose sedentary overtones would have made Genghis Khan shudder.

ACTIVITY 2

Note the areas traversed by the Silk Route and the goods that were available to traders along the way. This map does not reflect one of the eastern terminal points of the silk route during the height of Mongol power.

Can you place the missing city? Could it have been on the Silk Route in the twelfth century? Why not?

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ACTIVITY 3

Why was there a conflict of interests between pastoralists and peasants? Would Genghis Khan have expressed sentiments of this nature in a speech to his nomad commanders?

Ghazan Khan's Speech

Ghazan Khan (1295-1304) was the first Il-Khanid ruler to convert to Islam. He gave the following speech to the Mongol-Turkish nomad commanders, a speech that was probably drafted by his Persian *wazir* Rashiduddin and included in the minister's letters:

'I am not on the side of the Persian peasantry. If there is a purpose in pillaging them all, there is no one with more power to do this than I. Let us rob them together. But if you wish to be certain of collecting grain and food for your tables in the future, I must be harsh with you. You must be taught reason. If you insult the peasantry, take their oxen and seed and trample their crops into the ground, what will you do in the future? ... The obedient peasantry must be distinguished from the peasantry who are rebels...'

From Genghis Khan's reign itself, the Mongols had recruited civil administrators from the conquered societies. They were sometimes moved around: Chinese secretaries deployed in Iran and Persians in China. They helped in integrating the distant dominions and their backgrounds and training were always useful in blunting the harsher edges of nomadic predation on sedentary life. The Mongol Khans trusted them as long as they continued to raise revenue for their masters and these administrators could sometimes command considerable influence. In the 1230s, the Chinese minister Yeh-lu Ch'u-ts'ai, muted some of Ogedei's more rapacious instincts; the Juwaini family played a similar role in Iran through the latter half of the thirteenth century and at the end of the century, the *wazir*, Rashiduddin, drafted the speech that Ghazan Khan delivered to his Mongol compatriots asking them to protect, not harass, the peasantry.

The pressure to sedentarise was greater in the new areas of Mongol domicile, areas distant from the original steppe habitat of the nomads. By the middle of the thirteenth century the sense of a common patrimony shared by all the brothers was gradually replaced by individual dynasties each ruling their separate *ulus*, a term which now carried the sense of a territorial dominion. This was, in part, a result of succession struggles, where Genghis Khanid descendants competed for the office of Great Khan and prized pastoral lands. Descendants of Toluy had come to rule both China and Iran where they had formed the Yuan and Il-Khanid dynasties. Descendants of Jochi formed the Golden Horde and ruled the Russian steppes; Chaghatai's successors ruled the steppes of Transoxiana and the lands called Turkistan today. Noticeably, nomadic traditions persisted longest amongst the steppe dwellers in Central Asia (descendants of Chaghatai) and Russia (the Golden Horde).

The gradual separation of the descendants of Genghis Khan into separate lineage groups implied that their connections with the memory

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and traditions of a past family concordance also altered. At an obvious level this was the result of competition amongst the cousin clans and here the Toluyid branch was more adept in presenting their version of the family disagreements in the histories produced under their patronage. To a large extent this was a consequence of their control of China and Iran and the large number of literati that its family members could recruit. At a more sophisticated level, the disengagement with the past also meant underlining the merits of the regnant rulers as a contrast to other past monarchs. This exercise in comparison did not exclude Genghis Khan himself. Persian chronicles produced in Il-Khanid Iran during the late thirteenth century detailed the gory killings of the Great Khan and greatly exaggerated the numbers killed. For example, in contrast to an eyewitness report that 400 soldiers defended the citadel of Bukhara, an Il-Khanid chronicle reported that 30,000 soldiers were killed in the attack on the citadel. Although Il-Khanid reports still eulogised Genghis Khan, they also carried a statement of relief that times had changed and the great killings of the past were over. The Genghis Khanid legacy was important, but for his descendants to appear as convincing heroes to a sedentary audience, they could no longer appear in quite the same way as their ancestor.

Following the research of David Ayalon, recent work on the *yasa*, the code of law that Genghis Khan was supposed to have promulgated at the *quriltai* of 1206, has elaborated on the complex ways in which the memory of the Great Khan was fashioned by his successors. In its earliest formulation the term was written as *yasaq* which meant 'law', 'decree' or 'order'. Indeed, the few details that we possess about the *yasaq* concern administrative regulations: the organisation of the hunt, the army and the postal system. By the middle of the thirteenth century, however, the Mongols had started using the related term *yasa* in a more general sense to mean the 'legal code of Genghis Khan'.

We may be able to understand the changes in the meaning of the term if we take a look at some of the other developments that occurred at the same time. By the middle of the thirteenth century the Mongols had emerged as a unified people and just created the largest empire the world had ever seen. They ruled over very sophisticated urban societies, with their respective histories, cultures and laws. Although the Mongols dominated the region politically, they were a numerical minority. The one way in which they could protect their identity and distinctiveness was through a claim to a sacred law given to them by their ancestor. The *yasa* was in all probability a compilation of the customary traditions of the Mongol tribes but in referring to it as Genghis Khan's code of law, the Mongol people also laid claim to a 'lawgiver' like Moses and Solomon, whose authoritative code could be imposed on their subjects. The *yasa* served to cohere the Mongol people around a body of shared beliefs, it acknowledged their affinity to Genghis Khan and his descendants and, even as they absorbed different aspects of a sedentary lifestyle, gave them the confidence to retain their ethnic

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identity and impose their 'law' upon their defeated subjects. It was an extremely empowering ideology and although Genghis Khan may not have planned such a legal code, it was certainly inspired by his vision and was vital in the construction of a Mongol universal dominion.

ACTIVITY 4

Did the meaning of *yasa* alter over the four centuries separating Genghis Khan from 'Abdullah Khan? Why did Hafiz-i Tanish make a reference to Genghis Khan's *yasa* in connection with 'Abdullah Khan's prayer at the Muslim festival ground?

Yasa

In 1221, after the conquest of Bukhara, Genghis Khan had assembled the rich Muslim residents at the festival ground and had admonished them. He called them sinners and warned them to compensate for their sins by parting with their hidden wealth. The episode was dramatic enough to be painted and for a long time afterwards people still remembered the incident. In the late sixteenth century, 'Abdullah Khan, a distant descendant of Jochi, Genghis Khan's eldest son, went to the same festival ground in Bukhara. Unlike Genghis Khan, however, 'Abdullah Khan went to perform his holiday prayers there. His chronicler, Hafiz-i Tanish, reported this performance of Muslim piety by his master and included the surprising comment: 'this was according to the *yasa* of Genghis Khan'.

Conclusion: Situating Genghis Khan and the Mongols in World History

When we remember Genghis Khan today the only images that appear in our imagination are those of the conqueror, the destroyer of cities, and an individual who was responsible for the death of thousands of people. Many thirteenth-century residents of towns in China, Iran and eastern Europe looked at the hordes from the steppes with fear and distaste. And yet, for the Mongols, Genghis Khan was the greatest leader of all time: he united the Mongol people, freed them from interminable tribal wars and Chinese exploitation, brought them prosperity, fashioned a grand transcontinental empire and restored trade routes and markets that attracted distant travellers like the Venetian Marco Polo. The contrasting images are not simply a case of dissimilar perspectives; they should make us pause and reflect on how one (dominant) perspective can completely erase all others.

Beyond the opinions of the defeated sedentary people, consider for a moment the sheer size of the Mongol dominion in the thirteenth century and the diverse body of people and faiths that it embraced. Although the Mongol Khans themselves belonged to a variety of

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different faiths – Shaman, Buddhist, Christian and eventually Islam – they never let their personal beliefs dictate public policy. The Mongol rulers recruited administrators and armed contingents from people of all ethnic groups and religions. Theirs was a multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-religious regime that did not feel threatened by its pluralistic constitution. This was utterly unusual for the time, and historians are only now studying the ways in which the Mongols provided ideological models for later regimes (like the Mughals of India) to follow.

The nature of the documentation on the Mongols – and any nomadic regime – makes it virtually impossible to understand the inspiration that led to the confederation of fragmented groups of people in the pursuit of an ambition to create an empire. The Mongol empire eventually altered in its different milieus, but the inspiration of its founder remained a powerful force. At the end of the fourteenth century, Timur, another monarch who aspired to universal dominion, hesitated to declare himself monarch because he was not of Genghis Khanid descent. When he did declare his independent sovereignty it was as the son-in-law (*guregen*) of the Genghis Khanid family.

The Capture of Baghdad by the Mongols, a miniature painting in the Chronicles of Rashid al-Din, Tabriz, fourteenth century.

Today, after decades of Soviet control, the country of Mongolia is recreating its identity as an independent nation. It has seized upon Genghis Khan as a great national hero who is publicly venerated and whose achievements are recounted with pride. At a crucial juncture in the history of Mongolia, Genghis Khan has once again appeared as an iconic figure for the Mongol people, mobilising memories of a great past in the forging of national identity that can carry the nation into the future.

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Qubilai Khan and Chabi in camp.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. Why was trade so significant to the Mongols?
2. Why did Genghis Khan feel the need to fragment the Mongol tribes into new social and military groupings?
3. How do later Mongol reflections on the *yasa* bring out the uneasy relationship they had with the memory of Genghis Khan.
4. 'If history relies upon written records produced by city-based literati, nomadic societies will always receive a hostile representation.' Would you agree with this statement? Does it explain the reason why Persian chronicles produced such inflated figures of casualties resulting from Mongol campaigns?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. Keeping the nomadic element of the Mongol and Bedouin societies in mind, how, in your opinion, did their respective historical experiences differ? What explanations would you suggest account for these differences?
6. How does the following account enlarge upon the character of the Pax Mongolica created by the Mongols by the middle of the thirteenth century?

   The Franciscan monk, William of Rubruck, was sent by Louis IX of France on an embassy to the great Khan Mongke's court. He reached Karakorum, the capital of Mongke, in 1254 and came upon a woman from Lorraine (in France) called Paquette, who had been brought from Hungary and was in the service of one of the prince's wives who was a Nestorian Christian. At the court he came across a Parisian goldsmith named Guillaume Boucher, 'whose brother dwelt on the Grand Pont in Paris'. This man was first employed by the Queen Sorghaqtani and then by Mongke's younger brother. Rubruck found that at the great court festivals the Nestorian priests were admitted first, with their regalia, to bless the Grand Khan's cup, and were followed by the Muslim clergy and Buddhist and Taoist monks…

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III

CHANGING TRADITIONS

The Three Orders

Changing Cultural Traditions

Confrontation of Cultures

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CHANGING TRADITIONS

WE have seen how, by the ninth century, large parts of Asia witnessed the growth and expansion of great empires – some nomadic, some based on well-developed cities and trading networks that centred on them. The difference between the Macedonian, Roman and Arab empires and the ones that preceded them (the Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, Mauryan) was that they covered greater areas of territory, and were continental or transcontinental in nature. The Mongol empire was similar.

Different cultural encounters were crucial to what took place. The arrival of empires was almost always sudden, but they were almost always the result of changes that had been taking place over a long time in the core of what would become an empire.

Traditions in world history could change in different ways. In western Europe during the period from the ninth to the seventeenth centuries, much that we connect with modern times evolved slowly – the development of scientific knowledge based on experiment rather than religious belief, serious thought about the organisation of government, with attention to the creation of civil services, parliaments and different codes of law, improvements in technology that was used in industry and agriculture. The consequences of these changes could be felt with great force outside Europe.

As we have seen, by the fifth century CE, the Roman Empire in the west had disintegrated. In western and central Europe, the remains of the Roman Empire were slowly adapted to the administrative requirements and needs of tribes that had established kingdoms there. However, urban centres were smaller in western Europe than further east.

By the ninth century, the commercial and urban centres – Aix, London, Rome, Sienna – though small, could not be dismissed. From the ninth to the eleventh centuries, there were major developments in the countryside in western Europe. The Church and royal government developed a combination of Roman institutions with the customary

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rules of tribes. The finest example was the empire of Charlemagne in western and central Europe at the beginning of the ninth century. Even after its rapid collapse, urban centres and trading networks persisted, albeit under heavy attack from Hungarians, Vikings and others.

What happened was called 'feudalism'. Feudalism was marked by agricultural production around castles and 'manor houses', where lords of the manor possessed land that was cultivated by peasants (serfs) who pledged them loyalty, goods and services. These lords in turn pledged their loyalty to greater lords who were 'vassals' of kings. The Catholic Church (centred on the papacy) supported this state of affairs and itself possessed land. In a world where uncertainties of life, poor sense of medicine and low life expectancy were common, the Church showed people how to behave so that life after death at least would be tolerable. Monasteries were created where God-fearing people could devote themselves to the service of God in the way Catholic churchmen thought fit. Equally, churches were part of a network of scholarship that ran from the Muslim states of Spain to Byzantium, and they provided the petty kings of Europe with a sense of the opulence of the eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

The influence of commerce and towns in the feudal order came to evolve and change encouraged by Mediterranean entrepreneurs in Venice and Genoa (from the twelfth century). Their ships carried on a growing trade with Muslim states and the remains of the Roman Empire in the east. Attracted by the lure of wealth in these areas, and inspired by the idea of freeing 'holy places' associated with Christ from Muslims, European kings reinforced links across the Mediterranean during the 'crusades'. Trade within Europe improved (centred on fairs and the port cities of the Baltic Sea and the North Sea and stimulated by a growing population).

The Palace of the Popes, in Avignon, a fourteenth-century town in south France.

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The Palace of the Doge, in Venice, fifteenth century.

Opportunities for commercial expansion coincided with changing attitudes concerning the value of life. Respect for human beings and living things that marked much of Islamic art and literature, and the example of Greek art and ideas that came to Europe from Byzantine trade encouraged Europeans to take a new look at the world. And from the fourteenth century (in what is called the 'Renaissance'), especially in north Italian towns, the wealthy became less concerned with life after death and more with the wonders of life itself. Sculptors, painters and writers became interested in humanity and the discovery of the world.

By the end of the fifteenth century, this state of affairs encouraged travel and discovery as never before. Voyages of discovery took place. Spaniards and Portuguese, who had traded with northern Africa, pushed further down the coast of western Africa, finally leading to journeys around the Cape of Good Hope to India – which had a great reputation in Europe as a source of spices that were in great demand. Columbus attempted to find a western route to India and in 1492 reached the islands which the Europeans called the West Indies. Other explorers tried to find a northern route to India and China via the Arctic.

European travellers encountered a range of different peoples in the course of their journeys. In part, they were interested in learning from them. The papacy encouraged the work of the North African geographer and traveller Hasan al-Wazzan (later known in Europe as Leo Africanus), who wrote the first geography of Africa in the early sixteenth century for Pope Leo X. Jesuit churchmen observed and wrote on Japan in the sixteenth century. An Englishman, Will Adams, became a friend and

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counsellor of the Japanese Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, in the early seventeenth century. As in the case of Hasan al-Wazzan, peoples that the Europeans encountered in the Americas often took a great interest in them and sometimes worked for them. For example an Aztec woman – later known as Dona Marina – befriended the Spanish conqueror of Mexico, Cortes, and interpreted and negotiated for him.

In their encounters, Europeans were sometimes cautious, self-effacing and observant, even as they frequently attempted to establish trade monopolies and enforce their authority by force of arms as the Portuguese attempted to do in the Indian Ocean after Vasco da Gama's arrival in Calicut (present-day Kozhikode) in 1498. In other cases, they were overbearing, aggressive and cruel and adopted an attitude of superiority to those they met, considering such people ignorant. The Catholic Church encouraged both attitudes. The Church was the centre for the study of other cultures and languages, but encouraged attacks on people it saw as 'un-Christian'.

From the point of view of non-Europeans, the encounter with Europe varied. For much of the Islamic lands and India and China, though, Europeans remained a curiosity until the end of the seventeenth century. They were perceived as hardy traders and seamen who had little to contribute to their sense of the larger world. The Japanese learnt some of the advantages of European technology quickly – for instance, they had begun large-scale production of muskets by the late sixteenth century. In the Americas, enemies of the Aztec empire sometimes used Europeans to challenge the power of the Aztecs. At the same time the diseases the Europeans brought devastated the populations, leading to the death of over 90 per cent of the people in some areas by the end of the sixteenth century.

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TIMELINE III

(c. 1300 to 1700)

The period under consideration witnessed several major developments in Europe, including changes in agriculture and the lives of peasants. It was also marked by a range of cultural developments. This timeline draws attention to contacts between continents, stimulated in many instances by the growth of trade. The impact of these contacts was varied – while ideas, inventions and goods were shared across continents, there was also constant warfare between kingdoms to control land, resources and access to trade routes. As a result, men and women were often displaced and enslaved, if not exterminated. In many ways, the lives of people were transformed beyond recognition.

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DATES	AFRICA	EUROPE
1300-25		Alhambra and Granada emerge as important cultural centres in Spain
1325-50	Plague* in Egypt (1348-55)	Hundred Years War between England and France (1337-1453); Black Death (a form of plague) spreads throughout Europe (1348)
1350-75	Ibn Batuta explores the Sahara	French peasants protest against high taxes (1358)
1375-1400		Peasant revolt in Britain (1381); Geoffrey Chaucer writes *The Canterbury Tales*, one of the earliest compositions in English (1388)
1400-25		
1425-50	Portuguese begin slave trading (1442)	
1450-75	Songhai empire in West Africa established based on trading networks across the Sahara; Portuguese expeditions and settlements along the west coast of Africa (1471 onwards)	First printed book appears in Europe; Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), painter, architect, inventor in Italy
1475-1500	Portuguese convert the king of Bokongo to Christianity	Establishment of the Tudor dynasty in England (1485)
1500-25	African slaves taken to work on sugar plantations in America (1510); Ottoman Turks conquer Egypt (1517)	Coffee from South America is drunk in Europe for the first time (1517) and tobacco, chocolate, tomatoes and turkey are also introduced; Martin Luther attempts to reform the Catholic Church (1517)
1525-50		Copernicus propounds theory about solar system (1543)
1550-75		William Shakespeare (1564-1616), dramatist in England
1575-1600		Zacharias Janssen invents the microscope (1590s)
1600-25	Oyo kingdom of Nigeria at the height of its power, centres for metal-working*	One of the first novels, *Don Quixote*, written in Spanish (1605)
1625-50		William Harvey demonstrates that blood is pumped through the body by the heart (1628)
1650-75	Portuguese destroy the Kongo kingdom (1662)	Louis XIV, king of France (1638-1715)
1675-1700		Peter the Great (1682-1725) attempts to modernise Russia

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DATES	ASIA	SOUTH ASIA
1300-25		
1325-1350		Establishment of the Vijayanagara empire* (1336)
1350-75	Ming dynasty* in China (1368 onwards)	
1375-1400		
1400-25		Emergence of regional sultanates
1425-50		
1450-75	Ottoman Turks capture Constantinople (1453)	
1475-1500		Vasco da Gama reaches India (1498)
1500-25	Portuguese entry into China opposed, driven out to Macao (1522)	
1525-50		Babur establishes Mughal control over north India, first battle of Panipat (1526)
1550-75		Akbar (1556-1605) consolidates Mughal rule
1575-1600	First Kabuki play staged in Japan (1586); Shah Abbas (1587-1629) of Persia introduces European methods of military training	
1600-25	Tokugawa Shogunate established in Japan (1603)	Establishment of the British East India Company (1600)
1625-50	All European traders with the exception of the Dutch forbidden to trade with Japan (1637); Manchu rule in China, (1644 onwards) which lasts for nearly 300 years; growing demand in Europe for Chinese tea and silk	Construction of the Taj Mahal (1632-53)
1650-75		
1675-1700		

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DATES	AMERICAS	AUSTRALIA/PACIFIC ISLANDS
1300-25	Aztec capital at Tenochtitlan, Mexico (1325), building temples, development of irrigation systems and accounting system (quipu)*	
1325-50		
1350-75		
1375-1400		
1400-25		
1425-50		
1450-75	Incas establish control over Peru (1465)	
1475-1500	Columbus reaches the West Indies (1492)	
1500-25	Spanish conquest of Mexico (1521)	Magellan, a Spanish navigator, reaches the Pacific Ocean (1519)
1525-50	French explorers reach Canada (1534)	
1550-75	Spanish conquest of Peru (1572)	
1575-1600		Dutch sailors reach Australia by accident
1600-25	England sets up its first colonies in North America (1607); the first slaves are brought from West Africa to Virginia (1619)	Spanish sailors reach Tahiti (1606)
1625-50	Dutch found New Amsterdam, now called New York (1626); first printing press is set up in Massachusetts (1635)	Dutch navigator Abel Tasman sails around Australia without realising it. He then lands on Van Diemen's land, later called Tasmania. He also reaches New Zealand, but thinks it is part of a huge landmass!
1650-75	First sugar plantations are established in the West Indies (1654)	
1675-1700	French colonise the Mississippi basin, naming it Louisiana after King Louis XIV (1682)	

ACTIVITY

You may have noticed that the column on Australia/Pacific Islands has very few recorded dates. This is because the peoples in these areas often used other forms of recording, including paintings such as the one shown above*. List at least one event/process from each of the preceding five columns which an Australian painter may have found worth recording. List another five which may have seemed irrelevant to her/him.

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THEME 6

THE THREE ORDERS

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IN this chapter, we shall learn about the socio-economic and political changes which occurred in western Europe between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. After the fall of the Roman Empire, many groups of Germanic people from eastern and central Europe occupied regions of Italy, Spain and France.

In the absence of any unifying political force, military conflict was frequent, and the need to gather resources to protect one's land became very important. Social organisation was therefore centred on the control of land. Its features were derived from both imperial Roman traditions and German customs. Christianity, the official religion of the Roman Empire from the fourth century, survived the collapse of Rome, and gradually spread to central and northern Europe. The Church also became a major landholder and political power in Europe.

The 'three orders', the focus of this chapter, are three social categories: Christian priests, landowning nobles and peasants. The changing relationships between these three groups was an important factor in shaping European history for several centuries.

Over the last 100 years, European historians have done detailed work on the histories of regions, even of individual villages. This was possible because, from the medieval period, there is a lot of material in the form of documents, details of landownership, prices and legal cases: for example, churches kept records of births, marriages and deaths, which have made it possible to understand the structure of families and of population. The inscriptions in churches give information about traders' associations, and songs and stories give a sense of festivals and community activities.

All these can be used by historians to understand economic and social life, and changes over a long period (like increase in population) or over a short period (like peasant revolts).

Of the many scholars in France who have worked on feudalism, one of the earliest was Bloch. Marc Bloch (1886–1944) was one of a group of scholars who argued that history consisted of much more than just political history, international relations and the lives of great people. He emphasised the importance of geography in shaping human

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history, and the need to understand the collective behaviour or attitudes of groups of people.

Bloch's *Feudal Society* is about European, particularly French, society between 900 and 1300, describing in remarkable detail social relations and hierarchies, land management and the popular culture of the period.

His career was cut short tragically when he was shot by the Nazis in the Second World War.

An Introduction to Feudalism

The term 'medieval era' refers to the period in European history between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries.

The term 'feudalism' has been used by historians to describe the economic, legal, political and social relationships that existed in Europe in the medieval era. Derived from the German word 'feud', which

MAP 1: Western Europe

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means 'a piece of land', it refers to the kind of society that developed in medieval France, and later in England and in southern Italy.

In an economic sense, feudalism refers to a kind of agricultural production which is based on the relationship between lords and peasants. The latter cultivated their own land as well as that of the lord. The peasants performed labour services for the lords, who in exchange provided military protection. They also had extensive judicial control over peasants. Thus, feudalism went beyond the economic to cover the social and political aspects of life as well.

Although its roots have been traced to practices that existed in the Roman Empire and during the age of the French king Charlemagne (742-814), feudalism as an established way of life in large parts of Europe may be said to have emerged later, in the eleventh century.

France and England

Gaul, a province of the Roman Empire, had two extensive coastlines, mountain ranges, long rivers, forests and large tracts of plains suited to agriculture.

The Franks, a Germanic tribe, gave their name to Gaul, making it 'France'. From the sixth century, this region was a kingdom ruled by Frankish/French kings, who were Christian. The French had very strong links with the Church, which were further strengthened when in 800 the Pope gave King Charlemagne the title of 'Holy Roman Emperor', to ensure his support*.

*The head of the Eastern Church, in Constantinople, had a similar relationship with the Byzantine emperor.

Across a narrow channel lay the island of England–Scotland, which in the eleventh century was conquered by a duke from the French province of Normandy.

Early History of France	
481	*Clovis becomes king of the Franks*
486	*Clovis and the Franks begin the conquest of northern Gaul*
496	*Clovis and the Franks convert to Christianity*
714	*Charles Martel becomes mayor of the palace*
751	*Martel's son Pepin deposes the Frankish ruler, becomes king and establishes a dynasty. Wars of conquest double the size of his kingdom*
768	*Pepin succeeded by his son Charlemagne/Charles the Great*
800	*Pope Leo III crowns Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor*
840 ONWARDS	*Raids by Vikings from Norway*

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The Three Orders

French priests believed in the concept that people were members of one of the three 'orders', depending on their work. A bishop stated, 'Here below, some pray, others fight, still others work...' Thus, the three orders of society were broadly the clergy, the nobility and the peasantry.

In the twelfth century, Abbess Hildegard of Bingen wrote: 'Who would think of herding his entire cattle in one stable – cows, donkeys, sheep, goats, without difference? Therefore it is necessary to establish difference among human beings, so that they do not destroy each other ... God makes distinctions among his flock, in heaven as on earth. All are loved by him, yet there is no equality among them.'

'Abbey' is derived from the Syriac abba, meaning father. An abbey was governed by an abbot or an abbess.

The Second Order: The Nobility

Priests placed themselves in the first order, and nobles in the second. The nobility had, in reality, a central role in social processes. This is because they controlled land. This control was the outcome of a practice called 'vassalage'.

The kings of France were linked to the people by 'vassalage', similar to the practice among the Germanic peoples, of whom the Franks were one. The big landowners – the nobles – were vassals of the king, and peasants were vassals of the landowners. A nobleman accepted the king as his *seigneur* (senior) and they made a mutual promise: the *seigneur*/lord ('lord' was derived from a word meaning one who provided bread) would protect the vassal, who would be loyal to him. This relationship involved elaborate rituals and exchange of vows taken on the Bible in a church. At this ceremony, the vassal received a written charter or a staff or even a clod of earth as a symbol of the land that was being given to him by his master.

French nobles starting for a hunt, fifteenth-century painting.

The noble enjoyed a privileged status. He had absolute control over his property, in perpetuity. He could raise troops called 'feudal levies'. The lord held his own courts of justice and could even coin his own money.

He was the lord of all the people settled on his land. He owned vast tracts of land which contained his own dwellings, his private fields and pastures and the homes and fields of his tenant-peasants. His house was called a manor. His private lands were cultivated by peasants, who were also expected to act as foot-soldiers in battle when required, in addition to working on their own farms.

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The Manorial Estate

A lord had his own manor-house. He also controlled villages – some lords controlled hundreds of villages – where peasants lived. A small manorial estate could contain a dozen families, while larger estates might include fifty or sixty. Almost everything needed for daily life was found on the estate: grain was grown in the fields, blacksmiths and carpenters maintained the lord's implements and repaired his weapons, while stonemasons looked after his buildings. Women spun and wove fabric, and children worked in the lord's wine-presses. The estate had extensive woodlands and forests where the lords hunted. They contained

A manorial estate, England, thirteenth century.

pastures where his cattle and his horses grazed. There was a church on the estate and a castle for defence.

From the thirteenth century, some castles were made bigger for use as a residence for a knight's family. In fact, in England castles were practically unknown before the Norman Conquest, and developed as centres of political administration and military power under the feudal system.

The manor could not be completely self-sufficient because salt, millstones and metalware had to be obtained from outside sources. Those lords who wanted a luxurious lifestyle and were keen to buy rich furnishings, musical instruments and ornaments not locally produced, had to get these from other places.

ACTIVITY 1

Discuss social hierarchies based on different criteria: occupation, language, wealth, education. Compare medieval France with Mesopotamia and the Roman Empire.

The Knights

From the ninth century, there were frequent localised wars in Europe. The amateur peasant-soldiers were not sufficient, and good cavalry was needed. This led to the growing importance of a new section of people – the knights. They were linked to the lords, just as the latter were linked to the king. The lord gave the knight a piece of land (called 'fief') and promised to protect it. The fief could be inherited. It extended to anything between 1,000 and 2,000 acres or more, including a house for the knight and his family, a church and other establishments to house his dependants, besides a watermill and a wine-press. As in the feudal manor, the land of the fief was cultivated by peasants. In exchange, the knight paid his lord a regular fee and promised to fight for him in war. To keep up their skills, knights spent time each day fencing and practising tactics with dummies. A knight might serve more than one lord, but his foremost loyalty was to his own lord.

'If my dear lord
is slain, his fate
I'll share,
If he is hanged,
then hang me
by his side.
If to the stake he
goes, with him
I'll burn;
And if he's
drowned, then
let me drown
with him.'

– Doon de Mayence, a thirteenth-century French poem (to be sung) recounting the adventures of knights.

In France, from the twelfth century, minstrels travelled from manor to manor, singing songs which told stories – partly historical, partly invented – about brave kings and knights. In an age when not too many people could read and manuscripts were few, these travelling bards were very popular. Many manors had a narrow balcony above the large hall where the people of the manor gathered for meals. This was the minstrels' gallery, from where singers entertained nobles while they feasted.

The First Order: The Clergy

The Catholic Church had its own laws, owned lands given to it by rulers, and could levy taxes. It was thus a very powerful institution which did not depend on the king. At the head of the western Church was the Pope. He lived in Rome. The Christians in Europe were guided by bishops and clerics – who constituted the first 'order'. Most villages had their own church, where people assembled every Sunday to listen to the sermon by the priest and to pray together.

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Everyone could not become a priest. Serfs were banned, as were the physically challenged. Women could not become priests. Men who became priests could not marry. Bishops were the religious nobility. Like lords who owned vast landed estates, the bishops also had the use of vast estates, and lived in grand palaces. The Church was entitled to a tenth share of whatever the peasants produced from their land over the course of the year, called a 'tithe'. Money also came in the form of endowments made by the rich for their own welfare and the welfare of their deceased relatives in the afterlife.

Some of the important ceremonies conducted by the Church copied formal customs of the feudal elite. The act of kneeling while praying, with hands clasped and head bowed, was an exact replica of the way in which a knight conducted himself while taking vows of loyalty to his lord. Similarly, the use of the term 'lord' for God was another example of feudal culture that found its way into the practices of the Church. Thus, the religious and the lay worlds of feudalism shared many customs and symbols.

ACTIVITY 2

Discuss examples of expected patterns of behaviour between people of different social levels, in a medieval manor, a palace and in a place of worship.

Monks

Apart from the Church, devout Christians had another kind of organisation. Some deeply religious people chose to live isolated lives, in contrast to clerics who lived amongst people in towns and villages. They lived in religious communities called abbeys or monasteries, often in places very far from human habitation. Two of the more well-known monasteries were those established by St Benedict in Italy in 529 and of Cluny in Burgundy in 910.

Monks took vows to remain in the abbey for the rest of their lives and to spend their time in prayer, study and manual labour, like farming. Unlike priesthood, this life was open to both men and women – men became monks and women nuns. Except in a few cases, all abbeys were single-sex communities, that is, there were separate abbeys for men and women. Like priests, monks and nuns did not marry.

The word 'monastery' is derived from the Greek word 'monos', meaning someone who lives alone.

From small communities of 10 or 20 men/women, monasteries grew to communities often of several hundred, with large buildings and landed estates, with attached schools or colleges and hospitals. They contributed to the development of the arts. Abbess Hildegard (see p.135) was a gifted musician, and did much to develop the practice of community singing of prayers in church. From the thirteenth century, some groups of monks – called friars – chose not to be based in a monastery but to move from place to place, preaching to the people and living on charity.

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St Michael's Benedictine abbey in Farnborough, England.

In Benedictine monasteries, there was a manuscript with 73 chapters of rules which were followed by monks for many centuries. Here are some of the rules they had to follow:

Chapter 6: Permission to speak should rarely be granted to monks.

Chapter 7: Humility means obedience.

Chapter 33: No monk should own private property.

Chapter 47: Idleness is the enemy of the soul, so friars and sisters should be occupied at certain times in manual labour, and at fixed hours in sacred reading.

A Benedictine monk working on a manuscript, woodcut.

Chapter 48: The monastery should be laid out in such a way that all necessities be found within its bounds: water, mill, garden, workshops.

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By the fourteenth century, there was a growing uncertainty about the value and purpose of monasticism. In England, Langland's poem, *Piers Plowman* (c.1360-70), contrasted the ease and luxury of the lives of some monks with the 'pure faith' of 'simple ploughmen and shepherds and poor common labourers.' Also in England, Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* (see box below) which had comic portraits of a nun, a monk and a friar.

The Church and Society

Though Europeans became Christian, they still held on to some of their old beliefs in magic and folk traditions. Christmas and Easter became important dates from the fourth century. Christ's birth, celebrated on 25 December, replaced an old pre-Roman festival, the date of which was calculated by the solar calendar. Easter marked the crucifixion of Christ and his rising from the dead. But its date was not a fixed one, because it replaced an older festival to celebrate the coming of spring after a long winter, dated by the lunar calendar. Traditionally, on that day, people of each village used to make a tour of their village lands. With the coming of Christianity, they continued to do this, but they called the village the 'parish' (the area under the supervision of one priest). Overworked peasants welcomed 'holy days'/holidays because they were not expected to work then. These days were meant for prayer, but people usually spent a good part of them having fun and feasting.

Pilgrimage was an important part of a Christian's life, and many people went on long journeys to shrines of martyrs or to big churches.

'When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root
And the small birds are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye…
(So Nature pricks them and their heart engages);
Then people long to go on pilgrimages,
And palmers long to seek the foreign shrines*
Of far-off saints, revered in various lands.
And especially from every shire
Of England, to Canterbury they make their journey.'

– Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1340–1400), The Canterbury Tales. This was written in Middle English, and the verse is a translation in modern English.

*A monk who travels to distant shrines.

