

Ancient Civilizations

A World History Sourcebook



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How to Read a Primary Source

When interpreting anything created in a different time and place than your own, it's essential to ask thoughtful questions. For example, a movie made in the 1980s deserves the same scrutiny as a legal code written 3,000 years ago. Historians typically ask the following questions when analyzing primary sources:

- **Author.** Who created the source? If known, what was the author's position in society—high status, low status, ruling group, subject group? Look for what the author repeats, exaggerates, and ignores to discover their point of view.
- **Purpose.** What is the source's agenda (to persuade, to inform, to frighten, to inspire)?
- **Context.** What were the conditions at the time of the source's creation? Knowing there was a war or religious dispute underway can illuminate why a source says what it does.
- **Values.** How do the ideas and values in the source compare to our own? What parts of the text might seem objectionable today, but were accepted at the time?
- **Audience.** Who was meant to see the source—a king, a crowd, a family member? The intended audience shapes tone, language, and argument.

Different sources have different expectations and formats. A court record or political speech will look and sound different than a private letter or memoir—keep that in mind. Some sources in this reader may include unfamiliar names or references to distant places, cultures, or historical eras. Be sure to read the introductions provided for each text, and don't let unfamiliar elements discourage you.

Questions for Discussion

What kind of primary source material will future historians use to write histories about people living in the second and third decades of the 21st century?

1. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (Mesopotamia, 18th Century BCE)

The Epic of Gilgamesh is a poem from ancient Mesopotamia that constitutes the oldest known piece of world literature. It tells the story of Gilgamesh, a warrior king from Uruk (modern day Iraq) who undertakes a dangerous journey in pursuit of eternal life after his friend and wartime companion Enkidu dies. In the first excerpt, a dying Enkidu describes his vision of the afterlife. In the second excerpt, a tavernkeeper named Siduri offers her advice to Gilgamesh about his quest for immortality. In the third excerpt, Gilgamesh speaks with an immortal being, Utnapishtim. The story was originally a series of poems transmitted through oral tradition until they were compiled and preserved on cuneiform tablets. They describe how ancient Mesopotamians viewed life, death, and the afterlife.

Source: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. Translated by N. K. Sandars. Penguin Books, 1964. Included under fair use as described in the [Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Open Educational Resources](#). Do not redistribute without permission of the rights holder.

Enkidu's Vision

Listen, my friend [Gilgamesh], this is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the somber-faced man-bird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare towards me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla, the Queen of Darkness, to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

'There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for coverings, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away for ever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil, stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water-skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy; there were servers of the temple, and there was Etana, that king of Kish whom the eagle carried to heaven in the days of old. I saw also Samuqan, god of cattle, and there was Ereshkigal the Queen of the Underworld; and Belit-Sheri squatted in front of her, she who is recorder of the gods and keeps the book of death. She held a tablet from which she read. She raised her head, she saw me and spoke: "Who has brought

this one here?” Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rushes; like one whom the bailiff has seized and his heart pounds with terror.’

Siduri’s Advice

Then Siduri said to him, ‘If you are that Gilgamesh who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven, who killed the watchman of the cedar forest, who overthrew Humbaba that lived in the forest, and killed the lions in the passes of the mountain, why are your cheeks so starved and why is your face so drawn? Why is despair in your heart and your face like the face of one who has made a long journey? Yes, why is your face burned from heat and cold, and why do you come here wandering over the pastures in search of the wind?’

Gilgamesh answered her, ‘And why should not my cheeks be starved and my face drawn? Despair is in my heart and my face is the face of one of who has made a long journey, it was burned with heat and with cold. Why should I not wander over the pastures in search of the wind? My friend, my younger brother, he who hunted the wild ass of the wilderness and the panther of the plains, my friend, my younger brother who seized and killed the Bull of Heaven and overthrew Humbaba in the cedar forest, my friend who was very dear to me and who enduring dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother, whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened on him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness and cannot rest. But now, young woman, maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much.’

She answered, ‘Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man.’

Utnapishtim’s Initial Response to Gilgamesh

Oh, father Utnapishtim, you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?

Utnapishtim said, ‘There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand for ever, do we seal a contract to hold all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep for ever, does the flood-time of rivers endure? It is only the nymph of the dragon-fly who sheds her larva and sees the sun in his glory. From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki, the judges, come together, and Mammetun the mother of destinies, together they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose.’

Questions for Discussion

What does Enkidu's dream suggest about the Mesopotamian conception of the afterlife? Next, comment on Siduri's advice to Gilgamesh or what Utnapishtim says to Gilgamesh. Do the ideas presented in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* resonate with any contemporary views on life and death?

2. *The Code of Hammurabi* (Mesopotamia, 18th Century BCE)

The Code of Hammurabi is one of the world's first written legal codes, dating back to around 1754 BCE. Named for the sixth king of the Babylonian Empire, located in what is now modern-day Iraq, this code was created by Hammurabi, who sought to establish a single set of laws to govern both criminal and civil matters within his expanding state. *The Code of Hammurabi* consists of 282 laws, which were inscribed on a large stone stele. These laws reveal a great deal about Mesopotamia's economy and society, including aspects of commerce, property rights, family relations, and the social hierarchy.

Source: "Hammurabi's Code of Laws (circa 1780 BCE)." Translated by L. W. King. Internet History Sourcebooks Project. January 26, 1996. <https://sourcebooks.web.fordham.edu/ancient/hamcode.asp>

- 3: If any one bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death.
- 5: If a judge try a case, reach a decision, and present his judgment in writing; if later error shall appear in his decision, and it be through his own fault, then he shall pay twelve times the fine set by him in the case, and he shall be publicly removed from the judge's bench, and never again shall he sit there to render judgement.
- 15: If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates [to escape], he shall be put to death.
- 16: If any one receive into his house a runaway male or female slave of the court, or of a freedman, and does not bring it out at the public proclamation of the [police], the master of the house shall be put to death.
- 53: If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the grain which he has caused to be ruined.
- 54: If he be not able to replace the grain, then he and his possessions shall be divided among the farmers whose corn he has flooded.

- 108: If a woman wine-seller does not accept grain according to gross weight in payment of drink, but takes money, and the price of the drink is less than that of the corn, she shall be convicted and thrown into the water.
- 109: If conspirators meet in the house of a woman wine-seller, and these conspirators are not captured and delivered to the court, the wine-seller shall be put to death.
- 110: If a "sister of a god"[nun] open a tavern, or enter a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death.
- 129: If a man's wife be surprised [having intercourse] with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.
- 130: If a man violate the wife (betrothed or child-wife) of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father's house, and sleep with her and be surprised [discovered], this man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless.
- 131: If a man bring a charge against his wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.
- 132: If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for the sake of her husband.
- 138: If a man wishes to separate from his wife who has borne him no children, he shall give her the amount of her purchase money and the dowry which she brought from her father's house, and let her go.
- 141: If a man's wife, who lives in his house, wishes to leave it, plunges into debt [to go into business], tries to ruin her house, neglects her husband, and is judicially convicted: if her husband offer her release, she may go on her way, and he gives her nothing as a gift of release. If her husband does not wish to release her, and if he take another wife, she shall remain as servant in her husband's house.
- 142: If a woman quarrel with her husband, and say: "You are not congenial to me," the reasons for her prejudice must be presented. If she is guiltless, and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, then no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house.
- 143: If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman shall be cast into the water.
- 195: If a son strikes his father, his hands shall be cut off.
- 196: If a nobleman put out the eye of another nobleman, his eye shall be put out.

197: If he break another nobleman's bone, his bone shall be broken.

198: If he put out the eye of a commoner, or break the bone of a commoner, he shall pay one silver mina.

199: If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value.

200: If a man knock out the teeth of his equal, his teeth shall be knocked out.

201: If he knock out the teeth of a commoner, he shall pay one-third of a silver mina. In future time, through all coming generations, let the king, who may be in the land, observe the words of righteousness which I have written on my monument; let him not alter the law of the land which I have given, the edicts which I have enacted; my monument let him not mar. If such a ruler have wisdom, and be able to keep his land in order, he shall observe the words which I have written in this inscription; the rule, statute, and law of the land which I have given; the decisions which I have made will this inscription show him; let him rule his subjects accordingly, speak justice to them, give right decisions, root out the miscreants and criminals from this land, and grant prosperity to his subjects.

Questions for Discussion

How does *The Code of Hammurabi* understand the concept of justice and fairness and what does that concept tell us about the structure of ancient Babylonian society?

3. *The Book of the Dead* (Egypt, ca. 16th Century BCE)

The Book of the Dead is a collection of spells and prayers that the Egyptians believed contributed to well-being in the afterlife. The book has often been found in Egyptian tombs. This excerpt is a prayer meant to prepare the deceased for the judgment of the gods. This chant gives us a glimpse of Egyptian ethics and religious beliefs. Maat is the Egyptian concept of order, balance, truth, morality, and justice.

Source: Budge, E. A. Wallis. *The Book of the Dead*. London, 1898. (Pages 191–92.)
<https://archive.org/details/bookofdeadchapte02budg/page/190/mode/2up>

In truth I have come to thee, and I have brought Maat (right and truth) to thee,
And I have destroyed wickedness for thee.
I have not done evil to mankind.
I have not oppressed the members of my family.
I have not wrought evil in the place of right and truth.
I have had no knowledge of worthless men. I have not wrought evil.
I have not made to be the first [consideration] of each day that excessive labour should be performed for me.
I have not brought forward my name for [exaltation] to honours.
I have not ill-treated servants.
I have not thought scorn of God.
I have not defrauded the oppressed one of his property.
I have not done that which is an abomination unto the gods.
I have not caused harm to be done to the servant by his chief.
I have not caused pain.
I have made no man to suffer hunger.
I have made no one to weep.
I have done no murder.
I have not given the order for murder to be done for me.
I have not inflicted pain upon mankind.
I have not defrauded the temples of their oblations [things offered to the gods].
I have not stolen the cakes of the gods.
I have not carried off the cakes offered to the khus [souls of the deceased].
I have not committed fornication.
I have not polluted myself in the holy places of the god of my city.

