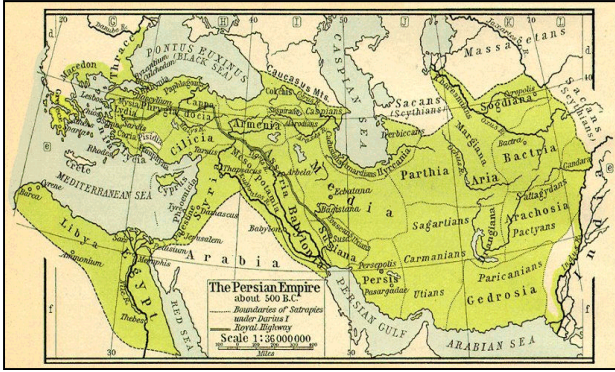


# Persia



**Location:** Iran, eventually included Egypt, Afghanistan, and parts of India

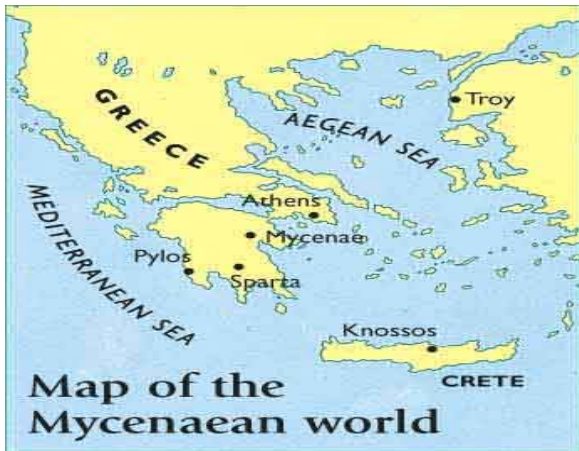
**Political Achievements:** The Persian Empire was divided into provinces that were each ruled by a *satrap*. Both the military and law were important elements of the empire, while the king, considered to be divine, was at the center. The government's work was carried out by a highly organized bureaucracy of officials headed by the king. Most government workers were scribes, the majority of whom worked at the royal treasuries. The Persians were noted for the implementation of a unified code of laws that enabled them to rule their empire for more than two centuries.

**Cultural Achievements:** Due to such a vast empire with so many people, Persian culture included elements from Egypt and India. Cyrus the Great was very tolerant of other cultures and religions, and only required that conquered peoples speak the Persian language. When Persia conquered Egypt and India they allowed them to worship the same Gods and practice their cultural rituals. This united the cultures and helped to keep the empire together. It also made it easier to communicate with all parts of the empire.

**Religious Developments:** The earliest Persians worshiped many deities that were associated with aspects of nature, daily life, truth, and justice. Around 600 B.C.E., a religious prophet named Zoroaster formed a new religion whose beliefs included that the only true god was *AHURA MAZDA*, the traditional Persian god of goodness, and demoted the other traditional deities to demons. Zoroastrianism became the main religion of Persia, but the government didn't require for the people to convert.

**Advancements:** The Persian alphabet consisted of 32 letters, was written from right to left, and form the basis of the modern western European alphabet. The Royal Road was the longest highway in the Persian Empire. It ran for more than 1,550 miles from Sardis, in western Turkey, to the empire's capital, Susa, near the Persian Gulf. A giant network of roads linked the empire's provinces. Messengers traveled on horseback to deliver urgent royal commands or news, while merchants used camel trains to transport goods.

# Ancient Greece



**Location:** Greece, Cyprus, Iran, Egypt, and parts of India

**Political Achievements:** Today's democratic governments are founded on the ideology of the ancient Greeks. Like other city-states, Athens was once ruled by a monarchy; however, after the last tyrant-king was overthrown in 660 BCE, the world's first *democracy* was formed. Building on the ideals in which the aristocracy did not hold all the power, representative legislative bodies, a constitution, and the formation of local neighborhood councils brought the government closer to the people. The ideals of democracy have endured, becoming Greece's greatest accomplishment.