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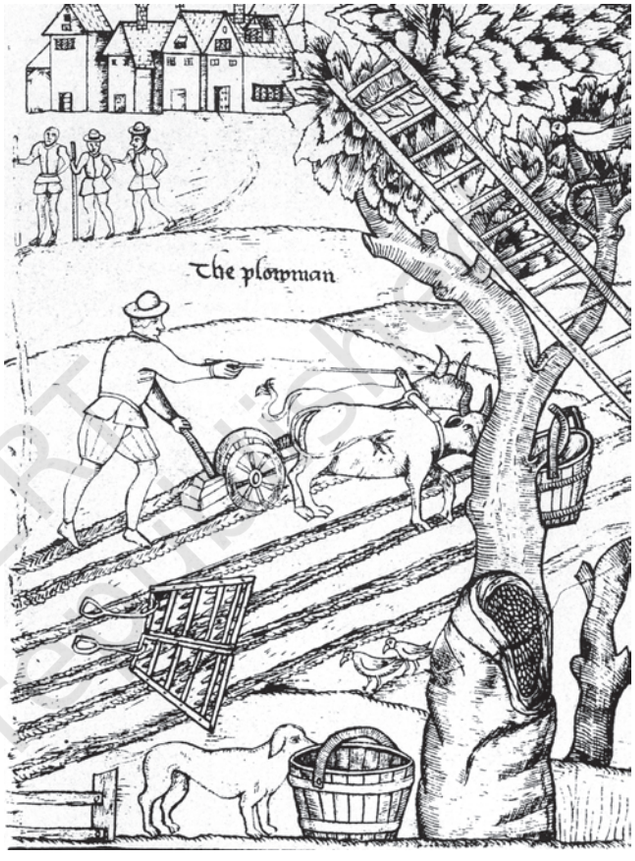
The Third Order: Peasants, Free and Unfree

Let us now turn to the vast majority of people, namely, those who sustained the first two orders. Cultivators were of two kinds: free peasants and serfs (from the verb 'to serve').

Free peasants held their farms as tenants of the lord. The men had to render military service (at least forty days every year). Peasant families had to set aside certain days of the week, usually three but often more, when they would go to the lord's estate and work there. The output from such labour, called labour-rent, would go directly to the lord. In addition, they could be required to do other unpaid labour services, like digging ditches, gathering firewood, building fences and repairing roads and buildings. Besides helping in the fields, women and children had to do other tasks. They spun thread, wove cloth, made candles and pressed grapes to prepare wine for the lord's use. There was one direct tax called 'taille' that kings sometimes imposed on peasants (the clergy and nobles were exempted from paying this).



An English ploughman, sixteenth-century sketch.

Serfs cultivated plots of land, but these belonged to the lord. Much of the produce from this had to be given to the lord. They also had to work on the land which belonged *exclusively* to the lord. They received no wages and could not leave the estate without the lord's permission. The lord claimed a number of monopolies at the expense of his serfs. Serfs could use only their lord's mill to grind their flour, his oven to bake their bread, and his wine-presses to distil wine and beer. The lord could decide whom a serf should marry, or might give his blessing to the serf's choice, but on payment of a fee.

England

Feudalism developed in England from the eleventh century.

The Angles and Saxons, from central Europe, had settled in England in the sixth century. The country's name, England, is a variant of 'Angle-land'. In the eleventh century, William, the Duke of Normandy*, crossed the English Channel with an army and defeated the Saxon king of England. From this time, France and England were often at war because of disputes over territory and trade.

*The present Queen of England is descended from William I.

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Hever Castle, England, thirteenth century.

William I had the land mapped, and distributed it in sections to 180 Norman nobles who had migrated with him. The lords became the chief tenants of the king, and were expected to give him military help. They were obliged to supply a certain number of knights to the king. They soon began to gift some of their own lands to knights who would serve them just as they in turn served the king. They could not, however, use their knights for private warfare, which was forbidden in England. Anglo-Saxon peasants became tenants of various levels of landholders.

Factors Affecting Social and Economic Relations

While members of the first two orders saw the social system as stable and unchanging, there were several processes which were transforming the system. Some of these, such as changes in the environment, were gradual and almost imperceptible. Others were more dramatic, like the changes in agricultural technology and land use. These in turn were shaped by and had an effect on the social and economic ties between lords and vassals. Let us examine these processes one by one.

The Environment

From the fifth to the tenth centuries, most of Europe was covered with vast forests. Thus the land available for agriculture was limited. Also, peasants dissatisfied with their conditions could flee from oppression and take refuge in the forest. Europe was undergoing an intensely cold climatic spell in this period. This led to severe and prolonged winters, a shortened growing season for crops, and reduced yields from agriculture.

From the eleventh century, Europe entered a warm phase. Average temperatures increased, which had a profound effect on agriculture. Peasants now had a longer growing season and the soil, now less subjected to frost, could be more easily ploughed. Environmental historians have noted that there was a significant receding of the forest line in many parts of Europe. This made expansion of the area under cultivation possible.

Land Use

Initially, agricultural technology was very primitive. The only mechanical aid available to the peasant was the wooden plough, drawn by a team of oxen. This plough could at best scratch the surface of the earth and was unable to fully draw out the natural productivity of the soil. Agriculture was therefore very labour intensive. Fields had to be

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dug by hand, often once in four years, and enormous manual labour was required.

Also, an ineffective method of crop rotation was in use. The land was divided in half, one field was planted in autumn with winter wheat, while the other field was left fallow. Rye was planted on this piece of fallow land the next year while the other half was put to fallow. With this system, the soil slowly deteriorated, and famines were not uncommon. Chronic malnutrition alternated with devastating famines and life was difficult for the poor.

Despite these hardships, the lords were anxious to maximise their incomes. Since it was not possible to increase output from the land, the peasants were forced to bring under cultivation all the land in the manorial estate, and spend more time doing this than they were legally bound to do. The peasants did not bow quietly to oppression. Since they could not protest openly, they resorted to passive resistance. They spent more time cultivating their own fields, and kept much of the product of that labour for themselves. They also avoided performing unpaid extra services. They came into conflict with the lords over pasture and forest lands, and saw these lands as resources to be used by the whole community, while the lords treated these as their private property.

New Agricultural Technology

By the eleventh century, there is evidence of several technological changes.

Instead of the basic wooden ploughs, cultivators began using heavy iron-tipped ploughs and mould-boards. These ploughs could dig much deeper and the mould-boards turned the topsoil properly. With this the nutrients from the soil were better utilised.

The methods of harnessing animals to the plough improved. Instead of the neck-harness, the shoulder-harness came into use. This enabled animals to exert greater power. Horses were now better shod, with iron horseshoes, which prevented foot decay. There was increased use of wind and water energy for agriculture. More water-powered and wind-powered mills were set up all over Europe for purposes like milling corn and pressing grapes.

There were also changes in land use. The most revolutionary one was the switch from a two-field to a three-field system. In this, peasants could use a field two years out of three if they planted it with one crop in autumn and a different crop in spring a year and a half later. That meant that farmers could break their holdings into three fields. They could plant one with wheat or rye in autumn for human consumption. The second could be used in spring to raise peas, beans and lentils for human use, and oats and barley for the horses. The third field lay fallow. Each year they rotated the use among the three fields.

With these improvements, there was an almost immediate increase in the amount of food produced from each unit of land. Food availability

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doubled. The greater use of plants like peas and beans meant more vegetable proteins in the diet of the average European and a better source of fodder for their animals. For cultivators, it meant better opportunities. They could now produce more food from less land. The average size of a peasant's farm shrank from about 100 acres to 20 to 30 acres by the thirteenth century. Holdings which were smaller could be more efficiently cultivated and reduced the amount of labour needed. This gave the peasants time for other activities.

Some of these technological changes cost a lot of money. Peasants did not have enough money to set up watermills and windmills. Therefore the initiative was taken by the lords. But peasants were able to take the initiative in many things, such as extending arable land. They also switched to the three-field rotation of crops, and set up small forges and smithies in the villages, where iron-tipped ploughs and horseshoes were made and repaired cheaply.

From the eleventh century, the personal bonds that had been the basis of feudalism were weakening, because economic transactions were becoming more and more money based. Lords found it convenient to ask for rent in cash, not services, and cultivators were selling their crops for money (instead of exchanging them for other goods) to traders, who would then take such goods to be sold in the towns. The increasing use of money began to influence prices, which became higher in times of poor harvests. In England, for instance, agricultural prices doubled between the 1270s and the 1320s.

A Fourth Order? New Towns and Townspeople

Expansion in agriculture was accompanied by growth in three related areas: population, trade and towns. From roughly 42 million in 1000, Europe's population stood at 62 million around 1200 and 73 million in 1300. Better food meant a longer lifespan. By the thirteenth century, an average European could expect to live 10 years longer than in the eighth century. Women and girls had shorter lifespans compared to men because the latter ate better food.

The towns of the Roman Empire had become deserted and ruined after its fall. But from the eleventh century, as agriculture increased and became able to sustain higher levels of population, towns began to grow again. Peasants who had surplus grain to sell needed a place where they could set up a selling centre and where they could buy tools and cloth. This led to the growth of periodic fairs and small marketing centres which gradually developed town-like features – a town square, a church, roads where merchants built shops and homes, an office where those who governed the town could meet. In other places, towns grew around large castles, bishops' estates, or large churches.

In towns, instead of services, people paid a tax to the lords who owned the land on which the town stood. Towns offered the prospect

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Reims, French cathedral-town, seventeenth-century map.

ACTIVITY 3

Look carefully at this map and the drawing of a town. What would you notice as special features of medieval European towns? How were they different from towns in other places and other periods of time?

of paid work and freedom from the lord's control, for young people from peasant families.

'Town air makes free' was a popular saying. Many serfs craving to be free ran away and hid in towns. If a serf could stay for one year and one day without his lord discovering him, he would become a free man. Many people in towns were free peasants or escaped serfs who provided unskilled labour. Shopkeepers and merchants were numerous. Later there was need for individuals with specialised skills, like bankers and lawyers. The bigger towns had populations of about 30,000. They could be said to have formed a 'fourth' order.

The basis of economic organisation was the guild. Each craft or industry was organised into a guild, an association which controlled the quality of the product, its price and its sale. The 'guild-hall' was a feature of every town; it was a building for ceremonial functions, and where the heads of all the guilds met formally. Guards patrolled the town walls and musicians were called to play at feasts and in civic processions, and innkeepers looked after travellers.

By the eleventh century, new trade routes with West Asia were developing (see Theme 5). Scandinavian merchants were sailing south from the North Sea to exchange furs and hunting-hawks for cloth; English traders came to sell tin. In France, by the twelfth century, commerce and crafts began to grow. Earlier, craftsmen used to travel from manor to manor; now they found it easier to settle in one place where goods could be produced and traded for food. As the number of towns grew and trade continued to expand, town merchants became rich and powerful, and rivalled the power of the nobility.

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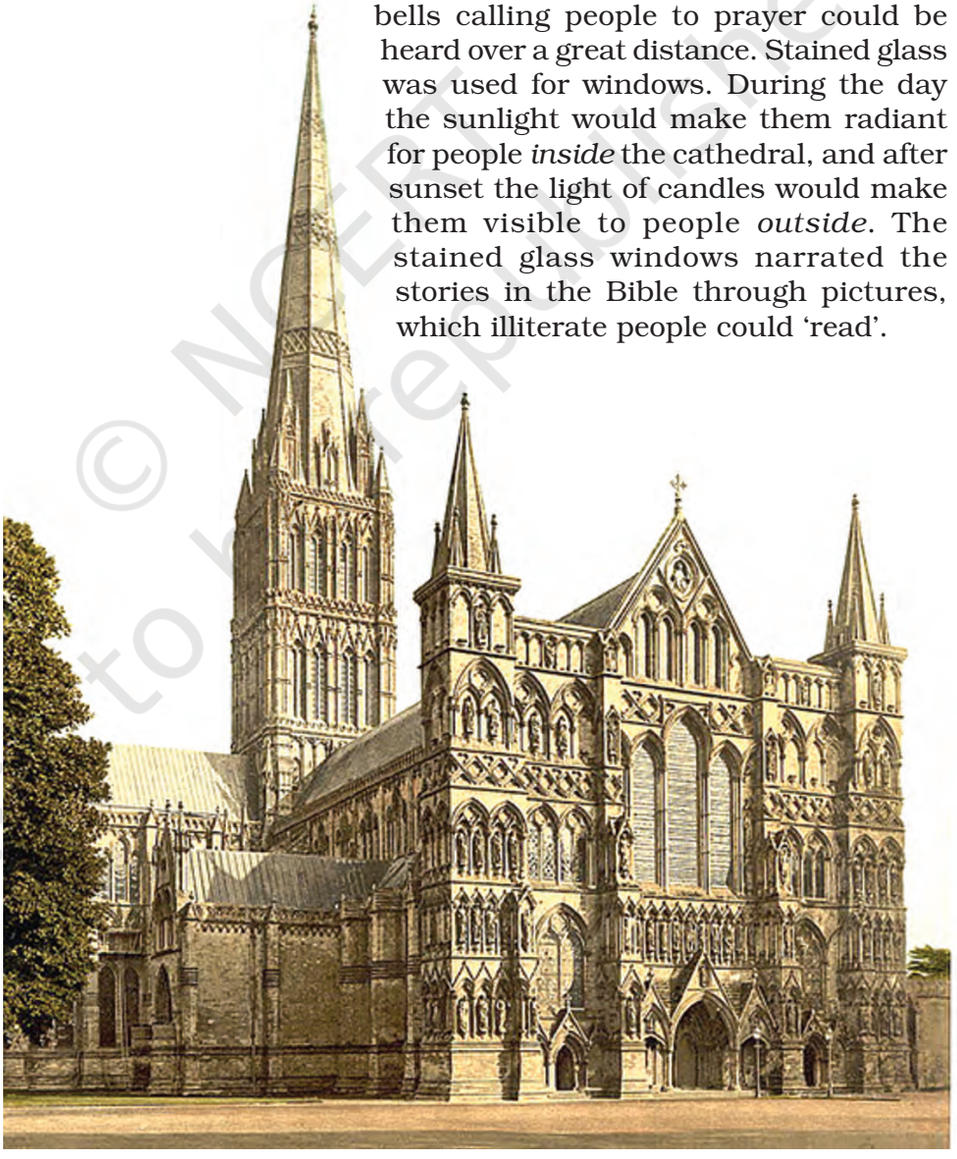
Cathedral-towns

One of the ways that rich merchants spent their money was by making donations to churches. From the twelfth century, large churches – called cathedrals – were being built in France. These belonged to monasteries, but different groups of people contributed to their construction with their own labour, materials or money. Cathedrals were built of stone, and took many years to complete. As they were being built, the area around the cathedrals became more populated, and when they were completed they became centres of pilgrimage. Thus, small towns developed around them.

Cathedrals were designed so that the priest's voice could be heard clearly within the hall where large numbers of people gathered, and so that the singing by monks could sound beautiful and the chiming bells calling people to prayer could be heard over a great distance. Stained glass was used for windows. During the day the sunlight would make them radiant for people *inside* the cathedral, and after sunset the light of candles would make them visible to people *outside*. The stained glass windows narrated the stories in the Bible through pictures, which illiterate people could 'read'.



Salisbury Cathedral, England.

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'Because of the inadequacy which we often felt on feast days, for the narrowness of the place forced the women to run towards the altar upon the heads of the men with much anguish and noisy confusion, [we decided] to enlarge and amplify the noble church...

We also caused to be painted, by the exquisite hands of many masters from different regions, a splendid variety of new windows... Because these windows are very valuable on account of their wonderful execution and the profuse expenditure of painted glass and sapphire glass, we appointed an official master craftsman for their protection, and also a goldsmith...who would receive their allowances, namely, coins from the altar and flour from the common storehouse of the brethren, and who would never neglect their duty, to look after these [works of art].'

– Abbot Suger (1081-1151) about the Abbey of St Denis, near Paris.

Stained-glass window, Chartres cathedral, France, fifteenth century.

The Crisis of the Fourteenth Century

By the early fourteenth century, Europe's economic expansion slowed down. This was due to three factors.

In northern Europe, by the end of the thirteenth century the warm summers of the previous 300 years had given way to bitterly cold summers. Seasons for growing crops were reduced by a month and it became difficult to grow crops on higher ground. Storms and oceanic flooding destroyed many farmsteads, which resulted in less income in taxes for governments. The opportunities offered by favourable climatic conditions before the thirteenth century had led to large-scale reclamation of the land of forests and pastures for agriculture. But intensive ploughing had exhausted the soil despite the practice of the three-field rotation of crops, because clearance was not accompanied by proper soil conservation. The shortage of pasturage reduced the number of cattle. Population growth was outstripping resources, and the immediate result was famine. Severe famines hit Europe between 1315 and 1317, followed in the 1320s by massive cattle deaths.

In addition, trade was hit by a severe shortage of metal money because of a shortfall in the output of silver mines in Austria and Serbia. This forced governments to reduce the silver content of the currency, and to mix it with cheaper metals.

The worst was yet to come. As trade expanded in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, ships carrying goods from distant countries had started arriving in European ports. Along with the ships came rats – carrying the deadly bubonic plague infection (the 'Black Death'). Western Europe, relatively isolated in earlier centuries, was hit by the epidemic between 1347 and 1350. The modern estimate of mortality in that epidemic is that 20 per cent of the people of the whole of Europe died, with some places losing as much as 40 per cent of the population.

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'How many valiant men, how many fair ladies, (had) breakfast with their kinfolk and the same night supped with their ancestors in the next world! The condition of the people was pitiable to behold. They sickened by the thousands daily, and died unattended and without help. Many died in the open street, others dying in their houses, made it known by the stench of their rotting bodies. Consecrated churchyards did not suffice for the burial of the vast multitude of bodies, which were heaped by the hundreds in vast trenches, like goods in a ships hold and covered with a little earth.'

– Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-75), Italian author.

As trade centres, cities were the hardest hit. In enclosed communities like monasteries and convents, when one individual contracted the plague, it was not long before everyone did. And in almost every case, none survived. The plague took its worst toll among infants, the young and the elderly. There were other relatively minor episodes of plague in the 1360s and 1370s. The population of Europe, 73 million in 1300, stood reduced to 45 million in 1400.

This catastrophe, combined with the economic crisis, caused immense social dislocation. Depopulation resulted in a major shortage of labour. Serious imbalances were created between agriculture and manufacture, because there were not enough people to engage in both equally. Prices of agricultural goods dropped as there were fewer people to buy. Wage rates increased because the demand for labour, particularly agricultural labour, rose in England by as much as 250 per cent in the aftermath of the Black Death. The surviving labour force could now demand twice their earlier wages.

Social Unrest

The income of lords was thus badly hit. It declined as agricultural prices came down and wages of labourers increased. In desperation, they tried to give up the money-contracts they had entered into and revive labour-services. This was violently opposed by peasants, particularly the better-educated and more prosperous ones. In 1323, peasants revolted in Flanders, in 1358 in France, and in 1381 in England.

Though these rebellions were ruthlessly crushed, it is significant that they occurred with the most violent intensity in those areas which had experienced the prosperity of the economic expansion – a sign that peasants were attempting to protect the gains they had made in previous centuries. Despite the severe repression, the sheer intensity of peasant opposition ensured that the old feudal relations could not be reimposed. The money economy was too far advanced to be reversed. Therefore, though the lords succeeded in crushing the revolts, the peasants ensured that the feudal privileges of earlier days could not be reinvented.

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Eleventh to Fourteenth Centuries	
1066	*Normans defeat Anglo-Saxons and conquer England*
1100 ONWARDS	*Cathedrals being built in France*
1315–17	*Great famine in Europe*
1347–50	*Black Death*
1338–1461	*Hundred Years War between England and France*
1381	*Peasants' revolts*

ACTIVITY 4

Read through the events and processes listed with dates, and connect them into a narrative account.

Political Changes

Developments in the political sphere paralleled social processes. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, European kings strengthened their military and financial power. The powerful new states they created were as significant for Europe as the economic changes that were occurring. Historians have therefore called these kings 'the new monarchs'. Louis XI in France, Maximilian in Austria, Henry VII in England and Isabelle and Ferdinand in Spain were absolutist rulers, who started the process of organising standing armies, a permanent bureaucracy and national taxation and, in Spain and Portugal, began to play a role in Europe's expansion overseas (see Theme 8).

Queen Elizabeth I of England at a picnic, late sixteenth century.

The most important reason for the triumph of these monarchies was the social changes which had taken place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The dissolution of the feudal system of lordship and vassalage, and the slow rate of economic growth had given the first opportunity to kings to increase their control over their powerful and not-so-powerful subjects. Rulers dispensed with the system of feudal levies for their armies and introduced professionally trained infantry equipped with guns and siege artillery (see Theme 5) directly under their control. The resistance of the aristocracies crumbled in the face of the firepower of the kings.

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The New Monarchy

1461–1559	*New monarchs in France*
1474–1556	*New monarchs in Spain*
1485–1547	*New monarchs in England*

By increasing taxes, monarchs got enough revenues to support larger armies and thus defended and expanded their frontiers and overcame internal resistance to royal authority. Centralisation, however, did not occur without resistance from the aristocracy. A common thread running through all types of opposition to the monarchies was the question of taxation. In England, rebellions occurred and were put down in 1497, 1536, 1547, 1549 and 1553. In France, Louis XI (1461-83) had to wage a long struggle against dukes and princes. Lesser nobles, often members of local assemblies, resisted this royal usurpation of their powers. The 'religious' wars in France in the sixteenth century were in part a contest between royal privileges and regional liberties.

The nobility managed a tactical shift in order to ensure their survival. From being opponents to the new regimes, they quickly transformed themselves into loyalists. It is for this reason that royal absolutism has been called a modified form of feudalism. Precisely the same class of people who had been rulers in the feudal system – the lords – continued to dominate the political scene. They were given permanent positions in the administrative service. But the new regimes were different in some important ways.

Nemours Castle, France, fifteenth century.

The king was no longer at the apex of a pyramid where loyalty had been a matter of personal dependence and trust. He was now at the centre of an elaborate courtier society and a network of patron–client relationships. All monarchies, weak or powerful, needed the cooperation of those who could command authority. Patronage became the means of ensuring such cooperation. And patronage could be given or obtained by means of money. Therefore money became an important way in which non-aristocratic elements like merchants and bankers could gain access to the court. They lent money to the kings, who used it to pay the wages of soldiers. Rulers thus made space for non-feudal elements in the state system.

The later history of France and England was to be shaped by these changes in the power structures. In the reign of the child-king Louis XIII of France, in 1614, a meeting was held of the French consultative assembly, known as the Estates-General (with three houses to represent the three estates/orders – clergy, nobility, and the rest). After this, it

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was not summoned again for nearly two centuries, till 1789, because the kings did not want to share power with the three orders.

What happened in England was very different. Even before the Norman Conquest, the Anglo-Saxons had a Great Council, which the king had to consult before imposing any tax. This developed into what was called the Parliament, which consisted of the House of Lords, the members of which were the lords and the clergy, and the House of Commons, representing towns and rural areas. King Charles I ruled for 11 years (1629–40) without calling Parliament. When he was forced to call it, because he needed money, a section of Parliament decided to go to war against him, and later executed him and established a republic. This did not last long, and monarchy was restored, but on the condition that Parliament would be called regularly.

Today, France has a republican form of government and England has a monarchy. This is because of the different directions that the histories of the two countries took after the seventeenth century.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. *Describe two features of early feudal society in France.*
2. *How did long-term changes in population levels affect economy and society in Europe?*
3. *Why did knights become a distinct group, and when did they decline?*
4. *What was the function of medieval monasteries?*

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. *Imagine and describe a day in the life of a craftsman in a medieval French town.*
6. *Compare the conditions of life for a French serf and a Roman slave.*

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THEME 7

CHANGING CULTURAL TRADITIONS

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FROM the fourteenth to the end of the seventeenth century, towns were growing in many countries of Europe. A distinct 'urban culture' also developed. Townspeople began to think of themselves as more 'civilised' than rural people. Towns – particularly Florence, Venice and Rome – became centres of art and learning. Artists and writers were patronised by the rich and the aristocratic. The invention of printing at the same time made books and prints available to many people, including those living in distant towns or countries. A sense of history also developed in Europe, and people contrasted their 'modern' world with the 'ancient' one of the Greeks and Romans.

Religion came to be seen as something which each individual should choose for himself. The church's earth-centric belief was overturned by scientists who began to understand the solar system, and new geographical knowledge overturned the Europe-centric view that the Mediterranean Sea was the centre of the world (*see Theme 8*).

There is a vast amount of material on European history from the fourteenth century – documents, printed books, paintings, sculptures, buildings, textiles. Much of this has been carefully preserved in archives, art galleries and museums in Europe and America.

From the nineteenth century, historians used the term 'Renaissance' (literally, rebirth) to describe the cultural changes of this period. The historian who emphasised these most was a Swiss scholar – Jacob Burckhardt (1818–97) of the University of Basle in Switzerland. He was a student of the German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886). Ranke had taught him that the primary concern of the historian was to write about states and politics using papers and files of government departments. Burckhardt was dissatisfied with these very limited goals that his master had set out for him. To him politics was not the be-all and end-all in history writing. History was as much concerned with culture as with politics.

In 1860, he wrote a book called *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, in which he called his readers' attention to literature, architecture and painting to tell the story of how a new 'humanist' culture had flowered in Italian towns from

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the fourteenth to the seventeenth century. This culture, he wrote, was characterised by a new belief – that man, as an individual, was capable of making his own decisions and developing his skills. He was 'modern', in contrast to 'medieval' man whose thinking had been controlled by the church.

The Revival of Italian Cities

After the fall of the western Roman Empire, many of the towns that had been political and cultural centres in Italy fell into ruin. There was no unified government, and the Pope in Rome, who was sovereign in his own state, was not a strong political figure.

While western Europe was being reshaped by feudal bonds and unified under the Latin Church, and eastern Europe under the Byzantine Empire, and Islam was creating a common civilisation further west, Italy was weak and fragmented. However, it was these very developments that helped in the revival of Italian culture.

With the expansion of trade between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic countries, the ports on the Italian coast revived. From the twelfth century, as the Mongols opened up trade with China via the Silk Route (see Theme 5) and as trade with western European countries

MAP 1: The Italian States

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also increased, Italian towns played a central role. They no longer saw themselves as part of a powerful empire, but as independent city-states. Two of these – Florence and Venice – were republics, and many others were court-cities, ruled by princes.

One of the most vibrant cities was Venice, another was Genoa. They were different from other parts of Europe – the clergy were not politically dominant here, nor were there powerful feudal lords. Rich merchants and bankers actively participated in governing the city, and this helped the idea of citizenship to strike root. Even when these towns were ruled by military despots, the pride felt by the townspeople in being citizens did not weaken.

The City-State

Cardinal Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) writes about the democratic government of his city-state in The Commonwealth and Government of Venice (1534).

'...to come to the institution of our Venetian commonwealth, the whole authority of the city...is in that council, into which all the gentlemen of the City being once past the age of 25 years are admitted...

Now first I am to yield you a reckoning how and with what wisdom it was ordained by our ancestors, that the common people should not be admitted into this company of citizens, in whose authority [lies] the whole power of the commonwealth... Because many troubles and popular tumults arise in those cities, whose government is swayed by the common people... many were of contrary opinion, deeming that it would do well, if this manner of governing the commonwealth should rather be defined by ability and abundance of riches. Contrariwise the honest citizens, and those that are liberally brought up, oftentimes fall to poverty... Therefore our wise and prudent ancestors... ordered that this definition of the public rule should go rather by the nobility of lineage, than by the estimation of wealth: yet with that temperature [proviso], that men of chief and supreme nobility should not have this rule alone (for that would rather have been the power of a few than a commonwealth) but also every other citizen whosoever not ignobly born: so that all which were noble by birth, or ennobled by virtue, did...obtain this right of government.'

G. Bellini's 'The Recovery of the Relic of the Holy Cross' was painted in 1500, to recall an event of 1370, and is set in fifteenth-century Venice.

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The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries	
1300	*Humanism taught at Padua University in Italy*
1341	*Petrarch given title of 'Poet Laureate' in Rome*
1349	*University established in Florence*
1390	*Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales published*
1436	*Brunelleschi designs the Duomo in Florence*
1453	*Ottoman Turks defeat the Byzantine ruler of Constantinople*
1454	*Gutenberg prints the Bible with movable type*
1484	*Portuguese mathematicians calculate latitude by observing the sun*
1492	*Columbus reaches America*
1495	*Leonardo da Vinci paints The Last Supper*
1512	*Michelangelo paints the Sistine Chapel ceiling*

Universities and Humanism

The earliest universities in Europe had been set up in Italian towns. The universities of Padua and Bologna had been centres of legal studies from the eleventh century. Commerce being the chief activity in the city, there was an increasing demand for lawyers and notaries (a combination of solicitor and record-keeper) to write and interpret rules and written agreements without which trade on a large scale was not possible. Law was therefore a popular subject of study, but there was now a shift in emphasis. It was studied in the context of earlier Roman culture. Francesco Petrarch (1304-78) represented this change. To Petrarch, antiquity was a distinctive civilisation which could be best understood through the actual words of the ancient Greeks and Romans. He therefore stressed the importance of a close reading of ancient authors.

This educational programme implied that there was much to be learnt which religious teaching alone could not give. This was the culture which historians in the nineteenth century were to label 'humanism'. By the early fifteenth century, the term 'humanist' was used for masters who taught grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history and moral philosophy. The Latin word *humanitas*, from which 'humanities' was derived, had been used many centuries ago by the Roman lawyer and essayist Cicero (106-43 BCE), a contemporary of Julius Caesar, to mean culture. These subjects were not drawn from or connected with religion, and emphasised skills developed by individuals through discussion and debate.

ACTIVITY 1

Locate Venice on the map of Italy, and look carefully at the painting on p. 154. How would you describe the city, and in what ways was it different from a cathedral-town?

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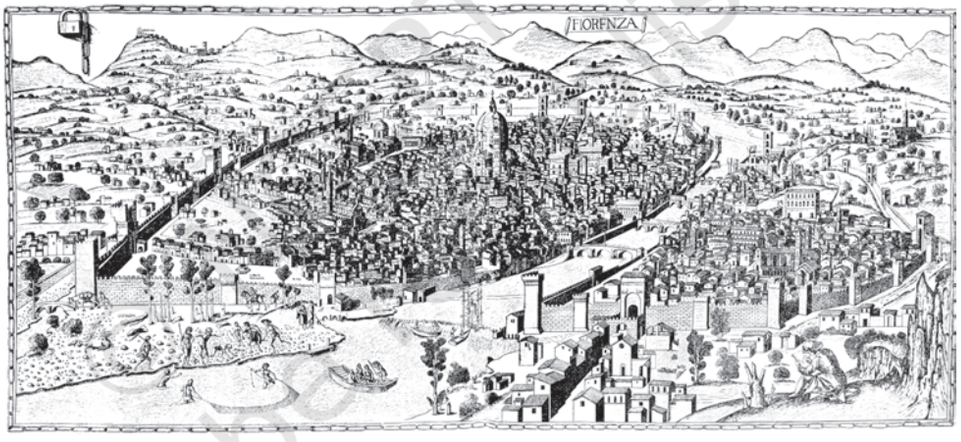
Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-94), a humanist of Florence, wrote on the importance of debate in On the Dignity of Man (1486).

'For [Plato and Aristotle] it was certain that, for the attainment of the knowledge of truth they were always seeking for themselves, nothing is better than to attend as often as possible the exercise of debate. For just as bodily energy is strengthened by gymnastic exercise, so beyond doubt in this wrestling-place of letters, as it were, energy of mind becomes far stronger and more vigorous.'

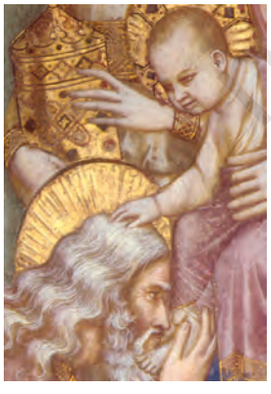
These revolutionary ideas attracted attention in many other universities, particularly in the newly established university in Petrarch's own home-town of Florence. Till the end of the thirteenth century, this city had not made a mark as a centre of trade or of learning, but things changed dramatically in the fifteenth century. A city is known by its great citizens as much as by its wealth, and Florence had come

Florence, a sketch made in 1470.



to be known because of Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), a layman who wrote on religious themes, and Giotto (1267-1337), an artist who painted lifelike portraits, very different from the stiff figures done by earlier artists. From then it developed as the most exciting intellectual city in Italy and as a centre of artistic creativity. The term 'Renaissance Man' is often used to describe a person with many interests and skills, because many of the individuals who became well known at this time were people of many parts. They were scholar-diplomat-theologian-artist combined in one.

Giotto's painting of the child Jesus, Assisi, Italy.



The Humanist View of History

Humanists thought that they were restoring 'true civilisation' after centuries of darkness, for they believed that a 'dark age' had set in after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Following them, later scholars unquestioningly assumed that a 'new age' had begun in Europe from the fourteenth century. The term 'Middle Ages'/'medieval period' was

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used for the millennium (thousand years) after the fall of Rome. In the 'Middle Ages', they argued, the Church had had such complete control over men's minds that all the learning of the Greeks and Romans had been blotted out. The humanists used the word 'modern' for the period from the fifteenth century.

Periodisation used by humanists and by later scholars

5th–14th century	The Middle Ages
5th–9th century	The Dark Ages
9th–11th century	The Early Middle Ages
11th–14th century	The Late Middle Ages
15th century onwards	The Modern Age

Recently, historians have questioned this division. With more research being done and more being found out about Europe in this period, scholars are increasingly reluctant to make sharp divisions between centuries in terms of being culturally vibrant or otherwise. It seems unfair to label any period as the 'Dark Ages'.

Science and Philosophy: The Arabs' Contribution

Much of the writings of the Greeks and Romans had been familiar to monks and clergymen through the 'Middle Ages', but they had not made these widely known. In the fourteenth century, many scholars began to read translated works of Greek writers like Plato and Aristotle. For this they were indebted not to their own scholars but to Arab translators who had carefully preserved and translated ancient manuscripts (Plato was Aflatun, and Aristotle Aristu in Arabic).

While some European scholars read Greek in Arabic translation, the Greeks translated works of Arabic and Persian scholars for further transmission to other Europeans. These were works on natural science, mathematics, astronomy, medicine and chemistry. Ptolemy's *Almagest* (a work on astronomy, written in Greek before 140 CE and later translated into Arabic) carries the Arabic definite article 'al', which brings out the Arabic connection. Among the Muslim writers who were regarded as men of wisdom in the Italian world were Ibn Sina* ('Avicenna' in Latin, 980-1037), an Arab physician and philosopher of Bukhara in Central Asia, and al-Razi ('Rhazes'), author of a medical encyclopaedia. Ibn Rushd ('Averroes' in Latin, 1126-98), an Arab philosopher of Spain, tried to resolve the tension between philosophical knowledge (*faylasuf*) and religious beliefs. His method was adopted by Christian thinkers.

Humanists reached out to people in a variety of ways. Though the curricula in universities continued to be dominated by law, medicine and theology, humanist subjects slowly began to be introduced in schools, not just in Italy but in other European countries as well.

*The European spelling of these individuals' names made later generations think they were Europeans!

Schools at this time were only for boys.

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Artists and Realism

Formal education was not the only way through which humanists shaped the minds of their age. Art, architecture and books were wonderfully effective in transmitting humanist ideas.