I have not diminished from the bushel.
I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
I have not added to the weights of the scales [to cheat the seller].
I have not mis-read the pointer of the scales [to cheat the buyer].
I have not carried away the milk from the mouths of children.
I have not driven away the cattle which were upon their pastures.
I have not snared the feathered fowl of the preserves of the gods.
I have not caught fish [with bait made of] fish of their kind.
I have not turned back the water at the time when it should flow.
I have not cut a cutting in a canal of running water.
I have not extinguished a fire (or light) when it should burn.
I have not violated the times I [of offering] the chosen meat-offerings.
I have not driven off the cattle from the property of the gods.
I have not repulsed God in his manifestations.



Questions for Discussion

How do the ethical concerns of ancient Egyptians resemble our own and how are they different? What do the last nine chants reveal about immediate concerns of Egyptian society?

4. Egyptian Objects

Objects and written documents are sources of historical knowledge that complement one another. While objects can provide physical evidence of cultural practices, texts offer explicit explanations or narratives. Together, they create a fuller picture of the past. This group of objects from Egypt should be analyzed in much the same way one would approach a written document. Consider who might have created the object, with what materials, and for what purpose.

Board Game



Figure 1: Board game (1814-1805 BCE). *Game of Hounds and Jackals* from the Metropolitan Museum of Art is in the public domain. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Game_of_Hounds_and_Jackals_MET_DP264105.jpg)

Razor Belonging to Hatnefer



Figure 2: Razor Belonging to Hatnefer (1492–1473 BCE). Razor Belonging to Hatnefer from the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Razor_Belonging_to_Hatnefer_MET_DP116027.jpg) is in the public domain. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Razor_Belonging_to_Hatnefer_MET_DP116027.jpg)

Wig



Figure 3: Wig (1040-992 BCE). Wig from the [Metropolitan Museum of Art](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wig_MET_30.3.35_EGDP021609.jpg) is in the public domain. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wig_MET_30.3.35_EGDP021609.jpg)

Sandal Socks



Figure 4: Sandal socks (300-499 CE). BLW Pair of socks by David Jackson is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 UK. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BLW_Pair_of_socks.jpg)

Questions for Discussion

What did these artifacts make you think about? Who would've used the objects and what do they reveal about Egyptian society?

5. The Mandate of Heaven, Selection from the Shu Jing (China, 6th Century BCE)

The Mandate of Heaven is an explanation for the success and failure of monarchs and states. Beginning in the sixth century, Chinese sages reasoned that when a ruling dynasty got overthrown, it had lost the moral right to rule bestowed by Heaven. For this source, you should understand heaven to mean a cosmic all-pervading power. The Shu Jing is a collection of documents, not a person. It dates from the sixth century, prior to the life of Confucius. According to Chinese tradition, the first royal dynasty was the Xia.

Source: “The Instructions of Î,” In *The Sacred Books of China, The Texts of Confucianism, Part I*, vol. 3 of *The Sacred Books of the East*, edited by F. Max Mueller, Translated by James Legge. Oxford: Clarendon, 1879–1910. <https://archive.org/details/sacredbooksofch03conf/page/92/mode/2up>

[When] the former kings of Xia cultivated earnestly their virtue, and then there were no calamities from Heaven. The spirits of the hills and rivers alike were all in tranquility; and the birds and beasts, the fishes and tortoises, all enjoyed their existence according to their nature. But their descendants did not follow their example, and great Heaven sent down calamities, employing the agency of our ruler- who was in possession of its favoring appointment. The attack on Xia may be traced to the orgies in Ming Tiao... Our king of Shang brilliantly displayed his sagely prowess; for oppression he substituted his generous gentleness; and the millions of the people gave him their hearts. Now your Majesty is entering on the inheritance of his virtue; — all depends on how you commence your reign. To set up love, it is for you to love your relations; to set up respect, it is for you to respect your elders. The commencement is in the family and the state....

The former king began with careful attention to the bonds that hold men together. He listened to their request and did not seek to resist it; he conformed to the wisdom of the ancients; occupying the highest position, he displayed intelligence; occupying an inferior position, he displayed his loyalty; he allowed the good qualities of the men whom he employed and did not seek that they should have every talent....

He extensively sought out wise men, who should be helpful to you, his descendant and heir. He laid down the punishments for officers, and warned those who were in authority, saying, ‘If you dare to have constant dancing in your palaces, and drunken singing in your chambers, — that is called the fashion of sorcerers; if you dare to see your hearts on wealth and women, and abandon yourselves to wandering about or to the chase, — that is called the fashion of extravagance; if you dare to despise sage words, to resist the loyal and upright, to put far from you the aged and virtuous, and to

seek the company of...youths, — that is called the fashion of disorder. Now if a high noble or officer be addicted to one of these three fashions with their ten evil ways, his family will surely come to ruin; if the prince of a country be so addicted, his state will surely come to ruin. The minister who does not try to correct such vices in the sovereign shall be punished with branding.’...

Do you, who now succeed to the throne, revere these warnings in your person? Think of them! — sacred counsels of vast importance, admirable words forcibly set forth! The ways of Heaven are not invariable: — on the good-doer it sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer it sends down all miseries. Do you but be virtuous, be it in small things or in large, and the myriad regions will have cause for rejoicing. If you not be virtuous, be it in large things or in small, it will bring the ruin of your ancestral temple.”



Questions for Discussion

What responsibilities does the Mandate of Heaven place on rulers? How does a Chinese monarch keep the Mandate of Heaven? What demonstrates that the Mandate of Heaven has been lost? Does this ancient idea resemble the way people think today?

6. Sun-Tzu: *The Art of War* (China, ca. 500 BCE)

Sun-Tzu lived during the Zhou dynasty and is considered one of the most influential military theorists of all time. His dissertation on the nature of war is marked by an extremely realistic assessment of warfare and its relation to geography, psychology, tactics and other factors that come to play in warfare. Today, many business schools as well as military academies require their students to read *The Art of War*.

Source: Sun Zi. *Sun Tzu on The Art of War*. Translated by Lionel Giles. Luzac & Co., 1910.
<https://archive.org/details/the-art-of-war-by-sun-tzu-trans.-by-lionel-giles-m.-a.-1910>

Laying Plans

The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.

The art of war, then, is governed by five constant factors, to be taken into account in one's deliberations, when seeking to determine the conditions obtaining in the field. These are: The Moral Law; Heaven; Earth; The Commander; Method and discipline.

The Moral Law causes the people to be in complete accord with their ruler, so that they will follow him regardless of their lives, undismayed by any danger.

Heaven signifies night and day, cold and heat, times and seasons.

Earth comprises distances, great and small; danger and security; open ground and narrow passes; the chances of life and death.

The Commander stands for the virtues of wisdom, sincerely, benevolence, courage and strictness.

By method and discipline are to be understood the marshaling of the army in its proper subdivisions, the graduations of rank among the officers, the maintenance of roads by which supplies may reach the army, and the control of military expenditure.

These five heads should be familiar to every general; he who knows them will be victorious; he who knows them not will fail.

Therefore, in your deliberations, when seeking to determine the military conditions, let them be made the basis of a comparison, in this wise:—

Which of the two sovereigns is imbued with the Moral law? Which of the two generals has most ability? With whom lie the advantages derived from Heaven and Earth? On which side is discipline most rigorously enforced? Which army is stronger? On which side are officers and men more highly trained? In which army is there the greater constancy both in reward and punishment?

By means of these seven considerations I can forecast victory or defeat...But remember: While heeding the profit of my counsel, avail yourself also of any helpful circumstances over and beyond the ordinary rules and modify your plans accordingly

All warfare is based on deception. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable; when using our forces, we must seem inactive; when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near.

Hold out baits to entice the enemy. Feign disorder, and crush him. If he is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is of choleric temper, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.

Waging War

When you engage in actual fighting, if victory is long in coming, then men's weapons will grow dull and their ardor will be damped. If you lay siege to a town, you will exhaust your strength. Again, if the campaign is protracted, the resources of the State will not be equal to the strain. Now, when your weapons are dulled, your ardor damped, your strength exhausted and your treasure spent, other chieftains will spring up to take advantage of your extremity. Then no man, however wise, will be able to avert the consequences that must ensue.

Thus, though we have heard of stupid haste in war, cleverness has never been seen associated with long delays. There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare. It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on.

The skillful soldier does not raise a second levy, neither are his supply-wagons loaded more than twice. Bring war material with you from home, but forage on the enemy. Thus the army will have food enough for its needs. Poverty of the State exchequer causes an army to be maintained by contributions from a distance. Contributing to maintain an army at a distance causes the people to be impoverished.

In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns. Thus it may be known that the leader of armies is the arbiter of the people's fate, the man on whom it depends whether the nation shall be in peace or in peril.

Attack by Stratagem

In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to recapture an army entire than to destroy it, to capture a regiment, a detachment or a company entire than to destroy them.

Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting. Thus the highest form of generalship is to balk the enemy's plans; the next best is to prevent the junction of the enemy's forces; the next in order is to attack the enemy's army in the field; and the worst policy of all is to besiege walled cities.

It is the rule in war, if our forces are ten to the enemy's one, to surround him; if five to one, to attack him; if twice as numerous, to divide our army into two. If equally matched, we can offer battle; if slightly inferior in numbers, we can avoid the enemy; if quite unequal in every way, we can flee from him. Hence, though an obstinate fight may be made by a small force, in the end it must be captured by the larger force.

