

IOHS ANCIENT HISTORY 2012 – TEXT (condensed)

Ancient History

Our Ancient History section covers the time period from 10,000 BC to 500 AD. From the beginning of agriculture in the Fertile Crescent to the rise and decline of the ancient Egyptian empire to the civilizations in China, this era of human history provided the foundation of the many advancements and conflicts found today in the modern world.

Historic Ages and Eras

Age or Era	Time Period
Stone Age	c. 70,000 - 3,000 BC
Palaeolithic era (Early Stone Age)	c. 70,000 - 20,000 BC
Mesolithic era (Middle Stone Age)	c. 20,000 - 7000 BC
Neolithic era (New Stone Age)	c. 7000 - 3000 BC
Bronze Age	c. 3000 - 1200 BC
Iron Age	c. 1200 - 600 BC
Egyptian Period	c. 3100 - 30 BC
Greek Era	c. 510 - 146 BC
Greek Dark Ages	c. 1200 - 900 BC
Archaic Period	c. 900 - 510 BC
Classical Period	510 - 404 BC
Hellenistic Period	404 - 146 BC
Roman Empire	c. 500 BC - 476

WORDS TO KNOW

Abu Simbel

Site of two massive rock temples build by Ramesses II of Egypt around c. 1250 BC. Abu Simbel was originally located on the banks of the Nile. It was moved in the 1960s onto the shore of Lake Nasser.

Achaemenid Empire

Persian empire named after its founder Achemens. The empire lasted from about 550 to 330 BC when it was conquered by Alexander the Great.

Anatolia

A historical term for the land that includes most of the Asian part of Turkey.

Ashur

City in northern Mesopotamia located on the river Tigris.

Assyria

An ancient empire in Mesopotamia.

Attica

The territory extending around the city of Athens.

Babylonia

A region of southern Mesopotamia named after the city of Babylon.

bireme

A galley having two banks of oars.

Boeotia

Region in central Greece; Thebes was located in Boeotia

Canaan

A historical and biblical term used to describe the strip of land which includes most of present day Gaza Strip and Israel and the Western part of Jordan. The term was found on Egyptian writings from the 15th century BC.

Carthage

An ancient city in North Africa destroyed by Rome in the Third Punic Wars.

Chu

Major feudal state of the Zhou kingdom in southern China.

Cohort

A sub-unit of the Roman Legion. Approximately 600 men; a Legion is composed of ten Cohorts.

Consul

Title of the two leading magistrates of the Roman Republic. Consuls were elected annually.

Delian League

Athenian-led alliance formed to stop Persian advances into Greek territories. Named after the island of Delos where the alliance's funds were held.

Etruscans

A group of people who lived in Italy south of the river Arno and north of the river Tiber (approximately modern day Tuscany) around 1000 BC.

Fertile Crescent

First used by Henry Breasted a 19th century scholar. The area of land arching from the Persian Gulf over the watersheds of the Tigris and Euphrates river in Iraq through the western coast of the Mediterranean into Egypt.

Greek Fire

a pottery container filled with flaming naphtha and catapulted from a warship onto a target.

Hellespont

Narrow passage of sea between ancient Anatolia and the ancient Greek mainland.

Helots

Enslaved people located in Messenia; the Spartans enslaved the Helots and used them to provide food.

Judah

Region in Palestine from about 922 to 587 BC named after one of the tribes of Israel.

Legion

A Roman military unit composed of about 6,000 men. Legion comes from legio which means levy or draft.

Linear A

Script developed by the ancient Minoan culture

Maniple

A sub-unit of a Roman Legion. About 160 men. Three Maniples to a Cohort.

Megiddo

Town located in Palestine; location of one of the earliest battles recorded in history.

Mesopotamia

An ancient region in southwest Asia between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, site of the ancient civilizations of Sumer, Babylon and Assyria. Roughly equivalent to present-day Iraq and part of Syria.

Messenia

Southwest region of the Peloponnese conquered by Sparta.

Minoan

Civilization that lived on Crete around 2000 BC; named after King Minos, the legendary ruler of the island.

Nubia

Region located south of Egypt along the Nile.

Nubia

Region along the Nile, south of Egypt.

Oligarchy

Rule by the few.

Parthenon

Name of the temple built on the Acropolis in Athens. Built for Athena the patron goddess of Athens.

Peloponnese

The large peninsula of southern Greece.

Pharaoh

Wasn't used until 1400 BC but is now used generally for the kings of ancient Egypt.

Punic Wars

A series of three wars between Rome and Carthage: 264 - 241 bc; 219 - 202 bc; and 149 - 146 bc.

Rhodes

Island located off the southwestern tip of modern day Turkey.

Sardis

Capital of the Lydian kingdom; located in western Anatolia.

Sea Peoples

A group of people who migrated to eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea around 1400 BC.

Semites

People who spoke a Semitic language which originated in Arabia and Mesopotamia. Some of the peoples include the: Arabs, Hebrews, Canaanites, and Phoenicians.

trireme

A galley having three banks of oars.

Triumvirates

A group of three people in power. There were two Triumvirates in Roman times: Crassus, Pompey and Caesar; and Antony, Octavian and Lepidus

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World

Seven Wonders of the Ancient World		
	Wonder	Location
1	Great Pyramid of Khufu	Cairo, Egypt
2	Hanging Gardens of Babylon	near modern Baghdad, Iraq
3	Statue of Zeus at Olympia	west coast of modern Greece
4	Temple of Artemis at Ephesus	near modern Izmir, Turkey
5	The Mausoleum at Halicarnassus	Bodrum, Turkey
6	The Colossus of Rhodes	Rhodes, Greece
7	The Lighthouse of Alexandria	Alexandria, Egypt

Most Decisive Battles of the Ancient World

Most Decisive Battles of the Ancient World			
	Battle	Date	Notes
1	Thymbra	546 BC	establishes Persian Empire
2	Salamis	480 BC	Greek ascedent
3	Chaeronea	338 BC	rise of the Macedonians
4	Metaurus River	207 BC	Rome defeats Carthage
5	Pharsalus	48 BC	Caeser's victory signals end of the republic
6	Teutoburger Wald	AD 9	Roman defeat marks end of Roman northern expansion

Content provided by: Larry Gormley, HistoryShots

Major Conflicts of Ancient History

War	Date(s)
Egyptian Invasion of Asia	1479 bc
Persia Empire Wars	546 - 539 bc
Persian-Greek Wars	499 - 401

	bc
Peloponnesian Wars	460 - 404 bc
Greek City-States Wars	395 - 362 bc
Alexander & Macedonian Conquests	338 - 322 bc
Hellenistic Monarchies, Wars of the	318 - 170 bc
Punic War, First	264 - 241 bc
Punic War, Second	219 - 202 bc
Invasion of the Hsiung-nu	203 - 200 bc
Third Macedonian War	168 bc
Punic War, Third	149 - 146 bc
Gallic Wars	58 - 52 bc
First Triumvirate, Wars of the	53 - 45 bc
Second Triumvirate, Wars of the	43 - 31 bc
Roman Empire Wars	27 - 476
Byzantine Empire Wars	395 - 1453

Stone Age, prehistoric cultural stage, or level of human development, characterized by the creation and use of stone tools. The Stone Age is usually divided into three **separate** periods—Paleolithic Period, Mesolithic Period, and Neolithic Period—based on the degree of sophistication in the fashioning and use of tools.

Paleolithic archaeology is concerned with the origins and development of early human culture between the first appearance of man as a tool-using mammal, which is believed to have occurred about 600,000 or 700,000 years ago, and near the beginning of the Holocene Epoch, about 8000 bc. It is included in the time span of the Pleistocene, or Glacial, Epoch—an interval of about 2,600,000 years. Although it

cannot be proved, modern evidence suggests that the earliest protohuman forms had diverged from the ancestral primate stock by the beginning of the Pleistocene. In any case, the oldest recognizable tools are found in horizons of Lower Pleistocene Age. During the Pleistocene a series of momentous climatic events occurred. The northern latitudes and mountainous areas were subjected on four successive occasions to the advances and retreats of ice sheets (known as Günz, Mindel, Riss, and Würm in the Alps), river valleys and terraces were formed, the present coastlines were established, and great changes were induced in the fauna and flora of the globe. In large measure, the development of culture during Paleolithic times seems to have been profoundly influenced by the environmental factors that characterize the successive stages of the Pleistocene Epoch.

Throughout the Paleolithic, man was a food gatherer, depending for his subsistence on hunting wild animals and birds, fishing, and collecting wild fruits, nuts, and berries. The artifactual record of this exceedingly long interval is very incomplete; it can be studied from such imperishable objects of now-extinct cultures as were made of flint, stone, bone, and antler. These alone have withstood the ravages of time, and, together with the remains of contemporary animals hunted by our prehistoric forerunners, they are all that scholars have to guide them in attempting to reconstruct human activity throughout this vast interval—approximately 98 percent of the time span since the appearance of the first true hominin stock. In general, these materials develop gradually from single, all-purpose tools to an assemblage of varied and highly specialized types of artifacts, each designed to serve in connection with a specific function. Indeed, it is a process of increasingly more complex technologies, each founded on a specific tradition that characterizes the cultural development of Paleolithic times. In other words, the trend was from simple to complex, from a stage of non-specialization to stages of relatively high degrees of specialization, just as has been the case during historic times.

In the manufacture of stone implements, four fundamental traditions were developed by the Paleolithic ancestors: (1) pebble-tool traditions; (2) bifacial-tool, or hand-ax, traditions; (3) flake-tool traditions; and (4) blade-tool traditions. Only rarely are any of these found in “pure” form, and this fact has led to mistaken notions in many instances concerning the significance of various assemblages. Indeed, though a certain tradition might be superseded in a given region by a more advanced method of producing tools, the older technique persisted as long as it was needed for a given purpose. In general, however, there is an overall trend in the order as given above, starting with simple pebble tools that have a single edge sharpened for cutting or chopping. But no true pebble-tool horizons had yet, by the late 20th century, been recognized in Europe. In southern and eastern Asia, on the other hand, pebble tools of primitive type continued in use throughout Paleolithic times.

French place-names have long been used to designate the various Paleolithic subdivisions, since many of the earliest discoveries were made in France. This terminology has been widely applied in other countries, notwithstanding the very great regional differences that do in fact exist. But the French sequence still serves as the foundation of Paleolithic studies in other parts of the Old World.

Bronze Age, third phase in the development of material culture among the ancient peoples of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, following the Paleolithic and Neolithic ages. The term also denotes the first period in which metal was used. The date at which the age began varied with regions; in Greece and China, for instance, the Bronze Age began before 3000 bc, whereas in Britain it did not start until about 1900 bc.

The beginning of the period is sometimes called the Chalcolithic (Copper-Stone) Age, referring to the initial use of pure copper (along with its predecessor toolmaking material, stone). Scarce at first, copper was initially used only for small or precious objects. Its use was known in eastern Anatolia by 6500 bc,

and it soon became widespread. By the middle of the 4th millennium, a rapidly developing copper metallurgy, with cast tools and weapons, was a factor leading to urbanization in Mesopotamia. By 3000 the use of copper was well known in the Middle East, had extended westward into the Mediterranean area, and was beginning to infiltrate the Neolithic cultures of Europe.

This early copper phase is commonly thought of as part of the Bronze Age, though true bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, was used only rarely at first. During the 2nd millennium the use of true bronze greatly increased; the tin deposits at Cornwall, Eng., were much used and were responsible for a considerable part of the large production of bronze objects at that time. The age was also marked by increased specialization and the invention of the wheel and the ox-drawn plow. From about 1000 bc, the ability to heat and forge another metal, iron, brought the Bronze Age to an end, and the Iron Age began.

Iron Age, final technological and cultural stage in the Stone–Bronze–Iron-Age sequence. The date of the full Iron Age, in which this metal for the most part replaced bronze in implements and weapons, varied geographically, beginning in the Middle East and southeastern Europe about 1200 bce but in China not until about 600 bce. Although in the Middle East iron had limited use as a scarce and precious metal as early as 3000 bce, there is no indication that people at that time recognized its superior qualities over those of bronze. Between 1200 and 1000, however, the export of knowledge of iron metallurgy and of iron objects was rapid and widespread. With the large-scale production of iron implements came new patterns of more permanent settlement. On the other hand, utilization of iron for weapons put arms in the hands of the masses for the first time and set off a series of large-scale movements of peoples that did not end for 2,000 years and that changed the face of Europe and Asia.

ANCIENT EGYPT

Ancient Egypt - Timeline

The chronology of Ancient Egypt is divided into general categories referred to as kingdoms and intermediate periods. These in turn are divided into dynasties. Note: there is not general agreement on the length and demarcation dates for each of these time divisions.