' "Art" is embedded in nature; he who can extract it, has it... Moreover, you may demonstrate much of your work by geometry. The more closely your work abides by life in its form, so much the better will it appear...No man shall ever be able to make a beautiful figure out of his own imagination unless he has well stored his mind by much copying from life.'

– Albrecht Durer (1471-1528)

This sketch by Durer (Praying Hands) gives us a sense of Italian culture in the sixteenth century, when people were deeply religious, but also had a sense of confidence in man's ability to achieve near-perfection and to unravel the mysteries of the world and the universe.

'Praying Hands', brush drawing by Durer, 1508.

'The Pieta' by Michelangelo depicts Mary holding the body of Jesus.

Artists were inspired by studying works of the past. The material remains of Roman culture were sought with as much excitement as ancient texts: a thousand years after the fall of Rome, fragments of art were discovered in the ruins of ancient Rome and other deserted cities. Their admiration for the figures of 'perfectly' proportioned men and women sculpted so many centuries ago, made Italian sculptors want to continue that tradition. In 1416, Donatello (1386-1466) broke new ground with his lifelike statues.

Artists' concern to be accurate was helped by the work of scientists. To study bone structures, artists went to the laboratories of medical schools. Andreas Vesalius (1514-64), a Belgian and a professor of medicine at the University of Padua, was the first to dissect the human body. This was the beginning of modern physiology.

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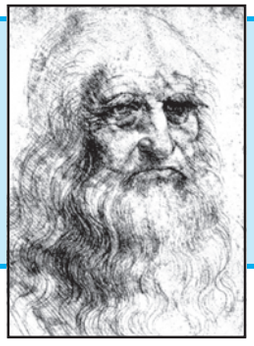
This self-portrait is by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) who had an amazing range of interests from botany and anatomy to mathematics and art. He painted the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper.

One of his dreams was to be able to fly. He spent years observing birds in flight, and designed a flying machine.

He signed his name 'Leonardo da Vinci, disciple of experiment'.



Painters did not have older works to use as a model. But they, like sculptors, painted as realistically as possible. They found that a knowledge of geometry helped them understand perspective, and that by noting the changing quality of light, their pictures acquired a three-dimensional quality. The use of oil as a medium for painting also gave a greater richness of colour to paintings than before. In the colours and designs of costumes in many paintings, there is evidence of the influence of Chinese and Persian art, made available to them by the Mongols. (see Theme 5)

Thus, anatomy, geometry, physics, as well as a strong sense of what was beautiful, gave a new quality to Italian art, which was to be called 'realism' and which continued till the nineteenth century.

ACTIVITY 2

Describe the different scientific elements in the work of sixteenth-century Italian artists.

Architecture

The city of Rome revived in a spectacular way in the fifteenth century. From 1417, the popes were politically stronger because the weakness caused by the election of two rival popes since 1378 had ended. They actively encouraged the study of Rome's history. The ruins in Rome were carefully excavated by archaeologists (archaeology was a new skill). This inspired a 'new' style in architecture, which was actually a revival of the imperial Roman style – now called 'classical'. Popes, wealthy merchants and aristocrats employed architects who were familiar with classical architecture. Artists and sculptors were also to decorate buildings with paintings, sculptures and reliefs.

Some individuals were skilled equally as painters, sculptors and architects. The most impressive example is Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) – immortalised by the ceiling he painted for the Pope in the Sistine Chapel, the sculpture called 'The Pieta' and his design of the dome of St Peter's Church, all in Rome. Filippo Brunelleschi (1337-1446), the architect who designed the spectacular Duomo of Florence, had started his career as a sculptor.

Italian architecture in the sixteenth century copied many features of imperial Roman buildings.

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Another remarkable change was that from this time, artists were known individually, by name, not as members of a group or a guild, as earlier.

The Duomo, the dome of Florence cathedral designed by Brunelleschi.

Leon Batista Alberti (1404-72) wrote on art theory and architecture. 'Him I call an Architect who is able to devise and to compleat all those Works which, by the movement of great Weights, and by the conjunction and amassment of Bodies can, with the greatest Beauty, be adapted to the uses of Mankind.'

The First Printed Books

If people in other countries wanted to see paintings, sculptures or buildings of great artists, they had to travel to Italy. But in the case of the written word, what was written in Italy travelled to other countries. This was because of the greatest revolution of the sixteenth century – the mastery of the technology of printing. For this, Europeans were indebted to other peoples – the Chinese, for printing technology, and to Mongol rulers because European traders and diplomats had become familiar with it during visits to their courts. (This was also the case with three other important innovations – firearms, the compass and the abacus.)

Earlier, texts existed in a few hand-written copies. In 1455, 150 copies of the Bible were printed in the workshop of Johannnes Gutenberg (1400-1458), the German who made the first printing press. Earlier, a monk would have taken the same amount of time to write out *one* copy of the Bible!

By 1500, many classical texts, nearly all in Latin, had been printed in Italy. As printed books became available, it was possible to buy them, and students did not have to depend solely on lecture-notes. Ideas, opinions and information moved more widely and more rapidly than ever before. A printed book promoting new ideas could quickly reach hundreds of readers. This also made it possible for individuals to read books, since it was possible to buy copies for oneself. This developed the reading habit among people.

The chief reason that the humanist culture of Italy spread more rapidly across the Alps from the end of the fifteenth century is that printed books were circulating. This also explains why earlier intellectual movements had been limited to particular regions.

A New Concept of Human Beings

One of the features of humanist culture was a slackening of the control of religion over human life. Italians were strongly attracted to material wealth, power and glory, but they were not necessarily irreligious. Francesco Barbaro (1390-1454), a humanist from Venice, wrote a

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pamphlet defending acquisition of wealth as a virtue. In *On Pleasure*, Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457), who believed that the study of history leads man to strive for a life of perfection, criticised the Christian injunction against pleasure. There was also a concern at this time with good manners – how one should speak politely and dress correctly, what skills a person of culture should learn.

Humanism also implied that individuals were capable of shaping their own lives through means other than the mere pursuit of power and money. This ideal was closely tied with the belief that human nature was many-sided, which went against the three separate orders that feudal society believed in.

Niccolo Machiavelli wrote about human nature in the fifteenth chapter of his book, The Prince (1513).

'So, leaving aside imaginary things, and referring only to those which truly exist, I say that whenever men are discussed (and especially princes, who are more exposed to view), they are noted for various qualities which earn them either praise or condemnation. Some, for example, are held to be generous, and others miserly. Some are held to be benefactors, others are called grasping; some cruel, some compassionate; one man faithless, another faithful; one man effeminate and cowardly, another fierce and courageous; one man courteous, another proud; one man lascivious, another pure; one guileless, another crafty; one stubborn, another flexible; one grave, another frivolous; one religious, another sceptical; and so forth.'

Machiavelli believed that 'all men are bad and ever ready to display their vicious nature partly because of the fact that human desires are insatiable'. The most powerful motive Machiavelli saw as the incentive for every human action is self-interest.

The Aspirations of Women

The new ideal of individuality and citizenship excluded women. Men from aristocratic families dominated public life and were the decision-makers in their families. They educated their sons to take their place in family businesses or in public life, at times sending their younger sons to join the Church. Although their dowries were invested in the family businesses, women generally had no say in how their husbands should run their business. Often, marriages were intended to strengthen business alliances. If an adequate dowry could not be arranged, daughters were sent to convents to live the life of a nun. Obviously, the public role of women was limited and they were looked upon as keepers of the households.

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The position of women in the families of merchants, however, was somewhat different. Shopkeepers were very often assisted by their wives in running the shop. In families of merchants and bankers, wives looked after the businesses when the male members were away on work. The early death of a merchant compelled his widow to perform a larger public role than was the case in aristocratic families.

A few women were intellectually very creative and sensitive about the importance of a humanist education. 'Even though the study of letters promises and offers no reward for women and no dignity', wrote the Venetian Cassandra Fedele (1465-1558), 'every woman ought to seek and embrace these studies.' She was one of a handful of women who questioned the idea that women were incapable of achieving the qualities of a humanist scholar. Fedele was known for her proficiency in Greek and Latin, and was invited to give orations at the University of Padua.

Isabella d'Este.

Fedele's writings bring into focus the general regard for education in that age. She was one of many Venetian women writers who criticised the republic 'for creating a highly limited definition of freedom that favoured the desires of men over those of women'. Another remarkable woman was the Marchesa of Mantua, Isabella d'Este (1474-1539). She ruled the state while her husband was absent, and the court of Mantua, a small state, was famed for its intellectual brilliance. Women's writings revealed their conviction that they should have economic power, property and education to achieve an identity in a world dominated by men.

ACTIVITY 3

Compare the aspirations for women expressed by a woman (Fedele) and by a man (Castiglione). Did they have only women of a particular class in mind?

Balthasar Castiglione, author and diplomat, wrote in his book The Courtier (1528):

'I hold that a woman should in no way resemble a man as regards her ways, manners, words, gestures and bearing. Thus just as it is very fitting that a man should display a certain robust and sturdy manliness, so it is well for a woman to have a certain soft and delicate tenderness, with an air of feminine sweetness in her every movement, which, in her going and staying and whatsoever she does, always makes her appear a woman, without any resemblance to a man. If this precept be added to the rules that these gentlemen have taught the courtier, then I think that she ought to be able to make use of many of them, and adorn herself with the finest accomplishments... For I consider that many virtues of the mind are as necessary to a woman as to a man; as it is to be of good family; to shun affectation: to be naturally graceful; to be well mannered, clever and prudent; to be neither proud, envious or evil-tongued, nor vain... to perform well and gracefully the sports suitable for women.'

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Debates within Christianity

Trade and travel, military conquest and diplomatic contacts linked Italian towns and courts with the world beyond. The new culture was admired and imitated by the educated and the wealthy. Very few of the new ideas filtered down to the ordinary man who, after all, could not read or write.

In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, many scholars in universities in north Europe were attracted to humanist ideas. Like their Italian colleagues, they too focused on classical Greek and Roman texts along with the holy books of the Christians. But, unlike Italy, where professional scholars dominated the humanist movement, in north Europe humanism attracted many members of the Church. They called on Christians to practise religion in the way laid down in the ancient texts of their religion, discarding unnecessary rituals, which they condemned as later additions to a simple religion. Theirs was a radically new view of human beings as free and rational agents. Later philosophers were to return to this over and over again, inspired by the belief in a distant God who created man but allowed him complete freedom to live his life freely, in pursuit of happiness 'here and now'.

Christian humanists like Thomas More (1478-1535) in England and Erasmus (1466-1536) in Holland felt that the Church had become an institution marked by greed, extorting money at will from ordinary people. One of the favourite methods of the clergy was to sell 'indulgences', documents which apparently freed the buyer from the burden of the sins he had committed. Christians came to realise from printed translations of the Bible in local languages that their religion did not permit such practices.

In almost every part of Europe, peasants began to rebel against the taxes imposed by the Church. While the common folk resented the extortions of churchmen, princes found their interference in the work of the state irritating. They were pleased when the humanists pointed out that the clergy's claim to judicial and fiscal powers originated from a document called the 'Donation of Constantine' supposed to have been issued by Constantine, the first Christian Roman Emperor. Humanist scholars were able to point out that this was not genuine, and had been forged later.

In 1517, a young German monk called Martin Luther (1483-1546) launched a campaign against the Catholic Church and argued that a person did not need priests to establish contact with God. He asked his followers to have complete faith in God, for faith alone could guide them to the right life and entry into heaven. This movement – called the Protestant Reformation – led to the churches in Germany and Switzerland breaking their connection with the Pope and the Catholic Church. In Switzerland, Luther's ideas were popularised by Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) and later by Jean Calvin (1509-64). Backed by merchants, the reformers had greater popular

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appeal in towns, while in rural areas the Catholic Church managed to retain its influence. Other German reformers, like the Anabaptists, were even more radical: they blended the idea of salvation with the end of all forms of social oppression. They said that since God had created all people as equal, they were not expected to pay taxes and had the right to choose their priests. This appealed to peasants oppressed by feudalism.

William Tyndale (1494-1536), an English Lutheran who translated the Bible into English in 1506, defended Protestantism thus:

'In this they be all agreed, to drive you from the knowledge of the scripture, and that ye shall not have the text thereof in the mother-tongue, and to keep the world still in darkness, to the intent they might sit in the consciences of the people, through vain superstition and false doctrine, to satisfy their proud ambition, and insatiable covetousness, and to exalt their own honour above king and emperor, yea, and above God himself... Which thing only moved me to translate the New Testament. Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay-people in any truth, except the scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother-tongue, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text. '

The New Testament is the section of the Bible dealing with the life and teachings of Christ and his early followers.

Luther did not support radicalism. He called upon German rulers to suppress the peasants' rebellion, which they did in 1525. But radicalism survived, and merged with the resistance of Protestants in France, who, persecuted by the Catholic rulers, started claiming the right of a people to remove an oppressive ruler and to choose someone of their own liking. Eventually, in France, as in many other parts of Europe, the Catholic Church allowed Protestants to worship as they chose. In England, the rulers ended the connection with the Pope. The king/queen was from then onwards the head of the Church.

The Catholic Church itself did not escape the impact of these ideas, and began to reform itself from within. In Spain and in Italy, churchmen emphasised the need for a simple life and service to the poor. In Spain, Ignatius Loyola, in an attempt to combat Protestantism, set up the Society of Jesus in 1540. His followers were called Jesuits, whose mission was to serve the poor and to widen their knowledge of other cultures.

ACTIVITY 4

What were the issues on which the Protestants criticised the Catholic Church?

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The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries	
1516	*Thomas More's Utopia published*
1517	*Martin Luther writes the Ninety-Five Theses*
1522	*Luther translates the Bible into German*
1525	*Peasant uprising in Germany*
1543	*Andreas Vesalius writes On Anatomy*
1559	*Anglican Church established in England, with the king/queen as its head*
1569	*Gerhardus Mercator prepares cylindrical map of the earth*
1582	*Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII*
1628	*William Harvey links the heart with blood circulation*
1673	*Academy of Sciences set up in Paris*
1687	*Isaac Newton's Principia Mathematica published*

The Copernican Revolution

The Christian notion of man as a sinner was questioned from an entirely different angle – by scientists. The turning point in European science came with the work of Copernicus (1473-1543), a contemporary of Martin Luther. Christians had believed that the earth was a sinful place and the heavy burden of sin made it immobile. The earth stood at the centre of the universe around which moved the celestial planets.

Celestial means divine or heavenly, while terrestrial implies having a worldly quality.

Copernicus asserted that the planets, including the earth, rotate around the sun. A devout Christian, Copernicus was afraid of the possible reaction to his theory by traditionalist clergymen. For this reason, he did not want his manuscript, *De revolutionibus* (The Rotation) to be printed. On his deathbed, he gave it to his follower, Joachim Rheticus. It took time for people to accept this idea. It was much later – more than half a century later, in fact – that the difference between 'heaven' and earth was bridged through the writings of astronomers like Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). The theory of the earth as part of a sun-centred system was made popular by Kepler's *Cosmographical Mystery*, which demonstrated that the planets move around the sun not in circles but in ellipses. Galileo confirmed the notion of the dynamic world in his work *The Motion*. This revolution in science reached its climax with Isaac Newton's theory of gravitation.

Self-portrait by Copernicus.

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Reading the Universe

Galileo once remarked that the Bible that lights the road to heaven does not say much on how the heavens work. The work of these thinkers showed that *knowledge*, as distinct from *belief*, was based on observation and experiments. Once these scientists had shown the way, experiments and investigations into what came to be called physics, chemistry and biology expanded rapidly. Historians were to label this new approach to the knowledge of man and nature the Scientific Revolution.

Consequently, in the minds of sceptics and non-believers, God began to be replaced by Nature as the source of creation. Even those who retained their faith in God started talking about a distant God who does not directly regulate the act of living in the material world. Such ideas were popularised through scientific societies that established a new scientific culture in the public domain. The Paris Academy, established in 1670 and the Royal Society in London for the promotion of natural knowledge, formed in 1662, held lectures and conducted experiments for public viewing.

Was there a European 'Renaissance' in the Fourteenth Century?

Let us now reconsider the concept of the 'Renaissance'. Can we see this period as marking a sharp break with the past and the rebirth of ideas from Greek and Roman traditions? Was the earlier period (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) a time of darkness?

Recent writers, like Peter Burke of England, have suggested that Burckhardt was exaggerating the sharp difference between this period and the one that preceded it, by using the term 'Renaissance', which implies that the Greek and Roman civilisations were *reborn* at this time, and that scholars and artists of this period substituted the pre-Christian world-view for the Christian one. Both arguments were exaggerated. Scholars in earlier centuries had been familiar with Greek and Roman cultures, and religion continued to be a very important part of people's lives.

To contrast the Renaissance as a period of dynamism and artistic creativity, and the Middle Ages as a period of gloom and lack of development is an over-simplification. Many elements associated with the Renaissance in Italy can be traced back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It has been suggested by some historians that in the ninth century in France, there had been similar literary and artistic blossoming.

The cultural changes in Europe at this time were not shaped only by the 'classical' civilisation of Rome and Greece. The archaeological and literary recovery of Roman culture did create a great admiration of that civilisation. But technologies and skills in Asia had moved far

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ahead of what the Greeks and Romans had known. Much more of the world had become connected, and the new techniques of navigation (see Theme 8) enabled people to sail much further than had been possible earlier. The expansion of Islam and the Mongol conquests had linked Asia and North Africa with Europe, not politically but in terms of trade and of learning skills. The Europeans learned not just from the Greeks and Romans, but from India, from Arabia, from Iran, from Central Asia and China. These debts were not acknowledged for a long time because when the history of this period started to be written, historians saw it from a Europe-centred viewpoint.

An important change that did happen in this period was that gradually the 'private' and the 'public' spheres of life began to become separate: the 'public' sphere meant the area of government and of formal religion; the 'private' sphere included the family and personal religion. The individual had a private as well as a public role. He was not simply a member of one of the 'three orders'; he was also a person in his own right. An artist was not just a member of a guild, he was known for himself. In the eighteenth century, this sense of the individual would be expressed in a political form, in the belief that all individuals had equal political rights.

Another development was that the different regions of Europe started to have their separate sense of identity, based on language. Europe, earlier united partly by the Roman Empire and later by Latin and Christianity, was now dissolving into states, each united by a common language.

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Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. *Which elements of Greek and Roman culture were revived in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries?*
2. *Compare details of Italian architecture of this period with Islamic architecture.*
3. *Why were Italian towns the first to experience the ideas of humanism?*
4. *Compare the Venetian idea of good government with those in contemporary France.*

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. *What were the features of humanist thought?*
6. *Write a careful account of how the world appeared different to seventeenth-century Europeans.*

THEME 8

CONFRONTATION OF CULTURES

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THIS chapter will examine some aspects of the encounters between Europeans and the people of the Americas between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Some Europeans ventured out on unknown oceans in order to find trading routes to areas where spices and silver were to be obtained. The first to do this were the Spanish and the Portuguese. They persuaded the Pope to give them the exclusive right to rule over any new regions they might locate. Christopher Columbus, an Italian, sponsored by the rulers of Spain, sailed west in 1492, and thought that the lands he had reached were 'the Indies' (India and countries east of India about which he had read in the Travels *of Marco Polo).*

Later exploration indicated that the 'Indians' of the 'New World' actually belonged to different cultural groups and were not part of Asia. Two types of culture were to be found in the Americas. There were small subsistence economies in the Caribbean region and in Brazil. There were also powerful monarchical systems based on well-developed agriculture and mining. These, like the Aztecs and Mayas of central America and the Incas of Peru, also had monumental architecture.

The exploration and later the settlement of South America were to have disastrous consequences for the native people and their cultures. It also marked the beginning of the slave trade, with Europeans selling slaves from Africa to work in plantations and mines in the Americas.

European conquest of the people of America was accompanied by the ruthless destruction of their manuscripts and monuments. It was only in the late nineteenth century that anthropologists began to study these cultures. Still later, archaeologists found the ruins of these civilisations. The Inca city of Machu Picchu was rediscovered in 1911. Recently, photographs taken from the air have shown traces of many cities now covered by forest.

By contrast, we know the European side of the encounters in great detail. The Europeans who went to the Americas kept log-books and diaries of their journeys. There are records left by officials and Jesuit missionaries (see Theme 7). Europeans wrote about their 'discovery' of the Americas, and when histories of the countries of America were written, these were in terms of *European* settlements, with little reference to the local people.

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People have been living in North and South America and nearby islands for thousands of years, and many migrations from Asia and from the South Sea Islands have taken place over time. South America was (and still is, in parts) densely forested and mountainous, and the Amazon, the world's largest river, flows through miles of dense forest. In Mexico, in central America, there were densely settled areas of habitation along the coast and in the plains, while elsewhere villages were scattered over forested areas.

Communities of the Caribbean and Brazil

The Arawakian Lucayos lived on a cluster of hundreds of small islands in the Caribbean Sea, today known as the Bahamas, and the Greater Antilles. They had been expelled from the Lesser Antilles by the Caribs, a fierce tribe. In contrast to them, the Arawaks were a people who preferred negotiation to conflict. Skilled boat-builders, they sailed the open sea in dugout canoes (canoes made from hollow tree trunks). They lived by hunting, fishing and agriculture, growing corn, sweet potatoes, tubers and cassava.

A central cultural value was the organisation of people to produce food collectively and to feed everyone in the community. They were organised under clan elders. Polygamy was common. The Arawaks were animists. As in many other societies, shamans played an important role as healers and intermediaries between this world and that of the supernatural.

Animists believe that even objects regarded by modern science as 'inanimate' may have life or a soul.

MAP 1: Central America and the Caribbean Islands

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ACTIVITY 1

Discuss the differences between the Arawaks and the Spanish. Which of these differences would you consider most significant and why?

The Arawaks used gold for ornaments, but did not attach the value to the metal that the Europeans did. They were quite happy to exchange gold for glass beads brought by the Europeans, because these seemed so much more beautiful. The art of weaving was highly developed – the hammock was one of their specialities, and one which captured the imagination of the Europeans.

The Arawaks were generous and were happy to collaborate with the Spanish in their search for gold. It was when Spanish policy became brutal that they were forced to resist, but this was to have disastrous consequences for them. Within twenty-five years of contact with the Spanish very little remained of the Arawaks or their way of life.

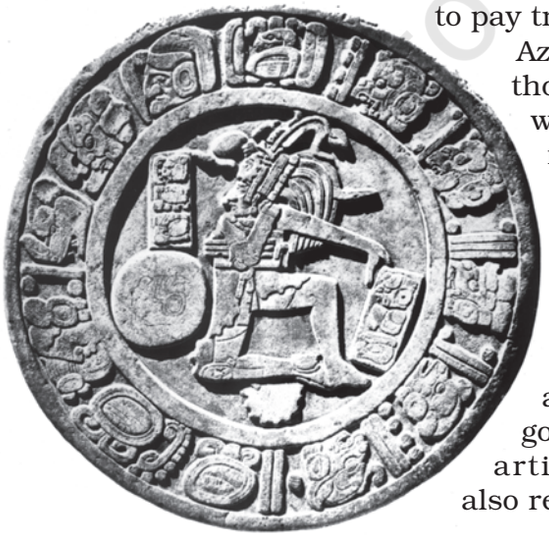
People called the Tupinamba lived on the east coast of South America, and in villages in the forests (the name 'Brazil' is derived from the brazilwood tree). They could not clear the dense forests for cultivation as they had no access to iron. But they had a healthy and plentiful supply of fruits, vegetables and fish, and so did not have to depend on agriculture. The Europeans who met them envied their happy freedom, with no king, army or church to regulate their lives.

The State Systems of Central and South America

In contrast to the Caribbean and Brazil, there were some highly organised states in central America. There was a generous surplus of corn, which provided the basis for the urbanised civilisations of the Aztecs, Mayas and Incas. The monumental architectural remains of these cities continue to mesmerise visitors today.

The Aztecs

A ball-court marker, with inscribed dates, Maya culture, Chiapas, sixth century.



In the twelfth century, the Aztecs had migrated from the north into the central valley of Mexico (named after their god Mexitli). They expanded their empire by defeating different tribes, who were forced to pay tribute.

Aztec society was hierarchical. The nobility included those who were nobles by birth, priests, and others who had been awarded the rank. The hereditary nobility were a small minority who occupied the senior positions in the government, the army and the priesthood. The nobles chose from among them a supreme leader who ruled until his death. The king was regarded as the representative of the sun on earth. Warriors, priests and nobles were the most respected groups, but traders also enjoyed many privileges and often served the government as ambassadors and spies. Talented artisans, physicians and wise teachers were also respected.

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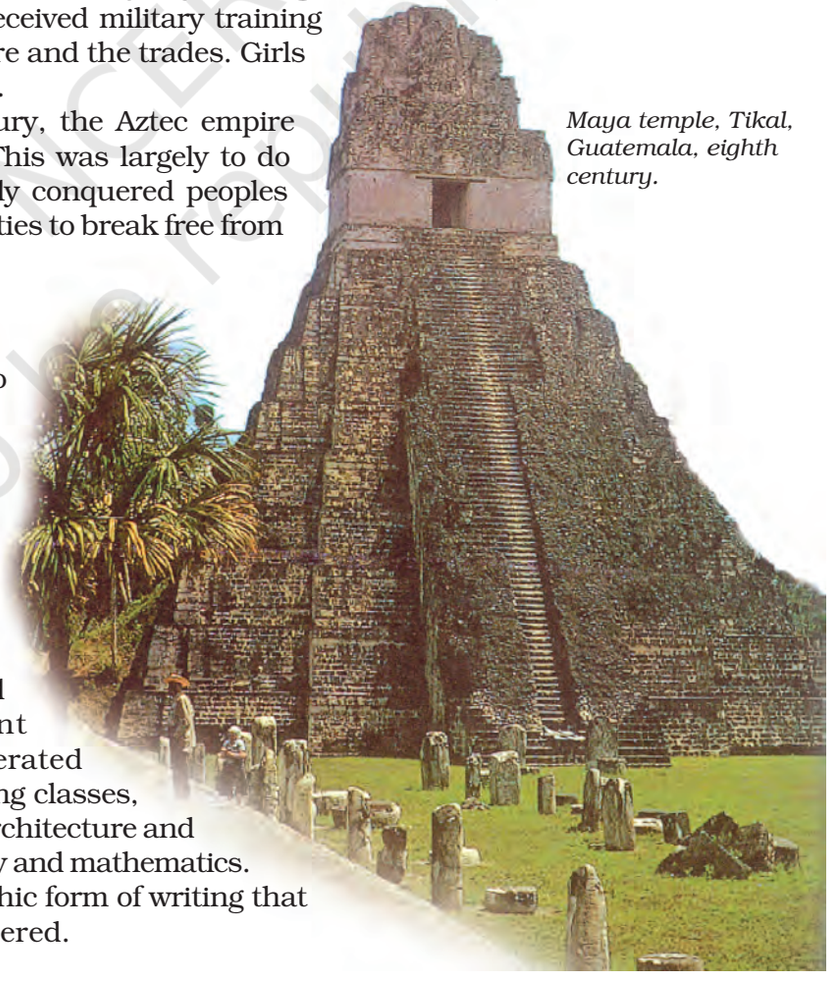
Since land was limited, the Aztecs undertook reclamations. They made *chinampas*, artificial islands, in Lake Mexico, by weaving huge reed-mats and covering them with mud and plants. Between these exceptionally fertile islands, canals were constructed on which, in 1325, was built the capital city Tenochtitlan. Its palaces and pyramids rose dramatically out of the lake. Because the Aztecs were frequently engaged in war, the most impressive temples were dedicated to the gods of war and the sun.

Reclamation is the conversion of wasteland into land suitable for habitation or cultivation.

The empire rested on a rural base. People cultivated corn, beans, squash, pumpkins, manioc root, potatoes and other crops. Land was owned not by individuals but by clans, which also organised public construction works. Peasants, like European serfs, were attached to lands owned by the nobility and cultivated them in exchange for part of the harvest. The poor would sometimes sell their children as slaves, but this was usually only for a limited period, and slaves could buy back their freedom.

The Aztecs made sure that all children went to school. Children of the nobility attended the *calmecac* and were trained to become military and religious leaders. All others went to the *tepochcalli* in their neighbourhood, where they learned history, myths, religion and ceremonial songs. Boys received military training as well as training in agriculture and the trades. Girls were trained in domestic skills.

In the early sixteenth century, the Aztec empire was showing signs of strain. This was largely to do with discontent among recently conquered peoples who were looking for opportunities to break free from central control.



Maya temple, Tikal, Guatemala, eighth century.

The Mayas

The Mayan culture of Mexico developed remarkably between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, but in the sixteenth century they had less political power than the Aztecs. Corn cultivation was central to their culture, and many religious ceremonies were centred on the planting, growing and harvesting of corn. Efficient agricultural production generated surplus, which helped the ruling classes, priests and chiefs to invest in architecture and in the development of astronomy and mathematics. The Mayas devised a pictographic form of writing that has only been partially deciphered.

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The Incas of Peru

The largest of the indigenous civilisations in South America was that of the Quechuas or Incas in Peru. In the twelfth century the first Inca, Manco Capac, established his capital at Cuzco. Expansion began under the ninth Inca and at its maximum extent the Inca empire stretched 3,000 miles from Ecuador to Chile.

The empire was highly centralised, with the king representing the highest source of authority. Newly conquered tribes were absorbed effectively; every subject was required to speak Quechua, the language of the court. Each tribe was ruled independently by a council of elders, but the tribe as a whole owed its allegiance to the ruler. At the same time, local rulers were rewarded for their military co-operation. Thus, like the Aztec empire, the Inca empire resembled a confederacy, with the Incas in control. There are no precise figures of the population, but it would seem that it included over a million people.

Like the Aztecs, the Incas too were magnificent builders. They built roads through mountains from Ecuador to Chile. Their forts were built of stone slabs that were so perfectly cut that they did not require mortar. They used labour-intensive technology to carve and move stones from nearby rock falls. Masons shaped the blocks, using an effective but simple method called flaking. Many stones weighed more than 100 metric tons, but they did not have any wheeled vehicles to transport these. Labour was organised and very tightly managed.

MAP 2: South America

The basis of the Inca civilisation was agriculture. To cope with the infertile soil conditions, they terraced hillsides and developed systems of drainage and irrigation. It has been recently pointed out that in 1500, cultivation in the Andean highlands was much greater than what it is today. The Incas grew corn and potatoes, and reared llamas for food and labour.

Their weaving and pottery were of a high quality. They did not develop a system of writing. However, there was an accounting system in place – the *quipu*, or cords upon which knots were made to indicate specific mathematical units. Some scholars now suggest that the Incas wove a sort of code into these threads.

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Most visitors today wonder at the arts and skills of the Incas. However, there are some like the Chilean poet Neruda, who thought of the hours of hard work that thousands of people must have been forced to put in. And all that to achieve such high levels of agricultural output, such remarkable architecture, and such exquisite crafts, in this difficult environment.

'Look at me from the depths of the earth,
tiller of fields, weaver, reticent shepherd,
...
mason high on your treacherous scaffolding,
iceman of Andean tears,
jeweler with crushed fingers,
farmer anxious among his seedlings,
potter wasted among his clays –
bring to the cup of this new life
your ancient buried sorrows.
Show me your blood and your furrow;
say to me: here I was scourged
because a gem was dull or because the earth
failed to give up in time its tithe of corn or stone.'

– Pablo Neruda (1904-73), The Heights of Machu Picchu, 1943.

The hilltop town of Machu Picchu. It escaped the notice of the Spaniards and was therefore not destroyed.

The organisation of the Inca empire, with its pyramid-like structure, meant that if the Inca chief was captured, the chain of command could quickly come apart. This was precisely what happened when the Spaniards decided to invade their country.

The cultures of the Aztecs and Incas had certain features in common, and were very different from European culture. Society was hierarchical, but there was no private ownership of resources by a few people, as in Europe. Though priests and shamans were accorded an exalted status, and large temples were built, in which gold was used ritually, there was no great value placed on gold or silver. This was also in marked contrast to contemporary European society.

Voyages of Exploration by Europeans

The people of South America and the Caribbean got to know of the existence of European people when the latter began to sail across the Atlantic Sea. The magnetic compass, which helped identify the cardinal points accurately, had been known since 1380, but only in the fifteenth century did people use it when they ventured on voyages into unknown areas. By this time many improvements had been made in European sailing ships. Larger ships were built, that could carry a huge quantity of cargo as well as equipment to defend themselves if attacked by enemy ships. The circulation of travel literature and books on cosmography and geography created widespread interest right through the fifteenth century.

ACTIVITY 2

Examine a detailed physical map of South America. To what extent do you think geography influenced the developments of the Inca empire?

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Cosmography was understood as the science of mapping the universe. It described both heaven and Earth, but was seen as distinct from geography and astronomy.

In 1477, Ptolemy's *Geography* (written 1,300 years earlier) became available in print (see Theme 7) and thus came to be widely read. According to Ptolemy, an Egyptian, the regions of the world were arranged in terms of latitudes and longitudes. Reading these texts gave Europeans some knowledge of the world, which they understood to have three continents, namely, Europe, Asia and Africa. Ptolemy had suggested that the world was spherical, but he underestimated the width of the oceans. Europeans had no idea of the distance they would have to travel in the Atlantic before they reached land. Since they imagined it would be a short voyage, there were many who were ready to venture forth recklessly beyond the known seas.

People from the Iberian peninsula – the Portuguese and the Spanish – were the pioneers in the fifteenth-century voyages of exploration. For a long time these were called 'voyages of discovery'. Later historians, however, argued that these were *not* the first voyages that people of the "Old World" made to lands unknown to them. Arabs, Chinese and Indians had navigated vast stretches of ocean, and sailors from the Pacific Islands (the Polynesians and Micronesians) had made major ocean crossings. The Vikings of Norway had reached North America in the eleventh century.

Why were Spanish and Portuguese rulers in particular so receptive to the idea of funding a maritime quest? What produced such a passion for gold and treasure and for glory and titles? One may find the answers in a combination of three motives: economic, religious and political.

The European economy went through a decline from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries (see Theme 6). Plague and wars led to depopulation in many parts of Europe, trade grew slack, and there was a shortage of gold and silver, used for making European coins. This situation was in stark contrast to the preceding period (from the eleventh to the mid-fourteenth centuries) when growing trade had supported Italian city-states and led to the accumulation of capital. In the late fourteenth century, long-distance trade declined, and then became difficult after the Turks conquered Constantinople in 1453. Italians managed to do business with Turks, but were now required to pay higher taxes on trade.

The possibility that many more people could be brought into the fold of Christianity made many devout Christian Europeans ready to face adventure.

As it happened, the 'Crusades' against the Turks (see Theme 4) began as a religious war, but they increased Europe's trade with Asia and created a taste for the products of Asia, especially spices. If trade could be followed by political control, with European countries establishing 'colonies' in regions with a warmer climate, they would benefit further.