Thus we may know that there are five essentials for victory: He will win who knows when to fight and when not to fight. He will win who knows how to handle both superior and inferior forces. He will win whose army is animated by the same spirit throughout all its ranks. He will win who, prepared himself, waits to take the enemy unprepared. He will win who has military capacity and is not interfered with by the sovereign.

Hence the saying: If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

Tactical Dispositions

The good fighters of old first put themselves beyond the possibility of defeat, and then waited for an opportunity of defeating the enemy.

To secure ourselves against defeat lies in our own hands, but the opportunity of defeating the enemy is provided by the enemy himself. Thus the good fighter is able to secure himself against defeat, but cannot make certain of defeating the enemy. Hence the saying: One may know how to conquer without being able to do it.

Security against defeat implies defensive tactics; ability to defeat the enemy means taking the offensive. Standing on the defensive indicates insufficient strength; attacking, a superabundance of strength.

The general who is skilled in defense hides in the most secret recesses of the earth; he who is skilled in attack flashes forth from the topmost heights of heaven. Thus on the one hand we have ability to protect ourselves; on the other, a victory that is complete.

To see victory only when it is within the ken of the common herd is not the acme of excellence. Neither is it the acme of excellence if you fight and conquer and the whole Empire says, "Well done!"

What the ancients called a clever fighter is one who not only wins, but excels in winning with ease. Hence his victories bring him neither reputation for wisdom nor credit for courage. He wins his battles by making no mistakes. Making no mistakes is what establishes the certainty of victory, for it means conquering an enemy that is already defeated.

Hence the skillful fighter puts himself into a position which makes defeat impossible, and does not miss the moment for defeating the enemy. Thus it is that in war the victorious strategist only seeks battle after the victory has been won, whereas he who is destined to defeat first fights and afterwards looks for victory.



Questions for Discussion

What is the best type of victory in war according to Sun-Tzu? Why does he prioritize it and what does it reveal about his philosophy of warfare? Similarly, what does *The Art of War* tell us about Chinese society and its values in 500 BCE?

7. Confucius: *Analects* (China, 5th Century BCE)

Confucius was a moral philosopher from China. The disciples of Confucius compiled his teachings in a book of *Analects* (sayings) and may have expanded on them. Through these sayings, Confucius articulates his ideas about virtue or positive character traits. A central concept for Confucius is filial piety, or the lifelong respect and obedience children owe to parents, wives to husbands, sisters to brothers, and younger siblings to older siblings. Filial piety also extends to honoring one's ancestors. The ideas of Confucius about morality, government, education, and social relations have had a tremendous impact on East Asian civilization.

Source: Confucius. “*Confucian Analects*,” In *The Chinese Classics*. Translated by James Legge (1887), revised by Michael Neville. <https://brians.wsu.edu/2016/11/10/confucius-analects-5th-c-bce/>

On Filial Piety

Mang I asked what filial piety is. The Master said, “It is being obedient.” Soon after, as Fan Chi was driving him, the Master told him “Mang asked me what filial piety is, and I answer him ‘being obedient.’” Fan Chi asked, “What exactly did you mean?” The Master replied, “That parents, when alive, should be served according to ritual; that, when dead, they should be buried according to ritual; and that they should be sacrificed to according to ritual.”

Ziyou asked what filial piety is. The Master said, “The filial piety of now-a-days means providing nourishment for one's parents. But dogs and horses likewise are able to do something along that line for their own kind. Without reverence, what is there to distinguish the one support given from the other?”

On Goodness

The Master said, “A youth, when at home, should behave well toward his parents, and when abroad, respectfully to his elders. He should be earnest and truthful. He should overflow in love to all, and cultivate the friendship of the good. When he has time and opportunity, after doing those things, he should study the polite arts.”

The Master said, “With coarse rice to eat, with water to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow, I still have joy in the midst of these things. Riches and honors acquired by unrighteousness are to me as a floating cloud.”

Zhonggong asked about perfect virtue. The Master said, “When abroad, behave to everyone as if you were receiving an important guest; treat people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; do not do to others as you would not wish done to yourself. Thereby you will let no murmuring rise against you in the country, and none in the family. . . .”

On the Gentleman

Why is ritual supposed to be important? What happens to otherwise virtuous traits without such ritual?

The Master said, “Riches and honors are what men desire; but if they cannot be obtained in the proper way, they should be let go. Poverty and meanness are what men dislike; but if they cannot be avoided in the proper way, they should not be avoided. If a gentleman abandons virtue, how can he fulfill the requirements of his title? A gentleman not, even for the space of a single meal, acts contrary to virtue. Even in moments of haste, and in times of danger, he clings to virtue.”

The Master said, “A gentleman, well studied in literature, and abiding by the rules of ritual, will not go very wrong.”

“When gentlemen perform well all their duties to their relations, the people are inspired to virtue. When they remain true to their old friends, the people are preserved from irresponsible behavior.”

The Master said, “A gentleman points out the admirable qualities of men and does not point out their bad qualities. A petty man does just the opposite.”

The Master said, “A gentleman is distressed by his lack of ability, but he is not distressed by men’s not knowing him.”

The Master said, “What the gentleman demands is something of himself. What the petty man demands is something of others.”

A gentleman does not wear a deep purple or a puce color, nor in his at-home clothes does he wear red. In warm weather, he wears a single-layered garment, either of coarse or fine texture, but when going out he wears it over another garment. He wears lambskin with a garment of black, fawn with white, and fox with yellow. His fur dressing gown should be long, but with the right sleeve short. His night clothes must be half again as long as his body. When staying at home, he wears thick furs of the fox or the badger. So long as he is not in mourning, he wears all the trimmings of his girdle. . . . He does not wear lamb’s fur or a black cap when making a visit of condolence. And on the first day of the month he must put on his court robes and present himself at court.

On Education

The Master said, “Anyone learning without thought is lost; anyone thinking but not learning is in peril.”

The Master said, “Yu, shall I teach you what knowledge is? When you know a thing, to realize that you know it;

and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it: this is knowledge.” The Master said, [I have been] “a transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients. . .”

When the Master went to Wei, Ran Yu acted as driver of his carriage. The Master observed, “How numerous the people are!” Ran Yu asked, “When they are more numerous, what more shall be done for them?” “Enrich them,” was the reply. “And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done?” The Master said, “Instruct them.”

On Government

The Master said, “To rule a country of a thousand chariots requires reverent attention to business, sincerity, economy in expenditures, and love for men, as well as the employment of the people only in the right seasons.”

The Master said, “If the people are governed by laws and punishment is used to maintain order, they will try to avoid the punishment but have no sense of shame. If they are governed by virtue and rules of propriety [ritual] are used to maintain order, they will have a sense of shame and will become good as well.”

Ji Kang Zi asked Confucius about government, saying, “What do you say to killing those who are unprincipled [i.e., the immoral] for the good of those who are principled?” Confucius replied, “Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your obvious desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass: the grass is bound to bend when the wind blows across it.”

Zigong asked about government. The Master said, “The requisites of government are that there be sufficient food, sufficient military equipment, and the confidence of the people in their ruler.” Zigong said, “If one had to dispense with one of those three, which should be given up first?” “The military equipment, ” said the Master. Zigong again asked, “If one had to dispense with one of the two remaining, which should be given up?” The Master answered, “Give up the food. From of old, death has always been the lot of men; but if the people have no faith in their rulers, they cannot stand.”

On Religion

Someone asked the meaning of the great sacrifice. The Master said, “I do not know. Anyone who knew its meaning would find it as easy to govern the kingdom as to look on this,” and he pointed to the palm of his hand.

Zilu asked about serving the ghosts of the dead. The Master said, “Until you are able to serve men, how can you serve their ghosts?” When Zilu ventured to ask about death, the answer was: “While you do not know life, how can you [hope to] know about death?”



Questions for Discussion

According to Confucius, why are rituals so important? Do you agree with him? Would you describe Confucius as more of a pragmatic or idealistic thinker?

8. Xunzi: The Nature of Man is Evil (China, ca. 275 BCE)

Xunzi was a Chinese philosopher who lived during a period of intense political disorder. He believed that human beings were selfish and tended towards bad behavior in opposition to the philosophy of Confucius and Mencius who believed in the essential goodness of people. For Xunzi, it was only through conscious ethical conduct and strong government that humans could rectify their natural tendency towards immorality. His ideas contributed to the Chinese philosophy of Legalism.

Source: Xun Zi. "The Nature of Man Is Evil," In *The Works of Hsüntze*, translated and edited by Homer H. Dubs. London: Arthur Probsthain, 1928. <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.103953/page/n303/mode/2up>

The nature of man is evil; his goodness is only acquired through training. The original nature of man today is to seek gain. If this desire is followed, strife and rapacity results and courtesy dies. Man is originally envious and naturally hates others. If these tendencies are followed, injury and destruction follow; loyalty and faithfulness are destroyed. Man originally possesses the desires of the ear and eye; he likes praise and is lustful. If these are followed, impurity and disorder results, and the rules of proper conduct and justice and etiquette are destroyed...

Crooked wood needs to undergo steaming and bending to conform to the carpenter's rule; only then is it straight. Blunt metal needs to undergo grinding and whetting; only then is it sharp. The original nature of man today is evil, so he needs to undergo the instruction of teachers and laws, only then will he be upright. He needs the rules of proper conduct and justice, only then will there be good government. But man today is without good teachers and laws; so he is selfish, vicious, and unrighteous. He is without the rules of proper conduct and justice, so there is rebellion, disorder, and no good government.

