PROLOGUE: History before 1200 C.E.

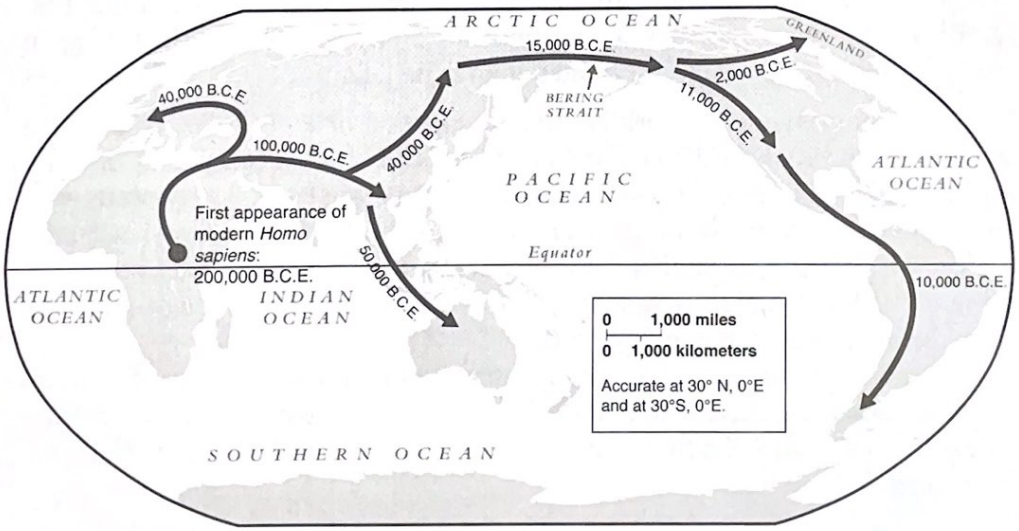
Part 1: Human Development to c. 600 B.C.E.

The First Migrations

Modern humans first appeared in East Africa between 200,000 B.C.E. and 100,000 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era, sometimes referred to as B.C.). They survived by hunting animals and foraging for seeds and edible plants. Living in small groups, usually no more than a few dozen people, they did not have permanent homes. As they moved about in search of food, they slowly adapted to new environments, developed genetic and cultural differences, learned how to control fire and make stone tools, and created artistic drawings and paintings. They developed a system of religious beliefs called animism, a reverence for deities associated with features of nature, such as animals or specific mountains or rivers. These societies were fairly egalitarian, but they showed early signs of **patriarchy**, domination by males.

Sometime between 100,000 and 60,000 years ago, and perhaps due to the end of the last major ice age, people's movements in search of food took them beyond East Africa. They began populating the rest of the globe. By 10,000 B.C.E., humans lived on every continent except Antarctica.

Migration Out of Africa



The Agricultural Revolution

Around 10,000 years ago, or about 8000 B.C.E., the climate was warming from an Ice Age. As it did, humans began to plant crops and raise animals for food. This change, called the **Agricultural Revolution**, began in the Middle East. Because of this development, people began to produce a surplus of food. For the first time in human history, one part of the population produced enough food to feed everyone. This allowed part of the population to specialize in non-food producing activities. This specialization change transformed every aspect of human life, causing innovations and trends that have existed ever since:

- The population grew. People lived in larger settlements that eventually developed into cities.
- People became highly skilled at one job. Artisans made tools and weapons. Merchants engaged in trade. Priests conducted rituals.
- People developed new technology. They learned how to improve irrigation systems, make use of the wheel in transportation, and replace stone with metals such as bronze and iron for making tools and art.
- People created more extensive governments and taxation. The desire to keep records about trade and taxes led to the invention of writing.
- Competition for resources and the accumulation of wealth increased group conflicts. However, the development of government provided a more peaceful way to settle conflicts between individuals.
- People became more sharply divided into social classes by wealth and occupation. In general, the status of women declined.

The First Civilizations

Trends that began to emerge after the Agricultural Revolution led to the first civilizations, large societies with cities and a powerful state. Most were in river valleys, places with fresh water and fertile land.

Mesopotamia The world's first civilization was in Mesopotamia, a region around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in what is today Iraq. Several cultures emerged in this region, many based on city-states. A **city-state** is an independent state made up of a city and its surrounding territory. All city-states were highly patriarchal, built monumental architecture such as religious temples called ziggurats, and engaged in long-distance trade. The people were polytheistic, believing in many gods.

Sumer was a city-state along the southernmost region of ancient Mesopotamia. As taxes and trade became more complex, the Sumerians invented cuneiform, the first written language in history. They used cuneiform to record the first written laws.

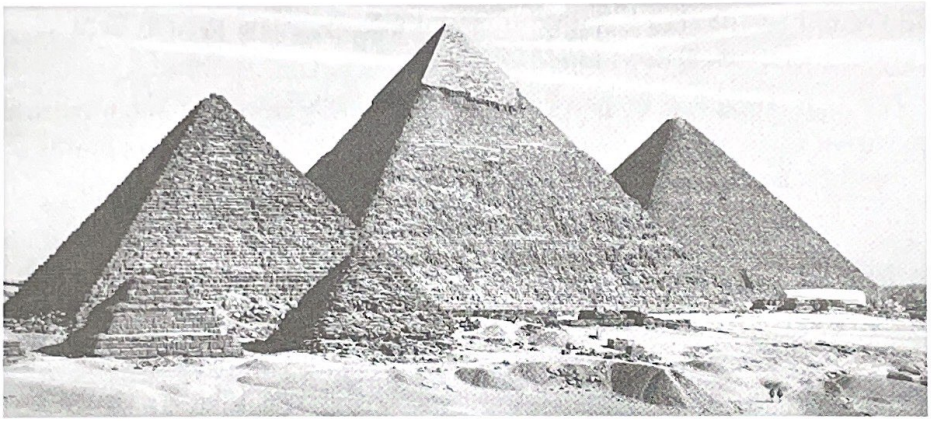
Egypt In the Nile River valley, Egypt prospered. Though it shared many traits with Mesopotamia, Egypt was highly centralized under one ruler, called a pharaoh. The Egyptians developed their own writing system (hieroglyphics)

and a complex system of mathematics. They built monumental architecture (pyramids) that demonstrated the pharaoh's power. Egyptian women were allowed to own property, and they were recognized as legally equal to men in court. These rights gave women a higher social standing than their counterparts in other patriarchal civilizations.