**Cultural Achievements:** The Olympics is one of ancient Greece's most famous legacies; so popular, the games still take place every four years! First recorded in history in 776 BCE, the games brought together Greeks from different city-states and were an integral part of Greek unity. Early Greek festivals involving singing and acting evolved into *theater*; Greek playwrights of the Classical Age are still studied today for the tragic historical and mythological elements explored in their work. Poets like Homer often spoke of Greek history, myths, and military victories, which contributed to the spread of Greek culture. Greeks were also renowned for their sculptures and architecture, especially Greek columns, which evolved in detail as time progressed.

**Religious Developments:** Ancient Greeks were polytheistic and worshipped a myriad of gods, each representing a certain facet of Greek life and ideals. The most important gods were the Olympians, believed to reside on Mt. Olympus and led by Zeus. Some of the Olympians, including Athena, Apollo, Poseidon, Hermes, Aphrodite, Hades, and Dionysus were recognized across Greece. In the Greek imagination, literature, and art, the gods were given human bodies and characteristics - both good and bad - and married, had children, fought, and directly intervened in human affairs.

**Advancements:** The Greeks were one of the first civilizations to study medicine as a scientific way to cure illnesses and disease. Doctors studied sick people, observed their symptoms, and then came up with some practical treatments. The most famous Greek doctor was Hippocrates, who developed the first code of ethics in any professional field. The Hippocratic Oath continues to be integral to medicine today. The Greeks were fascinated with numbers and how they applied to the real world. They studied mathematics for its own sake and developed complex mathematical theories and proofs. They also theorized that the Earth may orbit the Sun and came up with a fairly accurate estimate for the circumference of the Earth

# Rome



**Location:** Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, England, Egypt & Turkey

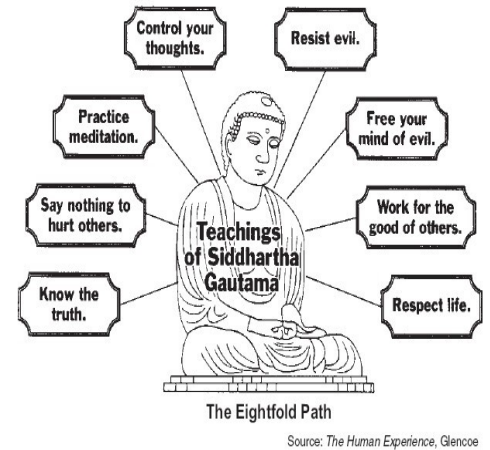
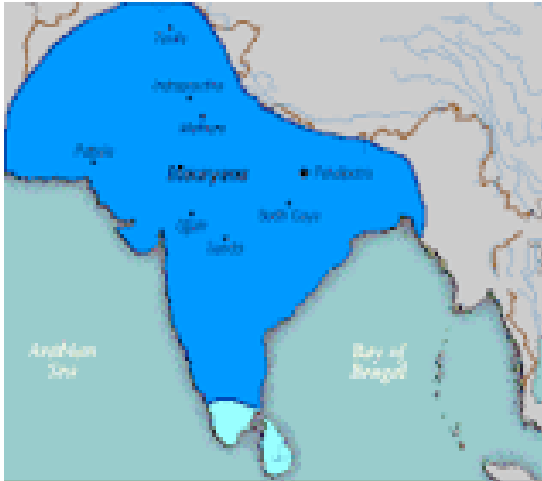
**Political Achievements:** The ancient Romans formulated many of the laws that most countries use even today. Strict implementation was employed throughout the empire. Any individual, regardless of social status, found violating the rules was subject to jail terms, torture, or even capital punishment under Roman laws. They also developed the method of crucifixion as a form of painful punishment. The Romans came up with the idea of listing, updating, and maintaining information on the number of citizens under its empire, called a *census*. This method is still used to population statistics around the world today.

**Cultural Achievements:** The official language of the Roman army and government officials was Latin. While Latin is still widely spoken, other major languages such as Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and French were derived from Latin. The Romans developed the alphabets that are widely used in all European languages, including English. Ancient Romans gave importance to education and sent their children to school. Roman architecture improved by learning sculpting from the Greeks, and the widespread use of sculptures in public places, like statues and busts, continue to be must-visit spectacles in modern-day Europe.