Time Period	Dynasty	Rulers
c. 2920 – 2575 BC The Early Dynastic Period	1st Dynasty (c. 2920 – 2770 BC) 2nd Dynasty (c. 2770 – 2650 BC) 3rd Dynasty (c. 2650 – 2575 BC)	1st Menes
c. 2575 - 2130 BC The Old Kingdom	4th Dynasty (c. 2575 – 2465 BC) 5th Dynasty (c. 2465 – 2325 BC) 6th Dynasty (c. 2325 – 2150 BC) 7th/8th Dynasty (c. 2150 – 2130 BC)	4th Snefru 4th Khufu 4th Djedefre (Redjedef) 4th Khafra 4th Menkaure
c. 2130 - 1938 BC First Intermediate Period	9th Dynasty (c. 2130 – 2080 BC) 10th Dynasty (c. 2080 – 1970 BC) 11th Dynasty (c. 2081– 1938 BC)	
c. 1938 – 1630 BC The Middle Kingdom	12th Dynasty (c. 1938 – 1756 BC) 13th Dynasty (c. 1756 – 1630 BC)	
c. 1630 - 1540 BC The Second Intermediate Period	14th Dynasty (unknown) 15th Dynasty (c. 1640 - 1196 BC) 16th Dynasty (unknown) 17th Dynasty (c. 1640 – 1540 BC)	
c. 1550 - 1070 BC The New Kingdom	18th Dynasty (c. 1550 - 1307 BC) 19th Dynasty (c. 1307 - 1196 BC) 20th Dynasty (c. 1196 – 1070 BC)	18th Ahmose 18th Amenhotep I 18th Thutmose I 18th Thutmose II 18th Thutmose III 18th Hatshepsut 18th Amenhotep II

		18th Thutmose IV 18th Amenhotep III 18th Amenhotep IV 18th Smenkhkare 18th Tutankhamen 19th Ramses I 19th Sethos I 19th Ramses II
c. 1070 - 653 BC The Third Intermediate Period	21th Dynasty (c. 1070 - 945 BC) 22th Dynasty (c. 945 - 718 BC) 23th Dynasty (c. 820 - 718 BC) 24th Dynasty (c. 730 - 712 BC) 25th Dynasty (c. 775 - 653 BC)	
c. 664 - 322 BC The Late Period	26th Dynasty (c. 664 - 525 BC) 27th Dynasty (c. 525 - 401 BC) 28th Dynasty (unknown) 29th Dynasty (c. 399 - 380 BC) 30th Dynasty (c. 380 - 332 BC)	
c. 332 - 30 BC The Ptolemaic Period	Macedonian Dynasty (c. 332 - 305 BC) Ptolemaic Dynasty (c. 305 - 30 BC)	Alexander Ptolemy

Ancient Egypt – KINGS/QUEENS

The Ancient Egyptian civilization spanned more than 3,000 years. During that time period there were at least 30 Dynasties and 170 individual "god-kings" that ruled the "Upper and Lower Kingdoms". Since the Egyptian civilization dates back to the very beginning of recorded history information on the many of the kings is sparse. Kings often had their names "erased" from monuments and left out of the "list of kings" if they had offended their successors. Below are some of the better known kings of Egypt.

Menes (Narmer)

The first king of the Upper and Lower kingdoms of Egypt.

Khufu

Built the first and largest Great Pyramid at Giza.

Khafre

Built the second Great Pyramid at Giza.

Menkaure

Built the third Great Pyramid at Giza.

Queen Hatshepsut

The first female Egyptian King and one of the first woman leaders of any civilization.

Thutmose III

Sometimes called the "Napoleon of ancient Egypt" for his successful military campaigns.

Amenhotep IV (Akhenaton)

The "heretic-pharaoh" one of the most controversial of all Egyptian kings.

Nefertiti

Considered by many as one of the most beautiful women in antiquity.

Tutankhamen

The finding of King Tutankhamen's tomb by Howard Carter launched a world-wide interest in Egypt's history that made King Tut a household name.

Rameses II

One of the greatest monument builders and longest reigning Pharaohs.

Alexander the Great

The Macedonian conquerer, Alexander the Great became Pharaoh after defeating the Persians.

Ptolemy

The first king of the last dynasty.

Cleopatra

The famous Cleopatra tried to maintain her rule of Egypt in the shadow of the Roman empire.

ANCIENT EGYPT MAP



Ancient Egypt

Around 3100 BC, two kingdoms that had grown up along the Nile river were united when the ruler of Upper Egypt conquered the kingdom in Lower Egypt. Thus began what is now generally accepted as the first of at least 30 Egyptian dynasties. Ancient Egyptian dynasties are grouped into periods of stability referred to as 'kingdoms' and periods of fragmentation and chaos referred to as 'intermediate periods'.

The Early Dynastic Period (c. 2925 to c. 2575 BC)

The Early Dynastic Period includes the 1st, 2nd and 3rd dynasties. The first king of the 1st dynasty is considered by some experts to be called Menes. Others believe Narmer was the unifier of the two Egyptian kingdoms. Still others consider Menes and Narmer to be the same person.

The Old Kingdom (c. 2600 - c. 2150 BC)

The Old Kingdom lasted approximately 500 years and is sometimes called the "Age of Pyramids". (The Old Kingdom includes the 4th through the 8th dynasties.) Great achievements in art and architecture were realized including the completion of 20 major pyramids. During this time, the kings of Egypt were totalitarian dictators owning all land, minerals and

water. The kings shared these resources with the people in return for taxes and obedience.

The strong centralized government of the king was broken down into provinces with appointed officials. Gradually these positions became hereditary and a class of nobles was created. The Old Kingdom ended in confusion as the centralized government lost power to provincial nobles who began to struggle against one another.

First Intermediate Period (c. 2150 - 1938 BC)

The chaotic period between the Old and New Kingdom are known as the First Intermediate Period. It was a time of great upheaval in political, religious and cultural structures. The 9th, 10th and 11th dynasties are included in this time period.

The Middle Kingdom (1938 c. 1600 BC)

After a century and a half of conflict, Theban nobles reunited Egypt. During this time period the king had less absolute power and more emphasis was placed on concepts of justice. Unlike the Old Kingdom the Egyptian religion began to accept the idea that the afterlife was for the common people as well as the king. The Middle Kingdom includes the 12th and 13th dynasties.

During this period, under King Amenemhet III (1818 c. 1770 BC), Egypt began to greatly expand its trade and developed colonies below the third cataract.

The Second Intermediate Period (c. 1600 - c. 1540 BC)

A series of weak rulers causes a new breakdown in centralized authority during the Second Intermediate Period (dynasties 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th.) The Hyksos from Asia took advantage of Egypt's internal conflicts. The Hyksos army used horses, chariots, body armor and new types of bronze weapons - none of which the Egyptians had. The Hyksos advanced military weaponry and the internal turmoil in Egypt allowed the Hyksos to conquer and rule Egypt for 160 years.

The Early New Kingdom (c. 1540 - 1300 BC)

The Egyptians learn to use the same weapons and warfare as their captors and eventually drive the Hyksos from the kingdom.

Queen Hatsehsut again increases trade and begins building new temples and palaces. She rules jointly with her husband King Thutmose III for awhile and there is relative peace in the land. When King Thutmose becomes sole ruler he begins a series of military campaigns. Thutmose conquers land as far as the fourth cataract takes Egypt's borders to its largest size.

The Amarna Revolution (1370 - 1300 BC)

When Amenhotep IV becomes king he tries to drastically change Egypt's religion from a polytheistic worship of many gods to a monotheistic worship of Aton the Sun. He outlaws all other religions and forces the people to worship him as a God-king. For the first time Egyptians begin to call their king, Pharaoh. During Amenhotep's reign the outlying control of Egypt's far borders is lost and the Hittites take over portions of Asia.

When Tutankhamon becomes king at an early age, the priests force him to return the country to the worship of many gods.

The Later New Kingdom (1300 - 1090 BC)

The Later New Kingdom is also known as "Egypt's Golden Age". Egypt regains its lands in Asia and although Ramses II begins with a very strong reign by 1150 the country again begins to lose control of its outlying areas. This time it isn't bronze weapons but new iron weapons that help others to encroach on Egypt's borders.

Period of Invasions

Sheshonq I of Libya siezes Egypt's throne in 945 BC. During this time period the Sudanese, Assyrians, Persians and then the Greeks take turns ruling Egypt. Alexander the Great's conquest leaves a new dynasty the Ptolemies in control until finally Rome takes Egypt and the death of Cleopatra ends the reign of the Pharaohs.

Greek religion, religious beliefs and practices of the ancient Hellenes. Greek religion is not the same as Greek mythology, which is concerned with traditional tales, though the two are closely interlinked. Curiously, for a people so religiously minded, the Greeks had no word for religion itself; the nearest terms were eusebeia ("piety") and threskeia ("cult").

Although its origins may be traced to the remotest eras, Greek religion in its developed form lasted more than a thousand years, from the time of Homer (probably 9th or 8th century bc) to the reign of the emperor Julian (4th century ad). During that period its influence spread as far west as Spain, east to the Indus River, and throughout the Mediterranean world. Its effect was most marked on the Romans, who identified their deities with

The roots of Greek religion



The study of a religion's history includes the study of the history of those who espoused it, together with their spiritual, ethical, political, and intellectual experiences. Greek religion as it is currently understood probably resulted from the mingling of religious beliefs and practices between the incoming Greek-speaking peoples who arrived from the north during the 2nd millennium bc and the indigenous inhabitants whom they called Pelasgi. The incomers' pantheon was headed by the Indo-European sky god variously known as Zeus (Greek), Dyaus (Indian), or Jupiter (Roman). But there was also a Cretan sky god, whose birth and death were celebrated in rituals and myths quite different from those of the incomers. The incomers applied the name of Zeus to his Cretan counterpart. In addition, there was a tendency, fostered but not necessarily

originated by Homer and Hesiod, for major Greek deities to be given a home on Mount Olympus. Once established there in a conspicuous position, the Olympians came to be identified with local deities and to be assigned as consorts to the local god or goddess.

An unintended consequence (since the Greeks were monogamous) was that Zeus in particular became markedly polygamous. (Zeus already had a consort when he arrived in the Greek world and took Hera, herself a major goddess in Argos, as another.) Hesiod used—or sometimes invented—the family links among the deities, traced out over several generations, to explain the origin and present condition of the universe. At some date, Zeus and other deities were identified locally with heroes and heroines from the Homeric poems and called by such names as Zeus Agamemnon. The Pelasgian and the Greek strands of the religion of the Greeks can sometimes be disentangled, but the view held by some scholars that any belief related to fertility must be Pelasgian, on the grounds that the Pelasgi were agriculturalists while the Greeks were nomadic pastoralists and warriors, seems somewhat simplistic. Pastoralists and warriors certainly require fertility in their herds—not to mention in their own number.

The Archaic period



The name Dionysus occurs in the Linear B tablets, so it seems very likely that his worship was a part of Mycenaean religion. His devotees, armed with thyrsos (wands tipped with a pinecone and wreathed with grapevine or ivy leaves) and known as maenads (literally “mad women”), were reputed to wander in thiasoi (revel bands) about mountain slopes, such as Cithaeron or Parnassus; the practice persisted into Roman imperial times. They were also supposed, in their ecstasy, to practice the sparagmos, the tearing of living victims to pieces and feasting on their raw flesh (ōmophagia). While such behaviour continued in the wild, in the cities—in Athens, at any rate—the cult of Dionysus was tamed before 500 bc. Tragedy developed from the choral song of Dionysus.



In the 7th and 6th centuries bc “tyrants” (monarchs whose position was not derived from heredity) seized power in many poleis. Some tyrants, such as Peisistratus in Athens, were nobles and rose to power by offering the poor defense against the rest of the nobility. Once established, Peisistratus built temples and founded or revived festivals. At this time too, the earliest references to the Eleusinian Mysteries appear. The Mysteries offered a more personal, less distant relationship with the divine than did most of the Olympians. There was no Eleusinian way of life. On one or two occasions (depending on the grade they wished to attain) the initiates went to Eleusis; what they saw there in the place of initiation sufficed to ensure them a life after death that was much more

“real” than the afterlife portrayed in the Olympian belief that the dead were witless ghosts.

The Classical period

During the 6th century bc the rationalist thinking of Ionian philosophers had offered a serious challenge to traditional religion. At the beginning of the 5th century, Heracleitus of Ephesus and Xenophanes of Colophon heaped scorn on cult and gods alike.



The Sophists, with their relentless probing of accepted values, continued the process. Little is known of the general success of these attacks in society as a whole. The Parthenon and other Athenian temples of the late 5th century proclaim the taste and power of the Athenians rather than their awe of the gods; but, it is said, after the completion of Phidias’s chryselephantine (gold and ivory) Athena on the Acropolis, the old olive-wood statue of Athena, aesthetically no match for Phidias’s work, continued to receive the worship of most of the citizens. Antiquity evoked awe; some of the most revered objects in Greece were antique and aniconic figures that bore the name of an Olympian deity.



Festivals were expressive of religion’s social aspect and attracted large gatherings (panēgyreis). Mainly agrarian in origin, they were seasonal in character, held often at full moon and on the 7th of the month in the case of Apollo and always with a sacrifice in view. Many were older than the deity they honoured, like the Hyacinthia and Carneia in Laconia, which were transferred from local heroes to Apollo. The games were a special festival, sometimes part of other religious events. Some festivals of Athens were performed on behalf of the polis and all its members. Many of these seem to have been originally the cults of individual noble families who came together at the synoikismos, the creation of the polis of Athens from its small towns and villages. The nobles continued to furnish the priests for these cults, but there was, and could be, no priestly class. There were no “priests of the gods” or even priests of an individual god; one became a priest of one god at one temple. Except for these public festivals, anyone might perform a sacrifice at any time. The priest’s role was to keep the temple clean; he was usually guaranteed some part of the animal sacrificed. A priesthood offered a

reasonably secure living to its incumbent.