When thinking of new regions where gold and spices might be found, one possibility was West Africa, where Europeans had not traded directly so far. Portugal, a small country which had gained independence from

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Spain since 1139, and which had developed fishing and sailing skills, took the lead. Prince Henry of Portugal (called the Navigator) organised the coasting of West Africa and attacked Ceuta in 1415. After that, more expeditions were organised, and the Portuguese established a trading station in Cape Bojador in Africa. Africans were captured and enslaved, and gold dust yielded the precious metal.

Reconquista was the military reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula by Christian kings from the Arabs in 1492.

In Spain, economic reasons encouraged individuals to become knights of the ocean. The memory of the Crusades and the success of the *Reconquista* fanned private ambitions and gave rise to contracts known as *capitulaciones*. Under these contracts the Spanish ruler claimed rights of sovereignty over newly conquered territories and gave rewards to leaders of expeditions in the form of titles and the right to govern the conquered lands.

The Atlantic Crossing

Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was a self-taught man who sought adventure and glory. Believing in prophecies, he was convinced that his destiny lay in discovering a route to the East (the 'Indies') by sailing westwards. He was inspired by reading *Imago Mundi* (a work on astronomy and geography) by Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly written in 1410. He submitted his plans to the Portuguese Crown, only to have them turned down. He had better luck with the Spanish authorities who sanctioned a modest expedition that set sail from the port of Palos on 3 August 1492.

Nothing, however, prepared Columbus and his crew for the long Atlantic crossing that they embarked upon, or for the destination that awaited them. The fleet was small, consisting of a small *nao* called *Santa Maria*, and two caravels (small light ships) named Pinta and *Nina*. Columbus himself commanded the *Santa Maria* along with 40 capable sailors. The outward journey enjoyed fair trade winds but was long. For 33 days, the fleet sailed without sight of anything but sea and sky. By this time, the crew became restive and some of them demanded that they turn back.

Nao means a heavy ship in Spanish. It is derived from Arabic, and this is explained by the fact of Arab occupation of the region till 1492.

On 12 October 1492, they sighted land; they had reached what Columbus thought was India, but which was the island of Guanahani in the Bahamas. (It is said that this name was given by Columbus, who described the Islands as surrounded by shallow seas, *baja mar* in Spanish.) They were welcomed by the Arawaks, who were happy to share their food and provisions; in fact, their generosity made a deep impression upon Columbus. As he wrote in his log-book, 'They are so ingenuous and free with all they have, that no one would believe it who has not seen of it, anything they possess, if it be asked of them, they never say no, on the contrary, they invite you to share it and show as much love as if their hearts went with it'.

Columbus planted a Spanish flag in Guanahani (which he renamed San Salvador), held a prayer service and, without consulting the local

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Europeans meet native Americans – a European woodblock print, sixteenth century.

people, proclaimed himself viceroy. He enlisted their cooperation in pressing forward to the larger islands of Cubanascan (Cuba, which he thought was Japan!) and Kiskeya (renamed Hispaniola, today divided between two countries, Haiti and the Dominican Republic). Gold was not immediately available, but the explorers had heard that it could be found in Hispaniola, in the mountain streams in the interior.

But before they could get very far, the expedition was overtaken by accidents and had to face the hostility of the fierce Carib tribes. The men clamoured to get back home. The return voyage proved more difficult as the ships were worm-eaten and the crew tired and homesick. The entire voyage took 32 weeks. Three more voyages followed, in the course of which Columbus completed his explorations in the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles, the South American mainland and its coast. Subsequent voyages revealed that it was not the 'Indies' that the Spaniards had found, but a new continent.

'Viceroy' means in place of the king (in this case the King of Spain).

Columbus's achievement had been to discover the boundaries of what seemed like infinite seas and to demonstrate that five weeks' sailing with the trade wind took one to the other side of the globe. Since places are often given the names of individuals, it is curious that Columbus is commemorated only in a small district in the USA and in a country in north-western South America (Columbia), though he did not reach either of these areas. The two continents were named after Amerigo Vespucci, a geographer from Florence who realised how large they might be, and described them as the 'New World'. The name 'America' was first used by a German publisher in 1507.

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Voyages by Europeans	
1492	Columbus claims Bahama Islands and Cuba for Spain
1494	The 'undiscovered world' divided between Portugal and Spain
1497	John Cabot, Englishman, explores North American coast
1498	Vasco da Gama reaches Calicut/Kozhikode
1499	Amerigo Vespucci sights South American coast
1500	Cabral claims Brazil for Portugal
1513	Balboa crosses Panama Isthmus, sights Pacific Ocean
1521	Cortes defeats Aztecs
1522	Magellan circumnavigates the globe
1532	Pizarro conquers Inca kingdom
1571	Spanish conquer the Philippines
1600	British East India Company formed
1602	Dutch East India Company formed

ACTIVITY 3

What according to you were the reasons for people from different European countries wanting to take the risk of going on a 'voyage of discovery'?

Spain Establishes an Empire in America

Spanish expansion was based on a display of military strength with the use of gunpowder and of horses. The local people were compelled either to pay tribute or to work in gold and silver mines. The initial discovery was typically followed by establishing a small settlement, peopled by a few Spaniards who supervised the labour of the local inhabitants. Local chieftains were enlisted to explore new lands and, hopefully, more sources of gold. The greed for gold led to violent incidents provoking local resistance. The Spanish friar Bartolome de las Casas, the most severe critic of the Spanish conquerors, observed that the Spanish often tested their swords on the naked flesh of the Arawaks.

To military repression and forced labour was added the ravages of disease. The diseases of the Old World, particularly smallpox wreaked havoc on the Arawaks whose lack of immunity resulted in large-scale deaths. The local people imagined these diseases were caused by 'invisible bullets' with which the Spaniards attacked them. The extinction of the Arawaks and all traces of their way of life is a silent reminder of their tragic encounter with Spaniards.

The expeditions of Columbus were followed by a sustained and successful *exploration* of Central and South America. Within half a century, the Spanish had explored and laid claim to a vast area of the western hemisphere, from approximately latitudes 40 degrees north to 40 degrees south, without anyone challenging them.

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Before this, the Spanish conquered lands of two great empires of the region. This was largely the work of two individuals: Hernan Cortes (1488-1547) and Francisco Pizarro (1478-1541). Their explorations were financed by members of the landed gentry in Spain, officials of municipal councils and noblemen. Those joining the expeditions supplied their own equipment in exchange for a share of the booty they expected from the conquests.

Cortes and the Aztecs

Cortes and his soldiers (called *conquistadores*) conquered Mexico swiftly and ruthlessly. In 1519, Cortes set sail from Cuba to Mexico, where he made friends with the Totonacs, a group who wanted to secede from Aztec rule. The Aztec king, Montezuma, sent an official to meet him. He was terrified at the aggressiveness of the Spanish, their gunpowder and their horses. Montezuma himself was convinced that Cortes was the reincarnation of an exiled god who had returned to avenge himself.

Dona Marina

Bernard Diaz del Castillo(1495-1584) wrote in his True History of the Conquest of Mexico that the people of Tabasco gave Cortes a woman attendant called Dona Marina. She was fluent in three local languages, and was able to play a crucial role as interpreter for Cortes. 'This was the great beginning of our conquests,and without Dona Marina we could not have understood the language of New Spain and Mexico.'

Diaz thought she was a princess, but the Mexicans called her 'Malinche', a word meaning 'betrayal'. Malinchista means someone who slavishly copies the costumes and language of another people.

Bernard Diaz wrote:

'And when we saw all those cities and villages built in the water, and other towns on dry land, and that straight and level causeway leading to Mexico City, we were astounded. These great towns and buildings rising from the water all made of stone, seemed like an enchanted vision from the tale of Amadis. Indeed, some of our soldiers asked whether it was not a dream.'

The Spaniards pressed against the Tlaxcalans, fierce fighters who submitted only after a stiff resistance. The Spaniards proceeded to massacre them cruelly. Then they marched to Tenochtitlan, which they reached on 8 November 1519.

The invading Spaniards were dumbstruck at the sight of Tenochtitlan. It was five times larger than Madrid and had 100,000 inhabitants, twice the population of Seville, Spain's largest city.

Cortes was cordially received by Montezuma. The Aztecs led the Spaniards into the heart of the city, where the Emperor showered them with gifts. His people were apprehensive, having heard of the massacre of the Tlaxcalans. An Aztec account described the situation: 'It was as though Tenochtitlan had given shelter to a monster. The people of Tenochtitlan felt as if everyone had eaten stupefying mushrooms... as if they had seen something astonishing. Terror dominated everyone, as if all the world were being disemboweled... people fell into a fearful slumber.'

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The fears of the Aztecs proved to be well founded. Cortes without any explanation placed the Emperor under house arrest and attempted to rule in his name. In an attempt to formalise the Emperor's submission to Spain, Cortes installed Christian images in the Aztec temple. Montezuma, on his part, suggested a compromise and placed both Aztec and Christian images in the temple.

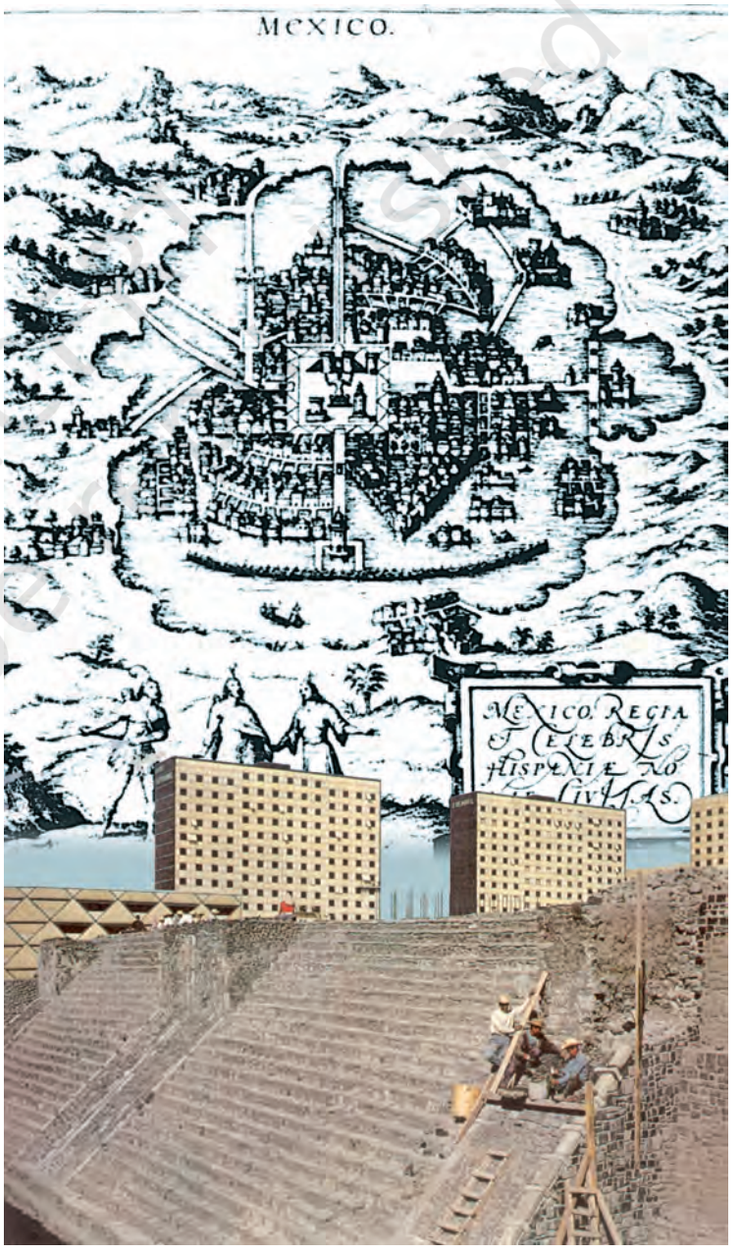
At this point, Cortes had to leave his deputy in charge and hurry back to Cuba. The high-handedness of the Spanish occupation and their incessant demands for gold provoked a general uprising. Alvarado ordered a massacre during the Aztec spring festival of Huizilpochtli. When Cortes returned on 25 June 1520, he had on his hands a full-blown crisis. The causeways were cut, the bridges taken away and the net closed. The Spaniards faced acute shortages of food and drinking water. Cortes was forced to retreat.

Around this time, Montezuma died under mysterious circumstances. The Aztecs continued to fight the Spaniards. 600 conquistadores and many more of their Tlaxcalan allies were killed in what is known as the Night of Tears. Cortes was forced to retreat to Tlaxcala to plan his strategy against the newly elected king, Cuatemoc. By then, the Aztecs were dying from the dreaded smallpox which had come with the Europeans. With just 180 soldiers and 30 horses, Cortes moved into Tenochtitlan as the Aztecs prepared for their final stand. The Aztecs thought they could see omens foretelling that their end was near, and because of this the Emperor chose to give up his life.

The conquest of Mexico had taken two years. Cortes became Captain-General of New Spain in Mexico and was showered with honours by Charles V. From Mexico, the Spaniards extended their control over Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Honduras.

Above: A European sketch of Tenochtitlan, sixteenth century.

Below: The grand stairway that led to the temples in the centre of Tenochtitlan, now a ruin in Mexico City.



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Pizarro and the Incas

A gold statuette of a woman, Peru. This was found in a tomb which the Spanish missed, and therefore was not melted down.

Pizarro, in contrast to Cortes, was uneducated and poor when he joined the army and found his way to the Caribbean Islands in 1502. He had heard stories about the Inca kingdom as a land of silver and gold (*El-dor-ado*). He made repeated attempts to reach it from the Pacific. On one of his journeys back home, he was able to meet the Spanish king and show him beautifully designed gold jars of Inca workmanship. The king's greed was aroused, and he promised Pizarro the governorship of the Inca lands if he conquered it. Pizarro planned to follow Cortes' method, but was disconcerted to find that the situation in the Inca empire was different.

In 1532, Atahualpa secured the throne of the Inca empire after a civil war. Pizarro arrived on the scene and captured the king after setting a trap for him. The king offered a roomful of gold as ransom for his release – the most extravagant ransom recorded in history – but Pizarro did not honour his promise. He had the king executed, and his followers went on a looting spree. This was followed by the occupation of the country. The cruelty of the conquerors provoked an uprising in 1534 that continued for two years, during which time thousands died in war and due to epidemics.

In another five years, the Spanish had located the vast silver mines in Potosi (in Upper Peru, modern Bolivia) and to work these they made the Inca people into slaves.

Cabral and Brazil

The Portuguese occupation of Brazil occurred by accident. In 1500, a grand procession of ships set out from Portugal for India, headed by Pedro Alvares Cabral. To avoid stormy seas, he made a wide loop around West Africa, and found to his surprise that he had reached the coast of present-day Brazil. As it happened, this eastern part of South America was within the section assigned on the map to Portugal by the Pope, so they regarded it as indisputably theirs.

The Portuguese were more eager to increase their trade with western India than with Brazil, which did not promise any gold. But there was one natural resource there which they exploited: timber. The brazilwood tree, after which the Europeans named the region, produced a beautiful red dye. The natives readily agreed to cut the trees and carry the logs to the ships in exchange for iron knives and saws, which they regarded as marvels. ('For one sickle, knife or comb [they] would bring loads of hens, monkeys, parrots, honey, wax, cotton thread and whatever else these poor people had'.)

'Why do you people, French and Portuguese, come from so far away to seek wood? Don't you have wood in your country?' a native asked a French priest. At the end of their discussion, he said 'I can see that you are great madmen. You cross the sea and suffer great inconvenience

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and work so hard to accumulate riches for your children. Is the land that nourished you not sufficient to feed them too? We have fathers, mothers and children whom we love. But we are certain that after our death the land that nourished us will also feed them. We therefore rest without further cares.'

This trade in timber led to fierce battles between Portuguese and French traders. The Portuguese won because they decided to 'settle' in/colonise the coast. In 1534, the king of Portugal divided the coast of Brazil into fourteen hereditary 'captaincies'. To the Portuguese who wanted to live there he gave landownership rights, and the right to make the local people into slaves. Many Portuguese settlers were veterans of the wars in Goa, in India, and were brutal to the local people.

In the 1540s, the Portuguese began to grow sugarcane on large plantations and built mills to extract sugar, which was then sold in Europe. In this very hot and humid climate they depended on the natives to work the sugar mills. When the natives refused to do this exhausting and dreary work, the mill-owners resorted to kidnapping them to work as slaves.

The natives kept retreating into the forests to escape the 'slavers' and, as time went on, there were hardly any native villages on the coast; instead, there were large, well-laid-out European towns. Plantation owners were then forced to turn to another source for slaves: West Africa. This was a contrast to the Spanish colonies. A large part of the population in the Aztec and Inca empires had been used to labouring in mines and fields, so the Spanish did not need to *formally* enslave them or to look elsewhere for slaves.

In 1549, a formal government under the Portuguese king was established, with the capital in Bahia/Salvador. From this time, Jesuits started to go out to Brazil. European settlers disliked them because they argued for humane interaction with the natives, ventured into the forests to live in villages, and sought to teach them Christianity as a joyous religion. Above all, the Jesuits strongly criticised slavery.

ACTIVITY 4

Analyse the effects of contact with the Europeans on the native people of South America. Describe their reactions to the settlers and the Jesuits.

'There is no greater curse on a home or family than to be unjustly supported by the sweat of others!'

'Any man who deprives others of their freedom, and being able to restore that freedom, does not do so, is condemned!'

– Antonio Vieira, Jesuit priest in Brazil, 1640s.

Conquest, Colonies and the Slave Trade

What had begun as uncertain voyages came to have lasting consequences for Europe, the Americas and Africa.

From the fifteenth century, European maritime projects produced knowledge of *continuous sea passages* from ocean to ocean. Before this, most of these passages had been unknown to Europeans. Some were not known to anyone. No ship had penetrated the Caribbean or the Americas. The South Atlantic was wholly unexplored; no sea-going ship had ever entered its waters, much less crossed it, or sailed from it to the Pacific or the Indian Ocean. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, all these feats were accomplished.

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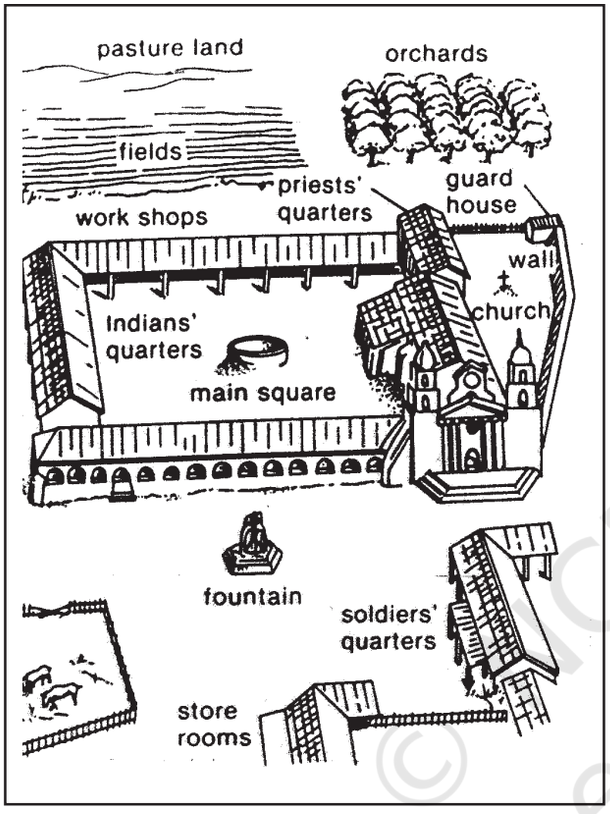
For Europe, the 'discovery' of the Americas had consequences for others besides the initial voyagers. The influx of gold and silver helped further expansion of international trade and industrialisation. Between 1560 and 1600, a hundred ships *each year* carried silver from South American mines to Spain. But it was not Spain and Portugal that benefited. They did not invest their huge income in further trade, or in building up a merchant navy. Instead, it was the countries bordering the Atlantic, particularly England, France, Belgium and Holland, that took advantage of the 'discoveries'. Their merchants formed joint-stock companies and sent out trading expeditions, established colonies and introduced Europeans to the products of the New World, including tobacco, potatoes, cane-sugar, cacao and rubber.



Sketch of a typical Spanish township in South America.

Europe also became familiar with new crops from America, notably potatoes and chillies. These were then taken by Europeans to other countries like India.

For the native people of the Americas, the immediate consequences were the physical decimation of local populations, the destruction of their way of life and their enslavement in mines, plantations and mills.

Estimates indicate that pre-conquest Mexico had a population of between 30 and 37.5 million, the Andean region a similar number while Central America had between 10 and 13 million. The natives on the eve of the arrival of the Europeans totalled 70 million. A century and a half later, they had reduced to 3.5 million. Warfare and disease were primarily responsible for this.

The sudden destruction of the two major civilisations – those of the Aztecs and the Incas – in America highlights the contrasts between the two cultures in combat. Both with the Aztecs and the Incas, the nature of warfare played a crucial role in terrorising local inhabitants psychologically and physically. The contest also revealed a fundamental difference in values. The Spanish avarice for gold and silver was incomprehensible to the natives.

The capitalist system of production is one in which the means of production and distribution are owned by individuals or corporates and where competitors participate in a free market.

The enslavement of the population was a sharp reminder of the brutality of the encounter. Slavery was not a new idea, but the South American experience was new in that it accompanied the emerging capitalist system of production. Working conditions were horrific, but the Spanish regarded the exploitation as essential to their economic gain.

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The silver mines in Peru began to function in the 1550s, and the monk Dominigo de Santo Tomas reported to the Council of the Indies that the Potosi was a mouth of hell which swallowed Indians by the thousands every year and that greedy mine owners treated them like stray animals.

In 1601, Philip II of Spain publicly banned forced labour, but made arrangements by a secret decree for its continuation. Things came to a head with the law of 1609, which gave full freedom to the local people, Christian and non-Christian alike. The European settlers were enraged, and within two years they had forced the king to revoke this law and to permit enslavement once again.

As new economic activities began – cattle farming on lands cleared of forests, and mining after the discovery of gold in 1700 – the demand for cheap labour continued. It was clear that the local people would resist enslavement. The alternative was to turn to Africa. Between the 1550s and 1880s (when slavery was abolished in Brazil) over 3,600,000 African slaves were imported into Brazil. This was almost half the total number of African slaves imported into the Americas. In 1750, there were individuals who owned as many as a thousand slaves.

From the early debates in the 1780s on abolishing slavery, there were those who argued that slavery existed in Africa prior to the entry of the Europeans, indeed slaves formed the bulk of the labour-force in the states being formed in Africa from the fifteenth century. They also pointed out that European traders were helped by Africans who helped capture young men and women to be sold as slaves, in return for crops imported from South America (maize, manioc and cassava, which became their staple foods). In his autobiography (1789), the freed slave Olaudah Equiano replied to these arguments by saying that slaves in Africa were treated as part of the family. In the 1940s, in his book *Capitalism and Slavery*, Eric Williams was one of the first modern historians to initiate a reassessment of the suffering experienced by African slaves.

MAP 3: Africa, indicating regions from where slaves were captured

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Epilogue

In the early nineteenth century, European settlers in the South American colonies were to rebel against Spain and Portugal and become independent countries, just as in 1776 the thirteen North American colonies rebelled against Britain and formed the United States of America.

South America today is also called 'Latin America'. This is because Spanish and Portuguese, two of the main languages of the continent, are part of the Latin family of languages. The inhabitants are mostly native European (called Creole), European, and African by origin. Most of them are Catholics. Their culture has many elements of native traditions mixed with European ones.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. *Compare the civilisation of the Aztecs with that of the Mesopotamians.*
2. *What were the new developments helping European navigation in the fifteenth century?*
3. *Give reasons for Spain and Portugal being the first in the fifteenth century to venture across the Atlantic.*
4. *What new food items were transmitted from South America to the rest of the world?*

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. *Write an account of the journey of an African boy of seventeen captured and taken to Brazil as a slave.*
6. *How did the 'discovery' of South America lead to the development of European colonialism?*

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IV

TOWARDS MODERNISATION

The Industrial Revolution

Displacing Indigenous Peoples

Paths to Modernisation

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TOWARDS MODERNISATION

IN the previous section you have read about certain crucial developments in the medieval and early modern world – feudalism, the European 'Renaissance' and the encounters between Europeans and the peoples of the Americas. As you would have realised, some of the phenomena that contributed to the making of our modern world gradually evolved in this period, and especially so from the mid-fifteenth century onwards. Two further developments in world history created a context for what has been called 'modernisation'. These were the Industrial Revolution and a series of political revolutions that transformed subjects into citizens, beginning with the American Revolution (1776-81) and the French Revolution (1789-94).

Britain has been the world's first industrial nation and you will read about how this came to be in Theme 9. For long it was believed that British industrialisation provided the model for industrialisation in other countries. The discussion of Theme 9 will show how historians have begun to question some of the earlier ideas about the Industrial Revolution. Each country drew upon the experiences of other nations, without necessarily reproducing any model. In Britain, for instance, coal and cotton textile industries were developed in the first phase of industrialisation, while the invention of railways initiated the second stage of that process. In other countries such as Russia, which began to industrialise much later (from the late nineteenth century onwards), the railway and other heavy industry emerged in the initial phase of industrialisation itself. Likewise, the role of the state, and of banks, in industrialisation has differed from country to country. The treatment of the British case in Theme 9 will hopefully whet your curiosity about the industrial trajectories of other nations such as the USA and Germany, two significant industrial powers. Theme 9 also emphasises the human and material costs incurred by Britain on its industrialisation – the plight of the labouring poor, especially of children, environmental degradation and the consequent epidemics of cholera and tuberculosis.

Linking the world – In 1927 Charles Lindbergh, twenty-five years old, flew across the Atlantic Ocean, from New York to Paris, in a single-engine aeroplane.

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In Theme 11 you will similarly read about industrial pollution and cadmium and mercury poisoning in Japan that stirred people into mass movements against indiscriminate industrialisation.

European powers began to colonise parts of America and Asia and South Africa well before the Industrial Revolution. Theme 10 tells you the story of what European settlers did to the native peoples of America and Australia. The bourgeois mentality of the settlers made them buy and sell everything, including land and water. But the natives, who appeared uncivilised to European Americans, asked, 'If you do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can one buy them?' The natives did not feel the need to own land, fish or animals. They had no desire to *commodify* them; if things needed to be exchanged, they could simply be *gifted*. Quite obviously, the natives and the Europeans represented competing notions of civilisation. The former did not allow the European deluge to wipe out their cultures although the US and Canadian governments of the mid-twentieth century desired natives to 'join the mainstream' and the Australian authorities of the same period attempted to simply ignore their traditions and culture. One might wonder what is meant by 'mainstream'. How does economic and political power influence the making of 'mainstream cultures'?

Linking the world – J. Lipchitz's Figure, *sculpted in the 1920s, shows the influence of central African statuary.*

Western capitalisms – mercantile, industrial and financial – and early twentieth-century Japanese capitalism created colonies in large parts of the third world. Some of these were settler colonies. Others, such as British rule in India, are examples of direct imperial control. The case of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China illustrates a third variant of imperialism. Here Britain, France, Germany, Russia, America and Japan meddled in Chinese affairs without directly taking over state power. They exploited the country's resources to their own advantage, seriously compromising Chinese sovereignty and reducing the country to the status of a semi-colony.

Linking the world – Japanese Zen paintings like this one were admired by western artists, and influenced the 'Abstract Expressionist' style of painting in the 1920s in the USA.

Almost everywhere, colonial exploitation was challenged by powerful nationalist movements. Nationalisms, however, also arose without a colonial context, as in the West or Japan. All nationalisms are doctrines of popular sovereignty. Nationalist movements believe that political power should rest with the people and this is what makes nationalism a modern concept. Civic nationalism vests sovereignty in *all* people regardless of language, ethnicity, religion or gender. It seeks to create a community of rights-exercising citizens and defines nationhood in terms of *citizenship*, not ethnicity or religion. Ethnic and religious nationalisms try to build national solidarities around a given language, religion or set of traditions, defining the people ethnically, not in terms of common citizenship. In a multi-ethnic country, ethnic nationalists might limit the exercise of sovereignty to a chosen people, often assumed to be superior to minority communities. Today, most western countries define their nationhood in terms of common citizenship and not by common ethnicity. One prominent exception is Germany where ideas

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of ethnic nationalism have had a long and troubling career going back to the reaction against the French imperial occupation of German states in 1806. Ideologies of civic nationalism have vied with those of ethnic/religious nationalism the world over and this has been so in modern India, China and Japan as well.

As with industrialisation, so with paths to modernisation. Different societies have evolved their distinctive modernities. The Japanese and Chinese cases are very instructive in this regard. Japan succeeded in remaining free of colonial control and achieved fairly rapid economic and industrial progress throughout the twentieth century. The rebuilding of the Japanese economy after a humiliating defeat in the Second World War should not be seen as a mere post-war miracle. As Theme 11 shows, it resulted from certain gains that had already been accomplished in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Did you know, for instance, that by 1910 tuition fees for studying at a primary school had more or less ended and enrolment had become universal? Japan's path to modernisation, like that of any other country, has had its own tensions: those between democracy and militarism, ethnic nationalism and civic nation-building and between what many Japanese describe as 'tradition' and 'westernisation'.

The Chinese resisted colonial exploitation and their own bureaucratic landed elite through a combination of peasant rebellion, reform and revolution. By the early 1930s, the Chinese Communist Party, which drew its strength from peasant mobilisation, had begun confronting the imperial powers as well as the Nationalists who represented the country's elite. It had also started implementing its ideas in selected pockets of the country. Its egalitarian ideology, stress on land reforms and awareness of women's problems helped it overthrow foreign imperialism and the Nationalists in 1949. Once in power, it succeeded in reducing inequalities, spreading education and creating political awareness. Even so, the country's single-party framework and state repression contributed to considerable dissatisfaction with the political system after the mid-1960s. But the Chinese Communist Party has been able to retain control over the country largely because, in embracing certain market principles, it reinvented itself and has worked hard to transform China into an economic powerhouse.

The different ways in which various countries have understood 'modernity' and sought to achieve it, each in the context of its own circumstances and ideas, make a fascinating story. This section introduces you to some aspects of that story.

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TIMELINE IV

(c. 1700 to 2000)

This timeline will give you an idea of what was happening in different parts of the world in the last three centuries, and how people in different countries contributed to the making of our modern world. It will tell you about the slave trade in Africa and the establishment of the Apartheid regime in South Africa, about social movements in Europe and the formation of nation states, about the expansion of imperial powers and the process of colonisation, and about democratic and anti-colonial movements that swept through the world in the last century. It will also refer to some of the inventions and technological developments that are associated with modernity.

As with all timelines, this one focuses on a few dates. There are others that are important. When you see a series of dates in a timeline, do not think that those are the only dates you need to know. Find out why different timelines focus on different types of dates, and what this selection tells us.