Indus Archaeological remains show the sophistication of ancient civilizations along the Indus River in South Asia. Cities such as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro engaged in long-distance trade with Mesopotamia, practiced polytheism, developed technology such as indoor plumbing, and planned the layout of urban areas. However, no one has deciphered their language, so less is known about them than about other early civilizations.

China Along the Huang He River in northern China, a highly patriarchal and centralized system developed. One of its distinctive features was the special honor that its people gave to their ancestors.

Non-River Valley Civilizations Two early civilizations in the Americas did not develop in river valleys. The Olmec in Mesoamerica and the Chavin in the Andes were complex societies that participated in extensive trade.



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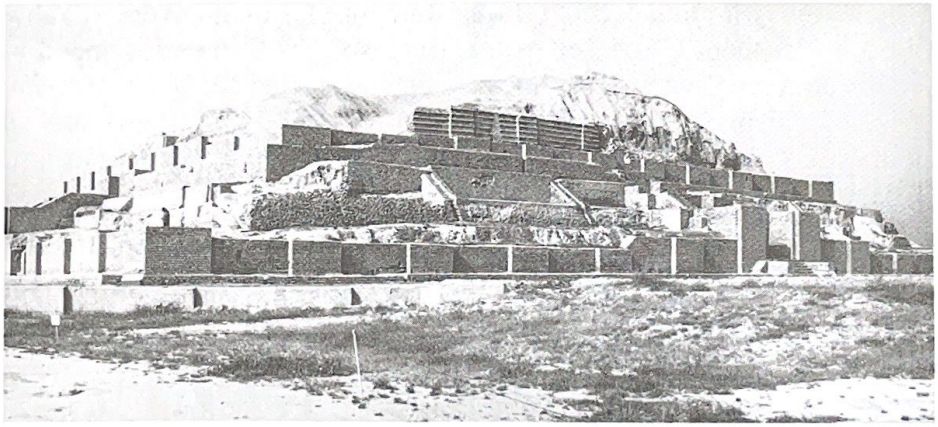


Source: Getty Images

Monumental architecture such as pyramids in Egypt (upper) and ziggurats in Mesopotamia (lower) reflected the power of early governments to organize workers to build large structures.

Hinduism and Judaism

At the same time that cities were growing, people began developing new ideas about religion. In animism, most deities were identified with specific places. Over time, people developed more abstract beliefs in which deities were not fixed in location. As people moved, they could take their deities with them. In some places, belief in many gods (polytheism) was replaced with a belief in just one supreme deity, monotheism.

Hinduism The belief now called **Hinduism** is sometimes categorized as polytheistic and sometimes as monotheistic. The origins of Hinduism go back at least 3,500 years. People called Aryans from north of the Himalaya Mountains migrated south to what is now Pakistan and India. They spoke an Indo-European language, and they brought with them scriptures called the Vedas and a belief that many deities existed. However, over time, people came to regard all deities as the expression of one supreme deity.

The Vedas taught that the soul of a person is reborn, or reincarnated, many times. Eventually, a soul would spiritually advance enough to become liberated from this cycle of death and rebirth. The Vedas taught that people should organize society into sharply defined classes, called castes. The caste system prohibited social mobility. While the caste system kept society stratified, society was also unified.

Zoroastrianism A clear example of an early form of monotheism is Zoroastrianism. This belief system developed in Persia. Followers of this faith focus on human free will and the eternal battle between the forces of good and evil.

Judaism The most influential example of monotheism is **Judaism**. Its earliest adherents were known as Hebrews or Israelites, but they have long been called Jews. Judaism developed in and around what is now the state of Israel. The Jewish people trace their history to the teachings of Abraham, who lived about 4,000 years ago.

Jews believe that they have entered into a covenant, or mutual promise, with their God, whom they call Yahweh. In return for their devotion, Yahweh would consider them his chosen people. Judaism was further developed with the codification of Hebrew Scriptures, sometimes called the Old Testament.

Like Judaism, two other faiths—Christianity and Islam—are also monotheistic religions that looked back to Abraham as an important figure. Christianity and Islam will be discussed later in this Prologue.

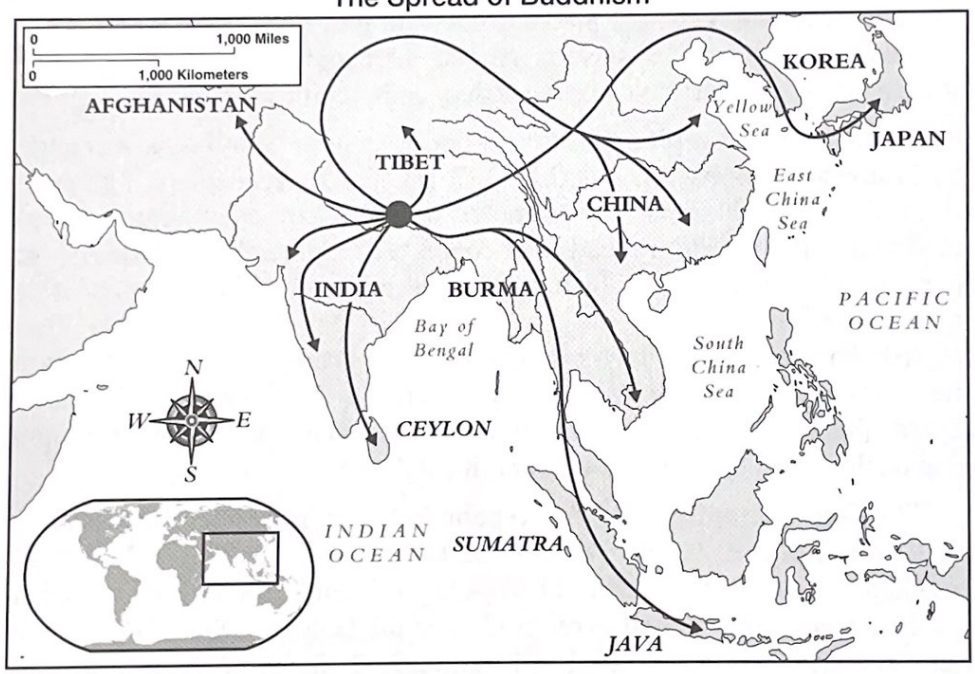
Part 2: The Classical Era, c. 600 B.C.E. to c. 600 C.E.