Popular religion flourished alongside the civic cults. Peasants worshipped the omnipresent deities of the countryside, such as the Arcadian goat-god Pan, who prospered the flocks, and the nymphs (who, like Eileithyia, aided women in childbirth) who inhabited caves, springs (Naiads), trees (dryads and hamadryads), and the sea (Nereids). They also believed in nature spirits such as satyrs and sileni and equine Centaurs. Among the more popular festivals were the rural Dionysia, which included a phallus pole; the Anthesteria, when new wine was broached and offerings were made to the dead; the Thalyisia, a harvest celebration; the Thargelia, when a scapegoat (pharmakos) assumed the communal guilt; and the Pyanepsia, a bean feast in which boys collected offerings to hang on the eiresiōne (“wool pole”). Women celebrated the Thesmophoria in honour of Demeter and commemorated the passing of Adonis with laments and miniature gardens, while images were swung from trees at the Aiora. Magic was widespread. Spells were inscribed on lead tablets. Statues of Hecate, goddess of witchcraft, stood outside dwellings, while Pan’s image was beaten with herbs in times of meat shortage.

The Hellenistic period



Greek religion, having no creed, did not proselytize. In the heyday of the polis, the Greek religion was spread by the founding of new poleis, whose colonists took with them part of the sacred fire from the hearth of the mother city and the cults of the city’s gods. (“Heroes,” being essentially bound to the territory in which they were buried, had to be left behind.) There was a tendency for Greeks to identify the gods of others with their own, often at a superficial level. So the virgin Artemis was identified with the chief goddess of Ephesus, a fertility deity.

After Alexander the Great had created a political world in which the poleis were engulfed by large kingdoms, those deities who were not too closely linked with a particular place became more prominent. Mystery cults, which offered a personal value to the individual in a large and indifferent world, also flourished. The Cabeiri of Samothrace, deities that had come in from Asia, were patronized by both the Greeks and the Romans, while the Egyptian cults of Isis and Serapis, in a Hellenized form, spread widely.

Rulers sometimes officially invited new gods to settle in times of crisis, in the hope that they would strive on their new worshippers’ behalf against their mortal foes; this mode of religious thought flourished at least until the days of the Roman emperor Constantine. Those novel cults that seemed likely to pose a threat to public order, on the other hand, were suppressed by the Romans. The Senate destroyed the Bacchic cult in Italy in 186 bc, perhaps for the same reasons that the emperor Trajan gave to the writer and statesman Pliny the Younger for his treatment of the

Christians: any cult in which men and women, bond and free, could participate and meet together—a most unusual circumstance in the ancient world—had dangerous political implications

A BIT ON THE AZTECS: The Aztecs had many beliefs. They believed the sun fought darkness every night and rose to save mankind. They believed the earth was flat. They believed that if they fed the sun blood, it would rise. They also believed in 13 heavens and 9 hells.

The Aztecs respected their gods very much. They put their greatest efforts into making strong, beautiful temples to please their gods. Their arts had a part in their religion. They drew pictures that told about their gods. They recorded religious events with hieroglyphics and even number symbols. The Aztecs worshipped about 1,000 gods! But they worshipped the sun god the most. Religious ceremonies took place in a temple called a teocalli. This temple had sacred pools for ceremonial cleansing, gardens, living quarters for a priest, and racks to hold the skulls of victims. Religion played a great part in Aztec life.

Sacrifice was one of the main events in the Aztec religion. Priests made human sacrifices to make the sun god happy. Aztecs fought in wars to capture men to sacrifice. On God's Feast Day, they killed their slaves for the gods. Human sacrifices were offerings to the sun and earth so that food would grow.

On the night of the O' Nothing Days, O' priests would dress up as the supreme gods and wait on the top of an extinct volcano. When the evening star reached the top of the sky, the priests would stretch the captive over an altar, or a special stone. Then the high priest would light a fire on the victim's heart and tear it out. After the heart is cut, the priest would hold the heart to the sun, then put it in a sacred dish. Finally, the bodies were rolled down the temple stairs to lie in a heap. Even after that, most victims were happy to die because they thought they would go straight to heaven.

The Aztecs strongly believed in the afterlife. It was the way the Aztecs died rather than the way they lived that determined whether they would go to the sun god or go to the dark and dismal underworld. If a person died a normal death, his or her soul would have to pass through the nine lives of the underworld before reaching Mictlan, the realm of the dead. A warrior who died in battle or a woman that died in childbirth would go straight to the sun god in the sky.

The head of the gods was Huizilopochtli, god of war and god of sun. This god had told the Aztecs to wander until they found an eagle with a serpent in its mouth perched on a cactus

growing from a rock. When they found this, they claimed the area around it, which is now known as Tenochtitlan.

The Aztecs worshipped Tlaloc, the rain god, in the main temple. This god was very important to farmers because drought was a threat in the area.

Quetzalcoatl was a feathered snake who represented arts, crafts, and self-sacrifice.

Priests and priestesses were very important people. They acted as doctors, and taught science, art, writing, music, dance, history, and counting. They also had to know astronomy and astrology. They had to perform difficult ceremonies.

Religion played an important part in Aztecs' lives, and human sacrifice was used to pay homage to their gods.



Roman Empire, the ancient empire, centred on the city of Rome, that was established in 27 bc following the demise of the Roman Republic and continuing to the final eclipse of the Empire of the West in the 5th century ad. A brief treatment of the Roman Empire follows. For full treatment, see ancient Rome.

Imperial Rome

A period of unrest and civil wars in the 1st century bc marked the transition of Rome from a republic to an empire. This period encompassed the career of Julius Caesar, who eventually took full power over Rome as its dictator. After his assassination in 44 bc, the triumvirate of Mark Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian, Caesar's nephew, ruled. It was not long before Octavian went to war against Antony in northern Africa, and after his victory at Actium (31 bc) he was crowned Rome's first emperor, Augustus. His reign, from 27 bc to ad 14, was distinguished by stability and peace.



Augustus established a form of government known as a principate, which combined some elements from the republic with the traditional powers of a monarchy. The Senate still functioned, though Augustus, as princeps, or first citizen, remained in control of the government. Under Augustus, Rome began to prosper once again, and the emperor came to be looked upon as a god. Thereafter, all good emperors were worshiped as gods after death. Among the beloved rulers of Rome were Trajan (reigned 98–117), Hadrian (117–138), Antoninus Pius (138–161), and Marcus Aurelius (161–180). Decadent, cruel men also rose to power: Caligula (37–41) and Nero (54–68) were so loathed that their reigns were struck from the official Roman records.



It was during the rule of Tiberius (14–37) that Jesus Christ was crucified. Thereafter, Christians were tolerated at best—but often tortured or killed—until the reign of Constantine I (312–337). In 313 an edict of toleration for all religions was issued, and from about 320 Christianity was favoured by the Roman state rather than persecuted by it. But the empire was dying. The last of Constantine's line, Theodosius I (379–395), was the last emperor to rule over a unified Roman Empire. The Western Empire, suffering from repeated invasions and the flight of the peasants into the cities, had grown weak compared with the East, where spices and other exports virtually guaranteed wealth and stability. When Theodosius died, in 395, Rome split into Eastern and Western empires.

The West was severely shaken in 410, when the city of Rome was sacked by the Visigoths, a wandering nation of Germanic peoples from the northeast. The fall of Rome was completed in 476, when the German chieftain Odoacer deposed the last Roman emperor of the West, Romulus Augustulus. The East, always richer and stronger, continued as the Byzantine Empire through the European Middle Ages.

The legacy of Rome

During the later republic and most of the empire, Rome was the dominant power in the entire Mediterranean basin, most of western Europe, and

large areas of northern Africa. The Romans possessed a powerful army and were gifted in the applied arts of law, government, city planning, and statecraft, but they also acknowledged and adopted contributions of other ancient peoples—most notably, those of the Greeks, much of whose culture was thereby preserved.



The Roman Empire was distinguished not only for its outstanding army—the foundation upon which the whole empire rested—but also for its accomplishments in intellectual endeavors. Roman law, for example, was a considered and complex body of precedents and comments, which were all finally codified in the 6th century (see Justinian, Code of). Rome's roads were without match in the ancient world, designed for comparatively fast transportation and adapted to a wide variety of functions: commerce, agriculture, mail delivery, pedestrian traffic, and military movements. Roman city planners achieved unprecedented standards of hygiene with their plumbing, sewage disposal, dams, and aqueducts. Roman architecture, though often imitative of Greek styles, was boldly planned and lavishly executed. Triumphal arches commemorated important state occasions, and the famous Roman baths were built to stir the senses as well as to cleanse the body.

Finally, Latin, the language of the Romans, became the medium for a significant body of original works in Western civilization. Cicero's speeches, the histories of Livy and Tacitus, Terence's drama, and above all the poetry of Virgil are all part of the legacy of Rome.

Ancient History Article 1

Marriage in Ancient Mesopotamia and Babylonia

As the bride approaches the ceremonial altar holding on to the arm of her father, the groom nervously takes a peek at the scene surrounding him. Not far away are the gifts, which shortly will be exchanged. Family members stand proudly around in a festive atmosphere. Is this taking place in upstate New York, a tropical garden in Miami, or a quaint old church in old Montreal? Perhaps, but it could well have happened somewhere in ancient Mesopotamia.

In western society some aspects of modern family relationships and composition can be traced to ancient Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Ideas such as the wedding, marriage, and divorce began developing then. Through innumerable legal documents from the Sumerian to the Seleucid period, we see the individual as father, son, brother, or husband. The root of these relationships started with a proposal, followed by the marriage contract, and ending with the wedding. The young Mesopotamian couple then chose where to live. In certain circumstances, the male had to decide whether to have another wife or a concubine. In no time, the newlyweds begot children. The father, as the head of the family, had complete authority over them. This authority extended to such matters as adoption and inheritance. How big the family unit got depended where in Mesopotamia it formed.

The family unit in Mesopotamia was small and restricted, although in certain regions of southern Babylonia clan like or even tribal organizations of some sort existed. In neo-Babylonian times, a measure of family consciousness appeared in the form of ancestral family names for identification purposes. The first step in creating a family unit, whether small or clan like, is of course the marriage. Ironically, for most of history, it left the prospective bride out of the decision-making process.

Marriage, regarded as a legal contract, and divorce as its breakup were similarly affected by official procedures. The future husband and his father-in-law agreed on a contract and if a divorce occurred, the father-in-law was entitled to satisfaction. The contract made between suitor and the father of the expected bride stipulated a price for the maiden's hand. She received the sum given to the father. If the marriage did not produce children then the price the groom had paid for his wife was returned to him upon her death, if it had not been returned previously. Lack of children was not the only reason for returning the price paid for the wife; her death could create a refund.

Once married, the girl became a full member of her future husband's family. If he died, she would marry one of his brothers or, if he lacked brothers, one of his near relatives. If these conditions did not take place, her father returned all his rights over her, and gave back all the presents that she had received except those consumed. Conversely, if the girl died, and her intended husband did not want to marry one of her sisters, he would take back all the presents that he had given her. An agreement once reached indicated that the actual wedding ceremony could now take place.

This ceremony took the form of the delivery of the wife to her husband.

If both belonged to the class of free citizens, the husband veiled his bride in the presence of witnesses and solemnly declared 'she is my wife'. During the ceremony of betrothal, the girl's future husband poured perfume on her head and brought her presents and provisions. After the wedding, where the couple would live remained the sole issue.

Married life might begin with either the bride staying in her father's house or going with her husband to his. In the former case, the husband gave the wife a sum called the dumaki toward the maintenance of the house. If the husband died this contribution remained the widow's property only if the deceased had left neither sons nor brothers. If, on the other hand, the young couple went to live in the husband's house, the wife brought with her a sherigtu, or dowry. The sherigtu, with the presents the bride had received, remained the inalienable property of her children, and her husband's brothers could not claim it.

Besides these presents, the bride might receive a marriage jointure or nudunnu, a special gift made to her at the time of her engagement. The nudunnu remained her property even if she divorced. Finally, she also would receive a present of gold, silver, lead or food for consumption at the wedding feast. After the wedding, husband and wife settled down to the routines of daily life. For the husband this was usually his only marriage, as long as the wife lived and provided children. It was not uncommon however, to have another spouse or even a concubine.

The only occasion regarded as justifiable and legitimate for a man to take another woman was in the event the first wife proved to be infertile. In spite of this reason, the husband might keep not only his wife, but also a concubine. The mistress was entitled to wear the veil only when she accompanied the legal wife outdoors. This right, which the Code of Hammurabi had granted to the Babylonians, remained in force for nearly five hundred years. This right however did not permit the husband to have two 'wives'; this title belonged to the legal wife from the moment that he placed the veil upon her. By comparison with the latter, the concubine would always occupy a slightly inferior position. Originally chosen from among the slaves, she had to do her duties with proper respect for the legal wife. Usually out of these relationships, whether with single wife or a spouse and a mistress, the first child was born.

The birth of the first child marked another step in the husband's life; he was now the head of a family. There were rarely any limits to a father's rights over his children. He could, for instance, deposit them with a creditor as security for the repayment of a debt. In certain legal documents he appeared as 'master' or 'owner' of his child, a concept entirely alien to the modern idea of a father. He also had the right to adopt additional children. They obtained the same rights of inheritance as the other male children in the family if this was not to the detriment of the sons born in wedlock. The ceremony of adoption took place in the presence of witnesses. In return for his newly acquired

rights, the adopted child gave a small present to his new father. The new father gained very extensive rights over the adoptee. He could end the adoption at his pleasure and send back the child. If the child renounced his adoptive family, he would simply be expelled and returned to his home. An example of this powerful right appears as a law under the Code of Hammurabi. This law stated that the son of a woman in a vow, or devotee, who repudiated his foster parents, had his tongue cut.