In ancient times the Sage-Kings knew that man's nature was evil, selfish, vicious, unrighteous, rebellious, and of itself did not bring about good government. For this reason, they created the rules of proper conduct and justice; they established laws and ordinances to force and beautify the natural feelings of man, thus rectifying them. Then good government arose, and men followed the right Way.

Now the people who are influenced by good teachers and laws, who accumulate literature and knowledge, who are led by the rules of proper conduct and justice become superior men. Those who give rein to their natural feelings, who take joy in haughtiness, and break the rules of proper

conduct and justice, become small-minded men. By this line of reasoning, it is evident that the original nature of man is evil, and his goodness is acquired.

Mencius says, "The fact that men are teachable shows that their original nature is good." I reply: This is not so. This is not understanding the nature of man, nor examining the original nature of man, nor the part played by acquired elements. Whatever belongs to original nature is the gift of Nature. It cannot be learned. It cannot be worked for. The Sage-Kings brought forth the rules of proper conduct and justice. Men learn them and gain ability; they work for them and obtain results in the development of character. What cannot be learned and cannot be worked for, what is in the power of Nature only is what is meant by original nature. That which can be learned and which gives men ability, which can be worked for and which brings results in the development of character, whatever is in the power of man is what is meant by acquired character. This is the distinction between original nature and acquired character...

Now the nature of man is that when he is hungry, he desires nourishment; when he is cold, he desires warmth; when he labors, he seeks rest. This is man's natural feeling. But now when a man is hungry and sees food, he dares not rush in ahead of others [who should go first according to proper conduct]; instead the eater yields to others. When working, he dares not seek rest, instead he works for others. The son yields precedence to his father, the younger brother yields to his older brother; the son works for his father, the younger brother works for his older brother – these two kinds of actions are contrary to original nature and antagonistic to natural feeling. Yet, there is the doctrine of filial piety, the etiquette of the rules of proper conduct and justice. If a person follows his natural feelings, he has no courtesy; if he has courtesy, then it is antagonistic to his natural feelings. By this line of reasoning, it is evident that man's original nature is evil and his goodness is acquired...

In ancient times, the Sage-Kings knew that man's nature was evil, that it was partial, bent on evil, and corrupt, rebellious, disorderly, without good government, hence they established the authority of the prince to govern man; they set forth clearly the rules of proper conduct and justice to reform him; they established laws and government to rule him; they made punishments severe to warn him; and so they caused the whole country to come to a state of good government and prosperity, and to accord with goodness. This is the government of the Sage-Kings, the reforming influence of the rules of proper conduct and justice.

Now suppose we try to remove the authority of the prince and be without the reforming influence of the rules of proper conduct and justice; suppose we try to remove the beneficent control of the laws and the government and be without the restraining influence of punishments. Let us stand and see how the people of the whole country would behave. If this were the situation, then the strong would injure the weak and rob him; the many would treat cruelly the few and tear them apart. The whole country would be in a state of rebellion and disorder. It would not take an instant to get into this condition. By this line of reasoning, it is evident that the nature of man is evil and that his goodness is acquired...

Questions for Discussion

Do you agree with Xunzi's views on human nature, acquired character, and the role of government? Why or why not? Think of an example from history or a current event that either supports or contradicts Xunzi's views. How do Xunzi's ideas agree with what Confucius teaches?

9. Chinese Objects

This group of objects from Han dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), and Sui dynasty (581–618 CE) should be analyzed in much the same way one would approach a written document. Consider function and purpose. Why were they created, for what purpose, and what do they reveal to us about ancient Chinese society?

Pottery Dog



Figure 1: Pottery dog (Han dynasty). [Escultura perro China Han](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escultura_perro_China_Han.JPG) by Hispalois is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Escultura_perro_China_Han.JPG)

Cash Coins



Figure 2: Cash coins (Han dynasty). 五铢钱 海昏侯国遗址2 by 三猪 is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:%E4%BA%94%E9%93%A2%E9%92%B1_%E6%B5%B7%E6%98%8F%E4%BE%AF%E5%9B%BD%E9%81%97%E5%9D%802.jpg)

Pipa Player



Figure 3: Pipa player (Sui dynasty). [Dynasty pipa player](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui_dynasty_pipa_player_.jpg) by Pratyeka is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sui_dynasty_pipa_player_.jpg)

Questions for Discussion

What did these artifacts make you think about? Did one draw your attention more than the others? If so, why?

10. The Buddha: Sermons and Teachings (India, 6th Century BCE)

Siddhartha Gautama (566-483 BCE) was a prince who lived a life of luxury before seeking enlightenment to understand the nature of reality and human suffering. At the time Gautama lived (Gotama in this translation), most spiritual seekers practiced austere asceticism, renouncing possessions, fasting, abstaining from alcohol and sex, and spending long periods in meditation. Siddhartha joined various ascetic sects but remained unsatisfied until he achieved enlightenment. Siddhartha taught the truths he discovered and promoted a “middle path” between worldliness and asceticism, and one focused on the alleviation of human suffering. His teachings are the foundation for one of the world’s universal religions, Buddhism. The Sermon at Benares is reproduced here. Benares is in northern India. “Bhikkhu” refers to a monk or ascetic. “Tathagata” refers to one who has found the truth, which the Buddha used to refer to himself. “Buddha” means “an enlightened one.”

Source: Carus, Paul. *The Gospel of Buddha: Compiled from Ancient Records*. Chicago and London, 1917. <https://archive.org/details/gospelofbuddha008430mbp/page/n5/mode/2up>

The Sermon at Benares

On seeing their old teacher approach, the five bhikkus agreed among themselves not to salute him, nor to address him as a master, but by his name only. “For,” so they said, “he has broken his vow and has abandoned holiness. He is no bhikkhu, but Gotama, and Gotama has become a man who lives in abundance and indulges in the pleasures of worldliness.” But when the Blessed One approached in a dignified manner, they involuntarily rose from their seats and greeted him in spite of their resolution. Still they called him by his name and addressed him as “friend Gotama.”

When they had thus received the Blessed One, he said: “Do not call the Tathagata by his name nor address him as ‘friend,’ for he is the Buddha, the Holy One. The Buddha looks with a kind heart equally on all living beings, and they therefore call him ‘Father.’ To disrespect a father is wrong; to despise him, is wicked. The Tathagata, the Buddha continued, does not seek salvation in austerities, but neither does he for that reason indulge in worldly pleasures, nor live in abundance. The Tathagata has found the middle path.

“There are two extremes, O bhikkhus, which the man who has given up the world ought not to follow—the habitual practice, on the one hand, of self-indulgence which is unworthy, vain and fit only for the worldly-minded and the habitual practice, on the other hand, of self-mortification, which is painful, useless and unprofitable.

“Neither abstinence from fish and flesh, nor going naked, nor shaving the head, nor wearing matted hair, nor dressing in a rough garment, nor covering oneself with dirt, nor sacrificing to Agni, will cleanse a man who is not free from delusions. Reading the Vedas, making offerings to priests, or sacrifices to the gods, self-mortification by heat or cold and many such penances performed for the sake of immortality, these do not cleanse the man who is not free from delusions. Anger, drunkenness, obstinacy, bigotry, deception, envy, self-praise, disparaging others, superciliousness and evil intentions constitute uncleanness; not verily the eating of flesh.

“A middle path, O bhikkhus avoiding the two extremes, has been discovered by the Tathagata—a path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana! What is that middle path, O bhikkhus, avoiding these two extremes, discovered by the Tathagata—that path which opens the eyes, and bestows understanding, which leads to peace of mind, to the higher wisdom, to full enlightenment, to Nirvana? Let me teach you, O bhikkhus, the middle path, which keeps aloof from both extremes. By suffering, the emaciated devotee produces confusion and sickly thoughts in his mind. Mortification is not conducive even to worldly knowledge; how much less to a triumph over the senses!

“He who fills his lamp with water will not dispel the darkness, and he who tries to light a fire with rotten wood will fail. And how can any one be free from self by leading a wretched life, if he does not succeed in quenching the fires of lust, if he still hankers after either worldly or heavenly pleasures? But he in whom self has become extinct is free from lust; he will desire neither worldly nor heavenly pleasures, and the satisfaction of his natural wants will not defile him. However, let him be moderate, let him eat and drink according to the need of the body.

“Sensuality is enervating; the self-indulgent man is a slave to his passions, and pleasure-seeking is degrading and vulgar. But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the lamp of wisdom, and keep our minds strong and clear. Water surrounds the lotus flower, but does not wet its petals. This is the middle path, O bhikkhus, that keeps aloof from both extremes.” And the Blessed One spoke kindly to his disciples, pitying them for their errors, and pointing out the uselessness of their endeavors, and the ice of ill-will that chilled their hearts melted away under the gentle warmth of the Master’s persuasion.

Now the Blessed One set the wheel of the most excellent law rolling, and he began to preach to the five bhikkhus, opening to them the gate of immortality, and showing them the bliss of Nirvana.

The Buddha said: “The spokes of the wheel are the rules of pure conduct: justice is the uniformity of their length; wisdom is the tire; modesty and thoughtfulness are the hub in which the immovable axle of truth is fixed. He who recognizes the existence of suffering, its cause, its remedy, and its cessation has fathomed the four noble truths. He will walk in the right path.

“Right views will be the torch to light his way. Right aspirations will be his guide. Right speech will be his dwelling-place on the road. His gait will be straight, for it is right behavior. His refreshments will

be the right way of earning his livelihood. Right efforts will be his steps: right thoughts his breath; and right contemplation will give him the peace that follows in his footprints.

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering: Birth is attended with pain, decay is painful, disease is painful, death is painful. Union with the unpleasant is painful, painful is separation from the pleasant; and any craving that is unsatisfied, that too is painful. In brief, bodily conditions which spring from attachment are painful. This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning suffering.

“Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering: Verily, it is that craving which causes the renewal of existence, accompanied by sensual delight, seeking satisfaction now here, now there, the craving for the gratification of the passions, the craving for a future life, and the craving for happiness in this life. This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the origin of suffering.

“Now this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering: Verily, it is the destruction, in which no passion remains, of this very thirst; it is the laying aside of, the being free from, the dwelling no longer upon this thirst. This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of suffering.

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the way which leads to the destruction of sorrow. Verily, it is this noble eightfold path; that is to say: Right views; right aspirations; right speech; right behavior; right livelihood; right effort; right thoughts; and right contemplation. This, then, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth concerning the destruction of sorrow.

“By the practice of loving-kindness I have attained liberation of heart, and thus I am assured that I shall never return in renewed births. I have even now attained Nirvana.”

And when the Blessed One had thus set the royal chariot wheel of truth rolling onward, a rapture thrilled through all the universes.

The devas [gods] left their heavenly abodes to listen to the sweetness of the truth; the saints that had parted from life crowded around the great teacher to receive the glad tidings; even the animals of the earth felt the bliss that rested upon the words of the Tathagata: and all the creatures of the host of sentient beings, gods, men, and beasts, hearing the message of deliverance, received and understood it in their own language.

And when the doctrine was propounded, the venerable Kondanna, the oldest one among the five bhikkhus, discerned the truth with his mental eye, and he said: “Truly, O Buddha, our Lord, thou hast found the truth!” Then the other bhikkhus too, joined him and exclaimed: “Truly, thou art the Buddha, thou hast found the truth.”

And the devas and saints and all the good spirits of the departed generations that had listened to the sermon of the Tathagata, joyfully received the doctrine and shouted: “Truly, the Blessed One

has founded the kingdom of righteousness. The Blessed One has moved the earth; he has set the wheel of Truth rolling, which by no one in the universe, be he god or man, can ever be turned back. The kingdom of Truth will be preached upon earth; it will spread; and righteousness, good-will, and peace will reign among mankind.”

Questions for Discussion

Why does the Buddha believe the middle path is superior? How might this philosophy apply to challenges in modern life? What can you infer about ascetics the Buddha preaches to? What have they been doing to attain enlightenment? According to the Buddha what is the correct path to enlightenment?

11. *The Edicts of Ashoka* (India, ca. 270 BCE)

Ashoka (304-232 BCE) ruled most of the Indian subcontinent during his long reign as third emperor of the Mauryan dynasty. The bloody Kalinga War of approximately 261 BCE greatly impacted Ashoka's leadership and personal philosophy. In its aftermath, he began issuing edicts on pillars in prominent places across India. The edicts contain specific instructions about the organization of society according to Dharma, or moral principles. Ashoka's impact on South Asia is substantial. He is remembered as an example of an ethical ruler who promoted public welfare, non-violence, and religious toleration.

Source: Nikam, N. A., and Richard McKeon. *The Edicts of Asoka*. University of Chicago Press, 1959. (Pages 27–57). Included under fair use as described in the [CBPFUOER](#). Do not redistribute without permission of the rights holder.

Rock Edict XIII

The Kalinga country was conquered by King Ashoka, Beloved of the Gods, in the eighth year of his reign. One hundred and fifty thousand persons were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain, and many times that number died.

Immediately after the Kalingas had been conquered, King Ashoka became intensely devoted to the study of Dharma, to the love of Dharma, and to the inculcation of Dharma.

The Beloved of the Gods, conqueror of the Kalingas, is moved to remorse now. For he has felt profound sorrow and regret because the conquest of a people previously unconquered involves slaughter, death, and deportation.

But there is a more important reason for the King's remorse. The Brahmanas and Sramanas [the priestly and ascetic orders] as well as the followers of other religions and the householders—who all practiced obedience to superiors, parents, and teachers, and proper courtesy and firm devotion to friends, acquaintances, companions, relatives, slaves, and servants—all suffer from the injury, slaughter, and deportation inflicted on their loved ones. Even those who escaped calamity themselves are deeply afflicted by the misfortunes suffered by those friends, acquaintances, companions, and relatives for whom they feel an undiminished affection. Thus all men share in the misfortune, and this weighs on King Ashoka's mind.

[Moreover, there is no country except that of the Yonas (that is, the Greeks) where Brahmin and Buddhist ascetics do not exist] and there is no place where men are not attached to one faith or another.

Therefore, even if the number of people who were killed or who died or who were carried away in the Kalinga war had been only one one-hundredth or one one-thousandth of what it actually was, this would still have weighed on the King's mind.

King Ashoka now thinks that even a person who wrongs him must be forgiven for wrongs that can be forgiven.

King Ashoka seeks to induce even the forest peoples who have come under his dominion [that is, primitive peoples in the remote sections of the conquered territory] to adopt this way of life and this ideal. He reminds them, however, that he exercises the power to punish, despite his repentance, in order to induce them to desist from their crimes and escape execution.

For King Ashoka desires security, self-control, impartiality, and cheerfulness for all living creatures.

King Ashoka considers moral conquest [that is, conquest by Dharma, Dharma-vijaya] the most important conquest. He has achieved this moral conquest repeatedly both here and among the peoples living beyond the borders of his kingdom...

Wherever conquest is achieved by Dharma, it produces satisfaction. Satisfaction is firmly established by conquest by Dharma [since it generates no opposition of conquered and conqueror]. Even satisfaction, however, is of little importance. King Ashoka attaches value ultimately only to consequences of action in the other world.

This edict on Dharma has been inscribed so that my sons and great-grandsons who may come after me should not think new conquests worth achieving. If they do conquer, let them take pleasure in moderation and mild punishments. Let them consider moral conquest the only true conquest. This is good, here and hereafter. Let their pleasure be pleasure in morality. For this alone is good, here and hereafter...

Rock Edict IV

For many hundreds of years in the past, slaughter of animals, cruelty to living creatures, discourtesy to relatives, and disrespect for priests and ascetics have been increasing.

But now, because of King Ashoka's practice of Dharma [rather than to war], summoning the people to exhibitions of the chariots of the gods, elephants, fireworks, and other divine displays.

King Ashoka's inculcation of Dharma has increased, beyond anything observed in many hundreds of years, abstention from killing animals and from cruelty to living beings, kindness in human and family relations, respect for priests and ascetics and obedience to mother and father and elders...

Pillar Edict VII

...My highest officials, who have authority over large numbers of people, will expound and spread the precepts of Dharma. I have instructed the provincial governors, too, who are in charge of many hundred thousand people, concerning how to guide people devoted to Dharma.

King Ashoka says: Having come to this conclusion, therefore, I have erected pillars proclaiming Dharma. I have appointed officers charged with the spread of Dharma, called Dharma-mahamatras. I have issued proclamations on Dharma.

King Ashoka says: My officers charged with the spread of Dharma are occupied with various kinds of services beneficial to ascetics and householders, and they are empowered to concern themselves with all sects. I have ordered some of them to look after the affairs of the Samgha [the Buddhist religious orders], some to take care of the Brahmin and Ajivika ascetics, some to work among the Nirgranthas [the Jaina monks], and some among the various other religious sects. Different officials are thus assigned specifically to the affairs of difference religions, but my officers for spreading Dharma are occupied with all sects...

Rock Edict XI

King Ashoka says: There is no gift that can equal the gift of Dharma, the establishment of human relations on Dharma, the distribution of wealth through Dharma, or kinship in Dharma.

That gift consists in proper treatment of slaves and servants, obedience to mother and father, liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, priests and ascetics, and abstention from the slaughter of animals.

Father, son, brother, master, friend, acquaintance, or even neighbor ought to say, "This has merit. This ought to be done."

If one act in this way, one achieves by the gift of Dharma happiness in this world and infinite merit in the world to come.

Rock Edict XII

The faiths of others all deserve to be honored for one reason or another. By honoring them, one exalts one's own faith and at the same time performs a service to the faith of others. By acting otherwise, one injures one's own faith and also does disservice to that of others. For if a man extols his own faith and disparages another because of devotion to his own and because he wants to glorify it, he seriously injures his own faith.

Therefore concord alone is commendable, for through concord men may learn and respect the conception of Dharma accepted by others. King Ashoka desires men of all faiths to know each other's doctrines and to acquire sound doctrines. Those who are attached to their particular faiths

should be told that King Ashoka does not value gifts or honors as much as growth in the qualities essential to religion in men of all faiths. . .

Rock Edict I

King Ashoka has commanded this edict on Dharma to be inscribed: No living creature shall be slaughtered here [at Pataliputra, Ashoka's capital city], and no festive gatherings shall be held. King Ashoka sees a great many evils in festive gatherings. Yet he also approves of some kinds of festivals.

Many hundreds of thousand living creatures were formerly slaughtered every day for curries in the kitchens of the His Majesty. At present, when this edict on Dharma is inscribed, only three living creatures are killed daily, two peacocks and a deer, and the deer is not slaughtered regularly. In the future, not even these three animals shall be slaughtered.

King Ashoka says: Twenty-six years after my coronation I declared that the following animals were not to be killed: parrots, mynas, the aruna, ruddy geese, wild geese...tortoises and porcupines, squirrels, twelve-antler stags, bulls which have been set free, household animals and vermin, rhinoceroses, white pigeons, domestic pigeons, and all quadrupeds which are not useful or edible.

She-goats, ewes, sows which have young or are in milk, and also their young less than six months old, must not be killed. Cocks must not be made into capons. Husks which contain living creatures must not be burned. Forests must not be burned without reason or in order to kill living creatures.

Living animals must not be fed to other animals.

Fish must not be killed or sold on the day of the full moon which begins each of the three seasons, on the Tisya [Sirius] full moon, on the three days which end a fortnight and begin a new one, or on fast days [a total of fifty-six days during each years]...