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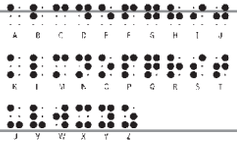
DATES	AFRICA	EUROPE
1720-30	King Agaja of Dahomey (1724-34), West Africa, stops slave trade*; it is reintroduced in the 1740s	
1730-40		Carolus Linnaeus invents a taxonomic system* to classify plants and animals (1735)
1740-50		
1750-60	First outbreak of smallpox (1755) brought by sailors, in Cape Town, South Africa	
1760-70		
1770-80	Peak of international slave trade, all the colonial powers are involved in it. Several hundred thousand Black Africans are taken across the Atlantic every year. As many as two-thirds die on board ship itself	Emelian Pugachev heads a peasant uprising (1773-75) that sweeps across Russia
1780-90		Beginning of the French Revolution* (1789)
1790-1800		
1800-10	Mohammed Ali rules Egypt, 1805-48; Egypt breaks away from Ottoman empire	
1810-20		
1820-30	Liberia founded (1822) in West Africa as home for freed slaves	Louis Braille develops a system of finger reading* (1823); passenger trains introduced in England (1825)
1830-40	Abdal-Kadir leads Arab resistance (1832-47) against French presence in Algeria	
1840-50		Liberal and socialist movements in several European countries (1848)
1850-60		

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DATES	AFRICA	EUROPE
1860-70	Suez Canal*, one of the most important trade routes in the world, opens (1869)	Russian serfs are freed (1861)
1870-80		Germany and Italy emerge as unified nation-states
1880-90	Beginning of the European 'Scramble for Africa'	
1890-1900		Making of the first film (1895); the modern Olympics are held for the first time in Athens (1896)
1900-1910	Mahatma Gandhi* advocates satyagraha to resist racist laws (1906)	
1910-1920	South Africa introduces laws to reserve 87 per cent of land for whites (1913)	First World War (1914-1918); the Russian Revolution of 1917
1920-30		Turkey becomes a republic under Mustapha Kemal (1923)
1930-40	First trans-African railway from Angola to Mozambique completed (1931)	Hitler captures power in Germany (1933); Second World War (1939-45)
1940-50	Afrikaner National Party wins power in South Africa (1948). The policy of Apartheid is put in place	Britain recognises Irish independence (1949)
1950-60	Ghana is the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to become independent (1957)	Discovery of DNA; Russia launches the spacecraft Sputnik (1957)
1960-70	Organisation of African Unity founded (1963)	Protest movements in Europe (1968)
1970-80		
1980-90		Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the USSR (1985); Beginning of the world wide web (1989)
1990-2000	Nelson Mandela* freed in South Africa (1990); process of dismantling Apartheid begins	Scientists clone the sheep Dolly (1997) raising new debates about the limits of genetic engineering

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DATES	ASIA	SOUTH ASIA
1720-30	*Gujin tushu jicheng**, the largest encyclopaedia ever printed, commissioned by Kangxi, the Manchu ruler of China	
1730-40		
1740-50		Marathas extend control over northern India
1750-60	Aoki Konyo, a Japanese scholar, compiles a Dutch-Japanese dictionary (1758)	Robert Clive defeats Siraj-ud-daula, Nawab of Bengal, at Battle of Plassey (1757)
1760-70		
1770-80		
1780-90	British export of opium* from India to China expands dramatically	
1790-1800		Ranjit Singh* founds Sikh kingdom in Punjab (1799)
1800-10		
1810-20		
1820-30	Javanese revolt against Dutch (1825-30)	Practice of *sati* made illegal (1829)
1830-40	Ottoman sultan Abdul Majid starts a programme of modernisation (1839)	
1840-50		
1850-60	King Rama IV rules Thailand, opens the country to foreign trade (1853)	Railway and telegraph line introduced (1853); the Great Revolt* (1857)
1860-70	French begin to occupy Indo-China (Southeast Asia) (1862)	
1870-80	Opening of the first Japanese railway, Tokyo to Yokohama (1872)	Famine in the Deccan, southern India (1876-78), over 5 million die
1880-90	Britain annexes Burma (Myanmar) (1885-86)	Foundation of Indian National Congress* (1885)
1890-1900		
		The First Indian National Congress, 1885

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DATES	ASIA	SOUTH ASIA
1900-10	Japanese navy defeats Russian fleet (1905)	
1910-20	Balfour Declaration promises homeland for Jews in Palestine (1917)	
1920-30		Non-Cooperation Movement (1921) launched by Mahatma Gandhi; E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker launches the Self-Respect Movement in Tamil Nadu (1925)
1930-40	Opening of British oil pipeline from Iraq to Syria (1934)	Alam Ara by Ardeshir Irani (1931) is the first Indian talkie. Berlin–Baghdad Railway linking Baghdad to Istanbul begins operation (1940)
1940-50	USA drops atom bombs on Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki* (1945) killing approximately 120,000 civilians. Many more were to die later through the effects of radiation; formation of People's Republic of China (1949)	Quit India Movement (1942); India and Pakistan become independent (1947)
1950-60	Bandung Conference (1955) strengthens the Non-Aligned Movement	India becomes a republic* (1950)
1960-70	Arab leaders set up Palestine Liberation Organisation to unite Palestinian refugees (1964); war in Vietnam (1965-73)	Sirimavo Bandarnaike* becomes world's first woman prime minister (1960)
1970-80	Shah of Iran is overthrown (1979)	Bangladesh emerges as an independent nation (1971)
1980-90	Mass demonstrations for democracy in Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China (1989)	A leak at the Union Carbide pesticides plant in Bhopal (1984) leads to one of the worst industrial disasters in history, thousands die
1990-2000	Gulf War between Iraq, Kuwait and the USA	India and Pakistan conduct nuclear tests (1998)

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DATES	AMERICAS	AUSTRALIA / PACIFIC ISLANDS
1720-30	Portuguese introduce coffee in Brazil (1727)	Dutch navigator Roggeveen reaches Samoa Islands and Easter Island in the Pacific (1722)
1730-40	Stono Slave Rebellion led by a literate slave Jemmy (1739)	
1740-50	Juan Santos, also called Atahualpa II, leads Native Americans of Peru in unsuccessful revolt (1742)	
1750-60		
1760-70	Chief Pontiac of the Ottawa tribe leads protest against the British (1763)	First of Captain James Cook's three voyages to the Pacific* (1768-71)
1770-80	US Declaration of Independence (1776)	
1780-90	US Constitution drawn up; dollars first used as American currency (1787)	First British convicts shipped to Botany Bay, Australia (1788)
1790-1800		
1800-10		Matthew Flinders circumnavigates, then names, Australia; it means 'southern' (1801-03)
1810-20		
1820-30	Simon Bolivar* leads Venezuela to independence (1821)	
1830-40	Trail of Tears; in the USA, thousands of eastern Native Americans are forced to move west, many dying on the way (1838)	Charles Darwin sets out on voyage to the Pacific, Galapagos Islands (1831), leading to the development of the theory of evolution
1840-50	Meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, calls for equal rights for American women (1848)	British and Maoris in New Zealand sign Treaty of Waitangi (1840). This was followed by a series of Maori uprisings (1844-88)
1850-60		Beginning of the first regular steamship service between Australia and England (1856)

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DATES	AMERICAS	AUSTRALIA/PACIFIC ISLANDS
1860-70	Civil War in USA (1861-65); Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution outlaws slavery	Transportation of prisoners to Australia from Britain ends (1868)
1870-80	Invention of telephone, record-player, electric bulb	
1880-90	Invention of Coca-Cola* (1886)	
1890-1900		Voting right for women in New Zealand (1893)
1900-1910	Wright brothers invent the aeroplane (1903)	
1910-1920	Henry Ford begins assembly line production of cars (1913); Panama Canal linking the Atlantic and Pacific opened (1914)	Influenza epidemic kills one-fifth of population of Western Samoa (1918)
1920-30	US Wall Street Stock Exchange crashes (1929); Great Depression follows; by 1932, 12 million are out of work	Uprising of Mau people of Samoa against New Zealand government (1929)
1930-40		
1940-50	The US enters Second World War	
1950-60	Fidel Castro comes to power after the Cuban Revolution (1958)	
1960-70	Civil Rights movement in the USA (1963)*; US Civil Rights Act (1964) bans racial discrimination. Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King is assassinated (1968); US astronauts land on the moon (1969)	
1970-80	US Congress passes Equal Opportunity Act in response to women's movement (1972)	Tonga and Fiji gain independence from Britain (1970); Papua New Guinea gains independence from Australia (1975)
1980-90		New Zealand declared nuclear-free zone (1984); Treaty of Rarotonga sets up South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone (1986)
1990-2000		

ACTIVITY

If you compare the four timelines given in the book, you will find that the chronological reference periods in the left-hand column differ. Can you think of the reasons for this? Try and design a timeline of your own, giving reasons for your selections.

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THEME 9

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

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THE transformation of industry and the economy in Britain between the 1780s and the 1850s is called the 'first industrial revolution'. This had far-reaching effects in Britain. Later, similar changes occurred in European countries and in the USA. These were to have a major impact on the society and economy of those countries and also on the rest of the world.*

This phase of industrial development in Britain is strongly associated with new machinery and technologies. These made it possible to produce goods on a massive scale compared to handicraft and handloom industries. The chapter outlines the changes in the cotton and iron industries. Steam, a new source of power, began to be used on a wide scale in British industries. Its use led to faster forms of transportation, by ships and railways. Many of the inventors and businessmen who brought about these changes were often neither personally wealthy nor educated in basic sciences like physics or chemistry, as will be seen from glances into the backgrounds of some of them.

Industrialisation led to greater prosperity for some, but in the initial stages it was linked with poor living and working conditions of millions of people, including women and children. This sparked off protests, which forced the government to enact laws for regulating conditions of work.

**In the second one, after about 1850, new areas like the chemical and electrical industries expanded. In that period, Britain fell behind, and lost its position as the world's leading industrial power, as it was overtaken by Germany and the USA.*

The term 'Industrial Revolution' was used by European scholars – Georges Michelet in France and Friedrich Engels in Germany. It was used for the first time in English by the philosopher and economist Arnold Toynbee (1852-83), to describe the changes that occurred in British industrial development between 1760 and 1820. These dates coincided with those of the reign of George III, on which Toynbee was giving a series of lectures at Oxford University. His lectures were published in 1884, after his untimely death, as a book called *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution in England: Popular Addresses, Notes and Other Fragments*.

Later historians, T.S. Ashton, Paul Mantoux and Eric Hobsbawm, broadly agreed with Toynbee. There was remarkable economic growth from the 1780s to 1820 in the cotton and iron industries, in coal mining, in the building of roads and canals and in foreign trade. Ashton (1889-1968) celebrated the Industrial Revolution, when England was 'swept by a wave of gadgets'.

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Why Britain?

Britain was the first country to experience modern industrialisation. It had been politically stable since the seventeenth century, with England, Wales and Scotland unified under a monarchy. This meant that the kingdom had common laws, a single currency and a market that was not fragmented by local authorities levying taxes on goods that passed through their area, thus increasing their price. By the end of the seventeenth century, money was widely used as the medium of exchange. By then a large section of the people received their income in the form of wages and salaries rather than in goods. This gave people a wider choice for ways to spend their earnings and expanded the market for the sale of goods.

In the eighteenth century, England had been through a major economic change, later described as the 'agricultural revolution'. This was the process by which bigger landlords had bought up small farms near their own properties and enclosed the village common lands, thus creating very large estates and increasing food production. This forced landless farmers, and those who had lived by grazing animals on the common lands, to search for jobs elsewhere. Most of them went to nearby towns.

'The man of wealth and pride
Takes up a space that many poor supplied;

Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,
Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;

The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth
Has robbed the neighbouring fields of half their growth.'

– Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), The Deserted Village.

Towns, Trade and Finance

From the eighteenth century, many towns in Europe were growing in area and in population. Out of the 19 European cities whose population doubled between 1750 and 1800, 11 were in Britain. The largest of them was London, which served as the hub of the country's markets, with the next largest ones located close to it.

London had also acquired a global significance. By the eighteenth century, the centre of global trade had shifted from the Mediterranean ports of Italy and France to the Atlantic ports of Holland and Britain. Still later, London replaced Amsterdam as the principal source of loans for international trade. London also became the centre of a triangular trade network that drew in England, Africa and the West Indies. The companies trading in America and Asia also had their offices in London. In England the movement of goods between markets was helped by a good network of rivers, and an indented coastline with sheltered bays. Until the spread of railways, transport by waterways was cheaper and faster than by land. As early as 1724, English rivers provided some 1,160 miles of navigable water, and except for mountainous areas, most places in the country were within 15 miles of a river. Since all the navigable sections of English rivers flow into the sea, cargo on river vessels was easily transferred to coastal ships called coasters. By 1800, at least 100,000 sailors worked on the coasters.

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ACTIVITY 1

Discuss the developments in Britain and in other parts of the world in the eighteenth century that encouraged British industrialisation.

The centre of the country's financial system was the Bank of England (founded in 1694). By 1784, there were more than a hundred provincial banks in England, and during the next 10 years their numbers trebled. By the 1820s, there were more than 600 banks in the provinces, and over 100 banks in London alone. The financial requirements to establish and maintain big industrial enterprises were met by these banks.

The industrialisation that occurred in Britain from the 1780s to the 1850s is explained partly by the factors described above – many poor people from the villages available to work in towns; banks which could loan money to set up large industries; and a good transport network.

The following pages will describe two new factors: a range of technological changes that increased production levels dramatically and a new transport network created by the construction of railways. In both developments, if the dates are read carefully, one will notice that there is a gap of a few decades between the development and its widespread *application*. One must not assume that a new innovation in technology led to it being used in the industry *immediately*.

Of the 26,000 inventions recorded in the eighteenth century, more than half were listed for the period 1782-1800. These led to many changes. We shall discuss the four major ones: the transformation of the iron industry, the spinning and weaving of cotton, the development of steam 'power' and the coming of the railways.

Coal and Iron

England was fortunate in that coal and iron ore, the staple materials for mechanisation, were plentifully available, as were other minerals – lead, copper and tin – that were used in industry. However, until the eighteenth century, there was a scarcity of *usable iron*. Iron is drawn out from ore as pure liquid metal by a process called smelting. For centuries, charcoal (from burnt timber) was used for the smelting process. This had several problems: charcoal was too fragile to transport across long distances; its impurities produced poor-quality iron; it was in short supply because

Coalbrookdale: blast-furnaces (left and centre) and charcoal-ovens (right); painting by F.Vivares, 1758.

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forests had been destroyed for timber; and it could not generate high temperatures.

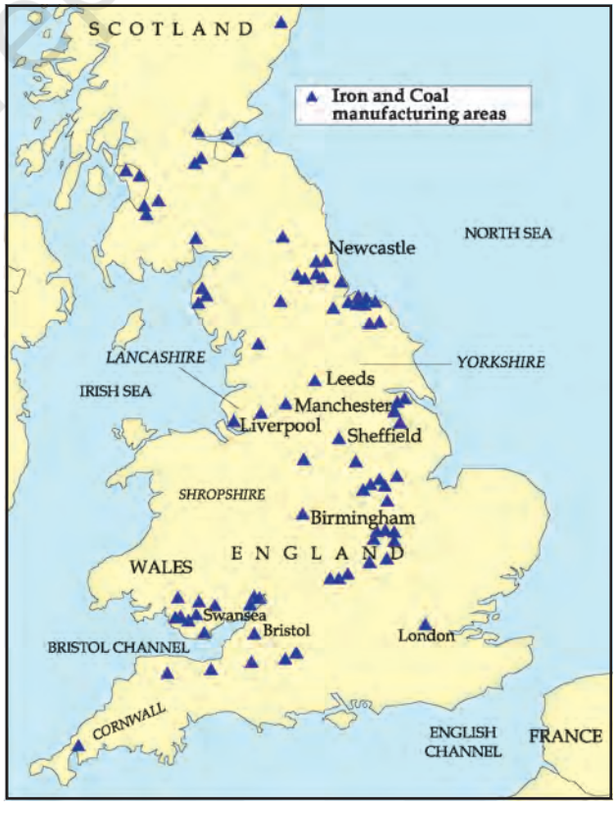
The solution to this problem had been sought for years before it was solved by a family of iron-masters, the Darbys of Shropshire. In the course of half a century, three generations of this family – grandfather, father and son, all called Abraham Darby – brought about a revolution in the metallurgical industry. It began with an invention in 1709 by the first Abraham Darby (1677-1717). This was a blast furnace that would use coke, which could generate high temperatures; coke was derived from coal by removing the sulphur and impurities. This invention meant that furnaces no longer had to depend on charcoal. The melted iron that emerged from these furnaces permitted finer and larger castings than before.

The Cast Iron Bridge near Coalbrookdale, painting by William Williams, 1780.

*This area later grew into the village called Ironbridge.

The process was further refined by more inventions. The second Darby (1711-68) developed wrought-iron (which was less brittle) from pig-iron. Henry Cort (1740-1823) designed the puddling furnace (in which molten iron could be rid of impurities) and the rolling mill, which used steam power to roll purified iron into bars. It now became possible to produce a broader range of iron products. The durability of iron made it a better material than wood for everyday items and for machinery. Unlike wood, which could burn or splinter, the physical and chemical properties of iron could be controlled. In the 1770s, John Wilkinson (1728-1808) made the first iron chairs, vats for breweries and distilleries, and iron pipes of all sizes. In 1779, the third Darby (1750-91) built the first iron bridge in the world, in Coalbrookdale, spanning the river Severn*. Wilkinson used cast iron for the first time to make water pipes (40 miles of it for the water supply of Paris).

MAP 1: Britain: The iron industry



The iron industry then came to be concentrated in specific regions as integrated units of coal mining and iron smelting. Britain was lucky in possessing excellent coking coal and high-grade iron ore in the same basins or even the same seams. These basins were also close to ports; there were five coastal coalfields which could deliver their products almost straight into ships. Since the coalfields were near the coast, shipbuilding increased, as did the shipping trade.

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ACTIVITY 2

Ironbridge Gorge is today a major 'heritage site'. Can you suggest why?

The British iron industry quadrupled its output between 1800 and 1830, and its product was the cheapest in Europe. In 1820, a ton of pig iron needed 8 tons of coal to make it, but by 1850 it could be produced by using only 2 tons. By 1848, Britain was smelting more iron than the rest of the world put together.

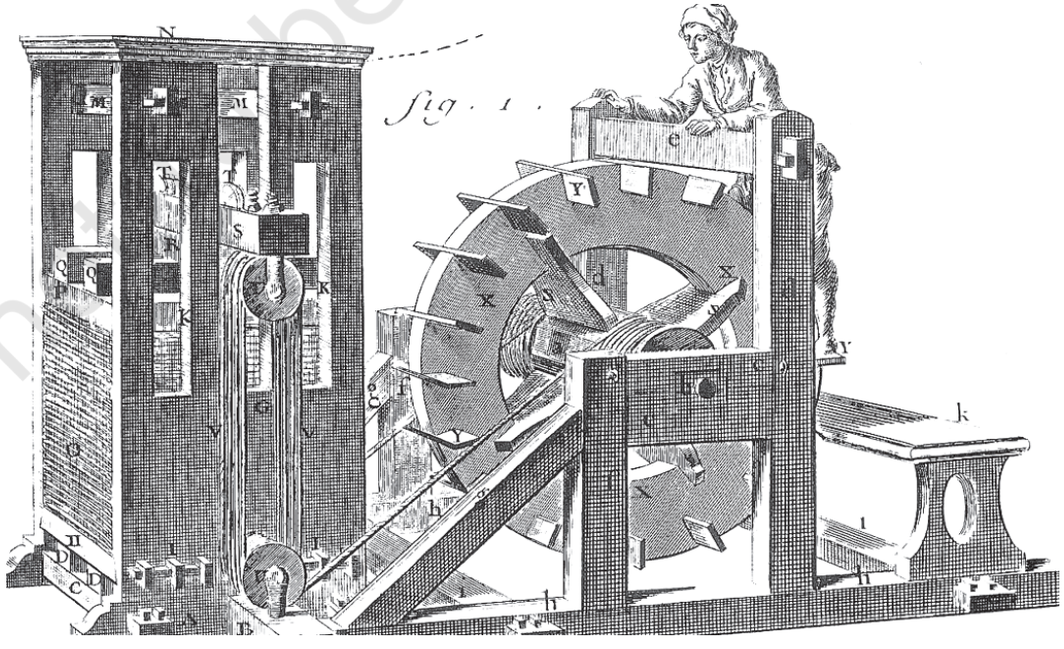
Cotton Spinning and Weaving

The British had always woven cloth out of wool and flax (to make linen). From the seventeenth century, the country had been importing bales of cotton cloth from India at great cost. As the East India Company's political control of parts of India was established, it began to import, along with cloth, raw cotton, which could be spun and woven into cloth in England.

Till the early eighteenth century, spinning had been so slow and laborious that 10 spinners (mostly women, hence the word 'spinster') were required to supply sufficient yarn to keep a single weaver busy. Therefore, while spinners were occupied all day, weavers waited idly to receive yarn. But a series of technological inventions successfully closed the gap between the speed in spinning raw cotton into yarn or thread, and of weaving the yarn into fabric. To make it even more efficient, production gradually shifted from the homes of spinners and weavers to factories.

From the 1780s, the cotton industry symbolised British industrialisation in many ways. This industry had two features which were also seen in other industries.

Raw cotton had to be entirely imported and a large part of the finished cloth was exported. This sustained the process of colonisation,



Manpower (in this picture, woman-power) worked the treadmill that lowered the lid of the cotton press.

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1. The **flying shuttle loom**, *designed by John Kay (1704-64) in 1733 made it possible to weave broader fabrics in less time and consequently called for more yarn than could be supplied at the prevailing pace of spinning.*

2. The **spinning jenny** *was a machine made by James Hargreaves (1720-78) in 1765 on which a single person could spin several threads of yarn simultaneously. This provided weavers with yarn at a faster rate than they could weave into fabric.*

3. The **water frame**, *which Richard Arkwright (1732-92) invented in 1769, produced a much stronger thread than before. This also made it possible to weave pure cotton fabrics rather than fabrics that combined linen and cotton yarn.*

4. The **mule** *was the nickname for a machine invented in 1779 by Samuel Crompton (1753-1827) that allowed the spinning of strong and fine yarn.*

5. The cycle of inventions in the cotton textile industry that sought to maintain a balance between the tasks of spinning and weaving concluded with the invention of the **powerloom** *by Edmund Cartwright (1743-1823) in 1787. This was easy to work, stopped automatically every time a thread broke and could be used to weave any kind of material. From the 1830s, developments in this industry concentrated on increasing the productivity of workers rather than bringing new machines into use.*

MAP 2: Britain: The cotton industry

so that Britain could retain control over the sources of raw cotton as well as the markets.

The industry was heavily dependent on the work of women and children in factories. This exemplified the ugly face of early industrialisation, as will be described below.

Steam Power

The realisation that steam could generate tremendous power was decisive to large-scale industrialisation.

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Water as hydraulic power had been the prime source of energy for centuries, but it had been limited to certain areas, seasons and by the speed of the flow of water. Now it was used differently. Steam power provided pressure at high temperatures that enabled the use of a broad range of machinery. This meant that steam power was the only source of energy that was reliable and inexpensive enough to manufacture machinery itself.

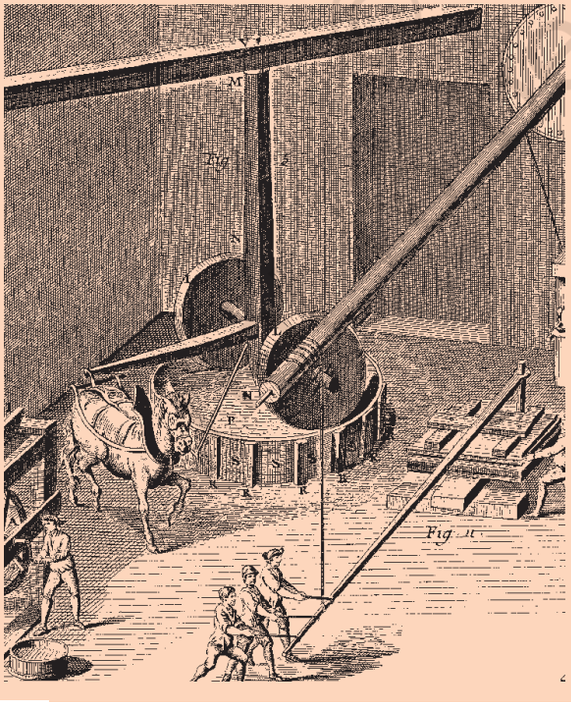
Steam power was first used in mining industries. As the demand for coal and metals expanded, efforts to obtain them from ever-deeper mines intensified. Flooding in mines was a serious problem. Thomas Savery (1650-1715) built a model steam engine called the Miner's Friend in 1698 to drain mines. These engines worked slowly, in shallow depths, and the boiler burst under too much pressure.

Another steam engine was built by Thomas Newcomen (1663-1729) in 1712. This had the major defect of losing energy due to continuous cooling of the condensing cylinder.

The steam engine had been used only in coal mines until James Watt (1736-1819) developed his machine in 1769. Watt's invention converted the steam engine from being a mere pump into a 'prime mover' capable of providing energy to power machines in factories. Backed by the wealthy manufacturer Matthew Boulton (1728-1809), Watt created the Soho Foundry in Birmingham in 1775. From this foundry Watt's steam engines were produced in steadily growing numbers. By the end of the eighteenth century, Watt's steam engine was beginning to replace hydraulic power.

After 1800, steam engine technology was further developed with the use of lighter, stronger metals, the manufacture of more accurate machine tools and the spread of better scientific knowledge. In 1840, British steam engines were generating more than 70 per cent of all European horsepower.

Watt's inventions were not limited to the steam engine. He invented a chemical process for copying documents. He also created a unit of measurement based on comparing mechanical power with that of the previous universal power source, the horse. Watt's measurement unit, horsepower, equated the ability of a horse to lift 33,000 pounds (14,969 kg) one foot (0.3 m) in one minute. Horsepower remains as a universally used index of mechanical energy.



Horses turned the wheels to grind metal. The use of steam reduced the dependence on manpower and horsepower.

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Canals and Railways

Canals were initially built to transport coal to cities. This was because the bulk and weight of coal made its transport by road much slower and more expensive than by barges on canals. The demand for coal, as industrial energy and for heating and lighting homes in cities, grew constantly. The making of the first English canal, the Worsley Canal (1761) by James Brindley (1716-72), had no other purpose than to carry coal from the coal deposits at Worsley (near Manchester) to that city; after the canal was completed the price of coal fell by half.

Canals were usually built by big landowners to increase the value of the mines, quarries or forests on their lands. The confluence of canals created marketing centres in new towns. The city of Birmingham, for example, owed its growth to its position at the heart of a canal system connecting London, the Bristol Channel, and the Mersey and Humber rivers. From 1760 to 1790, twenty-five new canal-building projects were begun. In the period known as the 'canal-mania', from 1788 to 1796, there were another 46 new projects and over the next 60 years more than 4,000 miles of canal were built.

The first steam locomotive, Stephenson's Rocket, appeared in 1814. Railways emerged as a new means of transportation that was available throughout the year, both cheap and fast, to carry passengers and goods. They combined two inventions, the iron track which replaced the wooden track in the 1760s, and haulage along it by steam engine.

The invention of the railways took the entire process of industrialisation to a second stage. In 1801, Richard Trevithick (1771-1833) had devised an engine called the 'Puffing Devil' that pulled trucks around the mine where he worked in Cornwall. In 1814, the railway engineer George Stephenson (1781-1848) constructed a locomotive, called 'The Blutcher', that could pull a weight of 30 tons up a hill at 4 mph. The first railway line connected the cities of Stockton and Darlington in 1825, a distance of 9 miles that was completed in two hours at speeds of up to 24 kph (15 mph), and the next railway line connected Liverpool and Manchester in 1830. Within 20 years, speeds of 30 to 50 miles an hour were usual.

In the 1830s, the use of canals revealed several problems. The congestion of vessels made movement slow on certain stretches of canals, and frost, flood or drought limited the time of their use. The railways now appeared as a convenient alternative. About 6,000 miles of railway was opened in Britain between 1830 and 1850, most of it in two short bursts. During the 'little railway mania' of 1833-37, 1400 miles of line was built, and during the bigger 'mania' of 1844-47, another 9,500 miles of line was sanctioned. They used vast amounts of coal and iron, employed large numbers of workers and boosted activity in the construction and public works industries. Most of England had been connected by railway by 1850.

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Who were the inventors?

It is interesting to find out who the individuals were who brought about these changes. Few of them were trained scientists. Education in basic sciences like physics or chemistry was extremely limited until the late nineteenth century, well after the technological inventions described above. Since these breakthroughs did not require a full knowledge of the laws of physics or chemistry on which they were based, advances could be and were made by brilliant but intuitive thinkers and persistent experimenters. They were helped by the fact that England had certain features which European countries did not. Dozens of scientific journals and published papers of scientific societies appeared in England between 1760 and 1800. There was a widespread thirst for knowledge even in the smaller towns. This was met by the activities of the Society of Arts (founded in 1754), by travelling lecturers, or in 'coffee houses' that multiplied through the eighteenth century.

Most inventions were more the product of determination, interest, curiosity, even luck, than the application of scientific knowledge. Some inventors in the cotton industry, like John Kay and James Hargreaves, were familiar with the skills of weaving and carpentry. Richard Arkwright, however, was a barber and wig-maker, Samuel Crompton was not technically skilled, and Edmund Cartwright studied literature, medicine and agriculture, initially wished to become a clergyman, and knew little of mechanics.

By contrast, in the area of steam engines, Thomas Savery, an army officer, Thomas Newcomen, a blacksmith and locksmith, and James Watt, with a strong mechanical bent, all had some knowledge relevant to their inventions. The road-builder John Metcalf, who personally surveyed surfaces for roads and planned them, was blind. The canal builder James Brindley was almost illiterate, with such poor spelling that he could never spell the word 'navigation', but he had tremendous powers of memory, imagination and concentration.

Changed Lives

In these years, therefore, it was possible for individuals with talent to bring about revolutionary changes. Similarly, there were rich individuals who took risks and invested money in industries in the hope that profits could be made, and that their money would 'multiply'. In most cases this money – capital – did multiply. Wealth, in the form of goods, incomes, services, knowledge and productive efficiency, did increase dramatically. There was, at the same time, a massive negative human cost. This was evident in broken families, new addresses, degraded cities and appalling working conditions in factories. The number of cities in England with a population of over 50,000 grew from two in 1750 to 29 in 1850. This pace of growth was not matched with the provision of adequate housing, sanitation or clean water for the rapidly growing urban population.

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Far left: Coalbrookdale, Carpenters' Row, cottages built by the company for workers in 1783.
Left: The houses of the Darbys; painting by William Westwood, 1835.

Newcomers were forced to live in overcrowded slums in the congested central areas of towns near factories, while the rich inhabitants escaped, by shifting to homes in the suburbs where the air was cleaner and the water safe to drink.

Edward Carpenter eloquently described such cities in about 1881, in his poem 'In a Manufacturing Town'

'As I walked restless and despondent through the gloomy city,
And saw the eager unresting to and fro – as of ghosts in some sulphurous Hades –*
And saw the crowds of tall chimneys going up, and the pall of smoke covering the sun, covering the earth, lying heavy against the very ground –
And saw the huge-refuse heaps writhing with children picking them over,
And the ghastly half-roofless smoke-blackened houses, and the black river flowing below, –
As I saw these, and as I saw again faraway the Capitalist quarter,
With its villa residences and its high-walled gardens and its well-appointed carriages, and its face turned away from the wriggling poverty which made it rich, …
I shuddered.'

**The gates of Hell.*

The Workers

A survey in 1842 revealed that the average lifespan of workers was lower than that of any other social group in cities: it was 15 years in Birmingham, 17 in Manchester, 21 in Derby. More people died, and died at a younger age, in the new industrial cities, than in the villages they had come from. Half the children failed to survive beyond the age of five. The increase in the population of cities was because of immigrants, rather than by an increase in the number of children born to families who already lived there.

Deaths were primarily caused by epidemics of disease that sprang from the pollution of water, like cholera and typhoid, or of the air,

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like tuberculosis. More than 31,000 people died from an outbreak of cholera in 1832. Until late in the nineteenth century, municipal authorities were negligent in attending to these dangerous conditions of life and the medical knowledge to understand and cure these diseases was unknown.

Women, Children and Industrialisation

The Industrial Revolution was a time of important changes in the way that children and women worked. Children of the rural poor had always worked at home or in the farm at jobs that varied during the day or between seasons, under the watchful eye of parents or relatives. Likewise, in villages women were actively involved in farm work; they reared livestock, gathered firewood and spun yarn on spinning wheels in their homes.

Work in the factories, with long, unbroken hours of the same kind of work, under strict discipline and sharp forms of punishment, was completely different. The earnings of women and children were necessary to supplement men's meagre wages. As the use of machinery spread, and fewer workers were needed, industrialists preferred to employ women and children who would be less agitated about their poor working conditions and work for lower wages than men.

They were employed in large numbers in the cotton textile industry in Lancashire and Yorkshire. Women were also the main workers in the silk,

Woman in gilt-button factory, Birmingham. In the 1850s, two-thirds of the workforce in the button trade were women and children. Men received 25 shillings a week, women 7 shillings and children one shilling each, for the same hours of work.

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lace-making and knitting industries, as well as (along with children) in the metal industries of Birmingham. Machinery like the cotton spinning jenny was designed to be used by child workers with their small build and nimble fingers. Children were often employed in textile factories because they were small enough to move between tightly packed machinery. The long hours of work, including cleaning the machines on Sundays, allowed them little fresh air or exercise. Children caught their hair in machines or crushed their hands, while some died when they fell into machines as they dropped off to sleep from exhaustion.

Coal mines were also dangerous places to work in. Roofs caved in or there could be an explosion, and injuries were therefore common. The owners of coal mines used children to reach deep coal faces or those where the approach path was too narrow for adults. Younger children worked as 'trappers' who opened and shut doors as the coal wagons travelled through mines, or carried heavy loads of coal on their backs as 'coal bearers.'

Factory managers considered child labour to be important training for future factory work. The evidence from British factory records reveals that about half of the factory workers had started work when they were less than ten years old and 28 per cent when they were under 14. Women may well have gained increased financial independence and self-esteem from their jobs; but this was more than offset by the humiliating terms of work they endured, the children they lost at birth or in early childhood and the squalid urban slums that industrial work compelled them to live in.

A lane in the poorer quarters of London; engraving by the French artist Dore, 1876.

In his novel Hard Times, Charles Dickens (1812-70), perhaps the most severe contemporary critic of the horrors of industrialisation for the poor, wrote a fictional account of an industrial town he aptly called Coketown. 'It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it; but as matters stood it was a town of unnatural red and black like the painted face of a savage. It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of building full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a stare of melancholy madness.'

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ACTIVITY 3

Discuss the effects of early industrialisation on British towns and villages, and compare these with similar situations in India.

D.H.Lawrence (1885-1930), British essayist and novelist, writing seventy years after Dickens, described the change in a village in the coal-belt, change which he had not experienced, but about which he had heard from older people.

'Eastwood…must have been a tiny village at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a small place of cottages and fragmentary rows of little four-roomed miners' dwellings, the homes of the old colliers…But somewhere about 1820 the company must have sunk the first big shaft…and installed the first machinery of the real industrial colliery…Most of the little rows of dwellings were pulled down, and dull little shops began to rise along the Nottingham Road, while on the down-slope…the company erected what is still known as the New Buildings…little four-room houses looking outward into the grim, blank street, and the back looking into the desert of the square, shut in like a barracks enclosure, very strange.'

Protest Movements

The early decades of industrialisation coincided with the spread of new political ideas pioneered by the French Revolution (1789-94). The movements for 'liberty, equality and fraternity' showed the possibilities of collective mass action, both in creating democratic institutions like the French parliamentary assemblies of the 1790s, and in checking the worst hardships of war by controlling the prices of necessities like bread. In England, political protest against the harsh working conditions in factories kept increasing, and the working population agitated to be given the right to vote. The government reacted by repression and by new laws that denied people the right to protest.

England had been at war with France for a long time – from 1792 to 1815. Trade between England and Europe was disrupted, factories were forced to shut down, unemployment grew and the price of essential items of food, like bread and meat, soared to heights beyond the level of average wages.

Parliament in 1795 passed two Combination Acts which made it illegal to 'incite the people by speech or writing to hatred or contempt of the King, Constitution or Government'; and banned unauthorised public meetings of over 50 persons. Protest, nonetheless, continued against 'Old Corruption'. This term was used for privileges linked to the monarchy and Parliament. Members of Parliament – landowners, manufacturers and professionals – were opposed to giving the working population the right to vote. They supported the Corn Laws, which prevented the import of cheaper food until prices in Britain had risen to a certain level.

As workers flooded towns and factories, they expressed their anger and frustration in numerous forms of protest. There were bread or

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food riots throughout the country from the 1790s onwards. Bread was the staple item in the diet of the poor and its price governed their standard of living. Stocks of bread were seized and sold at a price that was affordable and morally correct rather than at the high prices charged by profit-hungry traders. Such riots were particularly frequent in the worst year of the war,1795, but they continued until the 1840s.

Another cause of hardship was the process known as 'enclosure' – by which, from the 1770s, hundreds of small farms had been merged into the larger ones of powerful landlords. Poor rural families affected by this had sought industrial work. But the introduction of machines in the cotton industry threw thousands of handloom weavers out of work and into poverty, since their labour was too slow to compete with machines. From the 1790s, these weavers began to demand a legal minimum wage, which was refused by Parliament. When they went on strike, they were dispersed by force. In desperation, in Lancashire, cotton weavers destroyed the powerlooms which they believed had destroyed their livelihood. There was also resistance to the introduction of machines in the woollen knitting industry in Nottingham; protests also took place in Leicestershire and Derbyshire.

In Yorkshire, shearing-frames were destroyed by croppers, who had traditionally sheared sheep by hand. In the riots of 1830, farm labourers found their jobs threatened by the new threshing machines that separated the grain from the husk. The rioters smashed these machines. Nine of them were hanged and 450 were sent to Australia as convicts (see Theme 10).

The movement known as Luddism (1811-17), led by the charismatic General Ned Ludd, exemplified another type of protest. Luddism was not merely a backward-looking assault on machines. Its participants demanded a minimum wage, control over the labour of women and children, work for those who had lost their jobs because of the coming of machinery, and the right to form trade unions so that they could legally present these demands.