As for the inheritance, the first-born child received a preferred share in the paternal estate. In the early Babylonian period, provisions were also made to insure the daughter's dowry and the younger son's marriage expenses. Normally, brothers held in common the inherited fields and gardens to prevent their division into smaller lots. They often lived with their families in their father's house. The widow continued to live in her ex-husband's house as expected and to be supported by her children. If she had children by an earlier marriage living on their own, those of the second marriage could send her back to them as their responsibility.

As previously stated, the components of a modern family including marriage, wedding, and the relationships coming about from the birth of children goes back to Mesopotamia. The Mesopotamians codified this aspect of human life and established for almost every possibility a law or code of behavior starting an evolution still going on today.

Ancient History Article 2

The Notorious Nero

Nearly everyone has heard of Nero "fiddling while Rome burned". The true story of The Great Fire of 64 is debated but many believe Nero had the fire started to build his monumental "Golden House". There were reports that Nero climbed a tower in a stage costume and played the lyre while exulting in "the beauty of the flames". Afterwards, to assuage the throngs of homeless Romans, Nero tried to use the Christian population as scapegoats and blame the fire on them. Despite the atrocities he carried out on that population, people became convinced that Nero's soldiers had started the fire.

Nero Claudius Caesar became emperor of Rome when his adopted father and father-in-law, Claudius Caesar died in 54 AD. Although it was through family ties Nero eased into the reign of world power, Nero showed little compassion for his family members. He was only 16 years old when he came to power but it took him a mere four months to eliminate his half-brother and potential rival to the throne. Britannicus, the full son of Claudius, was poisoned while dining with Nero. When Britannicus collapsed, Nero told those at the dinner that his brother was having a seizure and had the body taken out and quietly buried.

A large part of Nero's claim to the throne was based upon his marriage to Octavia - the daughter of Claudius and his half-sister. When Nero became attracted to another woman (the wife of his best friend) he had his own wife imprisoned on an island and his friend sent to govern a remote region. After divorcing his wife he married his new girl friend, Poppaea. When he finally got around to having Octavia killed, he had her head brought back for Poppaea to gloat over. But she wasn't able to gloat for long. While Poppaea was pregnant Nero kicked her to death in a fit of anger.

While The Great Fire and the persecution of the Christians stand out in history books, the notorious event that disgusted his contemporaries was when Nero killed his mother, Agrippina. Agrippina had maneuvered her son to power through marriage and intrigue. Once he became emperor she attempted to rule through him. In the early years of his reign, Nero had shown great esteem for his mother. But when he was ready to be rid of her he had a special device rigged on a ship to make her death look like an accident. After dining with Agrippina, he had his mother placed on the ship and at the appointed time a lead-weighted canopy collapsed on top of her. However, she was seated on a Roman couch at the time and the arms of the couch saved her. So Nero had the ship capsized. Again his tough mother escaped death by swimming to shore. Finally, Nero gave up the pretense of an accident and sent his soldiers to kill her.

Nero met his own end in 68 AD when a rebellion broke out and his own soldiers refused to defend him. He tried to escape but when he was cornered he committed suicide. Aurelius Victor wrote in the Book of the Caesars 5, "For Nero in fact, spent the rest of his life so disgracefully, that it is disgusting and shameful to record the existence of anyone of this kind, let alone that he was ruler of the world."

Ancient History Article 3

Alcibiades (BC 450 - 404)

Alcibiades, an Athenian, was born in BC 450 to the Alcmaeonidae family. His father, Clinias, commander of the Athenian army, died in battle in BC 446 in Boeotia. A guardian was appointed for Alcibiades, but he paid little attention to the young boy. Alcibiades became a student of Socrates but when he was 30 years old he left his mentor to pursue a life of political ambitions.

In 420 Alcibiades became general and assisted Athens' allies (Argos, Elis and Mantinea) against the Spartans. After the Spartans defeated the alliance, many Athenian politicians and citizens blamed Alcibiades. To regain his reputation in Athens, Alcibiades entered seven chariots in the races at Olympia in 416 where he took first, second and fourth place. Consequently he gained many allies for the Athenians including Thessaly, Achaia, and Argos. A year later, Alcibiades persuaded the Athenians to send a military expedition to Sicily to attack the Syracusans. Alcibiades was chosen to command the force. Just before the army's departure, a number of hermae (busts of Hermes, the messenger of Zeus) were mutilated, and adversaries of Alcibiades quickly seized the opportunity to accuse him of the sacrilegious acts. Alcibiades requested a trial and since his enemies needed to collect more evidence against him, they allowed him to depart for Sicily.

Alcibiades arrived in Sicily and began organizing an operation against the Syracusans; but shortly after, he was recalled to Athens. Before reaching Athens, he heard that he had been condemned to death by the city officials, and escaped to Sparta. Alcibiades told the Spartans to send a general to Syracuse and to fortify Decelea in Attica. His strategy led to the eventual defeat of the Athenians in Sicily.

In 412 Alcibiades incited a revolt in Ionia. This unexpected action left many Athenian allies in complete chaos. The Spartans accused Alcibiades of being untrustworthy, because some feared he had too much power. He then left for the western capital of Persia, Sardis, but was recalled by the Athenian navy to help their fleet in 411. During the next three years, Alcibiades led the Athenians to several victories against the Spartans in the Hellespont. Believing he had restored his reputation, he returned to Athens in 407. Here he was welcomed and led the procession of the Eleusinian festival. However, once again his old enemies turned the Athenian people against him. Learning of this, Alcibiades retired to a Thracian castle, from where he warned the Athenians of their increasing carelessness regarding the Spartans. When the Athenians lost their fleet to the Spartans in 405 at Aegospotami, Alcibiades sought safety in Phrygia, in Western Asia Minor. He knew the Athenian statesmen would be angry that he had been right about the Spartans. Shortly thereafter, influential Spartans persuaded the Persian governor to have him assassinated. Alcibiades was only 46 years old when he died in BC 404.

Ancient History Article 4

A Different Horse: Alternate Interpretations of the Trojan War

The story of the Trojan War, as recounted in Homer's Iliad, Odyssey and in The Aeneid of Virgil, have for centuries been viewed as either literal truth (which is ridiculous to historians) or as a retelling of an ancient conflict that was indeed fought, but no one knows quite how (more realistic but not quite as colorful). But with growing evidence supporting the outlines of events in the Trojan War as described by Homer and Virgil, it may be time for a fresh look at the conflict, especially the climactic Trojan Horse story, to see if the legend may have something to say.

The historical siege of Troy is sometimes considered the beginning of Greek history.(1) As the stories go, the war between the Greeks and Troy started with the kidnapping (or elopement) of Helen, wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, by Paris, a nominal shepherd but the son of King Priam of Troy. As leaders of the budding Greek culture, Achilles(2) and Agamemnon led an invasion force to Asia Minor and besieged Troy. These are the bare bones of the historical part of the story. The legendary elements involve wagers by gods over who was the most beautiful woman (Helen, a daughter of Zeus who was worshiped as a goddess and was the patroness of sailors,(3) won) and subsequent grudges held by the losers of the wager.(4)

There are apparently real events in the Iliad, but an historical Helen seems unlikely. However, women as the cause of all trouble (and the inspiration for all men) is a common theme for drama. Homer makes Helen the cause of the conflict, and only because she was so beautiful did the war take place.(5)

Why a goddess? That she fell in love with Paris may be a reason, but any beautiful woman could serve a dramatic purpose here. But gods in Greek mythology never die, whereas death is always near at hand for mortals. The risk of destruction is what makes for heroes, and becomes for men of legend and of fact the ultimate test of courage. Beings who can become whatever they wish, take any form, blast men and mountains into dust and still squabble like willful children over trifles and vanity are, in human terms, incapable of fear and, thus, need no courage. By using Helen, Homer made an immortal being mortal so that she could share in the human struggle with the most fearsome of monsters on Earth: Man's savagery to his own species as expressed in war. Here Helen is not only the cause of the conflict; she became at risk because of it. Her beauty, whether or not of her own making, had unleashed one of the longest sieges in popular history.(6)

Historical and legendary Troy held out long enough for other Asia Minor powers to enter the conflict, even if they were not effective in raising the siege.(7) Heroes fell on both sides: the Greeks lost Patroclus (Pátroklos), and their combat leader Achilles (Akhilleus), while Troy lost Paris (Alexandros) and Hector (Hektor), their champion. But, even worse, there seemed to have been no end to it. The Trojans penetrated the Greek palisade fortress briefly once, nearly destroying the Greek ships. The Greeks resorted to the Arrows of Herakles, legendary weapons that killed Paris, but still could not win the war.(8)

Here Homer speaks of seemingly random acts of the gods, and to the seemingly unstoppable will of men to wage war. The gods use men like toys, throw up smokescreens, change form, appear as different mortals, give false and cryptic information, and generally act like willful, bizarre humans. The difference is that these willful, bizarre actors can't be killed, and they can turn almost anything into anything else. They act unpredictably, almost at whim, so that the slaughter goes on unabated, with neither one side or the other favored. This is the literary device used by Homer, a blind poet of whom we know practically nothing, to explain the causes of the random death and senseless violence of human warfare.

And it is at this impasse where the Trojan Horse tale starts, with an apparent deadlock and both sides seeming to wear out. The Greek plan is that a large wooden horse be constructed, where Odysseus and a few picked men would be secreted. As the Greeks sailed away and hid behind the island of Tenedos, the Trojans would haul the structure inside, the Greek commandos would be released, open the city gates, signal the waiting fleet, and the Greeks would sail back to take the city.(9)

The idea for a horse filled with men comes from Odysseus, who up to this time in Homer had been a skilled negotiator and bold raider. In Virgil's version, the horse was "tall as a hill,(10)" and contained nine "captains(11)" and at least two other men "fully armed.(12)(13)". The horse structure was so large that the walls that had stood for so long had to be partly dismantled to get it inside.(14) Various accounts have about a dozen men inside, but given what is known of Greek military requirements nine "captains" could imply as many as fifty. The risk of the total loss of these men in such an enterprise would have been great even for the increasingly desperate Greeks.

It's not made clear in the poems why the structure used was a horse, but Troy was famous for horse breeding before the war, and Hector had been a breaker (trainer) of horses, not a warrior by trade. The god Poseidon, who figures prominently in the Homeric version, was often worshiped in the shape of a horse.(15)

Unfortunately, there are some logistical problems with this part of the tale. A horse structure large enough to hold even a dozen, let alone fifty, fully-armed Greeks (at about ten square feet per man with spear and shield(16)) would have been impossible to hide behind a palisade, so it could have come as no real surprise to the Trojans when they discovered it after the Greeks sailed away.

The plan otherwise has too many "ifs" for any historical accuracy, or for skilled military planners as the Greeks almost had to have been. What reason would Troy have to haul the object inside the walls? Would not the wheels on this huge structure be somewhat suspicious, or the thoughtfulness of a defeated foe? Land-built structures of that size (at least thirty feet tall and forty long) just didn't move that much in Bronze Age technology. And if it could move, how would the Greeks be assured that Troy would move it inside their beloved city walls, rather than just leave it in place for all the world to see? And how long would the Greeks have to wait inside? Days? Weeks?

There are other problems as well, such as the very great risk of structural failure before, during or after movement, or the more realistic chance that the Trojans would just dismantle the large structure (which would require less manpower than dragging) to move it. But the poets don't seem to be thinking in those terms when the mist clears and a wooden horse full of Greek commandos is discovered in their former camps.

Virgil describes the Trojans coming out, throwing wide the gates to gape at the abandoned camps, to look in wonderment at the great tribute left behind. Would Troy really think it a tribute? Apparently not immediately, since some wanted to

destroy it, which would have been a more appropriate response in the circumstances. The name of Odysseus was even invoked by Laocoon (Laokoon) and his people. But then Sinon was found, an alleged deserter from the Greek forces, with a story about how Odysseus wanted to maintain the siege long after it appeared to be hopeless, and how the Greeks had tried to leave but were blocked by bad weather. And how the oracle of Apollo told them to leave an offering, which was to be none other than Sinon.(17)

Troy buys Sinon's story, but then, just before Laocoon sacrifices a bull come the serpents to destroy him. This affirms to Troy that, since the snakes coiled up at the feet of Athena when they were done, the horse was sacred (Laocoon having profaned it by throwing a spear at it) and needed to be hauled inside to the Palladium of Pallas Athena. Thus resolved, Troy proceeds to do exactly what the Greeks had planned for them to do, even to the point of tearing down part of the city walls to haul the great horse inside.

Even while this was happening, Cassandra foretells the future fall of Troy, and noises are heard inside the great structure. Here again, the fickle gods wreak their havoc, cursing Troy against believing the truth when they heard it. But still, Troy was joyous that this tribute, a symbol of the end of the conflict, was now being brought in to an honored place as a proof of Troy's great victory. Troy, after a decade of siege, appears desperate to believe that it is a tribute from a vanquished foe. Laocoon seems to be a dramatic device, and Sinon adds only a little credibility to the meaning of the horse. Given this, Laocoon's doubt was almost certainly added to provide narrative suspense and, perhaps, a clue to the mystery of the Trojan Horse.