Questions for Discussion

What do you make of Ashoka's idea of "moral conquest" as opposed to military conquest? From a 21st century perspective, what strikes you about Ashoka's edicts?

12. The Ten Commandments (Eastern Mediterranean, 6th Century BCE)

Jewish tradition venerates Hebrew patriarch Abraham as the first to recognize and pledge exclusive worship to one God, who in return promised to bless and protect Abraham and his descendants, later known as the Israelites. This covenant laid the foundation for Judaism's monotheism, which distinguished it from surrounding polytheistic cultures. The Ten Commandments, found in Exodus and Deuteronomy of the Tanakh (Hebrew Bible), are a set of moral laws the prophet Moses is believed to have received from God on Mount Sinai. These commandments illustrate the shift towards monotheism and the establishment of a covenantal relationship between a singular deity and His people. More generally, prophets, sacred scriptures, and moral commandments are central to each of the three Abrahamic faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam).

Source: Jewish Publication Society. *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*. Chicago: The Lakeside Press, 1917. <https://archive.org/details/jps1917/page/n109/mode/2up>

Exodus 20:1-21

¹And God spoke all these words, saying: ²I am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

³Thou shalt have no other gods before Me. ⁴Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness, of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵thou shalt not bow down unto them, nor serve them; for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; ⁶and showing mercy unto the thousandth generation of them that love Me and keep My commandments.

⁷Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; ¹¹for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

¹²Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

¹³Thou shalt not murder.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

¹⁴Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

¹⁵And all the people perceived the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the voice of the horn, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled, and stood afar off. ¹⁶And they said unto Moses: 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.'

¹⁷And Moses said unto the people: 'Fear not; for God is come to prove you, and that His fear may be before you, that ye sin not.' ¹⁸And the people stood afar off; but Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

¹⁹And the LORD said unto Moses: Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel: Ye yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²⁰Ye shall not make with Me—gods of silver, or gods of gold, ye shall not make unto you. ²¹An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee.



Questions for Discussion

Compare the Ten Commandments to *The Book of the Dead* or The Mandate of Heaven. What are the similarities and what are the differences?

13. Plato: *The Republic* (Greece, ca. 327 BCE)

Plato, a philosopher from Athens, Greece, studied under Socrates and later founded his own school, the Academy. His teaching style relied on philosophical dialogues, a method of questioning and discussion called the Socratic method. One of his most influential works, *The Republic*, is a series of dialogues in which Socrates debates with others, including Glaucon, about the structure of a just state. Book V discusses the role and education of women in this ideal society, while Book VII introduces Plato's allegory of the cave, a metaphor for the search for higher knowledge and enlightenment.

Source: Plato. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/55201/55201-h/55201-h.htm>

Book V

I suppose that I must retrace my steps and say what I perhaps ought to have said before in the proper place. The part of the men has been played out, and now properly enough comes the turn of the women. Of them I will proceed to speak, and the more readily since I am invited by you.

For men born and educated like our citizens, the only way, in my opinion, of arriving at a right conclusion about the possession and use of women and children is to follow the path on which we originally started, when we said that the men were to be the guardians and watchdogs of the herd.

True.

Let us further suppose the birth and education of our women to be subject to similar or nearly similar regulations; then we shall see whether the result accords with our design.

What do you mean?

What I mean may be put into the form of a question, I said: Are dogs divided into hes and shes, or do they both share equally in hunting and in keeping watch and in the other duties of dogs? or do we entrust to the males the entire and exclusive care of the flocks, while we leave the females at home, under the idea that the bearing and suckling their puppies is labor enough for them?

No, he said, they share alike; the only difference between them is that the males are stronger and the females weaker.

But can you use different animals for the same purpose, unless they are bred and fed in the same way?

You cannot.

Then, if women are to have the same duties as men, they must have the same nurture and education?

Yes.

The education which was assigned to the men was music and gymnastic.

Yes.

Then women must be taught music and gymnastic and also the art of war, which they must practice like the men?

That is the inference, I suppose.

I should rather expect, I said, that several of our proposals, if they are carried out, being unusual, may appear ridiculous.

No doubt of it.

Yes, and the most ridiculous thing of all will be the sight of women naked in the palaestra, exercising with the men, especially when they are no longer young; they certainly will not be a vision of beauty, any more than the enthusiastic old men who in spite of wrinkles and ugliness continue to frequent the gymnasia.

Yes, indeed, he said: according to present notions the proposal would be thought ridiculous.

But then, I said, as we have determined to speak our minds, we must not fear the jests of the wits which will be directed against this sort of innovation; how they will talk of women's attainments both in music and gymnastic, and above all about their wearing armor and riding upon horseback!

Very true, he replied.

Yet having begun we must go forward to the rough places of the law; at the same time begging of these gentlemen for once in their life to be serious. Not long ago, as we shall remind them, the Hellenes were of the opinion, which is still generally received among the barbarians, that the sight of a naked man was ridiculous and improper; and when first the Cretans and then the Lacedaemonians introduced the custom, the wits of that day might equally have ridiculed the innovation.

No doubt.

But when experience showed that to let all things be uncovered was far better than to cover them up, and the ludicrous effect to the outward eye vanished before the better principle which reason asserted, then the man was perceived to be a fool who directs the shafts of his ridicule at any other sight but that of folly and vice, or seriously inclines to weigh the beautiful by any other standard but that of the good.

Very true, he replied.

First, then, whether the question is to be put in jest or in earnest, let us come to an understanding about the nature of woman: Is she capable of sharing either wholly or partially in the actions of men, or not at all? And is the art of war one of those arts in which she can or can not share? That will be the best way of commencing the enquiry, and will probably lead to the fairest conclusion.

That will be much the best way.

Shall we take the other side first and begin by arguing against ourselves; in this manner the adversary's position will not be undefended.

Why not? he said.

Then let us put a speech into the mouths of our opponents. They will say: 'Socrates and Glaucon, no adversary need convict you, for you yourselves, at the first foundation of the State, admitted the principle that everybody was to do the one work suited to his own nature.' And certainly, if I am not mistaken, such an admission was made by us. 'And do not the natures of men and women differ very much indeed?' And we shall reply: Of course they do. Then we shall be asked, 'Whether the tasks assigned to men and to women should not be different, and such as are agreeable to their different natures?' Certainly they should. 'But if so, have you not fallen into a serious inconsistency in saying that men and women, whose natures are so entirely different, ought to perform the same actions?'—What defense will you make for us, my good Sir, against any one who offers these objections?

That is not an easy question to answer when asked suddenly; and I shall and I do beg of you to draw out the case on our side.

These are the objections, Glaucon, and there are many others of a like kind, which I foresaw long ago; they made me afraid and reluctant to take in hand any law about the possession and nurture of women and children.

By Zeus, he said, the problem to be solved is anything but easy.

Why yes, I said, but the fact is that when a man is out of his depth, whether he has fallen into a little swimming bath or into mid ocean, he has to swim all the same.

Very true.

And must not we swim and try to reach the shore: we will hope that Arion's dolphin or some other miraculous help may save us?

I suppose so, he said.

Well then, let us see if any way of escape can be found. We acknowledged– did we not? that different natures ought to have different pursuits, and that men's and women's natures are different. And now what are we saying? –that different natures ought to have the same pursuits,–this is the inconsistency which is charged upon us.

Precisely.

Verily, Glaucon, I said, glorious is the power of the art of contradiction!

Why do you say so?

Because I think that many a man falls into the practice against his will. When he thinks that he is reasoning he is really disputing, just because he cannot define and divide, and so know that of which he is speaking; and he will pursue a merely verbal opposition in the spirit of contention and not of fair discussion.

Yes, he replied, such is very often the case; but what has that to do with us and our argument?

A great deal; for there is certainly a danger of our getting unintentionally into a verbal opposition.

In what way?

Why we valiantly and pugnaciously insist upon the verbal truth, that different natures ought to have different pursuits, but we never considered at all what was the meaning of sameness or difference of nature, or why we distinguished them when we assigned different pursuits to different natures and the same to the same natures.

Why, no, he said, that was never considered by us.

I said: Suppose that by way of illustration we were to ask the question whether there is not an opposition in nature between bald men and hairy men; and if this is admitted by us, then, if bald men are cobblers, we should forbid the hairy men to be cobblers, and conversely?

That would be a jest, he said.

Yes, I said, a jest; and why? because we never meant when we constructed the State, that the opposition of natures should extend to every difference, but only to those differences which affected the pursuit in which the individual is engaged; we should have argued, for example, that a physician and one who is in mind a physician may be said to have the same nature.

True.

Whereas the physician and the carpenter have different natures?

Certainly.

And if, I said, the male and female sex appear to differ in their fitness for any art or pursuit, we should say that such pursuit or art ought to be assigned to one or the other of them; but if the difference consists only in women bearing and men begetting children, this does not amount to a proof that a woman differs from a man in respect of the sort of education she should receive; and we shall therefore continue to maintain that our guardians and their wives ought to have the same pursuits.

Very true, he said.

Next, we shall ask our opponent how, in reference to any of the pursuits or arts of civic life, the nature of a woman differs from that of a man?

That will be quite fair.

And perhaps he, like yourself, will reply that to give a sufficient answer on the instant is not easy; but after a little reflection there is no difficulty.

Yes, perhaps.

Suppose then that we invite him to accompany us in the argument, and then we may hope to show him that there is nothing peculiar in the constitution of women which would affect them in the administration of the State.

By all means.

Let us say to him: Come now, and we will ask you a question:—when you spoke of a nature gifted or not gifted in any respect, did you mean to say that one man will acquire a thing easily, another with difficulty; a little learning will lead the one to discover a great deal; whereas the other, after much study and application, no sooner learns than he forgets; or again, did you mean, that the one has a body which is a good servant to his mind, while the body of the other is a hindrance to him?—would not these be the sort of differences which distinguish the man gifted by nature from the one who is ungifted?