Several great empires that arose between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. became the core foundations of later civilizations in their region:

- western Eurasia: the Persian, Greek, Roman and Byzantine empires
- southern Asia: the Mauryan and Gupta empires
- eastern Asia: the Qin and Han dynasties
- Mesoamerica: the Mayan Empire

These empires provided political and economic security for their people. Goods and ideas flowed along land routes such as the ones in Eurasia known as the **Silk Roads** and maritime routes in the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean. These trade routes fostered the development of such great cities as Rome (Italy), Constantinople (Turkey), Damascus (Syria), Pataliputra (India), and Chang'an (China).

The Spread of Buddhism



Buddhism and Developments in South Asia

While intense spirituality and distinct social organization have provided continuity in South Asian history, strong political centralization has not. The region was unified under a single government only twice during the Classical Period. The most influential development in South Asia was the development of the religion of Buddhism.

Beginning of Buddhism The founder of **Buddhism** was Siddhartha Gautama. Born into a wealthy Hindu family around 530 B.C.E., he became sharply aware of all the suffering people endured. To understand why people suffered, he left his wealthy family and pursued a life of poverty and meditation. According to Buddhist traditions, Siddhartha had been meditating for several days underneath a bodhi tree when he finally understood the cause of suffering and how to end it. He called himself the Buddha or "enlightened one," and sought to teach others what he had come to understand.

Buddhist doctrines became summarized in the Four Noble Truths, which sought to eliminate desire and suffering by following the Eightfold Path. This path requires an individual to meditate, reflect, and refrain from excessive earthly pleasures. The goal is, over time, to achieve enlightenment and the peaceful bliss known as nirvana, which would end the cycle of reincarnation.

The Spread of Buddhism Buddhism provided an alternative to the Vedic beliefs that were the foundation of Hinduism. Because Buddhism rejected the caste system, it became popular with members of the lower caste. It spread quickly throughout India and across Asia. Those spreading it included missionaries and merchants along the Silk Roads and around the Indian Ocean.

Unlike Hinduism and Judaism, which remained the faiths of particular groups of people in particular places, Buddhism was a universalizing religion, one that actively sought converts among all people. Buddhism is also a monastic faith, one that develops monastery communities for men and women.

The Mauryan Empire The first period of unity in South Asia was under the **Mauryan Empire** (322 B.C.E.–187 B.C.E.) It reached its high point during the rule of Ashoka. He promoted prosperity by creating an efficient tax system and by building roads that connected commercial centers. Ashoka spread knowledge of the law by inscribing his edicts on pillars throughout the empire.

Ashoka is one of the few powerful rulers in history who converted from one faith—Hinduism—to another. He became a Buddhist. His conversion helped spread the faith throughout India. After Ashoka, the Mauryan Empire soon declined in power, resulting in political decentralization.

The Gupta Empire The second period of unity in South Asia was under the **Gupta Empire**. It ruled from c. 320 C.E. to c. 550 C.E. (C.E. stands for Common Era, sometimes called A.D.; c. stands for *circa* and means approximately). This period is referred to as the Golden Age of India. Under a centralized government based in Pataliputra, a city in northwestern India, intellectual and cultural life flourished. In public hospitals, physicians made advances in medicine, such as using inoculations to prevent disease. Mathematicians developed a numbering system that combined a small number of symbols, 0 through 9, and the idea of place value. The system was so efficient that it is used throughout most of the world today.

The social structure in the Gupta era was patriarchal. Men held most positions of power in public life. To unify people, the Gupta strongly supported Hinduism. Hinduism is the most common religion in India today.

Confucianism and Developments in East Asia

Central China was united under the Zhou Dynasty (1076 B.C.E.–256 B.C.E.). However, as the dynasty weakened, China suffered a time of instability and decentralization referred to as the Warring States period.

Mandate of Heaven One legacy of the Zhou Dynasty in China was in how people thought about government. This was the concept of a **Mandate of Heaven,** the idea that "heaven," or some universal force, provided the justification for an emperor and his family to rule China. If the ruler was corrupt or ineffective, "heaven" would show its displeasure in the form of natural disasters. These disasters, such as drought or famine, were a sign to the Chinese people that the ruler had lost the Mandate of Heaven. Several major peasant uprisings in China were a direct result in this belief.

Confucianism During the Warring States period, around 551 B.C.E., the philosopher K'ung Fu-tzu, whose westernized name is **Confucius**, was born. He lived around the same time as the Buddha in India. The teachings of Confucius, written down by his followers in the *Analects*, describe how people should behave in everyday life. Unlike the teachings of Hinduism and Judaism, the *Analects* do not focus on any deity. Rather, Confucius focused on education, benevolence, virtue, respect for those with authority (especially the emperor), and a patriarchal social structure. He emphasized filial piety, the duty of people to honor their ancestors. The teachings of Confucius affected Chinese beliefs and values more than any other philosophy.

Daoism A second response to the chaos of the Warring States period was Daoism. While Confucianism focused on how people could live in harmony with one another, **Daoism** focused on how people could live in harmony with nature. The practices of Daoism emphasized internal reflection more than external behavior. Daoism would be influential throughout Chinese history.

The Qin and Han Dynasties China regained stability when the **Qin Dynasty** (221 B.C.E.–207 B.C.E.) and **Han Dynasty** (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) established centralized control. The Qin standardized Chinese script, established a uniform system of weights and measures, and built canals and roads. Together, these changes provided the foundation for increased trade and prosperity.

Building on the accomplishments of the Qin, the Han Dynasty became a Golden Age of Chinese history. Under the Han, China was more peaceful and its population grew. Chinese science and technology prospered, producing such developments as the magnetic compass, paper, and the sternpost rudder. Under Han regulation, trade extended from Chang'an, the capital of the empire, west to the Mediterranean Sea. Most of the trade was in luxury items such as spices, gems, precious metals, tea, and, most famously, silk.

The Han transformed China's government by creating a **civil service exam**. It required students to analyze Confucian teachings. Those who scored well received prestigious jobs in the government bureaucracy. This system produced a government of well-educated individuals and allowed for some social mobility.