Sieges are hard work for both sides, and ancient sieges were particularly arduous.(18) Disease and starvation are endemic to both sides even during modern sieges. This raises possible explanations for the horse story that the ancient poets probably could have known nothing about, the first being disease and the weakening effects of long-term short rations.

Sanitation and nutrition were only dimly understood in the 11th Century BCE and the Greeks had been in roughly the same place for ten years. If Helen's face really did launch a thousand ships, with roughly fifty men to the ship that would mean that at least 50,000 Greeks (and probably more) had been encamped beneath Troy's walls.(19) This is a huge army to supply remotely, even today, and it needs an enormous number of latrines and gallons of fresh water, both of which would have been in short supply after ten years.

Troy would have suffered greatly in a ten-year siege. Fresh food acquisition and waste disposal has always been a problem in sieges, and in ancient sieges was often decisive.(20) Desperation and disease were more than likely in Priam's city.

Disease may have been encoded in the horse saga, but another clue may have been left us in the death of Laocoon by apparent suffocation.(21) It is unlikely that healthy, awake adults would stand still long enough to be crushed by non-mythical constricting snakes, but there are none indigenous to Asia Minor. The snakes Virgil describes may have been neurotoxic venomous asps or cobras (except perhaps for their apparent size).(22) However, given the horse story and that horses certainly would have been left by the Greeks, at least two other explanations may exist: Pulmonary anthrax and pneumonic plague, both of which suffocate their victims in fluid or hemorrhagic blood, and are two that cross the species barrier between horses and men. These diseases can strike a weakened individual so swiftly that medical help, even if available and competent, is often helpless.

Another theory reasons that the god Poseidon is the originator of earthquakes,(23) and Homer has Athena call him "earthshaker" in the Odyssey.(24) If a disease is partly responsible for the weakening of Troy's defenses, a tremor could have caused the partial destruction of the city's walls and perhaps part of the city itself. This explanation is a little too convenient for historians, but it comfortably fits into the pieces of the legend.

Though Homer's and Virgil's stories are romantic, they provide a lot of clues that add up to a plausible interpretation for the "events" of the seemingly fantastic story of the Trojan War and the Trojan Horse.

First, a long siege weakens both Greek and Trojan to a point where neither could see a reasonable or honorable end to the conflict. An outbreak of a highly contagious disease, possibly one that infects both men and animals, causes the Greeks to take to ship to get away from the "bad humors" that the medicine of their time would attribute such sicknesses to. The Trojans, out foraging for food or on an expeditionary raid find that the Greeks have abandoned their contaminated camps. They then bring in abandoned livestock, including horses.

Starving Troy slaughters what the Greeks leave behind and quickly consumes it, infecting themselves with the same diseases that the Greeks fled from. Weakened by years of siege, the Trojans begin to sicken and die in large numbers.

While mass cremations raise the stench of death and burning flesh to the offshore breezes, a small earthquake destroys part of the city wall. Troy, weakened by starvation, disease, a few collapsed buildings and fires compounded by simple exhaustion, cannot repair the walls immediately.

A Greek ship, captained by Odysseus, looks in on Troy, smells the death from the funeral pyres and sees the damaged wall, observing that no one appears to be trying to repair it. They signal the fleet and the Greeks return, opportunistically taking the city.

History, and in particular military history, has not been kind to the Trojan War. Beyond the inclusion of the fantastic and supernatural, the tale of events is also marred by dramatic effect, hearsay and misinformation.

However, the salient facts are that there was a city about where Homer described it and at about the same time, and it was destroyed roughly 1180 BCE with a lot of concurrent fire, and well-respected military historians mention the fall of Troy, one putting the year at 1184 BCE.⁽²⁵⁾ These are facts of archaeology and history, not the reading of a poem, which leads one to believe that there must be at least some historic basis for Homer's and Virgil's epics.

Just as Helen is an immortal being sharing the risks of war while being the apparent cause of it, Virgil's and Homer's tales of the Trojan War may have been what Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* was to World War Two --tales of a randomly-generated, endless tragedy of seemingly mindless death regulated by creatures immune to the killing itself. To Homer, it's a cultural tale in which the gods were responsible. For Virgil, the story is a politically driven tale focused on the inevitable destiny of the Roman Republic (the Roman rulers of the time were fond of the legend in which Rome was founded by the survivors of Troy). For Heller, bureaucrats a thousand miles away from the battlefield dictated the fate of the hapless victims with bizarre rules about sanity, dooming men to flying endless missions to no apparent purpose in a backwater of a global war.

In describing the events of a conflict that took place millennia before their time, both Homer and Virgil may have been preserving an oral tradition that at least made history entertaining enough to retain the main story in the first place. This should not be seen as unusual, for the two writers often used common dramatic devices for different purposes (for example, Homer's underworld is for heroes to watch the world go by or to get Odysseus to go home: Virgil's points to Rome's destiny).

But here the historian is faced with something of a dilemma: If the Trojan War is completely mythological, then what about all the fragmentary evidence we have supporting its occurrence? If the Trojan War did happen, then some parts of the mythical description must be true, and some part, or some other interpretation, of the Trojan Horse story has to be thought to be accurate.

Ancient History Article 5

The Ionian Revolt

About 2500 years ago, the Persian Empire was expanding through Asia and into Asia Minor (the area between the Black and Mediterranean Seas) and taking control of the eastern world. A Persian ruler was installed over every city-state that they conquered. It was this action that eventually provoked the Ionian revolt which marked the beginning of the long confrontation between the Greek and Persian empires.

About BC 550, Cyrus I, emperor of Persia, conquered the territory of Ionia (the west coast of Modern Turkey). For all of their advances in science and mathematics, these well-established city-states seemed the most prominent in Greece. The people of Ionia, were discontent with their new, dictatorial rulers. The Persian rulers knew the feelings of the populace, but did little to alleviate the hostilities. Around BC 500, Artaphrenes, ruler of the western capital of Persia (Sardis) met with other leaders of Ionia. Seeing that many of them were anxious for gains in power and land, he made them agree not to attack each other. Artaphrenes knew that internal conflict could result in disintegration of the empire.

In BC 499, Aristagoras, the ruler of the Ionian city Miletus, yearned to control the city of Naxos. He tried to gain help from surrounding cities but failed. Fearing punishment from Darius I (Persian Emperor from BC 521-486) or Artaphrenes, for breaking the agreement, he incited a rebellion. Aristagoras encouraged the Ionians to remove their leaders. In response, many cities in the area rebelled and ousted their Persian rulers. Knowing that it would not be long until Darius retaliated, Aristagoras traveled to Sparta and appealed to King Cleomenes for aid. When the Spartan leader learned of the distance his army would travel to reinforce the Ionians, he declined the request for aid

Aristagoras, now desperate for support, went to Athens for help. The Athenians, fearing an inevitable attack by the Persians, decided to support Aristagoras and sent twenty triremes along with five from Eretria. The Ionian fleet, bolstered by Athenian and Eretrian ships, sailed to Ephesus in BC 498. The ships were moored at the port of Coressus and the soldiers followed the river Cayster to Sardis. The Allied Greek force marched into the city where they met little resistance. As they marched deeper into the city, they finally engaged Artaphrenes (ruler of Sardis) who was defending the citadel. Not able to capture the citadel, the Ionians set the city ablaze and retreated to Ephesus. Persian troops in the area met the Greeks at Ephesus and massacred most of them. The remaining Ionians scattered to the surrounding cities.

Despite the great setback of losing so many men, Aristagoras continued his fight against Persia. He encouraged more revolts in Western Asia Minor, Thrace and Cyprus. Aristagoras sent part of his fleet to aid the Cyprians, but the Persians thoroughly defeated the Cyprian army. Darius I decided to attack Caria, a city with close ties to Miletus, Aristagoras' city. When the Carians learned of this plan, they ambushed the Persian army at night and annihilated it. Four Persian generals died in the battle. Although their deaths were a great loss, Persia continued to reclaim cities.

Seeing his rebellion collapse and fearing for his life, Aristagoras fled to Mycrinus. He gave command of Miletus over to Pythagoras, a mathematician. Aristagoras, frustrated with his failed rebellion, attacked the Thracians, but in time, he and his army were cut off and destroyed.

After Aristagoras left Miletus, the Persian fleet sailed to Lade and destroyed the Greek fleet defending the city. Darius and his army captured Miletus in BC 494. After the city-state fell, the revolts in the Persian Empire crumbled, due to a lack of leadership.

The revolt had several lasting effects. The Ionian enlightenment ended. Darius I's anger for Athens grew, because of the aid they provided to the Ionians, and gave him the incentive to invade Greece. The rebellion had clearly shown that the empire was unstable, and vulnerable to internal conflicts.

Ancient History Article 6

The Battle of Actium

The strange battle of Actium ended decades of Roman civil war and resulted in the rise of the first Roman Emperor. Antony's seemingly irrational battle tactics destroyed him, his armies and his famed wife, Cleopatra. Conjecture over Antony's reasons for abandoning the battle and chasing Cleopatra's ship has been fodder for historians, poets and movie writers for centuries.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC Rome had no clear leader. Mark Antony (Marcus Antonius) took over Caesar's papers and many of his legions but Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus was named as heir in Caesar's will. (Octavianus also possessed the ever important name "Caesar".) Since neither of the two men could manage a clear majority of support, they formed the Second Triumvirate with Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Lepidus was a well respected yet aged General.

Individually, Octavianus and Antony continued to persuade senators and generals to join their side. Eventually, Lepidus who had been assigned an unimportant role in Africa, attempted to seize Sicily by force. His troops mutinied and he was forcibly retired by Octavianus. This left Octavianus with control of the Western provinces and Antony with control of those in the East. Antony married Octavianus' sister, Octavia, and an uneasy truce began.

Mark Antony and Cleopatra VII began their fateful relationship after he took over the Western provinces. He began to live openly with Cleopatra and eventually married her although he didn't immediately divorce Octavia his Roman wife. This was greatly resented by the Romans and helped erode much of Antony's support with the public and the Senate. Octavianus capitalized on the situation by reading a supposed copy of Antony's will which gave much of his control to Cleopatra's children. Regardless of the authenticity of the will, the propaganda worked and the Senate declared war on Cleopatra (and, therefore on Antony as well.)

Prior to the battle of Actium, Mark Antony took his and Cleopatra's fleet into the Gulf of Ambracia (located on the west coast of Greece). He used towers on land and a row of ships in the water to guard the entrance to the Gulf. Octavianus setup camp on the Northernmost shore of the Gulf across from the Actium promontory (from which the battle gets its name.) Over the next few months the two commanders were stalemated. A few battles were fought up and down the coast - the most decisive of which by Agrippa (one of Octavianus' Generals) cutoff Antony's lines of communication further down the coast.

During this time disunity increased between Antony, his generals and his wife. Antony's generals didn't trust either Cleopatra or her armies. They also realized that as long as she was present she would act as fuel for Octavianus' propaganda. They argued that if Cleopatra would go home many of the Roman senate, the Roman people and the Roman army would quit their support of Octavianus. In addition, the Roman generals were much more comfortable and experienced with land battles while Cleopatra insisted that Antony had the advantage on the water and should attack by sea. Furthermore she apparently didn't trust her control over Antony unless she was present and thus refused to leave.

Mark Antony finally agreed to take Cleopatra's advice and fight the naval battle and to simultaneously take his General's advice and send Cleopatra home. Exactly when Cleopatra and her ships (which made up a large number of the fleet) were to leave and whether or not Antony planned to go with them is a matter of debate to this day.

On 2 September 31 BC. Antony moved out to meet Octavianus. Antony's fleet consisted primarily of massive quinqueremes with bronze plates while Octavianus' fleet was made up mainly of smaller Liburnian vessels. The quinqueremes had the advantage of height from which to shoot or attack from and the advantage of the plates which protected them from ramming. The Liburnian ships were much more maneuverable. At the time the primary nature of Roman naval battles was to maneuver into position to ram the opponent and thus sink their ship. Since the quinqueremes couldn't maneuver quick enough to ram the faster Liburnian ships and the Liburnians couldn't do much damage even if they did ram the plated quinqueremes the battle progressed more as a land battle than a standard sea battle.

Antony's ships rowed out in two wings where Octavianus' ships were gathered at the entrance to the Gulf. Antony tried to flank Octavianus' right but the sudden move threw his own center into confusion. When Octavianus' center took advantage of the confusion the fighting grew heavy. All day the unusual battle progressed with the land tactics of arrows and spears being fired back and forth without much chance of tangible gain. Late in the afternoon, Cleopatra and her squadron of 60 ships suddenly raised their sails and raced away from the center of the battle to the open ocean.

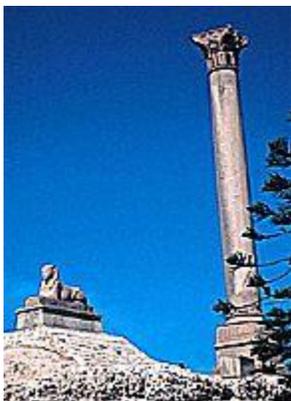
Antony's reaction has baffled historians for ages. When he saw Cleopatra leaving, Antony immediately left his command ship and followed her with 40 of his own ships following. Some have attributed Antony's rash departure to being caught off guard when his lover decided to leave him. Others have argued that Antony and Cleopatra had always secretly planned for him to steal away with her once her ships had the opportunity to break free. What is certain is that a quarter of Antony's fleet left without warning in the middle of the battle leaving the remainder of his fleet to their doom. By the end of the day the Antonian forces had lost 5000 lives and 300 ships. Octavianus no longer had an enemy capable of contending with him on the sea. A week later when all hope of Antony's return was lost, Antony's land forces surrendered as well.