No one will deny that.

And can you mention any pursuit of mankind in which the male sex has not all these gifts and qualities in a higher degree than the female? Need I waste time in speaking of the art of weaving, and the management of pancakes and preserves, in which womankind does really appear to be great, and in which for her to be beaten by a man is of all things the most absurd?

You are quite right, he replied, in maintaining the general inferiority of the female sex: although many women are in many things superior to many men, yet on the whole what you say is true.

And if so, my friend, I said, there is no special faculty of administration in a state which a woman has because she is a woman, or which a man has by virtue of his sex, but the gifts of nature are alike diffused in both; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man.

Very true.

Then are we to impose all our enactments on men and none of them on women?

That will never do.

One woman has a gift of healing, another not; one is a musician, and another has no music in her nature?

Very true.

And one woman has a turn for gymnastic and military exercises, and another is unwarlike and hates gymnastics?

Certainly.

And one woman is a philosopher, and another is an enemy of philosophy; one has spirit, and another is without spirit?

That is also true.

Then one woman will have the temper of a guardian, and another not. Was not the selection of the male guardians determined by differences of this sort?

Yes.

Men and women alike possess the qualities which make a guardian; they differ only in their comparative strength or weakness.

Obviously.

And those women who have such qualities are to be selected as the companions and colleagues of men who have similar qualities and whom they resemble in capacity and in character?

Very true.

And ought not the same natures to have the same pursuits?

They ought.

Then, as we were saying before, there is nothing unnatural in assigning music and gymnastic to the wives of the guardians—to that point we come round again.

Certainly not.

The law which we then enacted was agreeable to nature, and therefore not an impossibility or mere aspiration; and the contrary practice, which prevails at present, is in reality a violation of nature.

That appears to be true.

We had to consider, first, whether our proposals were possible, and secondly whether they were the most beneficial?

Yes.

And the possibility has been acknowledged?

Yes.

The very great benefit has next to be established?

Quite so.

You will admit that the same education which makes a man a good guardian will make a woman a good guardian; for their original nature is the same?

Yes.

I should like to ask you a question.

What is it?

Would you say that all men are equal in excellence, or is one man better than another?

The latter.

And in the commonwealth which we were founding do you conceive the guardians who have been brought up on our model system to be more perfect men, or the cobblers whose education has been cobbling?

What a ridiculous question!

You have answered me, I replied: Well, and may we not further say that our guardians are the best of our citizens?

By far the best.

And will not their wives be the best women?

Yes, by far the best.

And can there be anything better for the interests of the State than that the men and women of a State should be as good as possible?

There can be nothing better.

And this is what the arts of music and gymnastic, when present in such manner as we have described, will accomplish?

Certainly.

Then we have made an enactment not only possible but in the highest degree beneficial to the State?

True.

Then let the wives of our guardians strip, for their virtue will be their robe, and let them share in the toils of war and the defense of their country; only in the distribution of labors the lighter are to be assigned to the women, who are the weaker natures, but in other respects their duties are to be the same. And as for the man who laughs at naked women exercising their bodies from the best of motives, in his laughter he is plucking "A fruit of unripe wisdom," and he himself is ignorant of what he is laughing at, or what he is about; for that is, and ever will be, the best of saying, That the useful is the noble and the hurtful is the base...

Book VII

AND now, I said, let me show in a figure how far our nature is enlightened or unenlightened:—Behold! human beings living in a underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all along the den; here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets.

I see.

And do you see, I said, men passing along the wall carrying all sorts of vessels, and statues and figures of animals made of wood and stone and various materials, which appear over the wall? Some of them are talking, others silent.

You have shown me a strange image, and they are strange prisoners.

Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?

True, he said; how could they see anything but the shadows if they were never allowed to move their heads?

And of the objects which are being carried in like manner they would only see the shadows?

Yes, he said.

And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?

Very true.

And suppose further that the prison had an echo which came from the other side, would they not be sure to fancy when one of the passers-by spoke that the voice which they heard came from the passing shadow?

No question, he replied.

To them, I said, the truth would be literally nothing but the shadows of the images.

That is certain.

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision,—what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them,—will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

Far truer.

And if he is compelled to look straight at the light, will he not have a pain in his eyes which will make him turn away to take refuge in the objects of vision which he can see, and which he will conceive to be in reality clearer than the things which are now being shown to him?

True, he said.

And suppose once more, that he is reluctantly dragged up a steep and rugged ascent, and held fast until he is forced into the presence of the sun himself, is he not likely to be pained and irritated? When he approaches the light his eyes will be dazzled, and he will not be able to see anything at all of what are now called realities.

Not all in a moment, he said.

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

Certainly.

Last of all he will be able to see the sun, and not mere reflections of him in the water, but he will see him in his own proper place, and not in another; and he will contemplate him as he is.

Certainly.

He will then proceed to argue that this is he who gives the season and the years, and is the guardian of all that is in the visible world, and in a certain way the cause of all things which he and his fellows have been accustomed to behold?

Clearly, he said, he would first see the sun and then reason about him.

And when he remembered his old habitation, and the wisdom of the den and his fellow-prisoners, do you not suppose that he would felicitate himself on the change, and pity them?

Certainly, he would...



Questions for Discussion

Make a connection between the Allegory of the Cave in Book VII to George Orwell's *1984*, the Wachowskis' film, *The Matrix*, or some other piece of art. According to Plato, why should the state educate women?

14. Aristophanes: *Lysistrata* (Greece, 411 BCE)

Lysistrata was a comedy written by Athenian playwright Aristophanes. It was performed during the destructive Peloponnesian War (431–404) between the Athenian Empire and Sparta's Peloponnesian league (Peloponnesus, Thrace, and Boetia are regions in Greece). The play's heroine, Lysistrata, persuades women from across Greece to withhold sex from their husbands and lovers until all the men agree to stop fighting. In other words, they organized a sex strike. The comedy ends with Greek men calling for an immediate cessation of the war. Aristophanes' comedy was a critique of the war being fought and a playful exploration of the battle between the sexes. The prose includes amusing wordplay, double entendre, and many overt sexual references.

Source: Aristophanes. "Lysistrata." In *Aristophanes: The Eleven Comedies*. Anonymous translation. London: Athenian Society, 1912. https://web.ics.purdue.edu/~rauhn/Lysistrata_text.htm

Scene

At the base of the Orchestra are two buildings, the house of Lysistrata and the entrance to the Acropolis; a winding and narrow path leads up to the latter. Between the two buildings is the opening of the Cave of Pan. Lysistrata is pacing up and down in front of her house.

Lysistrata: Ah! if only they had been invited to a Bacchic revelling, or a feast of Pan or Aphrodite or Genetyllis, why! the streets would have been impassable for the thronging tambourines! Now there's never a woman here-ah! except my neighbour Cleonice, whom I see approaching yonder.... Good day, Cleonice.

Cleonice: Good day, Lysistrata; but pray, why this dark, forbidding face, my dear? Believe me, you don't look a bit pretty with those black lowering brows.

Lysistrata: Oh, Cleonice, my heart is on fire; I blush for our sex. Men will have it we are tricky and sly....

Cleonice: And they are quite right, upon my word!

Lysistrata: Yet, look you, when the women are summoned to meet for a matter of the greatest importance, they lie in bed instead of coming.

Cleonice: Oh! they will come, my dear; but it's not easy, you know, for women to leave the house. One is busy pottering about her husband; another is getting the servant up; a third is putting her child asleep or washing the brat or feeding it.

Lysistrata: But I tell you, the business that calls them here is far and away more urgent.

Cleonice: And why do you summon us, dear Lysistrata? What is it all about?

Lysistrata: About a big thing.

Cleonice (*taking this in a different sense; with great interest*): And is it thick too?

Lysistrata: Yes, very thick.

Cleonice: And we are not all on the spot! Imagine!

Lysistrata (*wearily*): Oh! if it were what you suppose, there would be never an absentee. No, no, it concerns a thing I have turned about and about this way and that so many sleepless nights.

Cleonice (*still unable to be serious*): It must be something mighty fine and subtle for you to have turned it about so!

Lysistrata: So fine, it means just this, Greece saved by the women!

Cleonice: By the women! Why, its salvation hangs on a poor thread then!

Lysistrata: Our country's fortunes depend on us—it is with us to undo utterly the Peloponnesians.

Myrrhine: Are we late, Lysistrata? Tell us, pray; what, not a word?

Lysistrata: I cannot say much for you, Myrrhine! you have not bestirred yourself overmuch for an affair of such urgency.

Myrrhine: I could not find my girdle in the dark. However, if the matter is so pressing, here we are; so speak.

Cleonice: No, let's wait a moment more, till the women of Boeotia arrive and those from the Peloponnese.

Lysistrata: Yes, that is best.... Ah! here comes Lampito. (*Lampito, a husky Spartan damsel, enters with three others, two from Boeotia and one from Corinth.*) Good day, Lampito, dear friend from Lacedaemon. How well and handsome you look! what a rosy complexion! and how strong you seem; why, you could strangle a bull surely!

Lampito: Yes, indeed, I really think I could. It's because I do gymnastics and practise the bottom-kicking dance.

Cleonice (*opening Lampito's robe and baring her bosom*): And what superb breasts!

Lampito: La! you are feeling me as if I were a beast for sacrifice.

Lysistrata: And this young woman, where is she from?

Lampito: She is a noble lady from Boeotia.

Lysistrata: Ah! my pretty Boeotian friend, you are as blooming as a garden.

Cleonice (*making another inspection*): Yes, on my word! and her “garden” is so thoroughly weeded too!