Civilizations of Western Eurasia and Christianity

In western Eurasia between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E., strong civilizations developed in Persia, Greece, and Rome. Trade, war, and the flow of ideas connected these civilizations to one another. Each civilization prospered through a combination of trade and military strength.

Persia Around 559 B.C.E., a large empire developed in Persia (modern-day Iran) under the leadership of Cyrus the Great. The **Persian Empire** included most of the lands from the Aegean Sea in the west to the border of India in the east. The empire also became known as the Achaemenid Empire.

With a strong centralized government, efficient bureaucracy, and network of roads, the Persian empire promoted trade, prosperity, and stability. The vast empire was ethnically and religiously diverse, which the government recognized by practicing religious toleration.

Greece While Persia was a vast but united empire, Greece was divided into approximately 1,000 city-states. The numerous islands and mountainous terrain made unifying the Grecian region under one leader very difficult.

One cultural trait shared by Greeks was religion. Unlike the monotheistic Hebrews who worshipped a single all-powerful God, the Greeks believed in many deities and each possessed human frailties. These frailties help explain why Greeks developed a feeling that they controlled their own destiny.

Two of the largest city-states, Athens and Sparta, reflected the great variety among Greece's many city-states.

- Spartans organized their society around a powerful military. Women, the elderly, and enslaved people all filled roles that allowed free men to train as soldiers and fight when needed.
- Athenians made impressive advances in architecture, literature, theater, and philosophy. Many of these came during its Golden Age in the late 400s B.C.E. Athens also developed the concept of **democracy**, a system of government in which a large part of the population runs the government. Athens allowed free adult males the ability to participate directly in making political decisions.

In the 300s B.C.E., the army of Alexander the Great spread Greek culture into Egypt, across Persia, and east to India. This region became known as the Hellenistic world.

Rome According to legend, Rome was founded in 753 B.C.E. Roman culture borrowed heavily from the Greeks. The Romans incorporated the Greek gods into their pantheon of deities, relied on slavery, and made advances in government that continue to have lasting influence on governments today. Romans developed the practice of a representative government and of the judicial concept "innocent until proven guilty." To protect individual rights, the Romans publicly displayed written laws known as the Twelve Tables. Spreading awareness of laws provided a check on abuses of government power, a concept that would be built into numerous constitutions in the future.

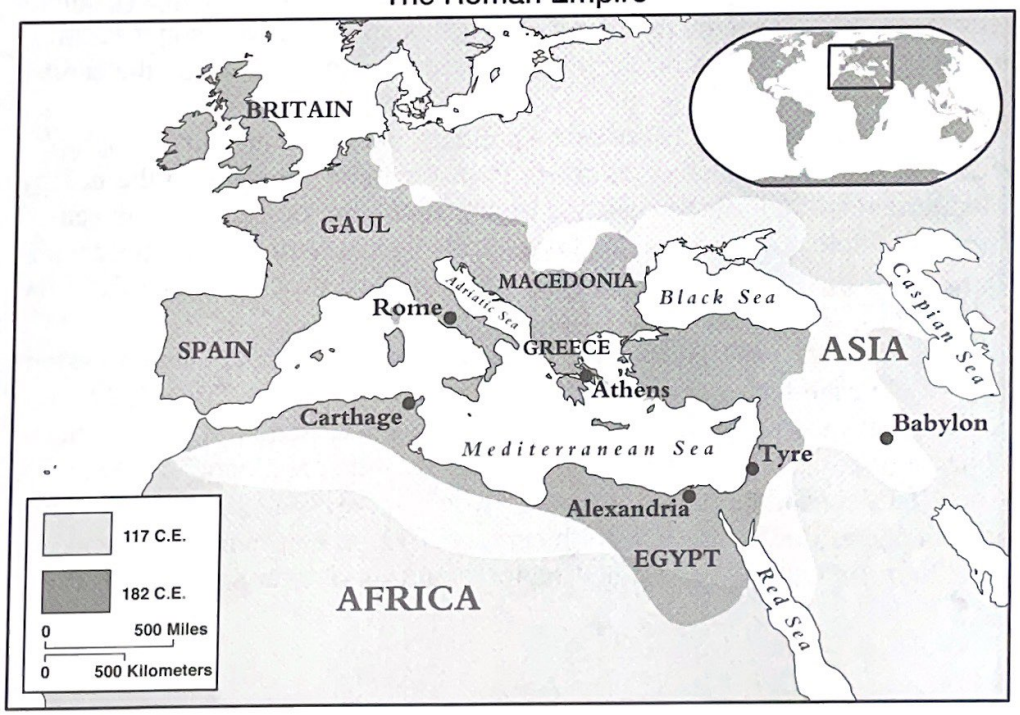
Like Greece, Rome had a patriarchal society. However, compared to Greek women, Roman women gained more rights, including the right to own and inherit property and the right to initiate divorce proceedings.

While the Greek city-states remained small, Rome expanded outward in all directions, turning the Mediterranean Sea into "a Roman lake." At the peak of its power, the Roman Empire ruled territory from Scotland to northern Africa to the Middle East. In the large size of its territory, Rome was more like Persia. Both Rome and Persia were land-based empires under a strong central government. Both fostered trade and prosperity with well-maintained roads and strong militaries to protect travelers. Rome was also famous for other publicly funded projects, such as aqueducts, which were systems to transport water to cities, and large stadiums for public entertainment.

Despite Rome's wealth and power, it faced many challenges. Roman leaders over-extended the Roman military, were often corrupt, and failed to deal with devastating epidemics caused by smallpox and the bubonic plague. Gradually, trade and urban populations declined. As a result, Roman lands suffered economically. Rome's decline was made worse by invasions from groups such as the Huns, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Vandals. By 476 C.E., the empire was so weak that a non-Roman became emperor for the first time in more than a thousand years.

The Development of Christianity Rome's most enduring legacy was not in its military or its engineering achievements. It was in religion. Rome generally tolerated all faiths as long as subjects agreed to accept the divine nature of the emperor. People with polytheistic beliefs could do this easily.

The Roman Empire



However, monotheists could not. In particular, Jews living the Middle East refused to recognize any deity but their own. Roman persecution of Jews living in the Middle East contributed to the **diaspora,** or spreading, of Jews to lands throughout northern Africa and Europe as they looked for places to worship freely.