A year later, as Octavianus' troops closed in on him, Antony committed suicide. Cleopatra was captured by Octavianus but rather than face the certain humiliation of being paraded through the streets of Rome she had a servant smuggle an asp into her quarters and committed suicide. In less than three years after the battle, Octavianus, now called Augustus Caesar, declared himself emperor.

Ancient History Article 7

The Burning of the Library of Alexandria

The loss of the ancient world's single greatest archive of knowledge, the Library of Alexandria, has been lamented for ages. But how and why it was lost is still a mystery. The mystery exists not for lack of suspects but from an excess of them.



Alexandria was founded in Egypt by Alexander the Great. His successor as Pharaoh, Ptolemy II Soter, founded the Museum or Royal Library of Alexandria in 283 BC. The Museum was a shrine of the Muses modeled after the Lyceum of Aristotle in Athens. The Museum was a place of study which included lecture areas, gardens, a zoo, and shrines for each of the nine muses as well as the Library itself. It has been estimated that at one time the Library of Alexandria held over half a million documents from Assyria, Greece, Persia, Egypt, India and many other nations. Over 100 scholars lived at the Museum full time to perform research, write, lecture or translate and copy documents. The library was so large it actually had another branch or "daughter" library at the Temple of Serapis.

The first person blamed for the destruction of the Library is none other than Julius Caesar himself. In 48 BC, Caesar was pursuing Pompey into Egypt when he was suddenly cut off by an

Egyptian fleet at Alexandria. Greatly outnumbered and in enemy territory, Caesar ordered the ships in the harbor to be set on fire. The fire spread and destroyed the Egyptian fleet. Unfortunately, it also burned down part of the city - the area where the great Library stood. Caesar wrote of starting the fire in the harbor but neglected to mention the burning of the Library. Such an omission proves little since he was not in the habit of including unflattering facts while writing his own history. But Caesar was not without public detractors. If he was solely to blame for the disappearance of the Library it is very likely significant documentation on the affair would exist today.

The second story of the Library's destruction is more popular, thanks primarily to Edward Gibbon's "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire". But the story is also a tad more complex. Theophilus was Patriarch of Alexandria from 385 to 412 AD. During his reign the Temple of Serapis was converted into a Christian Church (probably around 391 AD) and it is likely that many documents were destroyed then. The Temple of Serapis was estimated to hold about ten percent of the overall Library of Alexandria's holdings. After his death, his nephew Cyril became Patriarch. Shortly after that, riots broke out when Hierax, a Christian monk, was publicly killed by order of Orestes the city Prefect. Orestes was said to be under the influence of Hypatia, a female philosopher and daughter of the "last member of the Library of Alexandria". Although it should be noted that some count Hypatia herself as the last Head Librarian.

Alexandria had long been known for its violent and volatile politics. Christians, Jews and Pagans all lived together in the city. One ancient writer claimed that there was no people who loved a fight more than those of Alexandria. Immediately after the death of Hierax a group of Jews who had helped instigate his killing lured more Christians into the street at night by proclaiming that the Church was on fire. When the Christians rushed out the largely Jewish mob slew many of them. After this there was mass havoc as Christians retaliated against both the Jews and the Pagans - one of which was Hypatia. The story varies slightly depending upon who tells it but she was taken by the Christians, dragged through the streets and murdered.

Some regard the death of Hypatia as the final destruction of the Library. Others blame Theophilus for destroying the last of the scrolls when he razed the Temple of Serapis prior to making it a Christian church. Still others have confused both incidents and blamed Theophilus for simultaneously murdering Hypatia and destroying the Library though it is obvious Theophilus died sometime prior to Hypatia.

The final individual to get blamed for the destruction is the Moslem Caliph Omar. In 640 AD the Moslems took the city of Alexandria. Upon learning of "a great library containing all the knowledge of the world" the conquering general supposedly asked Caliph Omar for instructions. The Caliph has been quoted as saying of the Library's holdings, "they will either contradict the Koran, in which case they are heresy, or they will agree with it, so they are superfluous." So, allegedly, all the texts were destroyed by using them as tinder for the bathhouses of the city. Even then it was said to have taken six months to burn all the documents. But these details, from the Caliph's quote to the incredulous six months it supposedly took to burn all the books, weren't written down until 300 years after the fact. These facts condemning Omar were written by Bishop Gregory Bar Hebræus, a Christian who spent a great deal of time writing about Moslem atrocities without much historical documentation.

So who did burn the Library of Alexandria? Unfortunately most of the writers from Plutarch (who apparently blamed Caesar) to Edward Gibbons (a staunch atheist or deist who liked very much to blame Christians and blamed Theophilus) to Bishop Gregory (who was particularly anti-Moslem, blamed Omar) all had an axe to grind and consequently must be seen as biased. Probably everyone mentioned above had some hand in destroying some part of the Library's holdings. The collection may have ebbed and flowed as some documents were destroyed and others were added. For instance, Mark Antony was supposed to have given Cleopatra over 200,000 scrolls for the Library long after Julius Caesar is accused of burning it.

It is also quite likely that even if the Museum was destroyed with the main library the outlying "daughter" library at the Temple of Serapis continued on. Many writers seem to equate the Library of Alexandria with the Library of Serapis although technically they were in two different parts of the city.

The real tragedy of course is not the uncertainty of knowing who to blame for the Library's destruction but that so much of ancient history, literature and learning was lost forever.

Selected sources:

"The Vanished Library" by Luciano Canfora

"Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" by Edward Gibbons

Oracle of Delphi

Around 1400 BCE a goat herder noticed his sheep acted strange after peering into a particular chasm on Mount Parnassus. He looked in and found himself "agitated like one frantic". At least that is how the legend goes on the humble beginnings of the Oracle at Delphi.



The effects of the brain altering vapors, were ultimately attributed to a divine source. Other people began inhaling the vapors so that they could prophesy. But the gas was so disorienting some fell into the cavern and were lost. So a tripod was built and an individual was appointed to sit over the chasm and prophesy. Originally, the perfect candidate was considered to be a young virgin girl. But after one of the virgins escaped with a young Thessalian it was decreed no prophetess (also called the Pythoness or the Pythia) would be appointed under 50 years of age.

A booming industry grew up around the Oracle. Temples were built and rebuilt, priests were trained, rituals evolved and sacrifices were performed. Priests interpreted the incoherent utterances of the Pythia. Presents were brought to both placate the deity and in the hope of influencing a positive prophesy. The Delphic temple itself became one of the largest "banks" in the world. Delphi became a center for banking and commerce.

The divine nature and associated deity changed a few times over the course of several centuries. When the profits of the Oracle began to decline it was declared that Poseidon was speaking through her. Later this changed to the goddess Themis and, finally, Apollo was determined to be presiding over Delphi.

For over a millennia people traveled to the hill to consult the Oracle. Farmers consulted the Oracle on matters as simple as planting and harvest. Famous world leaders consulted on matters of conquest. Sophocles, Alexander the Great, and Croesus of Lydia all consulted the Oracle at one time or another.

The priests' interpretations may have been more coherent than the Pythoness but they generally remained cryptic and ambiguous. Croesus for example donated a fortune to the oracle to find out if he should invade a neighboring country. He was told "If you go to war you will cause the destruction of a great empire". He went to war and not only was defeated but was captured. He sent word to the Oracle asking why he was misled. The word came back that he wasn't misled, he had been told that there would be the destruction of a great empire and there was -- his.

The world famous Oracle of Delphi played an influential role in ancient history. For fourteen centuries it helped determine the course of empires. The prophesying was abolished in the 4th century as it conflicted with Christian beliefs that were at that time being embraced by Rome.

Ancient History Article 9

Ancient Battle Tanks

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One of the strangest innovations in warfare began around 4000 BC with the training of elephants in the Indus River Valley. Elephants were both an advantage and disadvantage for the armies that employed them up until the widespread use of gunpowder in the 16th Century. Sultans of India used them to fight Mongols. Alexander the Great, Carthaginians, Romans and several African civilizations all used war elephants at one time or another.

The potential advantages of war elephants are immediately obvious when considered from the point of the army facing them. Imagine a hundred or more elephants each weighing as much as five tons stampeding toward you. The shock effect alone would be staggering on both soldiers and their animals. Apparently, horses unaccustomed to elephants are frightened by the mere smell of the animals. Elephants were extremely difficult to kill and once charging they were difficult to stop. Armies using Asian elephants placed fighting towers on their backs. Usually the towers held an officer, archer and an infantryman with a lance. Outfitted with such a shielding tower, the elephants were used in much the same manner as latter day tanks. Traveling armies took advantage of the elephant's enormous strength by carrying heavy loads of equipment and supplies.

But elephants did not insure invincibility and were often a disadvantage. Only the larger Asian elephants or African plains elephants were able to maintain towers on their backs. The smaller African forest elephants (now extinct) usually only carried a single rider. Iron spikes in heavy wooden frames or wound through chains could be used against the elephants. Severely wounded or otherwise repulsed elephants tended to run amok. Similarly the loss of the elephant's driver would cause the elephants to charge about indiscriminately.

The most famous use of war elephants would have to be that of Hannibal and his armies crossing the Alps to attack the Romans. In reality, most of Hannibal's elephants died in that crossing or shortly thereafter. He did manage to replace many of them but they only played a pivotal role in one battle -- Trebia River. By the time Hannibal met the Romans at the last battle of Zama they had learned to create formations to "herd" the elephants through their ranks. The elephants that didn't pass through were as much a danger to their own army as to the enemy.

Ancient History: 12,000 BC to 500 AD Timeline

Year	Government, Politics, & War	Art & Culture	Science & Tech.	Religion & Philos.	Daily Life & Health
c. 10000 BC					(1) Dog first domesticated (Middle East) (2) Development of intensive flock management in Zagros Mountains
c. 8350 BC			Earliest known walled city at Jericho		
c. 8000 BC					(1) Potatoes and beans first cultivated in South America (2) Earliest permanent farming villages in Fertile Crescent
c. 7500 BC			First manufacture of textiles in the Middle East using flax		
c. 7000 BC					Goats, sheep, and pigs domesticated (Middle East)
c. 6200 BC			Copper smelting in Asia Minor		
c. 6000 BC			Irrigation in Zagros Mountains		(1) Cat domesticated (Northeast Africa) (2) Cattle domesticated (Turkey)
c. 5500 BC			Cotton cultivated in India		
c. 5200 BC					Chickens domesticated (China)
c. 5000 BC			Irrigation spreads to Mesopotamia		
c. 4500 BC			Sail, plow, and potter's wheel invented in Mesopotamia		
c. 4300 BC				Megalithic tombs in Western Europe	c. 4300-3100; Spread of cities in Mesopotamia
c. 4000 BC					Horse domesticated (Eurasian steppe)
c. 3800 BC			Bronze in Mesopotamia		

c. 3650 BC			Wheeled vehicles in Mesopotamia		
c. 3500 BC			Pottery in South America		Permanent fishing villages in South America
c. 3400 BC			Earliest hieroglyphics in Egypt		
c. 3150 BC		Unification of Egypt under King Menes			
3000 B C			Sumerians develop Cuneiform writing		Potatoes, alpacas, and llamas domesticated (Andes Mountains)
2900 B C			Defensive walls around cities become more prevalent		
2700 B C				Yin and Yang theory developed in China	Olive trees cultivated (Crete)
2630 B C			c. 2630; First pyramid constructed in Egypt; Imhotep is first known architect		
2600 B C					(1) Urbanization in Indus River Valley (2) Preservation of fish and poultry (Egypt)
2575 B C		c. 2575-2134; Old Kingdom of Egypt			
2528 B C			c. 2528; Cheops buried in First Great Pyramid at Giza		
2400 B C			First wheeled war wagons in Mesopotamia		
2350 B C		Earliest known law code in Sumer			
2334 B C		c. 2334-2193; Sargon unifies Sumer and Akkad, creating Akkadian Empire		c. 2334-2193; First deification of kings in Sumer	
2300 B C					Earliest permanent farming villages in Mesoamerica
2296 B C			Chinese record a comet		
2200 B C		Legendary Xia Dynasty in China			Dogs, goats, pigs, oxen, and sheep domesticated in China
2134 B C		Collapse of central authority in Egypt			