**Religious Developments:** Constantine, the first Roman emperor to embrace and practice Christianity, legalized the worship of the Roman gods. However, there were constant clashes between the clans who practiced Christianity and those who worshiped Roman gods. Hence, many historians believe that one of the causes of the downfall of the Roman Empire was the lack of religious unity.

**Advancements:** The months of the Roman calendar were named after Roman Gods and other religious symbols, which have now popularly come to be known as January, February, March, etc. Even the days of the week used globally as part of the English language were coined by the Romans.

# Mauryan India



**Location:** India

**Political Achievements:** Before the Mauryans, there had been hundreds of private kingdoms and armies, but the central government formed by Chandragupta Maurya provided a stable, unified nation. An important idea of the Mauryans was the central government. The Kumara was the head of all the provincial administration and ruled as the king's representative. The councils advised the leaders but the ultimate authority in the kingdom was the Emperor. The Mauryan Emperor also controlled an extensive spy system that was depended on both for internal and external security.

**Cultural Achievements:** The Mauryans were famous for unprecedented growth in art, architecture, and literature. This period witnessed an important transition from the use of wood to stone, the refinement of pottery, and the construction of pillars and stupas. A pillar consists of one piece of highly-polished stone, usually about 50 ft. high, supporting a capital made of another single piece of stone carved with lotus capitals and animal figures. Stupas are solid, dome-like structures built with bricks and stones. Most of the stupas contain the relics associated with Buddha on it.

**Religious Developments:** Jainism led to social and religious reform all throughout the society. People were expected to follow behavior norms championed by Hinduism, especially the beliefs in preserving karma, dharma, and the five principles of living. Buddhism was founded in India by Siddhartha Gautama in 500 BCE and practiced by the emperor Ashoka after the Kalinga War. It brought social and political peace to all of India. As Buddhism grew, thousands of stupas were built for Buddhist followers as well as Buddhist schools and universities. The unnecessary eating of animals was abolished.

**Advancements:** During Ashoka's reign, an international network of trade expanded. The Khyber Pass, on the modern boundary of Pakistan and Afghanistan, became a strategically-important port of trade with the outside world. Trade extended through the Greek states, West Asia, and the Malay Peninsula into Southeast Asia. India's exports included silk goods and textiles, spices, and exotic foods. An exchange of scientific knowledge and technology with Europe and West Asia along the Silk Road enriched the Empire further. Ashoka also sponsored the construction of thousands of roads, waterways, canals, hospitals, rest-houses, and other public works.

# Gupta India



**Location:** Central India

**Political Achievements:** The Mauryan Empire collapsed in 185 B.C.E, after their final king was assassinated. For the next 500 years, the many states in India were at constant war. The Gupta was an ancient Indian empire that was founded in 320 CE and survived until about 550 CE. The Gupta Empire covered most of north and central India, as well as Bangladesh. It was known to be one of the most peaceful and wealthy civilizations of its time. When Chandra Gupta ascended the throne in 320 CE, the time of darkness was reversed. Chandra Gupta set up a stable civilization with a well-functioning government, while his son, Samudra Gupta, was the responsible for extending the empire. He raided through Indian territories with little mercy. One unique tactic by the ruler was using war elephants in his conquests.

**Cultural Achievements:** Artists were highly appreciated and actually paid for their work in the Gupta Empire. After expanding the empire, the Gupta were relatively peaceful and tolerant of other religions, specifically Buddhism, even though their culture revolved around Hinduism. The prosperity of the civilization grew, especially after Chandra Gupta II ascended the throne. Literature was developed extensively; Sanskrit writing was very beneficial to the empire. The free expression and creativity included in the writing was revolutionary.

**Religious Developments:** The Gupta Dynasty had strong Hinduism beliefs, but Buddhism was also widely prevalent. The characteristics of Hinduism enabled the Gupta to survive whereas the features of Buddhism led to their final decline. The rulers of the dynasty were all Hindu, which is one reason the Buddhists were eventually driven out. The Gupta persecuted the Buddhists, forcing them to run to the hills and build caves near Ajanta to live, hide, and worship. This Buddhist community stayed in these caves for about 400 years.