One leader who emerged from the Jewish community was Jesus. For his teachings, he was executed by the Romans. Since the followers of his teachings considered him the Christ, or savior of humanity sent by God, they became known as Christians. Despite persecution by the Romans, Jesus's disciples continued to spread his teachings. By the end of the 1st century C.E., Christians were practicing their faith throughout the empire.

This new faith was particularly attractive to the poor because it taught that people could have a better life after death if they believed in Jesus. Despite continued persecution, **Christianity** grew stronger. In the 4th century, under the emperor Constantine, Christianity became legal and was accepted as the official religion of the empire.

Constantine's endorsement of Christianity accelerated its growth. Like Buddhism, Christianity was a universalizing religion, meaning it actively sought converts and it was easily adaptable to areas outside its place of origin. It also offered monastic lifestyles for men (monks) and women (nuns) to devote their lives to practicing the faith. This new monotheistic faith would have far-reaching impact on future civilizations.

Byzantine By the middle of the 4th century, the eastern half of the Roman Empire had become wealthier and politically more powerful than the western half. For this reason, in 330, Emperor Constantine moved the capital of the empire eastward to Byzantium and renamed the city Constantinople (Istanbul today). In 395, the **Roman Empire** was divided into two distinct entities. Rome became the capital in the west, and Constantinople became the capital in the east.

Constantinople quickly became a political and economic hub. Geography aided its rise to prominence as rivers from the north flowed into the nearby Mediterranean and Black seas. As an **entrepôt**, or coastal trading center, Constantinople prospered as raw goods arrived from northern Europe, cereals came from Egypt, and precious spices and finished products came from the east.

At its height, the **Byzantine Empire** extended throughout the eastern half of the Mediterranean world. The reign of Justinian the Great (527–565) included great accomplishments. One was the construction of a magnificent church called Hagia Sophia (537). Another was the creation of the Justinian Code. This consolidation of Roman law would serve as the foundation of legal knowledge in Europe into the 19th century. Though constantly threatened by foreign incursion, the Byzantine Empire would survive for another 900 years.

Source: Getty Images.
Hagia Sophia was originally built as a Christian church. After Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomam Empire in 1453, it became a mosque. Today it is a museum.

Early American Civilizations

Afro-Eurasian civilizations developed in isolation from American civilizations during the classical era. Two of the most important were in Mesoamerica, the region that is now Mexico and Central America.

Teotihuacan One of the most important civilizations in the Americas was based in the city of **Teotihuacan**, located near modern-day Mexico City. It was a multicultural urban area that prospered through regional trade. By the 6th century C.E., its population of 125,000 made it one of the largest cities in the world. Teotihuacan featured streets laid out on a grid and monumental religious temples dedicated to the gods of the sun and moon. The city was abandoned by 650, but the "city of the gods" as it was called, would later influence other powerful civilization such as the Aztecs.

The Mayans South of Teotihuacan lived the **Mayans**. They were the most influential classical civilization in the Americas. The Mayans can be traced as far back as 1500 B.C.E. They reached their height of population and wealth between 250 C.E. and 900 C.E. The Mayans developed the most complex written language in the Americas before contact with people from Europe. Mayan priests created a very accurate calendar, a sign that they studied and understood the movement of Earth through space. Mayans understood the importance of the concept of zero, something people in the Mediterranean world had not grasped in this period.

Comparisons in the Classical Age

The empires that emerged between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E. shared several traits in economics and politics. In general, increased trade, technological innovation, and centralized government worked together to make the lives of people longer, safer, and more comfortable. In general, the empires also shared similar reasons for their decline.

Early Trade Networks As technological developments made trade easier, strong and stable governments provided the wealth and security to foster and sponsor trade. The Eurasian exchange networks utilized the strength of the Roman and Han innovations, such as stirrups that made riding horses easier and networks of places to rest and eat that made long journey travel more dependable.

Other key technologies included the improvements in sail design and ship hulls that enabled ships to maneuver in less than favorable wind conditions. The knowledge of monsoon winds facilitated trade along the entrepôts in the Indian Ocean. The improvements to the camel saddle made caravan trade profitable and possible across the Sahara.

The Mediterranean Sea lanes continued to facilitate cultural exchange and goods between the Phoenicians, Greeks, Romans, and people of North Africa. Long-distance trade was only beginning to hit its stride. These developments ushered in the first Golden Age of the Silk Roads.

Decline of Classical Empires By 600 C.E., many of the great classical empires were losing or had lost their unity and political power. As a result, people faced growing problems that they could not agree on how to address. Each unsolved problem then made peace and prosperity more precarious:

- challenges collecting taxes weakened government
- declines in trade decreased access to foreign goods and markets
- spread of disease reduced urban populations
- increases in the gap between the rich and poor created social conflict
- lack of broad support for leadership made solving problems harder
- attacks by outside groups led to a need for more spending on defense

In some areas, the spread of a common religion helped keep society unified even as a government failed. In later centuries, this unity would help new empires arise. For example, in Europe, the Roman Empire broke apart in the 5th century, but Christianity held society together. Confucianism filled a similar role in China, while Hinduism and Buddhism did the same in South Asia.

Government in the Classical Period, c. 600 B.C.E. to c. 600 C.E.				
Civilization	**Form**	**Important Individuals and Government Bodies**	**Characteristics**	**Role of Religion**
Mauryan and Gupta (c. 320 B.C.E.– c. 550 C.E.)	Centralized empire	• Ashoka	Developed a sophisticated bureaucracy	The Gupta tolerated religious diversity, but Hindus dominated
Qin/Han (221 B.C.E.–220 C.E.)	Centralized empire	• Qin Shi Huangdi • Han Wudi	Used a civil service exam to create a merit-based bureaucracy	The Han supported Confucianism
Persian (c. 550 B.C.E.– c. 330 B.C.E.)	Centralized empire	• Darius • Xerxes	Organized empire into regional provinces	State was religiously tolerant
Greek (c. 550 B.C.E.–336 B.C.E.)	Decentralized city-states	• Pericles • Assembly of Citizens	Created a direct democracy in Athens for free adult males	Religion was separate from government but influential
Roman (c. 509 B.C.E.– c. 476 C.E.)	Centralized republic and then empire	• Julius Caesar • Ceasar Augustus • Senate	Allowed citizens to elect senators	Religion was separate from government but influential
Byzantine (c. 330 C.E.–1453 C.E.)	Centralized empire	• Justinian	Established laws known as the Justinian Code	The government appointed religious leaders
Mayan (c. 250 C.E.– c. 900 C.E.)	Decentralized city-states	•None are well-known	Considered emperors as descended from a deity	A theocracy with powerful priests