		End of Old Kingdom			
2100 B C				First Ziggurats in Sumer	
2040 B C		c. 2040-1650; Mentuhotep restores centralized government in Egypt marking the beginning of the Middle Kingdom			
2000 B C	Hittites establish empire in Anatolia (modern Turkey)	c. 2000 - 1450; Minoan palace civilization on Crete	Decimal notation in Babylon	(1) Stonehenge in Southern England (2) Epic of Gilgamesh is first written myth	Tea and bananas cultivated (India)
1813 B C	Emergence of Assyrian power under Shamshi-Adad I				
1800 B C	c. 1800-1750; Hammurabi establishes Babylonian Empire	c. 1800-1750; Hammurabi's Code is first written legal code	Irrigation in South America	Earliest prohibitions against pork among shepherd tribes in Middle East	
1750 B C				Collapse of Indus River Valley civilization at Mohenjo-daro and Harappa	
1700 B C	c. 1700-1650; Chariot-equipped Hyksos begin invasions and conquer Middle Kingdom Egypt		Spread of two-wheeled war chariot in Middle East		First evidence of leavened bread (Egypt)
1600 B C		(1) Rise of Mycenaean Civilization in mainland Greece (2) c. 1600; First historical dynasty in China (The Shang)	(1) Canaanites invent first alphabet (2) Pictographic writing in China		
1550 B C		Ahmosé reunites Egypt; c. 1550-1070; New Kingdom in Egypt			
1500 B C	c. 1504-1492; Thutmose I		Geometry developed in Egypt		(1) Silkworm domesticated (China) (2) c. 1500 Rabbit domesticated (Europe)

	expands Egypt into Palestine, Syria, and Nubia				
1458 B C		Thutmose III ascends to Egyptian throne; First usage of the term Pharaoh			
1450 B C	Mycenaean Greeks conquer Minoan Civilization on Crete			Brahma worship in India	
1440 B C			First metalworking in South America		
1400 B C			Iron Age begins in Asia Minor		Maize cultivation in Mesoamerica
1353 B C				Amenhotep IV introduces monotheism to Egypt	
1350 B C			War chariot introduced to China		
1333 B C				Tutankhaman (King Tut) reestablishes polytheism as official religion in Egypt	
1200 B C		(1) c. 1200-400; Olmec Civilization in Mesoamerica (2) c. 1200-1100; Bronze Age palaces destroyed throughout Mediterranean world		c. 1200-1100; Judaism established in Palestine	c. 1200-800; Rise of Phoenician maritime dominance in the Mediterranean
1150 B C					Aristocrats in Egypt use chairs
1122 B C		c. 1122-256; Zhou Dynasty in China			
1100 B C			Phoenician traders begin spreading alphabet throughout Mediterranean		
1070 B C		End of New Kingdom in Egypt			
1047 B C		c. 1047-1007 BCE; Saul reigns as first Hebrew king in Judaea			

1006 B C	c. 1006-965; David becomes king of Israel and conquers Jerusalem				
957 BC				Solomon builds first Jewish temple in Jerusalem	
900 BC		Etruscans establish cities in Tuscany			
883 BC	Revival of Assyrian power under Ashurnasirpal II				
850 BC				c. 850-750; Approximate date of written transcriptions of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey from existing oral tradition	
814 BC		Traditional date for the founding of Carthage			
800 BC			(1) Hieroglyphic script in Mesoamerica (2) c. 800-750; Development of Greek alphabet	Olmecs build pyramids in Central America (modern Mexico)	
780 BC		c. 780-755; Alara establishes Napata Kingdom of Kush			
776 BC				First Olympic Games held in Greece	
772 BC				Construction begins on Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, one of Seven Wonders of the Ancient World	
771 BC		Destruction of the Zhou capital at Hào marks end of Western Zhou Dynasty in China; Beginning of Eastern Zhou Dynasty			
753 BC		Traditional date of			

		the founding of Rome			
744 BC	Tiglath-Pileser III succeeds in Assyria; Conquers Syria, Palestine, Israel, and Babylon				
722 BC	Sargon II seizes power in Assyria; destroys the Kingdom of Israel	c. 722-481; Spring and Autumn Period in China; Decentralization and rise of powerful nobles			
720 BC			Chinese record solar eclipse		
700 BC			Aqueducts in the Middle East		
671 BC	Assyrians conquer Egypt				
660 BC		Legendary date for foundation of Japan by Emperor Jimmu; Celebrated in Japan as National Foundation Day			
657 BC		Cypselus becomes first tyrant in Corinth			
650 BC					First coins used by Lydians
621 BC		First written legal code in Athens attributed to Draco			
612 BC	Babylonians sack Nineveh; Assyrian power collapses				
609 BC			Nekan of Egypt launches first known circumnavigation of Africa		
605 BC	Babylonians defeat last Assyrian army at Megiddo; End of Assyria as				

	an independent kingdom				
600 BC	c. 600; Greeks colonize southern France			c. 600; Sappho is priestess of love cult on Lesbos	
594 BC		Solon's reforms in Athens			
587 BC	Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon destroys Jerusalem; Babylonian Captivity of the Jews begins				
585 BC			Greek astronomer Thales predicts an eclipse		
565 BC				Spread of Taoism in China	
553 BC				c. 553; Death of Zoroaster; Teachings emphasizing monotheism and eschatology become official religion of Persian Empire	
550 BC		Persian Empire unified by Cyrus II; Beginning of Achaemenid Dynasty	Earliest use of cast iron in China		
539 BC	Babylonian empire conquered by Cyrus the Great of Persia				
530 BC			Greek mathematician Pythagoras		
522 BC	Darius I rises to power in Persia; Expands Persian Empire to its maximum extent				
520 BC			Canal completed		

			between the Nile River and Red Sea		
517 BC				Hsiao Yen (Wu Ti) backs Buddhist missionary efforts in central China	
515 BC				c. 515; Birth of Parmenides, who becomes founder of metaphysics	
509 BC		Rome becomes a republic			
508 BC		Cleisthenes' democratic reforms in Athens			
500 BC				(1) c. 500; Polynesian culture develops in Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga (2) Earliest versions of Sun Tzu's The Art of War (3) Heraclitus becomes one of the earliest dialectical philosophers	c. 500 Honeybee domesticated (Europe)
499 BC	Ionian Revolt marks beginning of Persian-Greek Wars				
498 BC				Pindar begins composing his Odes	
495 BC				c. 495-483; Confucius teaches throughout China	
490 BC	Athenians defeat Persians at Battle of Marathon				
480 BC	(1) Spartan army under King Leonidas defeated by Persians at Battle of Thermopylae	c. 480-221; Warring States Period in China; Seven regional warlords fight for dominance in China			

	(2) Greek fleet defeats Persian fleet at Battle of Salamis				
479 BC	Battles of Plataea and Mycale mark the end of Spartan leadership of the Greek coalition against Persia				
478 BC	Athens founds Delian League to lead the Greek war against Persia				
472 BC				Aeschylus's tragedy Persae performed	
466 BC	Delian League decisively defeats Persian fleet at Battle of Eurymedon River				
461 BC		Golden Age of Athens begins; Pericles funds massive public works in city			
458 BC		Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus becomes dictator of Rome then retires; One of the founding myths of Roman Virtue			
457 BC	First Peloponnesian War; Sparta dominant in Peloponnesian Peninsula				
455 BC				Anaxagoras teaches atomistic theory of the natural world	
450 BC					Reindeer domesticated (Central Asia)

441 BC				First stage success of Euripides in Athens	
440 BC				Sophocles' tragedy Antigone	
438 BC				Phidias completes Parthenon	
431 BC	Second Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta begins			Euripides' Medea	
430 BC				(1) Death of Empedocles, who developed Four Elements theory of the natural world (2) c. 430; Herodotus writes his History	Hippocrates teaches in Athens
429 BC				c. 429, Sophocles' Oedipus Rex	
428 BC				Euripides' Hippolytus; portrays struggle between sexual desire and asceticism	
426 BC				Euripides' Andromache	
423 BC				Aristophanes' comedy The Clouds	
421 BC				Aristophanes' comedy The Peace	
420 BC				c. 420-413; Sophocles' Electra	
415 BC	Athens sends large expeditionary force to Sicily; Athenians are decisively defeated			Euripides' The Trojan Women	

411 BC	Outnumbered Athenian fleet defeats Spartans at Battle of Cynossema			Aristophanes' anti-war satire Lysistrata	
405 BC	With Persian aid, Spartan fleet decisively defeats Athenians at the battle of Aegospotami				
404 BC	Athens surrenders, marking end of Peloponnesian War	Sparta establishes government of the "Thirty Tyrants" and suspends democracy in Athens			
403 BC		Thrasybulus overthrows "Thirty Tyrants" and reestablishes democracy in Athens			
401 BC	Battle of Cunaxa; Xenophon and 10,000 Greek mercenaries retreat through Persian Empire			(1) Posthumous production of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus (2) Death of Thucydides, who leaves behind The History of the Peloponnesian War	
399 BC				Trial and death of Socrates	
385 BC				Plato establishes his Academy	
371 BC	Thebes defeats Sparta at Battle of Leuctra; Spartan helots freed				
367 BC				Aristotle begins study at Plato's Academy	
359 BC		Philip II becomes king in Macedon			
350 BC					c. 350; Earliest Mayan city-states

343 BC	Rome subdues Campania in First Samnite War				
340 BC	Athens forms Hellenic League to resist Philip II of Macedon				
338 BC	Philip II of Macedon defeats Greek army at Battle of Chaeronea; End of independent Greek city-states				
336 BC	Philip II of Macedon assassinated; Alexander rises to power in Macedon				
335 BC	Alexander destroys the rebellious city of Thebes and enslaves its population			Aristotle opens the Lyceum	
334 BC	Alexander the Great Invades Asia Minor and defeats Persians at Granicus River				
332 BC	Alexander conquers Palestine and Egypt	Alexander the Great founds Alexandria in Egypt			
331 BC	Alexander defeats Persians at Gaugamela; Effectively destroys Persian army				
330 BC	(1) Alexander the Great				

	enters Babylon; Conquers Persian Empire (2) Darius III assassinated by Persian satrap Bessus				
329 BC	Alexander the Great reaches India				
326 BC	Macedonian army defeats King Porus at the battle of The Hydaspes River; Alexander the Great's army mutinies and refuses to march farther into India				
325 BC					First historical reference to sugar cane by Nearchus
324 BC				Menander introduces 'New Comedy' to Greece	
323 BC	(1) Alexander's general Ptolemy establishes control of Egypt (2) Alexander the Great dies; Wars of the Diadochoi (Successors) begin				
322 BC		Chandragupta Maurya establishes the Mauryan Empire in northern India			
312 BC	Seleucus establishes Seleucid Empire in Mesopotamia		Appius Claudius Caecus begins construction of the Appian Way in Rome		

301 BC	Antigonus dies at battle of Ipsus; Dissolution of Alexander's empire is confirmed			Zeno introduces Stoic philosophy in Athens	
300 BC			(1) c. 300; Coal technology in Greece (2) Euclid's Elements	c. 300 BCE; Epicurus founds school of philosophy in Athens	c. 300; Rise of horse-nomadism among Turko-Mongol tribes of Central Asia
290 BC	Rome completes conquest of Samnites; Effectively controls Italy			Approximate date for the construction of the Library of Alexandria	
289 BC				Chinese ruler/philosopher Mencius dies; Responsible for refining Confucianism	
283 BC				Pharos lighthouse in Alexandria	
281 BC				Completion of the Colossus of Rhodes, one of Seven Wonders of the Ancient World	
272 BC	Rome conquers Tarentum and unifies Italian Peninsula				
270 BC			c. 270; Aristarchos of Samos proposes heliocentric universe		
264 BC	First Punic War begins between Rome and Carthage				
260 BC				(1) c. 260; Mauryan king Ashoka converts to Buddhism (2) c. 260; First gladiatorial games in Rome	
256 BC		End of Eastern Zhou Dynasty in China			

241 BC	First Punic War ends after Carthaginian defeat at the battle of the Aegates Islands; Rome conquers Sicily and makes it the first Roman province				
238 BC		Arsaces establishes independent kingdom of Parthia			
221 BC		China united by the first emperor Shih Huang-ti; Beginning of Qin Dynasty and Imperial China		Chinese Emperor Shih Huang-ti outlaws and persecutes Confucianism	
219 BC	Second Punic War between Rome and Carthage begins				
217 BC	Roman army ambushed and destroyed at Battle of Lake Trasimene				
216 BC	Hannibal's Carthaginian army destroys 16 Roman legions at Battle of Cannae				
212 BC			Archimedes dies during siege of Syracuse; Regarded as one of the greatest ancient scientists		
210 BC		Chinese Emperor Shih Huang-ti dies; Buried in massive mausoleum with the Terracotta Army			
206 BC	Roman army under Scipio Africanus defeats	Han Dynasty established in China			

	Carthaginians at battle of Ilipa; Rome conquers Hispania				
202 BC	Roman army under Scipio Africanus defeats Hannibal at Zama; Second Punic War ends with Rome dominant in the Mediterranean				
200 BC					c. 200, Polynesians settle Tahiti
190 BC	Rome defeats Seleucid king Antiochus III at battle of Magnesia; Rome secures control of Greece and gains territory in Asia Minor				
179 BC			Earliest dated stone arched bridge constructed over the Tiber River		
171 BC	Third Macedonian War between Rome and Macedon				
170 BC			Paved streets in Rome		
168 BC	Rome defeats Philip V of Macedon at battle of Pydna; Rome assures dominance in Greece				
167 BC	Mattathias the Hasmonian				

	begins Maccabean Revolt against Seleucid rule in Judea				
150 BC				(1) c. 150; El Mirador (Guatemala) has become largest center of Mayan civilization (2) c. 150; Polybius publishes first part of The Histories	
149 BC	Third Punic War between Rome and Carthage begins; Roman army besieges Carthage				
146 BC	(1) Romans capture Carthage; Carthaginian territory incorporated into Roman province of Africa (2) Rome eliminates democracies in Greece				
144 BC	Mithridates I of Parthia conquers Babylonia, Media, and Persia				
142 BC	Simon Maccabeus creates Hasmonean Dynasty in Judea; Independent Jewish state until 63 BCE				
135 BC	c. 135-132; First Slave Revolt in Sicily				
133 BC	Tiberius Gracchus elected tribune in Rome and proposes land reform; Murdered by aristocratic opponents				