During the early years of industrialisation, the working population possessed neither the vote nor legal methods to express their anger at the drastic manner in which their lives had been overturned. In August 1819, 80,000 people gathered peacefully at St Peter's Fields in Manchester to claim democratic rights – of political organisation, of public meetings, and of the freedom of the press. They were suppressed brutally in what became known as the Peterloo* Massacre and the rights they demanded were denied by the Six Acts, passed by Parliament the same year. These extended the restrictions on political activity introduced in the two Combination Acts of 1795. But there were some gains. After Peterloo, the need to make the House of Commons more representative was recognised by liberal political groups, and the Combination Acts were repealed in 1824-25.

*This name was made up to rhyme with 'Waterloo'; the French army had been defeated at Waterloo in 1815.

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Reforms through Laws

How attentive was the government to the conditions of work of women and children? Laws were passed in 1819 prohibiting the employment of children under the age of nine in factories and limiting the hours of work of those between the ages of nine and sixteen to 12 hours a day. But this law lacked the powers needed for its enforcement. It was not until 1833, after intense protest by workers throughout the north of England, that an Act was passed that permitted children under nine to be employed only in silk factories, limited the hours of work for older children and provided a number of factory inspectors to ensure that the Act was enforced. Finally, in 1847, after more than 30 years of agitation, the Ten Hours' Bill was passed. This limited the hours of work for women and young people, and secured a 10-hour day for male workers.

These Acts applied to the textile industries but not to the mining industry. The Mines Commission of 1842, set up by the government, revealed that working conditions in mines had actually become worse since the Act of 1833, because more children had been put to work in coal mines. The Mines and Collieries Act of 1842 banned children under ten and women from working underground. Fielder's Factory Act laid down in 1847 that children under eighteen and women should not work more than 10 hours a day. These laws were to be enforced by factory inspectors, but this was difficult to do. The inspectors were poorly paid and easily bribed by factory managers, while parents lied about the real ages of their children, so that they could work and contribute to family incomes.

ACTIVITY 4

Argue the case for and against government regulation of conditions of work in industries.

The Debate on the 'Industrial Revolution'

Until the 1970s, historians used the term 'industrial revolution' for the changes that occurred in Britain from the 1780s to the 1820s. From then, it was challenged, on various grounds.

Industrialisation had actually been too gradual to be considered a 'revolution'. It carried processes that already existed towards new levels. Thus, there was a *relatively* greater concentration of workers in factories, and a *wider* use of money.

Until well into the nineteenth century, large regions of England remained untouched by factories or mines and therefore the term 'industrial revolution' was regarded as inaccurate: England had changed in a *regional* manner, prominently around the cities of London, Manchester, Birmingham or Newcastle, rather than throughout the country.

Could the growth in the cotton or iron industries or in foreign trade from the 1780s to the 1820s be called revolutionary? The impressive growth of cotton textiles, based on new machinery, was in an industry that relied on a non-British raw material, on sales abroad (especially

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India), on non-metallic machinery, and with few links to other branches of industry. Metallic machinery and steam power was rare until much later in the nineteenth century. The rapid growth in British imports and exports from the 1780s occurred because of the resumption of trade with North America that the War of American Independence had interrupted. This growth was recorded as being sharp only because it started from a low point.

Indicators of economic change occurring before and after 1815-20 suggest that sustained industrialisation was to be seen *after* rather than *before* these dates. The decades after 1793 had experienced the disruptive effects of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Industrialisation is associated with a growing investment of the country's wealth in 'capital formation', or building infrastructure and installing new machinery, and with raising the levels of efficient use of these facilities, and with raising productivity. Productive investment, in these senses, grew steadily only after 1820, as did levels of productivity. The cotton, iron and engineering industries had accounted for less than half of the industrial output until the 1840s. Technical progress was not limited to these branches, but was visible in other branches too, like agricultural processing and pottery.

In searching for an answer as to why British growth may have been faster after 1815 than before, historians have pointed to the fact that from the 1760s to 1815, Britain tried to do two things simultaneously – to industrialise, and to fight wars in Europe, North America and India – and it may possibly have failed with one. Britain was at war for 36 out of 60 years from 1760. Capital that was borrowed was used to fight the wars rather than invested. As much as 35 per cent of the cost of the war was met by taxing people's incomes. Workers were transferred out of factories and farms to the army. Food prices rose so sharply that the poor had little money left for buying consumer goods. Napoleon's policies of blockade, and British reactions to them, closed the European continent, the destination for more than half of British exports, to British traders.

The word 'industrial' used with the word 'revolution' is too limited. The transformation extended beyond the economic or industrial sphere and into society and gave prominence to two classes: the bourgeoisie and the new class of proletarian labourers in towns and in the countryside.

In 1851, visitors thronged the Great Exhibition at the specially constructed Crystal Palace in London to view the achievements of British industry. At that time, half the population was living in towns, but of the workers in towns as many were in handicraft units as in factories. From the 1850s, the proportion of people living in urban areas went up dramatically, and most of these were workers in industry – the working class. Only 20 per cent of Britain's workforce now lived in rural areas. This was a far more rapid rate of industrialisation than had been witnessed in other European countries. In his detailed study of British industry, the historian A.E. Musson has suggested that

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The Great Exhibition of 1851 displayed "the Works of Industry of all Nations", particularly the spectacular progress of Britain. It was held in London's Hyde Park, in the Crystal Palace, made of glass panes set in iron columns manufactured in Birmingham.

'There are good grounds for regarding the period 1850-1914 as that in which the Industrial Revolution really occurred, on a massive scale, transforming the whole economy and society much more widely and deeply than the earlier changes had done.'

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. *How did Britain's involvement in wars from 1793 to 1815 affect British industries?*
2. *What were the relative advantages of canal and railway transportation?*
3. *What were the interesting features of the 'inventions' of this period?*
4. *Indicate how the supply of raw materials affected the nature of British industrialisation.*

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. *How were the lives of different classes of British women affected by the Industrial Revolution?*
6. *Compare the effects of the coming of the railways in different countries in the world.*

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THEME 10

DISPLACING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

THIS chapter recounts some aspects of the histories of the native peoples of America and Australia. Theme 8 described the history of the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation of South America. From the eighteenth century, more areas of South America, Central America, North America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand came to be settled by immigrants from Europe. This led to many of the native peoples being pushed out into other areas. The European settlements were called 'colonies'. When the European inhabitants of the colonies became independent of the European 'mother-country', these colonies became 'states' or countries.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, people from Asian countries also migrated to some of these countries. Today, these Europeans and Asians form the majority in these countries, and the number of the native inhabitants are very small. They are hardly seen in the towns, and people have forgotten that they once occupied much of the country, and that the names of many rivers, towns, etc. are derived from 'native' names (e.g. Ohio, Mississippi and Seattle in the USA, Saskatchewan in Canada, Wollongong and Parramatta in Australia).

Till the middle of the twentieth century, American and Australian history textbooks used to describe how Europeans 'discovered' the Americas and Australia. They hardly mentioned the native peoples except to suggest that they were hostile to Europeans. These peoples were, however, studied by anthropologists in America from the 1840s. Much later, from the 1960s, the native peoples were encouraged to write their own histories or to dictate them (this is called oral history).

Today, it is possible to read historical works and fiction written by the native peoples, and visitors to museums in these countries will see galleries of 'native art' and special museums which show the aboriginal way of life. The new National Museum of the American Indian in the USA has been curated by American Indians themselves.

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European Imperialism

The American empires of Spain and Portugal (see Theme 8) did not expand after the seventeenth century. From that time other countries – France, Holland and England – began to extend their trading activities and to establish colonies – in America, Africa and Asia; Ireland also was virtually a colony of England, as the landowners there were mostly English settlers.

From the eighteenth century, it became obvious that while it was the prospect of profit which drove people to establish colonies, there were significant variations in the *nature* of the control established.

In South Asia, trading companies like the East India Company made themselves into political powers, defeated local rulers and annexed their territories. They retained the older well-developed administrative system and collected taxes from landowners. Later they built railways to make trade easier, excavated mines and established big plantations.

In Africa, Europeans traded on the coast, except in South Africa, and only in the late nineteenth century did they venture into the interior. After this, some of the European countries reached an agreement to divide up Africa as colonies for themselves.

The word 'settler' is used for the Dutch in South Africa, the British in Ireland, New Zealand and Australia, and the Europeans in America. The official language in these colonies was English (except in Canada, where French is also an official language).

Names given by Europeans to Countries of the 'New World'

'AMERICA'	*First used after the publication of the travels of Amerigo Vespucci (1451-1512)*
'CANADA'	*from kanata (= 'village' in the language of the Huron-Iroquois, as heard by the explorer Jacques Cartier in 1535)*
'AUSTRALIA'	*Sixteenth-century name for land in the Great Southern Ocean (austral is Latin for 'south')*
'NEW ZEALAND'	*Name given by Tasman of Holland, who was the first to sight these islands in 1642 (zee is Dutch for 'sea')*

The Geographical Dictionary (pp 805-22) lists over a hundred place-names in the Americas and Australia which begin with 'New'.

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NORTH AMERICA

The continent of North America extends from the Arctic Circle to the Tropic of Cancer, from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean. West of the chain of the Rocky Mountains is the desert of Arizona and Nevada, still further west the Sierra Nevada mountains, to the east the Great Plains, the Great Lakes, the valleys of the Mississippi and the Ohio and the Appalachian Mountains. To the south is Mexico. Forty per cent of Canada is covered with forests. Oil, gas and mineral resources are found in many areas, which explains the many big industries in the USA and Canada. Today, wheat, corn and fruit are grown extensively and fishing is a major industry in Canada.

Mining, industry and extensive agriculture have been developed only in the last 200 years by immigrants from Europe, Africa and China. But there were people who had been living in North America for thousands of years before the Europeans learnt of its existence.

The Native Peoples

'Native' means a person born in the place he/she lives in. Till the early twentieth century, the term was used by Europeans to describe the inhabitants of countries they had colonised.

The earliest inhabitants of North America came from Asia over 30,000 years ago on a land-bridge across the Bering Straits, and during the last Ice Age 10,000 years ago they moved further south. The oldest artefact found in America – an arrow-point – is 11,000 years old. The population started to increase about 5,000 years ago when the climate became more stable.

> *'At sunset on the day before America [that is, before the Europeans reached there and gave the continent this name], diversity lay at every hand. People spoke in more than a hundred tongues. They lived by every possible combination of hunting, fishing, gathering, gardening, and farming open to them. The quality of soils and the effort required to open and tend them determined some of their choices of how to live. Cultural and social biases determined others. Surpluses of fish or grain or garden plants or meats helped create powerful, tiered societies here but not there. Some cultures had endured for millennia…' – William Macleish, The Day before America.*

These peoples lived in bands, in villages along river valleys. They ate fish and meat, and cultivated vegetables and maize. They often went on long journeys in search of meat, chiefly that of bison, the wild buffalo that roamed the grasslands (this became easier from the seventeenth century, when the natives started to ride horses, which they bought from Spanish settlers). But they only killed as many animals as they needed for food.

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They did not attempt extensive agriculture and since they did not produce a surplus, they did not develop kingdoms and empires as in Central and South America. There were some instances of quarrels between tribes over territory, but by and large control of land was not an issue. They were content with the food and shelter they got from the land without feeling any need to 'own' it. An important feature of their tradition was that of making formal alliances and friendships, and exchanging gifts. Goods were obtained not by buying them, but as gifts.

Wampum belts, made of coloured shells sewn together, were exchanged by native tribes after a treaty was agreed to.

Numerous languages were spoken in North America, though these were not written down. They believed that time moved in cycles, and each tribe had accounts about their origins and their earlier history which were passed on from one generation to the next. They were skilled craftspeople and wove beautiful textiles. They could read the land – they could understand the climates and different landscapes in the way literate people read written texts.

Encounters with Europeans

Different terms are used in English for the native peoples of the 'New World'

aborigine – native people of Australia (in Latin, ab = from, origine = the beginning)

Aboriginal – adjective, often misused as a noun

American Indian/Amerind/Amerindian – native peoples of North and South America and the Caribbean

First Nations peoples – the organised native groups recognised by the Canadian government (the Indians Act of 1876 used the term 'bands' but from the 1980s the word 'nations' is used)

indigenous people – people belonging naturally to a place

native American – the indigenous people of the Americas (this is the term now commonly used)

'Red Indian' – the brown-complexioned people whose land Columbus mistook for India

A woman of the Winnebago tribe of Wisconsin. In the 1860s, people of this tribe were moved to Nebraska

Names of native tribes are often given to things unconnected with them: Dakota (an aeroplane), Cherokee (a jeep), Pontiac (a car), Mohawk (a haircut)!

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'It was indicated on the stone tablets that the Hopis had that the first brothers and sisters that would come back to them would come as turtles across the land. They would be human beings, but they would come as turtles. So when the time came close the Hopis were at a special village to welcome the turtles that would come across the land and they got up in the morning and looked out at the sunrise. They looked out across the desert and they saw the Spanish Conquistadores coming, covered in armour, like turtles across the land. So this was them. So they went out to the Spanish man and they extended their hand hoping for the handshake but into the hand the Spanish man dropped a trinket. And so word spread throughout North America that there was going to be a hard time, that maybe some of the brothers and sisters had forgotten the sacredness of all things and all the human beings were going to suffer for this on the earth.'*

– From a talk by Lee Brown, 1986

*The Hopis are a native tribe who now live near California.

In the seventeenth century, the European traders who reached the north coast of North America after a difficult two-month voyage were relieved to find the native peoples friendly and welcoming. Unlike the Spanish in South America, who were overcome by the abundance of gold in the country, these adventurers came to trade in fish and furs, in which they got the willing help of the natives who were expert at hunting.

Further south, along the Mississippi river, the French found that the natives held regular gatherings to exchange handicrafts unique to a tribe or food items not available in other regions. In exchange for local products the Europeans gave the natives blankets, iron vessels (which they used sometimes in place of their clay pots), guns, which was a useful supplement for bows and arrows to kill animals, and alcohol. This last item was something the natives had not known earlier, and they became addicted to it, which suited the Europeans, because it enabled them to dictate terms of trade. (The Europeans acquired from the natives an addiction to tobacco.)

Quebec	American colonies
1497 John Cabot reaches Newfoundland	*1507 Amerigo de Vespucci's Travels published*
1534 Jacques Cartier travels down the St Lawrence river and meets native peoples	
1608 French found the colony of Quebec	*1607 British found the colony of Virginia*
	1620 British found Plymouth (in Massachusetts)

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Mutual Perceptions

In the eighteenth century, western Europeans defined 'civilised' people in terms of literacy, an organised religion and urbanism. To them, the natives of America appeared 'uncivilised'. To some, like the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, such people were to be admired, as they were untouched by the corruptions of 'civilisation'. A popular term was 'the noble savage'. Some lines in a poem by the English poet William Wordsworth indicate another perspective. Neither he nor Rousseau had met a native American, but Wordsworth described them as living 'amid wilds/Where fancy hath small liberty to grace/The affections, to exalt them or refine', meaning that people living close to nature had only limited powers of imagination and emotion!

Thomas Jefferson, third President of the USA, and a contemporary of Wordsworth, spoke of the natives in words that would lead to a public outcry today:

'This unfortunate race which we have been taking so much pains to civilise... have justified extermination.'

It is interesting to note that another writer, Washington Irving, much younger than Wordsworth and who had actually met native people, described them quite differently.

'The Indians I have had an opportunity of seeing in real life are quite different from those described in poetry... Taciturn they are, it is true, when in company with white men, whose goodwill they distrust and whose language they do not understand; but the white man is equally taciturn under like circumstances. When the Indians are among themselves, they are great mimics, and entertain themselves excessively at the expense of the whites... who have supposed them impressed with profound respect for their grandeur and dignity... The white men (as I have witnessed) are prone to treat the poor Indians as little better than animals.'

To the natives, the goods they exchanged with the Europeans were *gifts*, given in friendship. For the Europeans, dreaming of becoming rich, the fish and furs were *commodities*, which they would sell for a profit in Europe. The prices of the goods they sold varied from year to year, depending on the supply. The natives could not understand this – they had no sense of the 'market' in faraway Europe. They were puzzled by the fact that the European traders sometimes gave them a lot of things in exchange for their goods, sometimes very little. They were also saddened by the greed of the Europeans*. In their impatience to get furs, they had slaughtered hundreds of beavers, and the natives were very uneasy, fearing that the animals would take revenge on them for this destruction.

*Many folk tales of the natives mocked Europeans and described them as greedy and deceitful, but because these were told as imaginary stories, it was only much later that the Europeans understood the references.

Following the first Europeans, who were traders, were those who came to 'settle' in America. From the seventeenth century, there were groups of Europeans who were being persecuted because they were of a different sect of Christianity (Protestants living in predominantly Catholic countries, or Catholics in countries where Protestantism was the official religion). Many of them left Europe and went to America to begin a new life. As long as there was vacant

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land, this was not a problem, but gradually the Europeans moved further inland, near native villages. They used their iron tools to cut down forests to lay out farms.

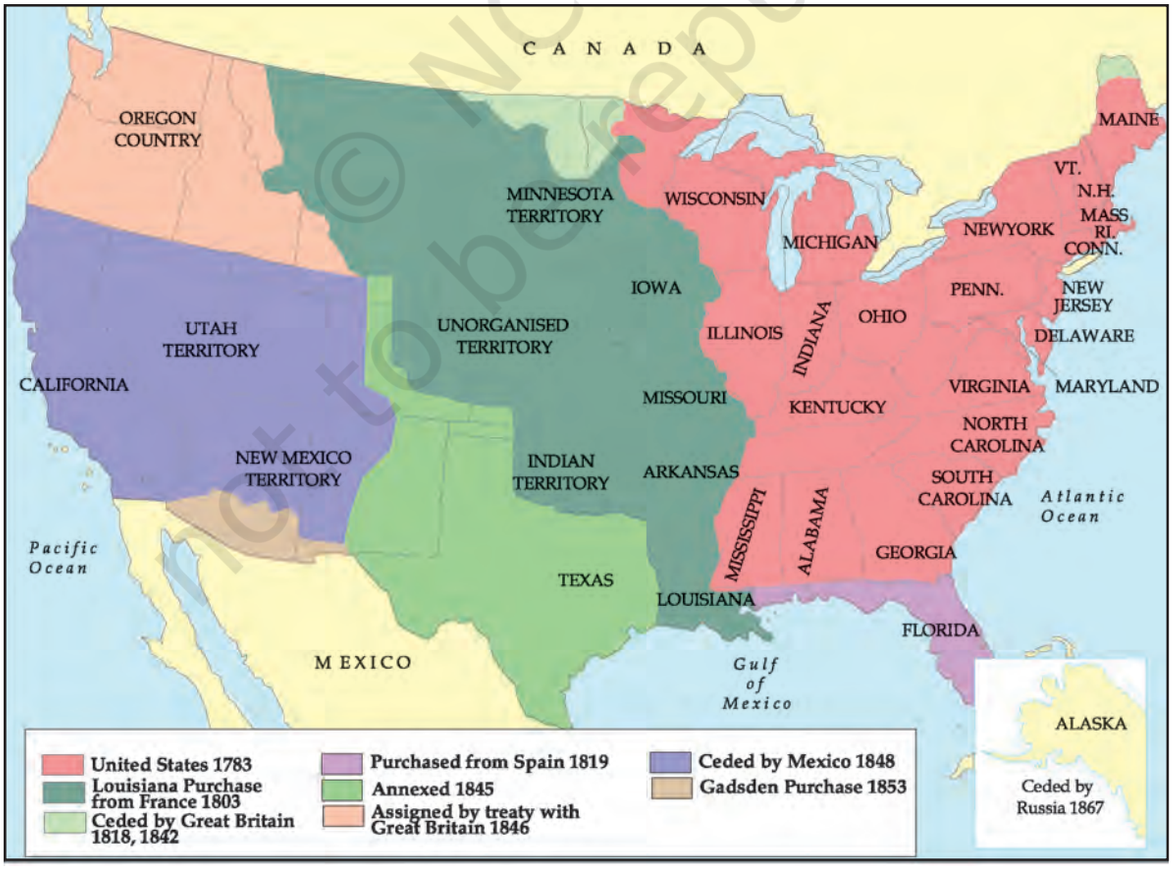
Natives and Europeans saw different things when they looked at forests – natives identified tracks invisible to the Europeans. Europeans imagined the forests cut down and replaced by cornfields. Jefferson's 'dream' was a country populated by Europeans with small farms. The natives, who grew crops for their own needs, not for sale and profit, and thought it wrong to 'own' the land, could not understand this. In Jefferson's view, this made them 'uncivilised'.

ACTIVITY 1

Discuss the different images that Europeans and native Americans had of each other, and the different ways in which they saw nature.

Canada	USA
1701 French treaty with natives of Quebec	
1763 Quebec conquered by the British	*1781 Britain recognises USA as an independent country*
1774 Quebec Act	*1783 British give Mid-West to the USA*
1791 Canada Constitutional Act	

MAP 1: The expansion of the USA



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The countries that are known as Canada and the United States of America came into existence at the end of the eighteenth century. At that time they occupied only a fraction of the land they now cover. Over the next hundred years they extended their control over more territory, to reach their present size. Large areas were acquired by the USA by purchase – they bought land in the south from France (the 'Louisiana Purchase') and from Russia (Alaska), and by war – much of southern USA was won from Mexico. It did not occur to anyone that the consent of natives living in these areas should have been asked. The western 'frontier' of the USA was a shifting one, and as it moved, the natives also were forced to move back.

Canada	USA
	1803 Louisiana purchased from France
	1825-58 Natives in USA moved to reserves
1837 French Canadian rebellion	*1832 Justice Marshall's judgement*
1840 Canadian Union of Upper and Lower Canada	*1849 American Gold Rush*
1859 Canada Gold Rush	*1861-65 American Civil War*
1867 Confederation of Canada	*1865-90 American Indian Wars*
1869-85 Red River Rebellion by the Metis in Canada	*1870 Transcontinental railway*
1876 Canada Indians Act America	*1890 Bison almost exterminated in*
1885 Transcontinental railway links east and west coasts	*1892 'End' of American frontier*

The landscapes of America changed drastically in the nineteenth century. The Europeans treated the land differently from the natives. Some of the migrants from Britain and France were younger sons who would not inherit their fathers' property and therefore were eager to own land in America. Later, there were waves of immigrants from countries like Germany, Sweden and Italy who had lost their lands to big farmers, and wanted farms they could own. People from Poland were happy to work in the prairie grasslands, which reminded them of the steppes of their homes, and were excited at being able to buy huge properties at very low prices. They cleared land and developed agriculture, introducing crops (rice and cotton) which could not grow in Europe and therefore could be sold there for profit. To protect their huge farms from wild animals – wolves and mountain lions – these were hunted to extinction. They felt totally secure only with the invention of barbed wire in 1873.

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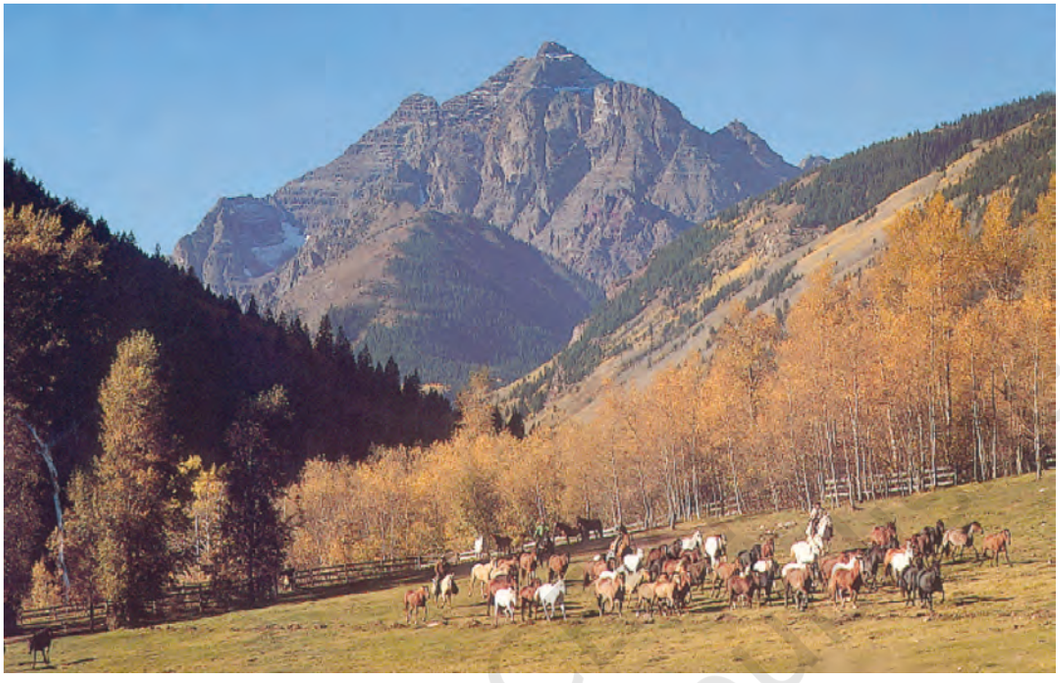
The climate of the southern region was too hot for Europeans to work outdoors, and the experience of South American colonies had



A ranch in Colorado.

shown that the natives who had been enslaved had died in large numbers. Plantation owners therefore bought slaves in Africa. Protests by anti-slavery groups led to a ban on slave trade, but the Africans who were in the USA remained slaves, as did their children.

The northern states of the USA, where the economy did not depend on plantations (and therefore on slavery), argued for ending slavery which they condemned as an inhuman practice. In 1861-65, there was a war between the states that wanted to retain slavery and those supporting abolition. The latter won. Slavery was abolished, though it was only in the twentieth century that the African Americans were able to win the battle for civil liberties, and segregation between 'whites' and 'non-whites' in schools and public transport was ended.

The Canadian government had a problem which was not to be solved for a long time, and which seemed more urgent than the question of the natives – in 1763 Canada had been won by the British after a war with France. The French settlers repeatedly demanded autonomous political status. It was only in 1867 that this problem was solved by organising canada as a Confederation of autonomous states.

The Native Peoples Lose their Land

In the USA, as settlement expanded, the natives were induced or forced to move, after signing treaties selling their land. The prices paid were very low, and there were instances when the Americans (a term used

to mean the *European* people of the USA) cheated them by taking more land or paying less than promised.

Even high officials saw nothing wrong in depriving the native peoples of their land. This is seen by an episode in Georgia, a state in the USA. Officials had argued that the Cherokee tribe was governed by state laws, but could not enjoy the rights of citizens. (This was despite the fact that, of all the native peoples, the Cherokees were the ones who had made the most effort to learn English and to understand the American way of life; even so they were not allowed the rights of citizens.)

In 1832, an important judgment was announced by the US Chief Justice, John Marshall. He said that the Cherokees were 'a distinct community, occupying its own territory in which the laws of Georgia had no force', and that they had sovereignty in certain matters. US President Andrew Jackson had a reputation for fighting against economic and political privilege, but when it came to the Indians, he was a different person. He refused to honour the Chief Justice's judgment, and ordered the US army to evict the Cherokees from their land and drive them to the Great American Desert. Of the 15,000 people thus forced to go, over a quarter died along the 'Trail of Tears'.

Those who took the land occupied by the tribes justified it by saying the natives did not deserve to occupy land which they did not use to the maximum. They went on to criticise them for being lazy, since they did not use their crafts skills to produce goods for the market, for not being interested in learning English or dressing 'correctly' (which meant like the Europeans). They deserved to 'die out', they argued. The prairies were cleared for farmland, and wild bison killed off. 'Primitive man will disappear with the primitive animal' wrote a visiting Frenchman.

ACTIVITY 2

Comment on these two sets of population data.

	USA: 1820	*Spanish America: 1800*
Natives	0.6 million	7.5 million
Whites	9.0 million	3.3 million
Mixed Europeans	0.1 million	5.3 million
Blacks	1.9 million	0.8 million
Total	**11.6 million**	**16.9 million**

Meanwhile, the natives were pushed westward, given land elsewhere ('theirs in perpetuity') but often moved again if any mineral – lead or gold – or oil was found on their lands. Many tribes were forced to share the land originally occupied by one tribe, thus leading to quarrels

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between them. They were locked off in small areas called 'reservations', which often was land with which they had no earlier connection. They did not give in without a fight. The US army crushed a series of rebellions from 1865 to 1890, and in Canada there were armed revolts by the Metis (people of native European descent) between 1869 and 1885. But after that they gave up.

In 1854, the President of the USA received a letter from a native leader, Chief Seattle. The president had asked the chief to sign a treaty giving a large part of the land they lived on to the American government. The Chief replied:

'How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If you do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can one buy them? Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine-needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man…

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word that he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably. He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father…'

The Gold Rush, and the Growth of Industries

There was always the hope that there was gold in North America. In the 1840s, traces of gold were found in the USA, in California. This led to the 'Gold Rush', when thousands of eager Europeans hurried to America in the hope of making a quick fortune. This led to the building of railway lines across the continent, for which thousands of Chinese workers were recruited. The USA's railway was completed by 1870, that of

Anthropology

It is significant that it was at this time (from the 1840s) that the subject of 'anthropology' (which had been developed in France) was introduced in North America, out of a curiosity to study the differences between native 'primitive' communities and the 'civilised' communities of Europe. Some anthropologists argued that just as there were no 'primitive' people to be found in Europe, the American natives too would 'die out'.

A native lodge, 1862. Archaeologists moved this from the mountains and placed it in a museum in Wyoming.

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Moving to California as part of the 'Gold Rush', photograph.

Canada by 1885. 'The old nations creep on at a snail's pace' said Andrew Carnegie, a poor immigrant from Scotland who became one of the first millionaire industrialists in the USA, 'the Republic thunders on at the speed of an express'.

One reason why the Industrial Revolution happened in England when it did was because small peasants were losing their land to big farmers, and moving to jobs in factories (see Theme 9). In North America, industries developed for very different reasons – to manufacture railway equipment so that rapid transport could link distant places, and to produce machinery which would make large-scale farming easier. Industrial towns grew and factories multiplied, both in the USA and Canada. In 1860, the USA had been an undeveloped economy. In 1890, it was the leading industrial power in the world.

Large-scale agriculture also expanded. Vast areas were cleared and divided up into farms. By 1890, the bison had almost been exterminated, thus ending the life of hunting the natives had followed for centuries. In 1892, the USA's continental expansion was complete. The area between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans was divided up into states. There no longer remained the 'frontier' that had pulled European settlers west for many decades. Within a few years the USA was setting up its own colonies – in Hawaii and the Philippines. It had become an imperial power.

Above: Immigrants welcomed by the USA, colour print, 1909.

Below: The ranch on the prairie that was the dream of poor European immigrants, photograph.

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Constitutional Rights

The 'democratic spirit' which had been the rallying cry of the settlers in their fight for independence in the 1770s, came to define the identity of the USA against the monarchies and aristocracies of the Old World. Also important to them was that their constitution included the individual's 'right to property', which the state could not override.

But both democratic rights (the right to vote for representatives to Congress and for the President) and the right to property *were only for white men.* Daniel Paul, a Canadian native, pointed out in 2000 that Thomas Paine, the champion of democracy at the time of the War for American Independence and the French Revolution, 'used the Indians as models of how society might be organized'. He used this to argue that 'the Native Americans by their example sowed the seeds for the long-drawn-out movement towards democracy by the people of Europe' (*We Were Not the Savages*, p. 333)

Karl Marx (1818-83), the great German philosopher, described the American frontier as 'the last positive capitalist utopia…the limitless nature and space to which the limitless thirst for profit adapts itself'.

– 'Bastiat and Carey', Grundrisse

The Winds of Change…

Not till the 1920s did things begin to improve for the native peoples of the USA and Canada. *The Problem of Indian Administration*, a survey directed by social scientist Lewis Meriam and published in 1928, only a few years before the USA was swept by a major economic depression that affected all its people, painted a grim picture of the terribly poor health and education facilities for natives in reservations.

White Americans felt sympathy for the natives who were being discouraged from the full exercise of their cultures and simultaneously denied the benefits of citizenship. This led to a landmark law in the USA, the Indian Reorganisation Act of 1934, which gave natives in reservations the right to buy land and take loans.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the US and Canadian governments thought of ending all special provisions for the natives in the hope that they would 'join the mainstream', that is, adopt European culture. But the natives did not want this. In 1954, in the 'Declaration of Indian Rights' prepared by them, a number of native peoples accepted citizenship of the USA but on condition that their reservations would not be taken away and their traditions would not be interfered with. A similar development occurred in Canada. In 1969 the government announced that they would 'not recognise aboriginal rights'. The natives, in a well-organised opposition move, held a series of demonstrations and debates. The question could not be resolved till 1982, when the Constitution Act accepted the existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the natives. Many details remain to be worked out. Today, it is clear that the native peoples of both countries, though reduced so much in numbers from what they had been in the eighteenth century, have been able to assert their right to their own cultures and, particularly in Canada, to their sacred lands, in a way their ancestors could not have done in the 1880s.

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ACTIVITY 3

Comment on the following statement by the American historian Howard Spodek: 'For the indigenous [people] the effects of the American Revolution were exactly opposite to those of the settlers – expansion became contraction, democracy became tyranny, prosperity became poverty, and liberty became confinement.'

Indians under British rule	*Taxed arbitrarily; seen as not equal (rationalisation – not ready for responsibility of representative government)*
Natives in America and	*Not seen as citizens; not equal Australia (rationalisation 'primitive' as in no settled agriculture, provision for the future, towns)*
African slaves in America	*Denied personal liberty; not equal (rationalisation – 'Slavery is part of their own social system', black people are inferior)*

AUSTRALIA

As in the Americas, human habitation in Australia has a long history. The 'aborigines' (a general name given to a number of different societies) began to arrive on the continent over 40,000 years ago (possibly even earlier). They came from New Guinea, which was connected to Australia by a land-bridge. In the natives' traditions, they did not *come* to Australia, but had always been there. The past centuries were called the 'Dreamtime' – something difficult for Europeans to understand, since the distinction between past and present is blurred.

In the late eighteenth century, there were between 350 and 750 native communities in Australia each with its own language (even today 200 of these languages are spoken). There is another large group of indigenous people living in the north, called the Torres Strait Islanders. The term 'Aborigine' is not used for these as they are believed to have migrated from elsewhere and belong to a different race. Together, they make up 2.4 per cent of Australia's population in 2005.

Australia is sparsely populated, and even now most of the towns are along the coast (where the British first arrived in 1770) because the central region is arid desert.