Part 3: Postclassical Civilizations, c. 600–c. 1200

In many parts of the world, the decline of classical civilizations was marked by a century or more of declines in trade, intellectual innovation, and social stability. However, new centralized states that promoted peace and prosperity emerged to replace them. Throughout Afro-Eurasia, trade intensified after 600 as networks of exchange widened and became more profitable. The Silk Roads, the **Indian Ocean trade networks**, and the **trans-Saharan trade routes** were brimming with items such as porcelain, ivory, teakwood, spices, and silk. These networks of exchange also provided ways for technology and ideas to move from one culture to another. More and more regions became familiar with the compass, the astrolabe, new forms of credit, paper money, and new religious beliefs.

However, all of this exchange came with a high price. Deadly diseases also spread along these same pathways.

Afro-Eurasia and the Americas remained separate, but people in Mesoamerica and the Andes Mountains experienced similar developments. The growth of more centralized states in each region also promoted trade and the spread of ideas.

The Spread of Islam

At the beginning of the 7th century, the people of the Middle East were a mixture of animists, Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, and others. A merchant named Muhammad living on the Arabian Peninsula believed that he had received revelations from God. These revelations were later recorded in the Quran, the sacred scriptures of the religion of **Islam**. Those who followed the teachings in the Quran became known as Muslims. They believed that Muhammad was last in a line of great prophets that included Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

The Teachings of Islam The core principles of the Quran became known as the Five Pillars of Islam: a belief in one god called Allah, ritual prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca. They evolved a law code based on the Quran, called *sharia*, to regulate Muslim religious and civic behavior. Unlike the laws of the Romans, sharia made no distinction between religious and civil law.

Sunnis and Shi'as Through Muhammad's leadership, Islam quickly unified and brought peace to the warring tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. However, Islam experienced a crisis upon the death of Muhammad in 632. He had made no provision for a successor. People fell into two warring camps over who should become the political leader, called the caliph, of the Islamic community. This rift, which continues today, created a divide between the two major branches of Islam: Sunni and Shi'a. Sunni Muslims felt that the caliph could be selected from among all leaders in the Islamic community.

Shi'a Muslims felt that the caliph should be a blood relative of Muhammad. Today, Sunnis form the majority of Muslims in the world. Shi'a Muslims are strongest in Iran and Iraq.

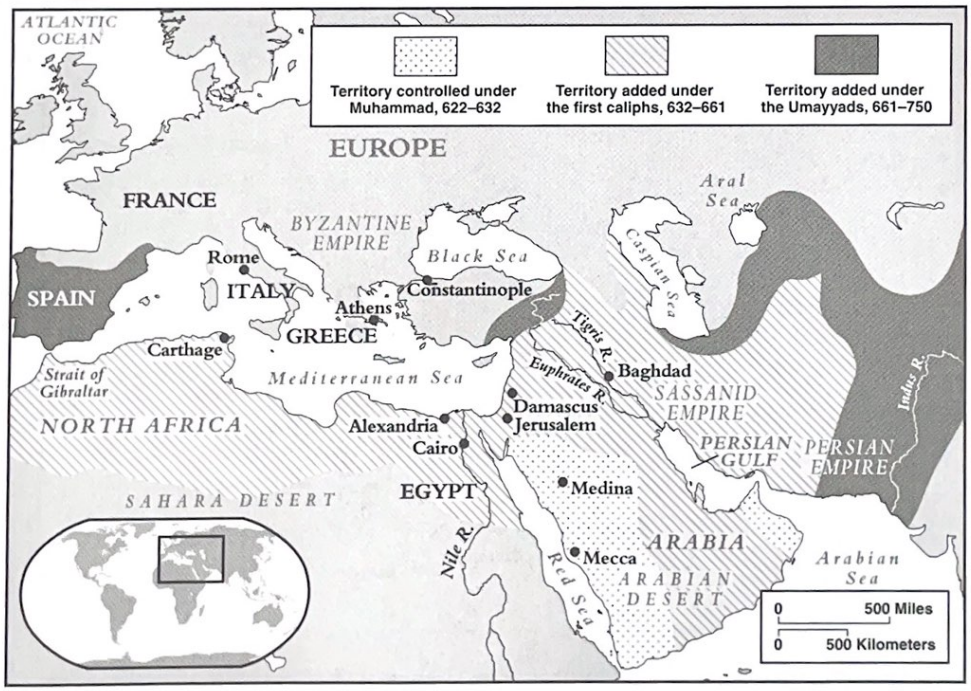
Expansion of Islam Despite this early division among Muslims, Islam spread rapidly. In less than a century, Islam had united southern Spain, North Africa, the Middle East, and parts of India. This area became known as the House of Islam, or **Dar al-Islam**.

The Abbasids The most influential rulers in Dar al-Islam were those of the **Abbasid Caliphate** (750–1258). Under them, Islamic culture experienced a golden age. A stable government allowed trade to once again prosper. The Abbasids helped China, then under the Tang Dynasty, reestablish a booming trade along the Silk Roads. They also facilitated the growth of trans-Saharan trade to West Africa and were major participants in the diffusion of ideas and goods throughout the Indian Ocean.

Islamic society, particularly in the capital in Baghdad, thrived under the Abbasids. The empire became a center of learning where people made advances in medicine, built astronomical observatories, developed algebra, improved the astrolabe, and preserved Greek and Roman texts. The government practiced a degree of religious toleration. Non-Muslims could keep their faith by paying an additional tax called the *jizya*.

The Abbasids ended female infanticide and strengthened the marriage and property rights of women. The Abbasids continued to support the veiling of women and the right of a man to take up to four wives.