**Advancements:** One of the Gupta's most notable accomplishments was the discovery of the decimal system and zero as a placeholder. The decimal system, based on the number 10, gave the world a flexible counting system. This revolutionized mathematics and allowed for new equations, theorems, and notations to be established. Aryhabhata, an Indian astronomer, discovered that the earth was a sphere and figured out that the solar year had 365 days. He calculated that the Earth's revolution around the sun is 365.3586805 days, which is very close to recent estimates. From this observation and discovery, Aryhabhata's advancements as well as many others paved the way for astronomers throughout history.

# Qin Dynasty



**Location:** Central China

**Political Achievements:** The Qin dynasty was the first imperial dynasty of China (221 to 206 BCE), the shortest dynasty in Chinese history. The stability of Qin rule enabled China to make several important contributions, the most well-known being the unification of China in 221 BC. The first Qin emperor, Qin Shi Huang-di, the leader of a small state known as Qin, fought with other states for territory and power. However, Qin was also known for his brutishness: He ordered the killings of scholars whose ideas he opposed, and showed little regard for the life of the conscripts who built those public works projects, including his burial complex.

**Cultural Achievements:** The Qin funded large-scale public works projects like the early Great Wall and Emperor Shi Huang-di's burial complex, which contained 8,000 terracotta soldiers whose purpose was to protect the Emperor in the afterlife from evil spirits. Each terracotta soldier of the army appears to be unique in its facial features, revealing a high level of craftsmanship and artistry.

**Religious Developments:** Legalism, a policy in which strict adherence to the letter of the law was prioritized, reached its peak in Chinese history. Shang Yang, a government minister, radically renovated the policies of government by focusing on greater government efficiency and less adherence to tradition, specifically the practice and teachings of Confucianism. Emperor Shi Huang-di approved of Shang Yang's policies and implemented them across his realm.

**Advancements:** Qin Shi Huang-di, introduced many reforms including the first merit-based administration system, a standardized code of law, units of measurement, and currency. He also authorized construction of the Great Wall, which stretches for over 4,000 miles and for thousands of years helped block the advances of nomadic enemies to the north. It is most likely the largest building project ever carried out in human history.

# Han Dynasty



**Location:** Eastern China

**Political Achievements:** The Han emperors created a civil service examination to choose officials. For the first time, qualifications for job placement was based on an examination, which usually stressed the teachings of Confucius, and promotions were based on merit. These teachings are still being used to this day.

**Cultural Achievements:** The arts began to gain status during the Eastern Han period when calligraphy and painting were no longer seen as pure letter symbols only. Ceramics was also developed along with the spread of pottery. Many of the greatest works in pottery were originally from the Han dynasty. Han emperors and other noblemen adorned their tombs with replicas made through pottery of warriors, servants, concubines, toilets, furniture; everything they needed in the next world.

Literature also became an integral part of the Han dynasty culture as it flourished greatly during this era mainly because of the invention of paper. Historian Sima Qian wrote the Book of History, the first account of Chinese history from Huangdi to Emperor Wu. The Yuefu, or the Music Bureau began to collect and record ceremonial chants and songs and ballads of common people. It was during this period that the loom was invented. With that, silk began to be woven for export trades. The world renowned “Three Treasures of the Han Dynasty” was also created during this time.

**Advancements:** The Han Dynasty created irrigation and water conservation projects to increase farming. Technological advancements in manufacturing farming tools contributed largely to agricultural revenues that assisted in boosting the Han economy. In addition, more programs were commissioned in order to increase farming efficiency. Another major achievement of the Han Dynasty was the invention of books and paper. Original paper was coarse, thick, and had an uneven texture. The Han invented paper made from disintegrated hemp fibers, which was lighter, durable, and thinner, which made it better for writing. Before the invention of paper, records were usually written on wooden strips, bamboo, or on solid objects; now, records could now be written, stored, and retained easily.