The Europeans Reach Australia

1606 Dutch travellers sight Australia

1642 Tasman lands on the island later named Tasmania

1770 James Cook reaches Botany Bay, named New South Wales

1788 British penal colony formed. Sydney founded

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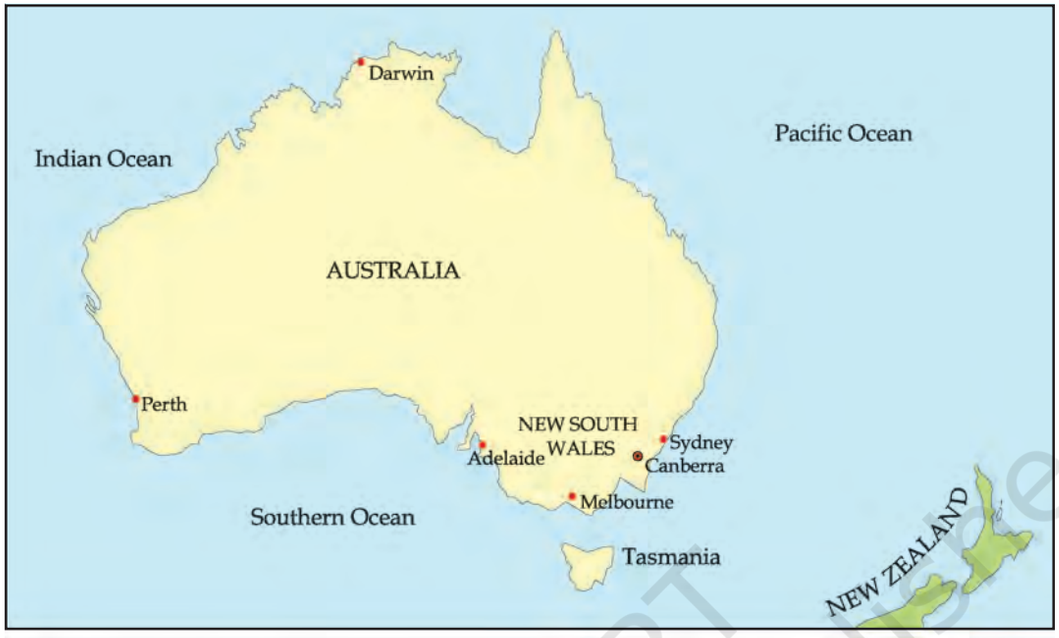

MAP 2: Australia

The story of the interaction between the European settlers, the native peoples and the land in Australia has many points of similarity to the story of the Americas, though it began nearly 300 years later. Initial reports from Captain Cook and his crew about encounters with natives are enthusiastic about their friendliness. There was a sharp reversal of feeling on the part of the British when Cook was killed by a native – not in Australia, but in Hawaii. As often happened, a single incident of this nature was used by colonisers to justify subsequent acts of violence towards other people.

A Description of the Sydney Area in 1790

'Aboriginal production had been dramatically disturbed by the British presence. The arrival of a thousand hungry mouths, followed by hundreds more, put unprecedented pressure on local food resources.

So what would the Daruk people have thought of all this? To them such large-scale destruction of sacred places and strange, violent behaviour towards their land was inexplicable. The newcomers seemed to knock down trees without any reason, for they were not making canoes, gathering bush honey or catching animals. Stones were moved and stacked together, clay dug up, shaped and cooked, holes were made in the ground, large unwieldy structures built. At first they may have equated the clearing with the creation of a sacred ceremonial ground...Perhaps they thought a huge ritual gathering was to be held, dangerous business from which they should steer well clear. There is no doubt the Daruks subsequently avoided the settlement, for the only way to bring them back was by an official kidnapping.'

– (P. Grimshaw, M. Lake, A. McGrath, M. Quartly, Creating a Nation)

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They did not foresee that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries nearly 90 per cent of them would die by exposure to germs, by the loss of their lands and resources, and in battles against the settlers. The experiment of settling Brazil with Portuguese convicts had been abandoned when their violent behaviour provoked angry reprisals from the natives. The British had adopted the same practice in the American colonies until they became independent. Then they continued it in Australia. Most of the early settlers were convicts who had been deported from England and, when their jail term ended, were allowed to live as free people in Australia on condition that they did not return to Britain. With no recourse but to make a life for themselves in this land so different from their own, they felt no hesitation about ejecting natives from land they took over for cultivation.

The Development of Australia

1850 Self-government granted to Australian colonies

1851 Chinese coolie immigration. Stopped by law in 1855

1851-1961 Gold rushes

1901 Formation of Federation of Australia, with six states

1911 Canberra established as capital

1948-75 Two million Europeans migrate to Australia

ACTIVITY 4

In 1911, it was announced that New Delhi and Canberra would be built as the capital cities of British India and of the Commonwealth of Australia. Compare and contrast the political situations of the native people in these countries at that time.

The economic development of Australia under European settlement was not as varied as in America. Vast sheep farms and mining stations were established over a long period and with much labour, followed by vineyards and wheat farming. These came to form the basis of the country's prosperity. When the states were united, and it was decided that a new capital would be built for Australia in 1911, one name suggested for it was Woolwheatgold! Ultimately, it was called Canberra (= kamberra, a native word meaning 'meeting place').

Some natives were employed in farms, under conditions of work so harsh that it was little different from slavery. Later, Chinese immigrants provided cheap labour, as in California, but unease about being dependent on non-whites led to the governments in both countries to ban Chinese immigrants. Till 1974, such was the popular fear that 'dark' people from South Asia or Southeast Asia might migrate to Australia in large numbers that there was a government policy to keep 'non-white' people out.

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The Winds of Change...

In 1968, people were electrified by a lecture by the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner, entitled 'The Great Australian Silence' – the silence of historians about the aborigines. From the 1970s, as was happening in North America, there was an eagerness to understand natives not as anthropological curiosities but as communities with distinct cultures, unique ways of understanding nature and climate, with a sense of community which had vast bodies of stories, textile and painting and carving skills, which should be understood and recorded and respected. Underlying it all was the urgent question which Henry Reynolds later articulated in a powerful book, *Why Weren't We Told?* This condemned the practice of writing Australian history as though it had begun with Captain Cook's 'discovery'.

Since then, university departments have been instituted to study native cultures, galleries of native art have been added to art galleries, museums have been enlarged to incorporate dioramas and imaginatively designed rooms explaining native culture, and natives have begun writing their own life histories. This has been a wonderful effort. It has also occurred at a critical time, because if native cultures had remained ignored, by this time much of such cultures would have been forgotten. From 1974, 'multiculturalism' has been official policy in Australia, which gave equal respect to native cultures and to the different cultures of the immigrants from Europe and Asia.

'Kathy my sister with the torn heart,
I don't know how to thank you
For your dreamtime stories of joy and grief
Written on paperbark.
You were one of the dark children
I wasn't allowed to play with–
Riverbank campers, the wrong colour
(I couldn't turn you white.)
So it was late I met you,
Late I began to know
They hadn't told me the land I loved
Was taken out of your hands.'

– 'Two Dreamtimes', written for Oodgeroo Noonuccal

JUDITH WRIGHT (1915-2000), an Australian writer, was a champion of the rights of the Australian aborigines. She wrote many moving poems about the loss created by keeping the white people and the natives apart.

From the 1970s, as the term 'human rights' began to be heard at meetings of the UNO and other international agencies, the Australian public realised with dismay that, in contrast to the USA, Canada and New Zealand, Australia had no treaties with the natives formalising the takeover of land by Europeans. The government had always termed the land of Australia *terra nullius*, that is belonging to nobody.

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There was also a long and agonising history of children of mixed blood (native European) being forcibly captured and separated from their native relatives.

Agitation around these questions led to enquiries and to two important decisions: one, to recognise that the natives had strong historic bonds with the land which was 'sacred' to them, and which should be respected; two, that while past acts could not be undone, there should be a public apology for the injustice done to children in an attempt to keep 'white' and 'coloured' people apart.

1974	*'White Australia' policy ends, Asian immigrants allowed entry*
1992	*Australian High Court (in the Mabo case) declares that terra nullius was legally invalid, and recognises native claims to land from before 1770*
1995	*National Enquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*
1999	*(26 May) 'A National Sorry Day' as apology for the children 'lost' from the 1820s to the 1970s*

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. *Comment on any points of difference between the native peoples of South and North America.*
2. *Other than the use of English, what other features of English economic and social life do you notice in nineteenth-century USA?*
3. *What did the 'frontier' mean to the Americans?*
4. *Why was the history of the Australian native peoples left out of history books?*

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

5. *How satisfactory is a museum gallery display in explaining the culture of a people? Give examples from your own experience of a museum.*
6. *Imagine an encounter in California in about 1880 between four people: a former African slave, a Chinese labourer, a German who had come out in the Gold Rush, and a native of the Hopi tribe, and narrate their conversation.*

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THEME 11

PATHS TO MODERNISATION

EAST ASIA at the beginning of the nineteenth century was dominated by China. The Qing dynasty, heir to a long tradition, seemed secure in its power, while Japan, a small island country, seemed to be locked in isolation. Yet, within a few decades China was thrown into turmoil unable to face the colonial challenge. The imperial government lost political control, was unable to reform effectively and the country was convulsed by civil war. Japan on the other hand was successful in building a modern nation-state, creating an industrial economy and even establishing a colonial empire by incorporating Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910). It defeated China, the land that had been the source of its culture and ideals, in 1894, and Russia, a European power, in 1905.

The Chinese reacted slowly and faced immense difficulties as they sought to redefine their traditions to cope with the modern world, and to rebuild their national strength and become free from Western and Japanese control. They found that they could achieve both objectives – of removing inequalities and of rebuilding their country – through revolution. The Chinese Communist Party emerged victorious from the civil war in 1949. However, by the end of the 1970s Chinese leaders felt that the ideological system was retarding economic growth and development. This led to wide-ranging reforms of the economy that brought back capitalism and the free market even as the Communist Party retained political control.

Japan became an advanced industrial nation but its drive for empire led to war and defeat at the hands of the Anglo-American forces. The US Occupation marked the beginning of a more democratic political system and Japan rebuilt its economy to emerge by the 1970s as a major economic power.

The Japanese path to modernisation was built on capitalist principles and took place within a world dominated by Western colonialism. Japanese expansion was justified by the call to resist Western domination and liberate Asia. The rapid development underlined the strength of tradition in Japanese institutions and society, their ability to learn and the strength of nationalism.

China and Japan have had a long tradition of historical writings, as history was an important guide for the rulers. The past provided the standards by which they would be judged and

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the rulers established official departments to maintain records and write dynastic histories. Sima Qian (145-90 BCE) is considered the greatest historian of early China. In Japan, Chinese cultural influence led to history being given a similar importance. One of the earliest acts of the Meiji government was to establish, in 1869, a bureau to collect records and write, as it were, a victor's version of the Meiji Restoration. There was great respect for the written word and literary ability was highly valued. This has meant that a wide range of written materials – official histories, scholarly writings, popular literature, religious tracts – are available. Printing and publishing were important industries in the pre-modern period and it is possible, for instance, to trace the distribution of a book in eighteenth-century China or Japan. Modern scholars have used these materials in new and different ways.

Modern scholarship has built on the work of Chinese intellectuals such as Liang Qichao or Kume Kunitake (1839-1931), one of the pioneers of modern history in Japan, as well as earlier writings by European travellers, such as the Italian Marco Polo (1254-1324, in China from 1274 to 1290), the Jesuit priests Mateo Ricci (1552-1610) in China and Luis Frois (1532-97), in Japan, all of whom left rich accounts of these countries. It has also benefited from the writings of Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century whose work provides valuable material for our understanding of these countries.

Scholarship in English from Joseph Needham's monumental work on the history of science in Chinese civilisation or George Sansom's on Japanese history and culture has grown and there is an immense body of sophisticated scholarship available to us today. In recent years, writings by Chinese and Japanese scholars have been translated into English, some of whom teach abroad and write in English, and in the case of Chinese scholars, since the 1980s, many have been working in Japan as well and write in Japanese. This has meant that we have scholarly writings from many parts of the globe that give us a richer and deeper picture of these countries.

*In Japan, the surname is written first.

Naito Konan* (1866-1934)

A leading Japanese scholar of China, Naito Konan's writings influenced scholars worldwide. Using the new tools of Western historiography Naito built on a long tradition of studying China as well as bringing his experience as a journalist there. He helped establish the Department of Oriental Studies in Kyoto University in 1907. In *Shinaron* [On China (1914)], he argued that republican government offered the Chinese a way to end aristocratic control and centralised power that had existed since the Sung dynasty (960-1279) – a way to revitalise local society where reform must begin. He saw in Chinese history strengths that would make it modern and democratic. Japan, he thought had an important role to play in China but he underestimated the power of Chinese nationalism.

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Introduction

China and Japan present a marked physical contrast. China is a vast continental country that spans many climatic zones; the core is dominated by three major river systems: the Yellow River (Huang He), the Yangtse River (Chang Jiang – the third longest river in the world) and the Pearl River. A large part of the country is mountainous.

MAP 1: East Asia

The dominant ethnic group are the Han and the major language is Chinese (Putonghua) but there are many other nationalities, such as the Uighur, Hui, Manchu and Tibetan, and aside from dialects, such as Cantonese (Yue) and Shanghainese (Wu), there are other minority languages spoken as well.

Chinese food reflects this regional diversity with at least four distinct types. The best known is southern or Cantonese cuisine – as most overseas Chinese come from the Canton area – which includes dim sum (literally touch your heart), an assortment of pastries and dumplings. In the north, wheat is the staple food, while in Szechuan spices brought by Buddhist monks in the ancient period, along the silk route, and chillies by Portuguese traders in the fifteenth century, have created a fiery cuisine. In eastern China, both rice and wheat are eaten.

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Japan, by contrast, is a string of islands, the four largest being Honshu, Kyushu, Shikoku and Hokkaido. The Okinawan chain is the southernmost, about the same latitude as the Bahamas. More than 50 per cent of the land area of the main islands is mountainous and Japan is situated in a very active earthquake zone. These geographical conditions have influenced architecture. The population is largely Japanese but there are a small Ainu minority and Koreans who were forcibly brought as labour when Korea was a Japanese colony.

Japan lacks a tradition of animal rearing. Rice is the staple crop and fish the major source of protein. Raw fish (sashimi or sushi) has now become a widely popular dish around the world as it is considered very healthy.

JAPAN

The Political System

An emperor had ruled Japan from Kyoto but by the twelfth century the imperial court lost power to shoguns, who in theory ruled in the name of the emperor. From 1603 to 1867, members of the Tokugawa family held the position of shogun. The country was divided into over 250 domains under the rule of lords called *daimyo*. The shogun exercised power over the domainal lords, ordering them to stay at the capital Edo (modern Tokyo) for long periods so that they would not pose a threat. He also controlled the major cities and mines. The samurai (the warrior class) were the ruling elite and served the shoguns and *daimyo*.

In the late sixteenth century, three changes laid the pattern for future development. One, the peasantry was disarmed and only the samurai could carry swords. This ensured peace and order, ending the frequent wars of the previous century. Two, the *daimyo* were ordered to live in the capitals of their domains, each with a large degree of autonomy. Third, land surveys identified owners and taxpayers and graded land productivity to ensure a stable revenue base.

The *daimyo*'s capitals became bigger, so that by the mid-seventeenth century, Japan not only had the most populated city in the world – Edo – but also two other large cities – Osaka and Kyoto, and at least half a dozen castle-towns with populations of over 50,000. (By contrast, most European countries of the time had only one large city.) This led to the growth of a commercial economy, and created financial and credit systems. A person's merit began to be more valued than his status. A vibrant culture blossomed in the towns, where the fast-growing class of merchants patronised theatre and the arts. As people enjoyed reading, it became possible for gifted writers to earn a living solely by writing. In Edo, people could 'rent' a book for the price of a bowl of noodles. This shows how popular reading had become and gives a glimpse into the scale of printing*.

* Printing was done with wood blocks. The Japanese did not like the regularity of European printing.

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Japan was considered rich, because it imported luxury goods like silk from China and textiles from India. Paying for these imports with gold and silver strained the economy and led the Tokugawa to put restrictions on the export of precious metals. They also took steps to develop the silk industry in Nishijin in Kyoto so as to reduce imports. The silk from Nishijin came to be known as the best in the world. Other developments such as the increased use of money and the creation of a stock market in rice show that the economy was developing in new ways.

Social and intellectual changes – such as the study of ancient Japanese literature – led people to question the degree of Chinese influence and to argue that the essence of being Japanese could be found long before the contact with China, in such early classics as the *Tale of the Genji* and in the myths of origin that said that the islands were created by the gods and that the emperor was a descendant of the Sun Goddess.

Tale of the Genji

A fictionalised diary of the Heian court written by Murasaki Shikibu, the Tale of the Genji became the central work of fiction in Japanese literature. That period saw the emergence of many women writers, like Murasaki, who wrote in the Japanese script, while men wrote in the Chinese script, used for education and government. The novel depicts the romantic life of Prince Genji and is a striking picture of the aristocratic atmosphere of the Heian court. It shows the independence that women had in choosing their husbands and living their lives.

The Meiji Restoration

Internal discontent coincided with demands for trade and diplomatic relations. In 1853, the USA sent Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858) to Japan to demand that the government sign a treaty that would permit trade and open diplomatic relations, which it did the following year. Japan lay on the route to China which the USA saw as a major market; also, their whaling ships in the Pacific needed a place to refuel. At that time, there was only one Western country that traded with Japan, Holland.

Perry's arrival had an important effect on Japanese politics. The emperor, who till then had had little political power, now re-emerged as an important figure. In 1868, a movement forcibly removed the shogun from power, and brought the Emperor to Edo. This was made the capital and renamed Tokyo, which means 'eastern capital'.

Nishijin is a quarter in Kyoto. In the sixteenth century, it had a weavers' guild of 31 households and by the end of the seventeenth century the community numbered over 70,000 people. Sericulture spread and was encouraged by an order in 1713 that only domestic yarn was to be used. Nishijin specialised only in the most expensive products. Silk production helped the growth of a class of regional entrepreneurs who challenged the Tokugawa order, and when foreign trade started in 1859 Japan's silk exports became a major source of profit for the economy struggling to compete with Western goods.

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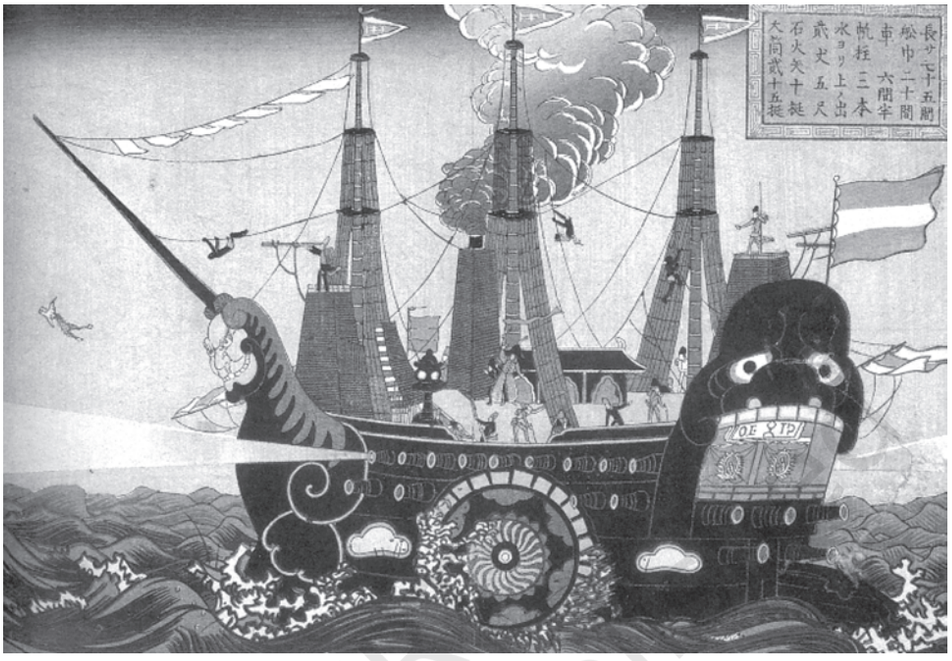

Perry's ship: a Japanese woodblock print.

What the Japanese called 'black ships' (tar was used to seal the joints of the wood) are depicted in paintings and cartoons showing the strange foreigners and their habits. This became a powerful symbol of Japan's 'opening'. (Today, scholars would argue that Japan had not been 'closed', took part in the east Asian trade and had access to knowledge of the wider world both through the Dutch and the Chinese.)

Officials and the people were aware that some European countries were building colonial empires in India and elsewhere. News of China being defeated by the British (see p. 244) was flowing in, and this was even depicted in popular plays, so that there was a real fear that Japan might be made a colony. Many scholars and leaders wanted to *learn* from the new ideas in Europe rather than ignore them as the Chinese were doing; others sought to exclude the Europeans even while being ready to adopt the new technologies they offered. Some argued for a gradual and limited 'opening' to the outer world.

The government launched a policy with the slogan '*fukoku kyohei*' (rich country, strong army). They realised that they needed to develop their economy and build a strong army, otherwise they would face the prospect of being subjugated like India. To do this they needed to create a sense of nationhood among the people, and to transform subjects into citizens.

At the same time, the new government also worked to build what they called the 'emperor system'. (Japanese scholars use this term as the emperor was part of a system, along with the bureaucracy and the military, that exercised power.) Officials were sent to study the European monarchies on which they planned to model their own. The Emperor would be treated with reverence as he was considered a direct descendant of the Sun Goddess but he was also shown as the leader of westernisation. His birthday became a national holiday, he wore Western-style military uniforms, and edicts were issued in his name to set up modern institutions. The Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 urged people to pursue learning, advance public good and promote common interests.

Commodore Perry as seen by the Japanese.

ACTIVITY 1

Contrast the encounter of the Japanese and the Aztecs with the Europeans.

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A new school system began to be built from the 1870s. Schooling was compulsory for boys and girls and by 1910 almost universal. Tuition fees were minimal. The curriculum had been based on Western models but by the 1870s, while emphasising modern ideas, stress was placed on loyalty and the study of Japanese history. The ministry of education exercised control over the curriculum and in the selection of textbooks, as well as in teachers' training. What was called 'moral culture' had to be taught, and texts urged children to revere their parents, be loyal to the nation, and become good citizens.

The Japanese had borrowed their written script from the Chinese in the sixth century. However, since their language is very different from Chinese they developed two phonetic alphabets – hiragana and katakana. Hiragana is considered feminine because it was used by many women writers in the Heian period (such as Murasaki). It is written using a mixture of Chinese characters and phonetics so that the main part of the word is written with a character – for instance, in 'going', 'go' would be written with a character and the 'ing' in phonetics.

The existence of a phonetic syllabary meant that knowledge spread from the elites to the wider society relatively quickly. In the 1880s it was suggested that Japanese develop a completely phonetic script, or adopt a European language. Neither was done.

To integrate the nation, the Meiji government imposed a new administrative structure by altering old village and domain boundaries. The administrative unit had to have revenue adequate to maintain the local schools and health facilities, as well as serve as a recruitment centre for the military. All young men over twenty had to do a period of military service. A modern military force was developed. A legal system was set up to regulate the formation of political groups, control the holding of meetings and impose strict censorship. In all these measures the government had to face opposition. The military and the bureaucracy were put under the direct command of the emperor. This meant that even after a constitution was enacted these two groups remained outside the control of the government. In all these measures the government faced opposition.

The tension between these different ideals represented by a democratic constitution and a modern army was to have far-reaching consequences. The army pressed for a vigorous foreign policy to acquire more territory. This led to wars with China and Russia, in both of which Japan was the victor. Popular demand for greater democracy was often in opposition to the government's aggressive policies. Japan developed economically and acquired a colonial empire that suppressed the spread of democracy at home and put it in collision with the people it colonised.

Writing Japanese: Kanji (Chinese characters) – red; katakana – blue; hiragana – green.

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Modernising the Economy

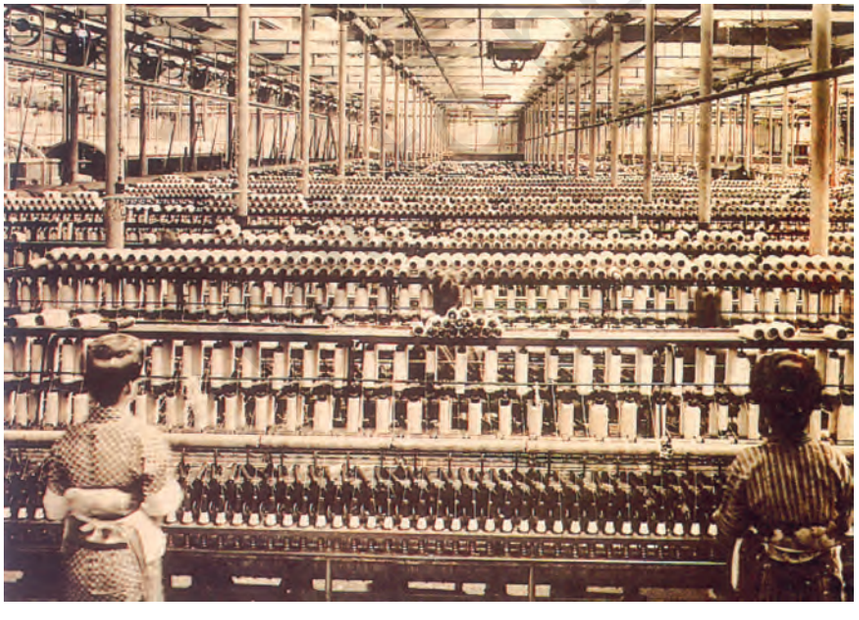
Another important part of the Meiji reforms was the modernising of the economy. Funds were raised by levying an agricultural tax. Japan's first railway line, between Tokyo and the port of Yokohama, was built in 1870-72. Textile machinery was imported from Europe, and foreign technicians were employed to train workers, as well as to teach in universities and schools, and Japanese students were sent abroad. In 1872, modern banking institutions were launched. Companies like Mitsubishi and Sumitomo were helped through subsidies and tax benefits to become major shipbuilders so that Japanese trade was from now on carried in Japanese ships. *Zaibatsu* (large business organisations controlled by individual families) dominated the economy till after the Second World War.

The population, 35 million in 1872, increased to 55 million in 1920. To reduce population pressure the government actively encouraged migration, first to the northern island of Hokkaido, which had been a largely autonomous area where the indigenous people called the Ainu lived, and then to Hawaii and Brazil, as well as to the growing colonial empire of Japan. Within Japan there was a shift to towns as industry developed. By 1925, 21 per cent of the population lived in cities; by 1935, this figure had gone up to 32 per cent (22.5 million).

Industrial Workers

The number of people in manufacturing increased from 700,000 in 1870 to 4 million in 1913. Most of them worked in units employing less than five people and using neither machinery nor electric power. Over half of those employed in modern factories were women. And it was women who organised the first modern strike in 1886. After 1900, the number of men began to increase but only in the 1930s did male workers begin to outnumber women.

Workers in a textile factory.



The size of factories also began to increase. Factories employing more than a hundred workers, just over 1,000 in 1909, jumped to over 2,000 by 1920 and 4,000 by the 1930s; yet even in 1940, there were over 550,000 workshops

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that employed less than five employees. This sustained the family-centred ideology, just as nationalism was sustained by a strong patriarchal system under an emperor who was like a family patriarch.

The rapid and unregulated growth of industry and the demand for natural resources such as timber led to environmental destruction. Tanaka Shozo, elected to the first House of Representatives, launched the first agitation against industrial pollution in 1897 with 800 villagers in a mass protest forcing the government to take action.

Tanaka Shozo (1841-1913), the self-taught son of a farmer, rose to become a major political figure. He participated in the Popular Rights Movement in the 1880s, a movement demanding constitutional government. He was elected member to the first Diet. He believed that ordinary people should not be sacrificed for industrial progress. The Ashio Mine was polluting the Watarase river ruining 100 square miles of farmland and affecting a thousand families. The agitation forced the company to take pollution-control measures so that by 1904 harvests were normal.

Aggressive Nationalism

The Meiji constitution was based on a restricted franchise and created a Diet (the Japanese used the German word for parliament because of the influence of German legal ideas) with limited powers. The leaders who brought about the imperial restoration continued to exercise power and even established political parties. Between 1918 and 1931, popularly elected prime ministers formed cabinets. Thereafter, they lost power to national unity cabinets formed across party lines. The emperor was the commander of the forces and from 1890 this was interpreted to mean that the army and the navy had independent control. In 1899, the prime minister ordered that only serving generals and admirals could become ministers. This strengthening of the military, together with the expansion of Japan's colonial empire, was connected with the fear that Japan was at the mercy of the Western powers. This fear was used to silence opposition to military expansion and to higher taxes to fund the armed forces.

Young people being exhorted to fight for the nation: a magazine cover. Student-soldiers: photographs.

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'Westernisation' and 'Tradition'

Successive generations of Japanese intellectuals had different views on Japan's relations with other countries. To some, the USA and western European countries were at the highest point of civilisation, to which Japan aspired. Fukuzawa Yukichi, a leading Meiji intellectual, expressed this by saying that Japan must 'expel Asia'. He meant that Japan must shed its 'Asian' characteristics and become part of the West.

Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901)

Born in an impoverished samurai family, he studied in Nagasaki and Osaka learning Dutch and Western sciences and, later, English. In 1860, he went as a translator for the first Japanese embassy to the USA. This provided material for a book on the West, written not in the classical but in the spoken style that became extremely popular. He established a school that is today the Keio University. He was one of the core members of the Meirokusha, a society to promote Western learning.

In The Encouragement to Learning (Gakumon no susume,1872-76) he was very critical of Japanese knowledge: 'All that Japan has to be proud of is its scenery'. He advocated not just modern factories and institutions but the cultural essence of the West – the spirit of civilisation. With this spirit it would be possible to build a new citizen. His principle was: 'Heaven did not create men above men, nor set men below men.'

The next generation questioned this total acceptance of Western ideas and urged that national pride be built on indigenous values. The philosopher Miyake Setsurei (1860-1945) argued that each nation must develop its special talents in the interest of world civilisation: 'To devote oneself to one's country is to devote oneself to the world.' By contrast, many intellectuals were attracted to Western liberalism and wanted a Japan based not on the military but on democracy. Ueki Emori (1857-1892), a leader of the Popular Rights Movement, was demanding constitutional government, admired the French Revolution's doctrine of the natural rights of man and of popular sovereignty, and spoke for a liberal education that would develop each individual: 'Freedom is more precious than order.' Others even advocated voting rights for women. This pressure led the government to announce a constitution.

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Daily Life

Japan's transformation into a modern society can be seen also in the changes in everyday life. The patriarchal household system comprised many generations living together under the control of the head of the house, but as more people became affluent, new ideas of the family spread. The new home (*homu* as the Japanese say, using the English word) was that of the nuclear family, where husband and wife lived as breadwinner and homemaker. This new concept of domesticity in turn generated demands for new types of domestic goods, new types of family entertainments, and new forms of housing. In the 1920s, construction companies made cheap housing available for a down payment of 200 yen and a monthly instalment of 12 yen for ten years – this at a time when the salary of a bank employee (a person with higher education) was 40 yen per month.

The novelty of electric goods: a rice-cooker, an American grill, a toaster.

CAR-CLUB

Moga: An abbreviation for 'modern girl'. It represented the coming together in the twentieth century of ideas of gender equality, a cosmopolitan culture and a developed economy. The new middle-class families enjoyed new forms of travel and entertainment. Transport in cities improved with electric trams, public parks were opened from 1878, and department stores began to be built. In Tokyo, the Ginza became a fashionable area for Ginbura, a word combining 'Ginza' and 'burbura' (walking aimlessly). The first radio stations opened in 1925. Matsui Sumako, an actress, became a national star with her portrayal of Nora in the Norwegian writer Ibsen's A Doll's House. Movies began to be made in 1899 and soon there were a dozen companies making hundreds of films. The period was one of great vitality and the questioning of traditional norms of social and political behaviour.

Women's car-pool.

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'Overcoming Modernity'

State-centred nationalism found full expression in the 1930s and 1940s as Japan launched wars to extend its empire in China and other parts of Asia, a war that merged into the Second World War after Japan attacked the USA at Pearl Harbor. This period saw greater controls on society, the repression and imprisonment of dissidents, as well as the formation of patriotic societies, many of them women's organisations, to support the war.

An influential symposium on 'Overcoming Modernity' in 1943 debated the dilemma facing Japan – of how to combat the West while being modern. A musician, Moroi Saburo, posed the question of how to rescue music from the art of sensory stimulation and restore it to an art of the spirit. He was not rejecting Western music but trying to find a way that went beyond merely rewriting or playing Japanese music on Western instruments. The philosopher Nishitani Keiji defined 'modern' as the unity of three streams of Western thought: the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of natural sciences. He argued that Japan's 'moral energy' (a term taken from the German philosopher Ranke) had helped it to escape colonisation and it was its duty to establish a new world order, a Greater East Asia. For this a new vision that would integrate science and religion was necessary.

ACTIVITY 2

Would you agree with Nishitani's definition of 'modern'?

After Defeat: Re-emerging as a Global Economic Power

Japan's attempt to carve out a colonial empire ended with its defeat by the Allied forces. It has been argued that nuclear bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to shorten the war. But others think the immense destruction and suffering it caused were unnecessary. Under the US-led Occupation (1945-47) Japan was demilitarised and a new constitution introduced. This had Article 9, the so-called 'no war clause' that renounces the use of war as an instrument of state policy. Agrarian reforms, the re-establishment of trade unions and an attempt to dismantle the *zaibatsu* or large monopoly houses that dominated the Japanese economy were also carried out. Political parties were revived and the first post-war elections held in 1946 where women voted for the first time.

The rapid rebuilding of the Japanese economy after its shattering defeat was called a post-war 'miracle'. But it was more than that – it was firmly rooted in its long history. The constitution was democratised only now, but the Japanese had a historic tradition of popular struggles and intellectual engagement with how to broaden political participation. The social cohesion of the pre-war years was strengthened, allowing for a close working of the government, bureaucracy and industry. US support, as well as the demand created by the Korean and the Vietnamese wars also helped the Japanese economy.