The Spread of Islam, 622–750



China

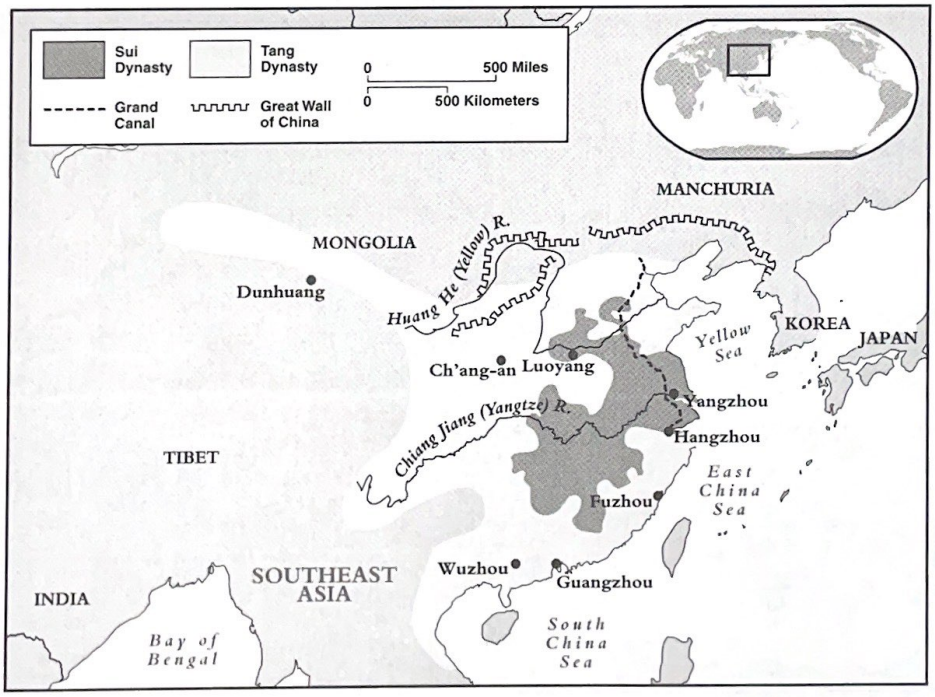
After the Han Dynasty declined in the 3rd century, China suffered three centuries of turmoil and disunity. However, after that, China experienced several centuries of growth.

Sui Dynasty China's period of troubles was ended by the short-lived **Sui Dynasty** (581–618). By reconstituting a centralized government, the Sui provided the foundation on which China again became prosperous. The dynasty's most dramatic accomplishment was the construction of the Grand Canal. Stretching over 1,000 miles, it connected the agricultural south to the population centers in the north. Besides fostering economic growth, the Grand Canal helped unify the varied ethnic and cultural groups of China.

Tang Dynasty Building on the accomplishments of the Sui, the **Tang Dynasty** (618–907) extended China's boundaries north into Mongolia, west into Central Asia, and south into Vietnam. China's population grew significantly under the Tang. Learning to grow a fast-ripening variety of rice allowed peasants to produce more calories per acre, so the land could support more people.

The Tang expanded the civil service exam and the empire's bureaucracy, which developed into an ongoing feature of the Chinese government. Under the Tang, the Chinese invented gunpowder and developed paper money, which facilitated trade. Political stability and steady demand for China's silk, porcelain, and other goods ushered in a second golden age of the Silk Roads.

Sui and Tang China



The Chinese had long viewed their country as the "Middle Kingdom," possibly because they believed they were at the center of cultural advances in the world. Based on this viewpoint, they developed the tributary system, the idea that surrounding kingdoms should make payment, or tribute, to the Chinese and officially submit to their rule in exchange for trading privileges.

The strength of the Tang eventually declined. A combination of internal peasant uprisings and invasions from the west and north led to the downfall of the dynasty.

Song Dynasty After the Tang collapsed, a new dynasty, the **Song Dynasty** (960–1279), was able to restore order. Under the Song, China continued its golden age. Chinese meritocracy allowed for more upward mobility than any other hiring system of its time. China became the leading manufacturer in the world, producing iron, steel, silk, and porcelain, and it had the largest cities in the world. Neo-Confucianism, a melding of Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist philosophies that had begun under the Tang, became popular. It was during this time that paper money and the magnetic compass was exported from East Asia to other parts of the world.

Japan

Between about 800 and 1200, Japan had its own golden age of achievements in painting and literature. Though influenced by China, Japan always had a separate and distinctive culture. However, by the end of this period, powerful clans of land-owning nobles were eroding the emperor's power. As government became more decentralized, warfare between these clans increased. A strong political and social hierarchy developed over the control of land and included hierarchical obligations. At the top was the **shogun**, a military general, followed by powerful landlords called **daimyos**. Each daimyo had a force of warriors called samurais who pledged loyalty to serve him. Below the samurai were the peasants, followed by merchants.

Culturally, Japan's official religion was **Shinto**, a set of beliefs centered on the veneration of ancestors and nature spirits. However, missionaries from China and Korea brought Buddhism to the country, and it became popular at this time. Many Japanese adopted Buddhism yet keep their Shinto beliefs.

Africa

In most of sub-Saharan Africa between 600 and 1200, people often lived in small self-governing chiefdoms in which many people were related. These kin-based communities often cooperated with one another and sometimes formed larger political units. While cultures were as diverse as the geography of the continent, similarities existed. Some similarities resulted from the migrations of Bantu-speaking people out of a region in west central Africa between c. 1000 B.C.E. and c. 1500 C.E. These migrating people spread a language, farming techniques, and knowledge of how to work with iron.

By 1000 C.E., complex agricultural practices such as irrigation and the allocation of land for people to cultivate demanded the development of more complex forms of government. With a stronger government came more control over production and distribution of surplus products. This government regulation, combined with the introduction of the camel and use of the camel saddle, led to long-distance trade across the Sahara. Muslim merchants greatly increased trade, which benefited the kingdom of **Ghana** (c. 700–c. 1240). The trans-Saharan trade route allowed Ghana to become very wealthy. The rulers of Ghana protected these trade routes and taxed the gold and salt that continually entered or exited their trading centers.

The development of trade also affected the religion of the people of West Africa. As Muslim merchants from North Africa traded in the region, they spread Islam. The region became part of Dar al-Islam. The legacy of this period can be seen today in the large number of Muslims in some countries. In Nigeria, about 50 percent of the population identifies as Muslim. In Mali, over 90 percent do.

On the east coast of Africa, merchants linked into the Indian Ocean trading network. Through it, Africans and people from the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia were all connected. African merchants exported gold, ivory, and enslaved people. They imported porcelain, silk, and spices.