130 BC					Silk Road expands after Chinese emperor Wu Di sends emissaries into Central Asia
123 BC		Gaius Gracchus proposes price controls in Rome, sparking aristocratic opposition			
121 BC		Gaius Gracchus killed during insurrection			
110 BC					Cultured oyster beds in Southern Italy
107 BC		Gaius Marius abolishes land qualifications for military service in Rome			
105 BC	Proto-Germanic Cimbri and Teutones destroy a Roman army at battle of Arausio				
104 BC	Second Slave Revolt in Sicily				
102 BC	Roman army under Gaius Marius defeats Teutones at battle of Aquae Sextiae				
100 BC		Saturnus and Glaucia propose price controls in Rome; Both are murdered with support of Gaius Marius			
91 BC		Social War begins in Italy; Roman allies rebel			
88 BC		(1) Social War ends; Italian allies gain Roman citizenship (2) Sulla marches on Rome; First Civil War in Rome			

86 BC		Gaius Marius dies suddenly, ending First Civil War in Rome			
75 BC			Greek physician Asclepiades makes distinction between chronic and acute disease; Develops theories of diet and exercise		
73 BC		Spartacus leads slave revolt against Rome			
71 BC		Slave Revolt under Spartacus defeated by Crassus and Pompey			
70 BC		Pompey and Crassus restore the powers of the Tribunate and resume grain distribution in Rome			
63 BC	Judea becomes client-kingdom of Rome				
60 BC		1st Triumvirate of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus			
58 BC	Julius Caesar invades Gaul; Gallic Wars begin				
53 BC	Parthians crush Roman army at battle of Carrhae; Crassus killed afterward	War of the First Triumvirate begins			
51 BC		Cleopatra assumes Egyptian throne		Cicero's De Republica	
49 BC		Caesar crosses Rubicon with his army			
48 BC	Caesar defeats Senetorial army under				

	Crassus at Pharsalus				
47 BC		Pompey assassinated			
45 BC	Julius Caesar defeats conservative republican army at the Battle of Munda; Caesar returns to Rome to rule as dictator			Julius Caesar enforces the Julian Calendar developed by Sosigenes of Alexandria	
44 BC		Julius Caesar named dictator for life; Assassinated by Senatorial opponents			
43 BC		2nd Triumvirate of Octavian, Marcus Aemilius, and Mark Antony			
42 BC	Marcus Junius Brutus defeated at the Second Battle of Philippi; Commits suicide soon after			(1) Virgil begins his Eclogues (2) Second Triumvirate deifies Julius Caesar; Origin of Caesar worship	
37 BC		Herod the Great confirmed as King of Judaea			
35 BC				First volume of Horace's Satires	
32 BC		Mark Antony divorces Octavian's sister; Civil war resumes			
31 BC		Octavian defeats Mark Antony at Battle of Actium; War of Second Triumvirate ends			
30 BC		(1) Antony and Cleopatra commit suicide (2) Egypt becomes personal property of Octavian; Serves as financial power base	Sundial in China		

		for he and successive emperors			
27 BC		Octavian gains title Caesar Augustus; Rules Rome informally as first emperor			
19 BC			Pont du Gard aqueduct completed in Nîmes, France	Virgil dies; Augustus immediately publishes the Aeneid	
18 BC				Ovid's Amores	
15 BC	Augustus expands Rome's frontier to the Danube River				
4				c. 4; Approximate date of the birth of Jesus	
6 AD	Rome incorporates client-kingdom of Judea into new province of Iudaea				
7				Ovid's Metamorphoses	
9	Germanic revolt against Rome under Arminius; Destroys Varus and three legions at battle of Teutoburg Forest				
14		Roman Emperor Augustus dies; Tiberius succeeds			
16	Romans defeat Arminius but German tribes remain independent				
17				Livy, Roman historian, dies leaving behind his 142-volume history of Rome, Ab Urbe Condita	
25		c. 25-220; Eastern Han dynasty established			

		by Guang Wudi			
27				c. 27; Jesus is baptized and begins ministry	
30			Water-powered bellows and iron furnace in China	c. 30; Crucifixion and death of Jesus	
37		Roman Emperor Tiberius dies; Caligula succeeds			
41		Roman emperor Caligula murdered; Claudius succeeds			
46				Paul of Tarsus begins missionary work in Asia Minor	
49					
50		c. 50; Londinium (London) founded			
54		Roman Emperor Claudius poisoned; Nero succeeds			
63				Seneca's work of stoic philosophy, Epistolae Morales	
64				Fires destroy half of Rome; Nero blames Christians and begins persecutions	
66	First Jewish Revolt against Roman rule in Judaea			Petronius' Satyricon	
67				Official introduction of Buddhism into China	
68		Roman emperor Nero commits suicide: End			

		of Julio-Claudian Dynasty			
69		Year of the Four Emperors in Rome; Vespasian founds Flavian Dynasty			
70	Roman army under Titus captures Jerusalem and destroys Jewish Temple				
73				Jewish Zealots commit mass suicide at Masada	
76	Chinese army defeats Xiongnu nomads (Probably the early Huns)				
79		Roman emperor Vespasian dies; Titus succeeds		Pliny the Elder killed in Pompeii during eruption of Vesuvius	
80				Colosseum opens in Rome	
81		Roman emperor Titus dies; Domitian succeeds			
96		Roman emperor Domitian assassinated; Nerva succeeds			
98		Roman emperor Nerva dies; Trajan succeeds			
100					c. 100 Turkey domesticated (Mexico)
105			Zailun invents new paper production technique in China	Tacitus' Historiae	
106		Dacia (Romania) becomes Roman			

		province			
113				Trajan's Column erected in newly rebuilt Roman Forum	
114	Rome annexes Armenia				
115	Emperor Trajan expands the Roman frontier to the Tigris River				
117		Roman emperor Trajan dies; After series of revolts, Hadrian succeeds		Tacitus' Annales	
120				c. 120; Plutarch's Parallel Lives	
121				Seutonius' Lives of the Caesars	
122	Hadrian's Wall built in Britain				
125				Approximate date of completion of the Pantheon in Rome	
132				c. 132-135; Jewish Rebellion in Jerusalem	
135				Hadrian orders destruction of Jerusalem and enforces a diaspora of the Jews	
138		Roman emperor Hadrian dies; Antoninus Pius succeeds			
155				Martyrdom of Polycarp, an early Christian bishop in Smyrna; His Letter to the Philippians among earliest Christian writings to survive	
161		Roman			

		Emperor Antoninus Pius dies; Marcus Aurelius succeeds			
164					c. 164-180; Plague (probably smallpox) hits Rome
167	Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius leads series of successful campaigns against Germanic tribes				
180		Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius dies; Commodus succeeds	Galen's Methodus Medendo; Becomes ultimate medical authority for centuries	Marcus Aurelius' Meditations; Stoic philosophy	
184		(1) Diocletian becomes Roman emperor; Begins administrative division of Eastern and Western Roman Empire (2) Revolt of the Yellow Turbans in China			
192		Roman Emperor Commodus murdered			
193		After series of murders, Septimus Severus uses army to become Roman emperor			
197				Approximate date of Tertullian's conversion to Christianity; Introduced the term Trinity into Christian theology	
200				Judah haNasi compiles Mishnah, the foundation of Talmudic Law	

211		Roman emperor Septimus Severus dies; Caracalla succeeds			
212		Caracalla extends Roman citizenship to all free males in the Empire			
217		Roman emperor Caracalla murdered by army officers; Macrinus succeeds			
218		Roman emperor Macrinus killed in battle; Heliogabalus succeeds			
220		c. 220-280; Han Dynasty falls in China; Replaced by Period of the Three Kingdoms			
222		Roman emperor Heliogabalus murdered; Severus Alexander succeeds			
224		Parthian Arsacid Dynasty overthrown; Beginning of Sassanian Dynasty in Persia			
225			c. 225; Early form of gunpowder developed in China		c. 225; Tea drinking becomes common in China
235		Roman Emperor Severus Alexander buys peace			

		from Alemanni in Gaul; Murdered by his troops; Maximinus succeeds			
238		Roman emperor Maximinus murdered by Praetorian Guard; Gordianus III succeeds			
241	Shapur I expands the Sassanid Empire at the expense of Roman territory				
244		Roman emperor Gordianus III killed by Praetorian Guard; Philippus succeeds			
247				Philippus holds games to celebrate millennial anniversary of the founding of Rome	
249		Decius proclaimed Roman emperor by troops; Philippus assassinated			
250				Roman emperor Decius begins systematic persecution of Christians to ensure dominance of paganism	
251		Roman emperor Decius killed fighting Goths; Gallus succeeds			
253		Roman emperor Gallus overthrown; After brief civil war			

		Valerian succeeds			
260	Persian King Shapur I defeats Roman army and seizes emperor Valerian	Gallienus becomes Roman emperor	Great Wall of China begun		
268	Roman emperor Claudius II repels invasion of Goths; Gains title Gothicus	Roman emperor Gallienus murdered by troops; Claudius II succeeds			
270		Roman emperor Claudius II dies of the plague; Aurelian succeeds			
271			Magnetic Compass used in China		
272					
274	Aurelian defeats rebels at Châlons to restore Roman authority in Gaul				
275		Roman emperor Aurelian murdered; Tacitus succeeds		c. 275; Anthony begins hermetic life of study; Beginning of Christian Monasticism	
276		Roman emperor Tacitus murdered by troops; Period of civil war and instability in Rome		Mani executed; Teachings will become Manichaeism, which combines Christian salvation and Zoroastrian dualism	
280		Western Jin emperor reunites China; Beginning of Jin Dynasty			
291		Rebellion of the Eight Princes in China			
301				Armenia becomes first state to officially adopt Christianity	

303				Roman emperor Diocletian begins the Great Persecution of Christians and Manicheans in the empire	
305		Diocletian and Maximian abdicate as co-emperors; Civil war erupts			
306				Baths of Diocletian open in Rome, the most lavish public bath in Rome	
311		Nomadic invasions divide China; Sixteen Kingdoms in North China and Jin Capital at Nanjing			
312		Constantine defeats Maxentius at battle of Milvian Bridge; Becomes sole emperor in the Western Roman Empire			
313				Constantine issues the Edict of Milan granting official toleration to Christianity in the Roman Empire	
320		Chandragupta I founds Gupta Dynasty in India			
321				Sunday becomes the Sabbath in Roman Empire	
324		Constantine defeats Licinius to become sole emperor of Rome			

325				Council of Nicaea; Arian Christianity condemned	
330		Constantinople made capital of Roman Empire		Construction begins on St. Peter's Basilica in Rome	
335				The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is consecrated in Jerusalem	
337		Roman emperor Constantine dies; Three sons succeed			
341				Coptic Christianity introduced to Ethiopia	
350	Huns invade Persia				
360	(1) Huns invade Europe (2) Picts invade Roman Britain				
361		Julian becomes Roman emperor			
362				Roman emperor Julian decrees religious toleration in the empire and attempts to reestablish paganism	
363		Roman Empire redivided into Eastern and Western halves			
372				Spread of Buddhism in China and Korea	
376	Visigoths permitted to settle in Balkans by Rome				
378	Visigoth cavalry destroys Roman army and kills emperor Valens at battle of Adrianople				

379	Roman emperor Theodosius makes treaty with Visigoths as military allies of Rome				
380				Theodosius I establishes Catholic Christianity as the official state religion of the Roman Empire	
390				Bishop Ambrose of Milan forces emperor Theodosius to do public penance for a massacre of 7,000 in Thessalonica	
391				Roman emperor Theodosius orders all non-Christian books burned	
393				Olympic games forbidden by Emperor Theodosius	
395		(1) Emperor Theodosius dies (2) Roman Empire permanently divided			
396	Visigoths under Alaric invade Greece				
397				Augustine's Confessions	
401	Visigoths under Alaric invade Italy				
403		Western Roman capital moved to Ravenna			
406	Vandals invade Gaul, sacking numerous Roman cities				
409	(1) Vandals invade Iberian Peninsula (2) Revolt in Britain marks the end of Roman rule				

410	Visigoths under King Alaric sack Rome				
411				Augustine's The City of God	
420		Nanking capital of China			
427		Korean capital established at Pyongyang			
431				Council of Ephesus exiles Nestorius; Emergence of cult of the Virgin Mary	
433		Attila becomes leader of the Huns			
438				Roman law since 312 published in Codex Theodosianus	
439		Vandals establish capital at Carthage			
449	Saxons and Angles invade Britain				
451	Attila and Huns defeated in Gaul at battle of Chalons; Last great military campaign by Western Roman Empire		c. 451; Spread of stirrups and metal horseshoes throughout Europe by the Huns		
452		Venice founded			
453	Attila dies; Huns expelled from Italy				
455		c. 455; Mayan city of Cichen Itza founded in Yucatan Peninsula			
473	King Euric of the Visigoths declares Gaul independent of Roman rule				

476		(1) Odoacer deposes emperor Romulus Augustus and becomes King of Italy; Formal end of the Western Roman Empire (2) Traditional date for the beginning of the Middle Ages in Europe			
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