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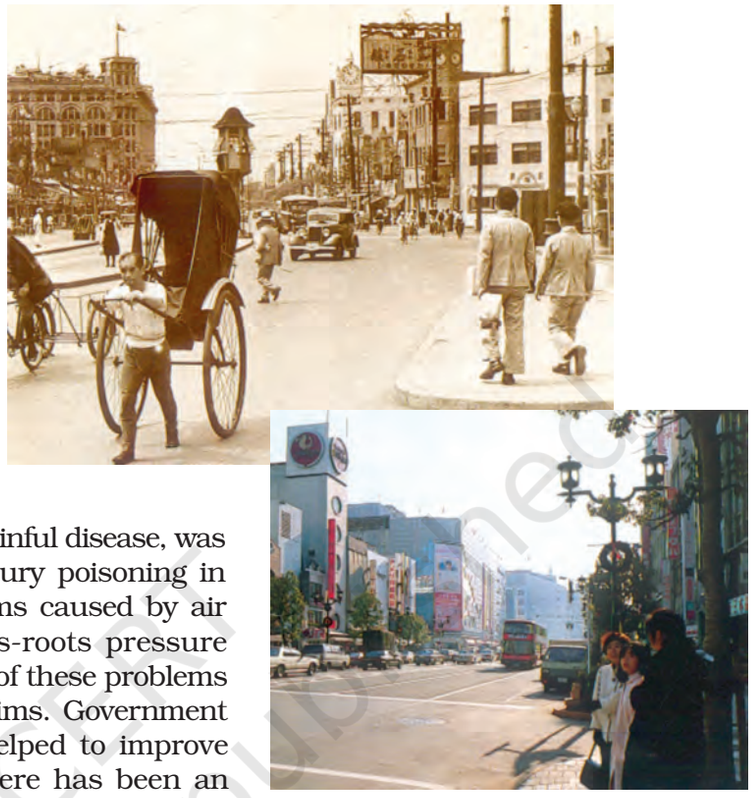

Tokyo before and after the Second World War.

The 1964 Olympics held in Tokyo marked a symbolic coming of age. In much the same way the network of high-speed *Shinkansen* or bullet trains, started in 1964, which ran at 200 miles per hour (now it is 300 miles per hour) have come to represent the ability of the Japanese to use advanced technologies to produce better and cheaper goods.

The 1960s saw the growth of civil society movements as industrialisation had been pushed with utter disregard to its effect on health and the environment. Cadmium poisoning, which led to a painful disease, was an early indicator, followed by mercury poisoning in Minamata in the 1960s and problems caused by air pollution in the early 1970s. Grass-roots pressure groups began to demand recognition of these problems as well as compensation for the victims. Government action and new legal regulations helped to improve conditions. From the mid-1980s there has been an increasing decline in interest in environmental issues as Japan enacted some of the strictest environmental controls in the world. Today, as a developed country it faces the challenge of using its political and technological capabilities to maintain its position as a leading world power.

CHINA

The modern history of China has revolved around the question of how to regain sovereignty, end the humiliation of foreign occupation and bring about equality and development. Chinese debates were marked by the views of three groups. The early reformers such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927) or Liang Qichao (1873-1929) tried to use traditional ideas in new and different ways to meet the challenges posed by the West. Second, republican revolutionaries such as Sun Yat-sen, the first president of the republic, were inspired by ideas from Japan and the West. The third, the Communist Party of China (CCP) wanted to end age-old inequalities and drive out the foreigners.

The beginning of modern China can be traced to its first encounter with the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when Jesuit missionaries introduced Western sciences such as astronomy and mathematics. Limited though its immediate impact was, it set in motion events that gathered momentum in the nineteenth century when Britain

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used force to expand its lucrative trade in opium leading to the first Opium War (1839-42). This undermined the ruling Qing dynasty and strengthened demands for reform and change.

The Opium War: A European painting.

THE OPIUM TRADE

The demand for Chinese goods such as tea, silk and porcelain created a serious balance-of-trade problem. Western goods did not find a market in China, so payment had to be in silver. The East India Company found a new option – opium, which grew in India. They sold the opium in China and gave the silver that they earned to company agents in Canton in return for letters of credit. The Company used the silver to buy tea, silk and porcelain to sell in Britain. This was the 'triangular trade' between Britain, India and China.

ACTIVITY 3

Does this painting give you a clear sense of the significance of the Opium War?

Qing reformers such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao realised the need to strengthen the system and initiated policies to build a modern administrative system, a new army and an educational system, and set up local assemblies to establish constitutional government. They saw the need to protect China from colonisation.

The negative example of colonised countries worked powerfully on Chinese thinkers. The partition of Poland in the eighteenth century was a much-discussed example. So much so that by the late 1890s it came to be used as a verb: 'to Poland us' (*bolan wo*). India was another such example. In 1903, the thinker Liang Qichao, who believed that only by making people aware that China was a nation would they be able to resist the West, wrote that India was 'a country that was destroyed by a non-country that is the East India Company'.

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He criticised Indians for being cruel to their own people and subservient to the British. Such arguments carried a powerful appeal as ordinary Chinese could see that the British used Indian soldiers in their wars on China.

Above all many felt that traditional ways of thinking had to be changed. Confucianism, developed from the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BCE) and his disciples, was concerned with good conduct, practical wisdom and proper social relationships. It influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, provided social standards and laid the basis for political theories and institutions. It was now seen as a major barrier to new ideas and institutions.

To train people in modern subjects students were sent to study in Japan, Britain and France and bring back new ideas. Many Chinese students went to Japan in the 1890s. They not only brought back new ideas but many became leading republicans. The Chinese borrowed even Japanese translations of European words such as justice, rights, and revolution because they used the same ideographic script, a reversal of the traditional relationship. In 1905, just after the Russo-Japanese war (a war fought on Chinese soil and over Chinese territory) the centuries-old Chinese examination system that gave candidates entry into the elite ruling class was abolished.

The Examination System

Entry to the elite ruling class (about 1.1 million till 1850) had been largely through an examination. This required writing an eight-legged essay [pa-ku wen] in classical Chinese in a prescribed form. The examination was held twice every three years, at different levels and of those allowed to sit only 1-2 per cent passed the first level, usually by the age of 24, to become what was called 'beautiful talent'. At any given time before 1850 there were about 526,869 civil and 212,330 military provincial (*sheng-yuan*) degree holders in the whole country. Since there were only 27,000 official positions, many lower-level degree holders did not have jobs. The examination acted as a barrier to the development of science and technology as it demanded only literary skills. In 1905, it was abolished as it was based on skills in classical Chinese learning that had, it was felt, no relevance for the modern world.

Establishing the Republic

The Manchu empire was overthrown and a republic established in 1911 under Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) who is unanimously regarded as the founder of modern China. He came from a poor family and studied in missionary schools where he was introduced to democracy and Christianity. He studied medicine but was greatly concerned about the fate of China. His programme was called the Three Principles (*San*

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min chui). These were nationalism – this meant overthrowing the Manchu who were seen as a foreign dynasty, as well as other foreign imperialists; democracy or establishing democratic government; and socialism regulating capital and equalising landholdings.

The social and political situation continued to be unstable. On 4 May 1919, an angry demonstration was held in Beijing to protest against the decisions of the post-war peace conference. Despite being an ally of the victorious side led by Britain, China did not get back the territories seized from it. The protest became a movement. It galvanised a whole generation to attack tradition and to call for saving China through modern science, democracy and nationalism. Revolutionaries called for driving out the foreigners, who were controlling the country's resources, to remove inequalities and reduce poverty. They advocated reforms such as the use of simple language in writing, abolishing the practice of foot-binding and the subordination of women, equality in marriage, and economic development to end poverty. After the republican revolution the country entered a period of turmoil. The Guomindang (the National People's Party) and the CCP emerged as major forces striving to unite the country and bring stability.

Sun Yat-sen's ideas became the basis of the political philosophy of the Guomindang. They identified the 'four great needs' as clothing, food, housing and transportation. After the death of Sun, Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975) emerged as the leader of the Guomindang as he launched a military campaign to control the 'warlords', regional leaders who had usurped authority, and to eliminate the communists. He advocated a secular and rational 'this-worldly' Confucianism, but also sought to militarise the nation. The people, he said, must develop a 'habit and instinct for unified behaviour'. He encouraged women to cultivate the four virtues of 'chastity, appearance, speech and work' and recognise their role as confined to the household. Even the length of hemlines was prescribed.

The Guomindang's social base was in urban areas. Industrial growth was slow and limited. In cities such as Shanghai, which became the centres of modern growth, by 1919 an industrial working class had appeared numbering 500,000. Of these, however, only a small percentage were employed in modern industries such as shipbuilding. Most were 'petty urbanites' (*xiao shimin*), traders and shopkeepers. Urban workers, particularly women, earned very low wages. Working hours were long and conditions of work bad. As individualism increased, there was a growing concern with women's rights, ways to build the family and discussions about love and romance.

Social and cultural change was helped along by the spread of schools and universities (Peking University was established in 1902). Journalism flourished reflecting the growing attraction of this new thinking. The popular *Life Weekly*, edited by Zao Taofen (1895-1944), is representative of this new trend. It introduced readers to new ideas, as well as to

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leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Kemal Ataturk, the modernist leader of Turkey. Its circulation increased rapidly from just 2,000 in 1926 to a massive 200,000 copies in 1933.

ACTIVITY 4

How does a sense of discrimination unite people?

Shanghai in 1935: Buck Clayton, a black American trumpet player, in Shanghai with his jazz orchestra lived the life of the privileged expatriates. But he was black and once some white Americans assaulted him and his orchestra members and threw them out from the hotel they played in. Thus, though American, he had greater sympathy for the plight of the Chinese being himself a victim of racial discrimination.

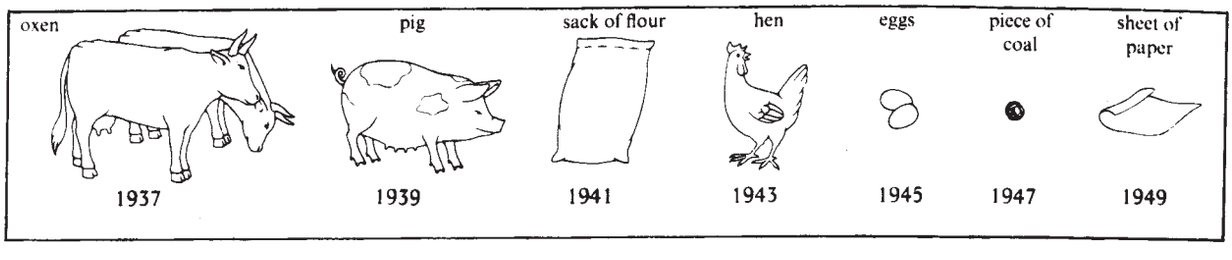
Of their fight with white Americans where they emerged victorious he writes, 'The Chinese onlookers treated us like we had done something they always wanted to do and followed us all the way home cheering us like a winning football team.'

On the poverty and hard life of the Chinese, Clayton writes, 'I would see sometimes twenty or thirty coolies pulling a big heavy cart that in America would be pulled by a truck or horses. These people seemed to be nothing but human horses and all they would get at the end of the day was just enough to get a couple of bowls of rice and a place to sleep. I don't know how they did it.'

'Rickshaw Puller', woodcut by Lan Jia. The novel Rickshaw *by Lao She (1936) became a classic.*

The Guomindang despite its attempts to unite the country failed because of its narrow social base and limited political vision. A major plank in Sun Yat-sen's programme – regulating capital and equalising land – was never carried out because the party ignored the peasantry and the rising social inequalities. It sought to impose military order rather then address the problems faced by the people.

The story of rising prices.



TIMELINE

	JAPAN		CHINA
1603	Tokugawa Ieyasu establishes the Edo shogunate	1644-1911	Qing dynasty
1630	Japan closes country to Western Powers except for restricted trade with the Dutch	1839-60	Two Opium Wars
1854	Japan and the USA conclude the Treaty of Peace, ending Japan's seclusion		
1868	Restoration of Meiji		
1872	Compulsory education system First railway line between Tokyo and Yokohama		
1889	Meiji Constitution enacted		
1894-95	War between Japan and China		
1904-05	War between Japan and Russia		
1910	Korea annexed, colony till 1945	1912	Sun Yat-sen founds Guomingdang
1914-18	First World War	1919	May Fourth Movement
1925	Universal male suffrage	1921	CCP founded
1931	Japan's invasion of China	1926-49	Civil Wars in China
1941-45	The Pacific War	1934	Long March
1945	Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki	1945	
1946-52	US-led Occupation of Japan Reforms to democratise and demilitarise Japan	1949	People's Republic of China Chiang Kai-shek founds Republic of China in Taiwan
1956	Japan becomes a member of the United Nations	1962	China attacks India over border dispute
1964	Olympic Games in Tokyo, the first time in Asia	1966	Cultural Revolution
		1976	Death of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai
		1997	Hong Kong returned to China by Britain

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The Rise of the Communist Party of China

When the Japanese invaded China in 1937, the Guomindang retreated. The long and exhausting war weakened China. Prices rose 30 per cent per month between 1945 and 1949, and utterly destroyed the lives of ordinary people. Rural China faced two crises: one ecological, with soil exhaustion, deforestation and floods, and the second, a socio-economic one caused by exploitative land-tenure systems, indebtedness, primitive technology and poor communications.

The CCP had been founded in 1921, soon after the Russian Revolution. The Russian success exercised a powerful influence around the world and leaders such as Lenin and Trotsky went on to establish the Comintern or the Third International in March 1918 to help bring about a world government that would end exploitation. The Comintern and the Soviet Union supported communist parties around the world but they worked within the traditional Marxist understanding that revolution would be brought about by the working class in cities. Its initial appeal across national boundaries was immense but it soon became a tool for Soviet interests and was dissolved in 1943. Mao Zedong (1893-1976), who emerged as a major CCP leader, took a different path by basing his revolutionary programme on the peasantry. His success made the CCP a powerful political force that ultimately won against the Guomindang.

Mao Zedong's radical approach can be seen in Jiangxi, in the mountains, where they camped from 1928 to 1934, secure from Guomindang attacks. A strong peasants' council (soviet) was organised, united through confiscation and redistribution of land. Mao, unlike other leaders, stressed the need for an independent government and army. He had become aware of women's problems and supported the emergence of rural women's associations, promulgated a new marriage law that forbade arranged marriages, stopped purchase or sale of marriage contracts and simplified divorce.

In a survey in 1930 in Xunwu, Mao Zedong looked at everyday commodities such as salt and soya beans, at the relative strengths of local organisations, at petty traders and craftsmen, ironsmiths and prostitutes, and the strength of religious organisations to examine the different levels of exploitation. He gathered statistics of the number of peasants who had sold their children and found out what price they received – boys were sold for 100-200 yuan but there were no instances of the sale of girls because the need was for hard labour not sexual exploitation. It was on the basis of these studies that he advocated ways of solving social problems.

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MAP 2: The Long March

The Guomindang blockade of the Communists' Soviet forced the party to seek another base. This led them to go on what came to be called the Long March (1934-35), 6,000 gruelling and difficult miles to Shanxi. Here, in their new base in Yanan, they further developed their programme to end warlordism, carry out land reforms and fight foreign imperialism. This won them a strong social base. In the difficult years of the war, the Communists and the Guomindang worked together, but after the end of the war the Communists established themselves in power and the Guomindang was defeated.

Photograph of soldiers on the Long March reclaiming wasteland, 1941.

Establishing the New Democracy: 1949-65

The Peoples Republic of China government was established in 1949. It was based on the principles of the 'New Democracy', an alliance of all social classes, unlike the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'* that the Soviet Union said it had established. Critical areas of the economy were put under government control, and private enterprise and private ownership of land were gradually ended. This programme lasted till 1953 when the government declared that it would launch a programme of socialist transformation. The Great Leap Forward movement launched in 1958 was a policy to galvanise the country to industrialise rapidly. People were encouraged to set up steel furnaces in their backyards. In the rural areas, people's communes (where land would be collectively owned

*This term was used by Karl Marx to stress that the working class would replace the repressive government of the propertied class with a revolutionary government and not a dictatorship in the current sense.

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and cultivated) were started. By 1958, there were 26,000 communes covering 98 per cent of the farm population.

Mao was able to mobilise the masses to attain the goals set by the Party. His concern was with creating a 'socialist man' who would have five loves: fatherland, people, labour, science and public property. Mass organisations were created for farmers, women, students and other groups. For instance, the All-China Democratic Women's Federation had 76 million members, the All-China Students Federation 3.29 million members. These objectives and methods did not appeal to everyone in the Party. In 1953-54, some were urging for more attention to industrial organisation and economic growth. Liu Shaochi (1896-1969) and Deng Xiaoping (1904-97) tried to modify the commune system as it was not working efficiently. The steel produced in the backyard furnaces was unusable industrially.

Conflicting Visions: 1965-78

The conflict between the Maoists wanting to create a 'Socialist Man' and those who objected to his emphasis on ideology rather than expertise, culminated in Mao launching the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in 1965 to counter his critics. The Red Guards, mainly students and the army, was used for a campaign against old culture, old customs and old habits. Students and professionals were sent to the countryside to learn from the masses. Ideology (being Communist) was more important than having professional knowledge. Denunciations and slogans replaced rational debate.

The Cultural Revolution began a period of turmoil, weakened the Party and severely disrupted the economy and educational system. From the late 1960s, the tide began to turn. In 1975, the Party once again laid emphasis on greater social discipline and the need to build an industrial economy so that China could become a power before the end of the century.

Reforms from 1978

The Cultural Revolution was followed by a process of political manoeuvring. Deng Xiaoping kept party control strong while introducing a socialist market economy. In 1978, the Party declared its goal as the Four Modernisations (to develop science, industry, agriculture, defence). Debate was allowed as long as the Party was not questioned.

In this new and liberating climate, as at the time of the May Fourth movement 60 years earlier, there was an exciting explosion of new ideas. On 5 December 1978, a wall-poster, 'The Fifth Modernisation' proclaimed that without Democracy the other modernisations would come to nothing. It went on to criticise the CCP for not solving the problem of poverty or ending sexual exploitation, even citing cases of such abuse from within the Party.

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After the 1978 Reforms, the Chinese were able to buy consumer goods freely.

These demands were suppressed, but in 1989 on the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth movement many intellectuals called for a greater openness and an end to 'ossified dogmas' (*su shaozhi*). Student demonstrators at Tiananmen Square in Beijing were brutally repressed. This was strongly condemned around the world.

The post-reform period has seen the emergence of debates on ways to develop China. The dominant view supported by the Party is based on strong political control, economic liberalisation and integration into the world market. Critics argue that increasing inequalities between social groups, between regions and between men and women are creating social tensions, and question the heavy emphasis on the market. Finally, there is a growing revival of earlier so-called 'traditional' ideas, of Confucianism and arguments that China can build a modern society following its own traditions rather than simply copying the West.

The Story of Taiwan

Chiang Kai-shek, defeated by the CCP fled in 1949 to Taiwan with over US$300 million in gold reserves and crates of priceless art treasures and established the Republic of China. Taiwan had been a Japanese colony since the Chinese ceded it after the 1894-95 war with Japan. The Cairo Declaration (1943) and the Potsdam Proclamation (1949) restored sovereignty to China.

Massive demonstrations in February 1947 had led the GMD to brutally kill a whole generation of leading figures. The GMD, under Chiang Kai-shek went on to establish a repressive government forbidding free speech and political opposition and excluding the local population from positions of power. However, they carried out land reforms that increased agricultural productivity and modernised the economy so that by 1973 Taiwan had a GNP second only to that of Japan in Asia. The economy, largely dependent on trade has been steadily growing, but what is important is that the gap between the rich and poor has been steadily declining.

Even more dramatic has been the transformation of Taiwan into a democracy. It began slowly after the death of Chiang in 1975 and grew in momentum when martial law was lifted in 1987 and opposition parties were legally permitted. The first free elections began the process of bringing local Taiwanese to power. Diplomatically most countries have only trade missions in Taiwan.

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Full diplomatic relations and embassies are not possible as Taiwan is considered to be part of China.

The question of re-unification with the mainland remains a contentious issue but "Cross Strait" relations (that is between Taiwan and China) have been improving and Taiwanese trade and investments in the mainland are massive and travel has also become easier. China may be willing to tolerate a semi-autonomous Taiwan as long as it gives up any move to seek independence.

The Story of Korea

Beginnings of Modernisation

During the late nineteenth century, Korea's Joseon Dynasty (1392–1910) faced internal political and social strife and increasing foreign pressure from China, Japan and the West. Amidst this, Korea implemented modernisation reforms in its governmental structures, diplomatic relations, infrastructure and society. After decades of political interference, the imperial Japan annexed Korea as its colony in 1910, bringing the over 500-year long Joseon Dynasty to its end. However, the Korean people were angry about Japan's suppression of their culture and forced assimilation. Desiring independence, Koreans around the country demonstrated against the colonial rule, set up a provisional government and sent delegations to appeal to foreign leaders at international meetings, such as the Cairo, Yalta and Potsdam conferences.

Koreans celebrate their independence from Japan in 1945.

The Japanese colonial rule ended after 35 years in August 1945 with Japan's defeat in the World War II. However, it was the continued efforts of independence activists both inside and outside Korea that ensured Korea's independence after Japan's defeat. Following liberation, the Korean Peninsula was temporarily divided along the 38th parallel with the Soviets managing the North and the U.N. managing the South even as the nations worked to disband the Japanese forces in the region. However, this division became permanent as separate governments were established in both the North and the South in 1948.

A Post-War Nation

In June 1950, the Korean War broke out. With South Korea receiving support from the US-led United Nations forces and North Korea receiving support from communist China, it developed into

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a vintage proxy war of the Cold War era. In July 1953, after three years, the war ended in an armistice agreement. Korea remained divided. The Korean War had caused not only massive losses of life and property, but also a delay in free-market economic development and democratisation. Prices suddenly rose due to inflation caused by increased national expenses and currency issued during the war. Furthermore, industrial facilities constructed during the colonial period had been destroyed entirely. As a result, South Korea was forced to rely on the economic assistance being provided by the USA.

Though South Korea's first president Syngman Rhee had been elected in 1948 through democratic process after the Korean War, he extended his administration, twice through illegal constitutional amendments. In April 1960, citizens protested against a rigged election in what is known as the April Revolution and Rhee was forced to resign.

With the revolution as an impetus, the spirit of the people, which had been suppressed during the Rhee administration, erupted in the form of demonstrations and demands. However, the Democratic Party administration, which took power after Rhee's resignation could not properly respond to citizens' demands due to internal divisions and conflict. Rather, reformist political powers emerged and the students' movement grew into a unification movement. This was not looked upon favourably by the military authorities. In May 1961, the Democratic Party government was overthrown in a military coup staged by General Park Chung-hee and other military authorities.

Rapid Industrialisation under Strong Leadership

In October 1963, an election was held and military coup leader Park Chung-hee was elected the president. The Park administration adopted a state-led, export-oriented policy to achieve economic growth. The five-year economic plans of the government favoured large corporate firms, placed emphasis on expanding employment and increased Korea's competitiveness.

Korea's unprecedented rate of economic growth began in the early 1960s when the state policy shifted from import substitution industrialisation (ISI) towards a focus on exports. Under the export-oriented policy, the government supported labour-intensive light industrial products, such as textiles and garments in which Korea had a comparative advantage. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the focus again shifted from light industries to value-added heavy and chemical industries. Steel, non-ferrous metals machinery, shipbuilding, electronics and chemical production were selected as the most important industries in the race for economic growth.

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In 1970, the New Village (*Saemaul*) Movement was introduced to encourage and mobilise the rural population and modernise the agricultural sector. This campaign aimed at reforming the spirit of the people from being passive and disheartened to becoming active and hopeful. Rural people were empowered to help themselves in developing their villages and improve the living conditions of their respective communities. The movement was later expanded to assist the neighbourhoods near industrial plants and in urban areas. Today, Korea is sharing the knowledge and experiences from this movement with developing countries, who wish to adopt the principles of the *Saemaul* Movement in their development efforts.

Korea achieved startling economic growth thanks to a combination of strong leaders, well-trained bureaucrats, aggressive industrialists and a capable labour force. Ambitious entrepreneurs responded well to government incentives to increase exports and develop new industries.

The high level of education also contributed to the economic growth of Korea. At the dawn of Korea's industrialisation, almost all Korean workers were already literate and could easily acquire new skills. At the same time, the country's open economic policy worked to absorb more advanced institutions and technologies from other countries. Foreign investment and Korea's high domestic savings rate helped develop the heavy industrial sector, while remittances from South Korean workers overseas also contributed to the overall economic development.

Economic growth was the foundation of the Park administration's long-term power. Park revised the constitution so that he could run for a third term and was reelected in 1971. In October 1972, Park declared and implemented the Yusin Constitution, which made permanent presidency possible. Under the Yusin Constitution, the president had complete authority over legislation, jurisdiction and administration and also had a constitutional right to repeal any law as an 'emergency measure'.

As the president was invested with absolute authority, the progress of democracy was temporarily suspended in pursuit of economic development. However, the second oil crisis in 1979 acted as a hindrance to the economic policy, which had over-invested in the heavy chemical industry. Moreover, students, scholars and the opposition continually demonstrated against the Yusin Constitution as the Park administration's invocation of emergency measures and suppression brought about political instability. Amidst this economic crisis and political instability, the Park administration came to an end in October 1979 when Park Chung-hee was assassinated.

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Continued Economic Growth and Calls for Democratisation

The desire for democratisation grew upon the death of Park Chung-hee, but in December 1979, another military coup, this time led by Chun Doo-hwan, was staged. In May 1980, various protests in key cities around the nation were held by students and citizens demanding democracy in the face of Chun's military faction. The military faction suppressed the democracy movement by implementing martial law across the country. In the city of Gwangju, in particular, students and citizens did not back down and demanded that martial law be ended. This is known as the Gwangju Democratisation Movement. However, Chun's military faction suppressed the protests for democratisation. Later that year, Chun became the president through an indirect election under the Yusin Constitution.

The Chun administration strengthened the suppression of democratisation influences in order to stabilise the regime. Due in part to the international economic boom, the Chun administration was able to raise economic growth from 1.7 per cent in 1980 to 13.2 per cent by 1983, while also significantly lowering inflation. Economic development had led to urbanisation, improved education levels and media advancements. As a result, citizens' self-awareness about political rights grew, leading to demands for a constitutional amendment to allow direct election of the president.

In May 1987, the Chun administration's minimisation of inquiries into the death-by-torture of a university student was made known, making citizens begin participate in a large-scale struggle for democratisation. The June Democracy Movement that followed had participation not only by students, but the middle class as well. Owing to these efforts, the Chun administration was forced to make a revision to the constitution, allowing direct elections. A new chapter of Korean democracy thus began.

Demonstrators during the June Democracy Movement of 1987.

Korean Democracy and the IMF Crisis

As per the new constitution, the first direct election since 1971 was held in December 1987. But due to the opposition parties' failure to unite, a fellow military leader of Chun's military faction, Roh Tae-woo, was elected. However, Korea continued along the path of democracy. In 1990, long-time opposition leader Kim Young-sam compromised with Roh's party to create a large

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ruling party. In December 1992, Kim, a civilian, was elected the president after decades of military rule. With his election and the consequent dissolution of authoritarian military power, democracy made its forward march.

Under the export-driven policy of the new administration, several companies grew to global prominence, which continued until the early 1990s. With governmental support, Korean conglomerates invested in capital-intensive heavy and chemical industries, as well as, electronic industries, while the government continued to focus on building industrial and social infrastructure.

Meanwhile, under increasing neoliberalist pressure to open its market, the Kim administration joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and attempted to strengthen Korea's international competitiveness. But amidst increasing trade deficits, poor management by financial institutions, reckless business operations by conglomerates, and more, Korea was met with a foreign currency crisis in 1997. The crisis was dealt with through emergency financial support provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Simultaneous efforts were also made to improve the country's economic constitution as the citizens actively contributed towards foreign loan repayment through the Gold Collection Movement.

In December 1997, long-time opposition party leader Kim Dae-jung was elected the president for the first time in Korea, marking a peaceful transfer of power. The second peaceful transfer of power came in 2008, when conservative Lee Myung-bak was elected as the president, following the progressive Roh Mu-hyun administration. In 2012, conservative Park Geun-hye was elected as the first female president. At the beginning of her presidency, she gained support due to the political legacy of her father, Park Chung-hee. But in October 2016, as it came to light that she had let a friend secretly manage government affairs, she met with nationwide protests, leading to her impeachment and removal from office in March 2017. In May 2017, Moon Jae-in was elected the president, in a peaceful transfer of power for the third time.

Present-day downtown Seoul at night.

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The candlelight protests of 2016, led by citizens who peacefully demonstrated for the president's resignation within the boundaries of democratic law and systems, show the maturity of the Korean democracy. The Korean democracy owes a debt to economic development, but it was the citizens' elevated political awareness to encourage republicanism in the country, which played the lead role in advancing it to where it is today.

Two Roads to Modernisation

Industrial societies far from becoming like each other have found their own paths to becoming modern. The histories of Japan and China, along with the stories of Taiwan and Korea, show how different historical conditions led them on widely divergent paths to building independent and modern nations.

Japan was successful in retaining its independence and using traditional skills and practices in new ways. However, its elite-driven modernisation generated an aggressive nationalism, helped to sustain a repressive regime that stifled dissent and demands for democracy, and established a colonial empire that left a legacy of hatred in the region, as well as, distorted internal developments.

Japan's programme of modernisation was carried out in an environment dominated by Western imperial powers. While it imitated them, it also attempted to find its own solutions. Japanese nationalism was marked by these different compulsions — while many Japanese hoped to liberate Asia from Western domination, for others these ideas justified building an empire.

It is important to note that the transformation of social and political institutions and daily life was not just a question of reviving traditions, or tenaciously preserving them, but rather of creatively using them in new and different ways. For instance, the Meiji school system, modelled on European and American practices, introduced new subjects but the curriculum's main objective was to make loyal citizens. A course on morals that stressed loyalty to the emperor was compulsory. Similarly, changes in the family or in daily life show how foreign and indigenous ideas were brought together to create something new.

The Chinese path to modernisation was very different. Foreign imperialism, both Western and Japanese, combined with a hesitant and unsure Qing dynasty to weaken government control and set the stage for a breakdown of political and social order leading to immense misery for most of the people. Warlordism, banditry and civil war exacted a heavy toll on human lives, as did the savagery of the Japanese invasion. Natural disasters added to this burden.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a rejection of traditions and a search for ways to build national unity and strength. The CCP and its supporters fought to put an end to tradition, which they saw

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as keeping the masses in poverty, the women subjugated and the country undeveloped. While calling for power to the people, it built a highly centralised state. The success of the Communist programme promised hope but its repressive political system turned the ideals of liberation and equality into slogans to manipulate the people. Yet it did remove centuries' old inequalities, spread education and raise consciousness among the people.

The Party has now carried out market reforms and has been successful in making China economically powerful but its political system continues to be tightly controlled. The society now faces growing inequalities, as well as, a revival of traditions long suppressed. This new situation again poses the question of how China can develop while retaining its heritage.

Exercises

ANSWER IN BRIEF

1. What were the major developments before the Meiji restoration that made it possible for Japan to modernise rapidly?
2. Discuss how daily life was transformed as Japan developed.
3. How did the Qing dynasty try and meet the challenge posed by the Western powers?
4. What were Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles?
5. How did Korea deal with the foreign currency crisis in 1997?

ANSWER IN A SHORT ESSAY

6. Did Japan's policy of rapid industrialisation lead to wars with its neighbours and destruction of the environment?
7. Do you think that Mao Zedong and the Communist Party of China were successful in liberating China and laying the basis for its current success?
8. Did economic growth in South Korea contribute to its democratisation?

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CONCLUSION

THIS book on Themes of World History has taken you across vast stretches of time – ancient, medieval, modern. It has focused on some of the more prominent themes of human evolution and development. Each section has covered the following, increasingly foreshortened, periods:

I c.6 MYA – 400 BCE
II BCE 400 – 1300 CE
III 800 – 1700 CE
IV 1700 – 2000 CE

Although historians tend to specialise in ancient, medieval and modern periods, the historian's craft displays certain common features and predicaments. We have attempted to nuance the distinction between ancient, medieval and modern in order to convey a holistic idea of how history is written and discussed as also to equip you with an overall understanding of human history that goes well beyond our modern roots.

The book would have allowed you a glimpse into the history of Africa, West and Central Asia, East Asia, Australia, North and South America and Europe including the United Kingdom. It would have familiarised you with what may be called the 'case study' method. Instead of burdening you with enormous detail about the history of all these places, we felt it would be better to examine key illustrations of certain phenomena in detail.

World history can be written in many ways. One of these, perhaps the oldest, is to focus on contact between peoples to stress the interconnectedness of cultures and civilisations and to explore the multifarious dimensions of world historical change. An alternative is to identify relatively self-contained – though expanding – regions of economic exchange that sustained certain forms of culture and power. A third method specifies differences in the historical experience of nations and regions to highlight their distinctive characteristics. You would have found traces of each of these approaches in the book. But differences between societies (and individuals) go hand in

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hand with similarities. Interlinkages, connections and similarities among human communities always existed. The interplay of the global and the local ('the world in a grain of sand'), the 'mainstream' and the 'marginal', the general and the specific, which you would have gleaned from this book, are a fascinating aspect of the study of history.

Our account began from scattered settlements in Africa, Asia and Europe. From there we moved on to city life in Mesopotamia. Early empires were created around cities in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Persia and India. Empires of greater extent followed them – the Greek (Macedonian), Roman, Arab and (from the 1200s) the Mongol. Trading operations, technology and government were often highly intricate in these empires. Very often, they were based on effective use of a written language.

A new era in human history took shape as a consequence of a combination of technological and organisational changes that occurred in Western Europe in the middle of the second millennium CE (from the 1400s onwards). These were linked to the 'Renaissance' or 'rebirth' of civilisation, whose primary impact was felt in the cities of northern Italy, but whose influence spread quickly over Europe. This Renaissance was the product of the region's city life, and of extensive interactions with Byzantium and the Muslim world of the Mediterranean. Over time, ideas and discoveries were carried to the Americas by explorers and conquerors, in the sixteenth century CE. Some of these notions were carried later to Japan, India and elsewhere as well.

European pre-eminence in global trade, politics and culture did not come at this time. It was to be the feature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Industrial Revolution took place in Britain, and spread to Europe. Britain, France and Germany were able to create systems of colonial control over parts of Africa and Asia – systems more intense and powerful than those of earlier empires. By the mid-twentieth century, the technology, economic life and culture that had once made European states powerful had been reworked in the rest of the world to create the foundations of modern life.

You must have noticed passages quoted in the various chapters of the book. Many of these are extracts for what historians call 'primary sources'. Scholars construct history from such materials, drawing their 'facts' from them. They critically evaluate these materials and are attentive to their ambiguities. Different historians may use a given source-material to advance vastly different, even contradictory arguments about historical phenomena. As with the other human sciences, history can be made to speak to us in varied voices. This is because of the intricate relationship between the historian's reasoning and historical facts.

In your final year at school you will be studying aspects of Indian (or South Asian) history from Harappan times to the making of modern India's Constitution. Again, the emphasis will be on a judicious mix

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of political, economic, social and cultural history, inviting you to engage with chosen themes through the case-study method. We hope these books will help you formulate your own answers to so many questions, above all to the question,'Why study History?' Do you know the gifted medievalist, Marc Bloch, began his book, *The Historian's Craft*, written in the trenches during the Second World War, by recalling a young boy's question, 'Tell me, Daddy. What is the use of history?'

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