While governments were generally small and local in most of Africa, outside of West Africa, one large kingdom arose in the southeast part of the continent, **Great Zimbabwe**. It dominated the region between the 12th and 15th centuries. The reasons Great Zimbabwe declined are not clear, though one reason was probably the reduced output of gold mines in the region.

South Asia and Southeast Asia

After the fall of the Gupta empire in 550, South Asia was riddled by disunity and fighting. Despite this decentralization, Hinduism and the caste system kept southern India unified and relatively stable. Northern India, however, suffered a series of invasions and weak confederations. One of those invasions brought Islam to the region in 711.

Despite a period of divisions and conflict, South Asian trade flourished. As people better understood the pattern of the **monsoon winds**, India's location made it the hub of Indian Ocean trade. Silks and porcelain from East Asia, spices from southeast Asia, horses from the Middle East, and enslaved people and ivory from Africa were all traded in India.

Religion and trade dominated South Asia's influence on Southeast Asia. Buddhists and Hindus used trade networks to spread their religions' teachings. Islam also significantly influenced Southeast Asia at this time. Muslim merchants, though often not consciously missionaries, spread their faith by settling in new regions with their families. Islam soon became the dominant religion in the Spice Islands and the Malay peninsula.

Source: Getty Images.

The Temple of Borobudur was built around 800 C.E. on the island of Java in Indonesia. With its statue of Buddha and its Hindu-style temples, it shows the interaction of the two religions.

Europe

The Postclassical period saw a dramatic shift in Europe. The Eastern Roman Empire, based in Constantinople, flourished. In contrast, the decline of the Western Roman Empire left a power vacuum in the rest of the continent. Invasions of people from Northern Europe, known as the Vikings, brought another group of people into the cultural exchanges. Central and western Europe devolved into thousands of duchies and fiefdoms. As a result of the lack of strong central governments, Europe could not provide the protection and stability merchants desired. It did not benefit from long distance Afro-Eurasian trade as much as other regions did.

Just as Hinduism provided cultural unity to a politically divided South Asia, Christianity became the one unifying force in central and western Europe. In 800, the pope demonstrated his power and authority by bestowing on the French king, Charlemagne, the title of "Emperor of the Romans." However, European Christian unity would not endure. In 1054, it split into two branches, the **Roman Catholic Church** in the west and the **Orthodox Church** in the east.

In 1095, the Roman Catholic pope called for a Holy Crusade to free Jerusalem and the lands around it from Islamic control. The early crusaders had some limited success. But after two centuries of trying, the crusades failed to seize power. However, they had a large impact culturally. The Crusades made Europeans more aware of the achievements of the Middle East and the rest of Asia. This awareness was one factor in stimulating Europe to become more interested in intellectual and technological advances.

The Americas

By the year 900, the Mayan golden age in Mesoamerica was ending. A combination of environmental degradation, drought, and warfare caused Mayans to abandon many of their cities. However, some Mayan cities, such as Chichen Itza, continued to be inhabited.

Two other large civilizations developed in the Western Hemisphere during this time. One was the **Mississippian** civilization, near present-day St. Louis. It flourished between the 8th century and the 16th century. Its city of Cahokia was a major trade hub with a population larger than that of London.

The other was the **Toltecs** civilization, which emerged in the 10th century in Mesoamerica. The Toltecs adopted many Mayan practices, including a religion that was both polytheistic and animistic. The Toltecs had a major influence on a later empire in the region, the Aztecs.

Source: Herb Roe, www.chromesun.com

A diorama at the Cahokia Historic Site n Collinsville, Illinois, shows a number of scenes from the Mississippian culture, including this figure of a flintknapper—someone who shapes the sharp edges of a flint tool.

The World in 1200

By 1200, much of the world had recovered from the decline of the classical civilizations. In many regions, new states were emerging that were promoting trade and the transfer of ideas among regions:

- Africa, Europe, and Asia were connected through Indian Ocean trade, the Silk Roads, and trans-Saharan trade routes.
- The Byzantine Empire and various Islamic empires provided some stability in the region from Eastern Europe through the Middle East to South Asia.
- China and Dar al-Islam continued to be leading centers of learning and innovation.
- Western Europe and Japan had decentralized systems of government that featured powerful land-owning nobles.
- Africa largely remained stateless, except for some regions in West Africa and East Africa that were part of Dar al-Islam.
- Afro-Eurasia, America, and Oceania were developing in isolation from each other.

In 1200, people in Africa and Eurasia might have predicted that in the next three centuries, the regions of the world would remain on their paths. China would grow wealthier, Islamic states would become stronger, and Europe would continue to learn from other regions. However, few could have guessed that in the 13th century a little-known group of nomads from Central Asia would upend life in Eurasia. Then, in 1492, a voyage by a European would reshape the lives of people around the world.

Source: Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Columbus arrives in the Americas, L. Prang and Co.,1893

KEY TERMS BY THEME

CULTURE: Religion
Hinduism
Judaism
Buddhism
Confucius
Daoism
Christianity
Islam
Dar al-Islam
Shinto
Roman Catholic Church
Orthodox Church

SOCIETY: Patterns
patriarchy
civil service exam
diaspora
entrepôt
shogun
daimyos

ENVIRONMENT: Food and Trade
Agricultural Revolution
monsoon winds

CULTURE: Americas
Teotihaucan
Mayans
Mississippian
Toltecs

ECONOMY: Trade
Silk Roads
Indian Ocean trade routes
trans-Saharan trade routes

GOVERNMENT: Classical
city-state
Mauryan Empire
Gupta Empire
Mandate of Heaven
Qin
Han
Persian Empire
Greece
Roman Empire
Byzantine Empire

GOVERNMENT: Postclassical
Abbasid Caliphate
Sui Dynasty
Tang Dynasty
Song Dynasty
Ghana
Great Zimbabwe

REFLECT ON THE PROLOGUE

1. **Comparison** In what ways are Judaism, Islam, and Christianity alike?
2. **Comparison** Describe the difference between centralized and decentralized civilizations and give an example of each.
3. **Causation** Name at least three causes for the decline of Classical civilizations.
4. **Causation** Explain how trade networks caused Islam and Buddhism to spread.
5. **Continuity** Identify a continuity that kept southern India unified despite disruptions after the fall of the Gupta Empire.
6. **Change** Identify one new historical development after 600 C.E.