Lysistrata (*pointing to the Corinthian*): And who is this?

Lampito: ‘Tis an honest woman, by my faith! she comes from Corinth.

Cleonice: Oh! honest, no doubt then-as honesty goes at Corinth.

Lampito: But who has called together this council of women, pray?

Lysistrata: I have.

Lampito: Well then, tell us what you want of us.

Cleonice: Yes, please tell us! What is this very important business you wish to inform us about?

Lysistrata: I will tell you. But first answer me one question.

Cleonice: Anything you wish.

Lysistrata: Don’t you feel sad and sorry because the fathers of your children are far away from you with the army? For I’ll wager there is not one of you whose husband is not abroad at this moment.

Cleonice: Mine has been the last five months in Thrace-looking after Eucrates.

Myrrhine: It’s seven long months since mine left for Pylos.

Lampito: As for mine, if he ever does return from service, he’s no sooner home than he takes down his shield again and flies back to the wars.

Lysistrata: And not so much as the shadow of a lover! Since the day the Milesians betrayed us, I have never once seen an eight-inch gadget even, to be a leathern consolation to us poor widows.... Now tell me, if I have discovered a means of ending the war, will you all second me?

Cleonice: Yes verily, by all the goddesses, I swear I will, though I have to put my gown in pawn, and drink the money the same day.

Myrrhine: And so will I, though I must be split in two like a flat-fish, and have half myself removed.

Lampito: And I too; why to secure peace, I would climb to the top of Mount Taygetus.

Lysistrata: Then I will out with it at last, my mighty secret! Oh! sister women, if we would compel our husbands to make peace, we must refrain...

Cleonice: Refrain from what? tell us, tell us!

Lysistrata: But will you do it?

Myrrhine: We will, we will, though we should die of it.

Lysistrata: We must refrain from the male altogether.... Nay, why do you turn your backs on me? Where are you going? So, you bite your lips, and shake your heads, eh? Why these pale, sad looks? why these tears? Come, will you do it-yes or no? Do you hesitate?

Cleonice: I will not do it, let the war go on.

Myrrhine: Nor will I; let the war go on.

Lysistrata (to Myrrhine): And you say this, my pretty flat-fish, who declared just now they might split you in two?

Cleonice: Anything, anything but that! Bid me go through the fire, if you will,-but to rob us of the sweetest thing in all the world, Lysistrata darling!

Lysistrata (to Myrrhine): And you?

Myrrhine: Yes, I agree with the others; I too would sooner go through the fire.

Lysistrata: Oh, wanton, vicious sex! the poets have done well to make tragedies upon us; we are good for nothing then but love and lewdness! But you, my dear, you from hardy Sparta, if you join me, all may yet be well; help me, second me, I beg you.

Lampito: 'Tis a hard thing, by the two goddesses it is! for a woman to sleep alone without ever a strong male in her bed. But there, peace must come first.

Lysistrata: Oh, my darling, my dearest, best friend, you are the only one deserving the name of woman!

Cleonice: But if-which the gods forbid-we do refrain altogether from what you say, should we get peace any sooner?

Lysistrata: Of course we should, by the goddesses twain! We need only sit indoors with painted cheeks, and meet our mates lightly clad in transparent gowns of Amorgos silk, and perfectly depilated; they will get their tools up and be wild to lie with us. That will be the time to refuse, and they will hasten to make peace, I am convinced of that!

Lampito: Yes, just as Menelaus, when he saw Helen's naked bosom, threw away his sword, they say.

Cleonice: But, oh dear, suppose our husbands go away and leave us.

Lysistrata: Then, as Pherecrates says, we must "flay a skinned dog," that's all.

Cleonice: Fiddlesticks! these proverbs are all idle talk.... But if our husbands drag us by main force into the bedchamber?

Lysistrata: Hold on to the door posts.

Cleonice: But if they beat us?

Lysistrata: Then yield to their wishes, but with a bad grace; there is no pleasure in it for them, when they do it by force. Besides, there are a thousand ways of tormenting them. Never fear, they'll soon tire of the game; there's no satisfaction for a man, unless the woman shares it.

Cleonice: Very well, if you must have it so, we agree.

Lampito: For ourselves, no doubt we shall persuade our husbands to conclude a fair and honest peace; but there is the Athenian populace, how are we to cure these folk of their warlike frenzy?

Lysistrata: Have no fear; we undertake to make our own people listen to reason.

Lampito: That's impossible, so long as they have their trusty ships and the vast treasures stored in the temple of Athene.

Lysistrata: Ah! but we have seen to that; this very day the Acropolis will be in our hands. That is the task assigned to the older women; while we are here in council, they are going, under pretence of offering sacrifice, to seize the citadel.

Lampito: Well said indeed! everything is going for the best.

Lysistrata: Come, quick, Lampito, and let us bind ourselves by an inviolable oath.

Lampito: Recite the terms; we will swear to them.

Cleonice: Now, my dears, let me swear first, if you please.

Lysistrata: No, by Aphrodite, unless it's decided by lot. But come, then, Lampito, and all of you, put your hands to the bowl; and do you, Cleonice, repeat for all the rest the solemn terms I am going to recite. Then you must all swear, and pledge yourselves by the same promises,-I will have naught to do whether with lover or husband...

Cleonice (*faintly*): I will have naught to do whether with lover or husband...

Lysistrata: Albeit he come to me with an erection...

Cleonice (*her voice quavering*): Albeit he come to me with an erection... (*in despair*) Oh! Lysistrata, I cannot bear it!

Lysistrata (*ignoring this outburst*): I will live at home unbullied...

Cleonice: I will live at home unbullied...

Lysistrata: Beautifully dressed and wearing a saffron-coloured gown

Cleonice: Beautifully dressed and wearing a saffron-coloured gown...

Lysistrata: To the end I may inspire my husband with the most ardent longings.

Cleonice: To the end I may inspire my husband with the most ardent longings.

Lysistrata: Never will I give myself voluntarily...

Cleonice: Never will I give myself voluntarily...

Lysistrata: And if he has me by force...

Cleonice: And if he has me by force...

Lysistrata: I will be cold as ice, and never stir a limb...

Cleonice: I will be cold as ice, and never stir a limb...

Lysistrata: I will neither extend my Persian slippers toward the ceiling...

Cleonice: I will neither extend my Persian slippers toward the ceiling...

Lysistrata: Nor will I crouch like the carven lions on a knife-handle.

Cleonice: Nor will I crouch like the carven lions on a knife-handle.

Lysistrata: And if I keep my oath, may I be suffered to drink of this wine.

Cleonice (*more courageously*): And if I keep my oath, may I be suffered to drink of this wine.

Lysistrata: But if I break it, let my bowl be filled with water.

Cleonice: But if I break it, let my bowl be filled with water.

Lysistrata: Will you all take this oath?

All: We do.

Questions for Discussion

Lysistrata feels both modern and ancient. How so? *Lysistrata* is probably the most frequently staged Greek comedy on college campuses. Why does it speak to audiences in the 21st century?

15. Greek Objects

This group of objects from classical Greece should be analyzed in much the same way one would approach a written document. Consider who created the object, why, with what materials, and for what purpose. More importantly, what does the object or physical structure reveal about the society that created it?

Oil Lamp



Figure 1: Oil lamp (1st century BCE–4th century CE). Lamp-83.AQ.377.410 from the J. Paul Getty Museum is in the public domain. (<https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/103YD9>)

Suit of Armor



Figure 2: Suit of armor (340-330 BCE). Greek bronze panoply by AlexanderVanLoon is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panoply#/media/File:Greek_bronze_panoply_in_RMO_AvL.JPG)

Theater of Epidaurus



Figure 3: Theater of Epidaurus (340-300 BCE). The great theater of Epidaurus by Carole Raddato is licensed under [CC BY-SA 2.0](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_great_theater_of_Epidaurus,_designed_by_Polykleitos_the_Younger_in_the_4th_century_BC,_Sanctuary_of_Asklepeios_at_Epidaurus,_Greece_(14015010416).jpg). ([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_great_theater_of_Epidaurus,_designed_by_Polykleitos_the_Younger_in_the_4th_century_BC,_Sanctuary_of_Asklepeios_at_Epidaurus,_Greece_\(14015010416\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_great_theater_of_Epidaurus,_designed_by_Polykleitos_the_Younger_in_the_4th_century_BC,_Sanctuary_of_Asklepeios_at_Epidaurus,_Greece_(14015010416).jpg))

Oil Flask



Figure 4: Oil flask (550-530 BCE). Red-Figure Amphora with Musical Scene from The Walters Art Museum is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Niobid_Painter_-_Red-Figure_Amphora_with_Musical_Scene_-_Walters_482712_-_Side_A.jpg)

Questions for Discussion

How might these objects reveal something about the values and priorities of the Greeks? Did one draw your attention more than the others? If so, why?

16. Josephus on the Roman Army (Roman Empire, 75 CE)

Flavius Josephus was a Jewish historian and regional military commander who witnessed Roman military operations in his homeland during the 60s CE. After his surrender to Roman forces, Josephus won the favor of Emperors Vespasian and Titus. This excerpt comes from *The Jewish War*, which records the history of the First Jewish–Roman War (66–74 CE). In this passage he reflects on the organization of Rome’s standing army.

Source: Josephus, Flavius. *The Works of Flavius Josephus*. Translated by William Whiston, A.M. Auburn and Buffalo: John E. Beardsley, 1895. <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0148>

1. As soon as they have marched into an enemy’s land, they do not begin to fight till they have walled their camp about; nor is the fence they raise rashly made, or uneven; nor do they all abide in it, nor do those that are in it take their places at random; but if it happens that the ground is uneven, it is first leveled: their camp is also four-square by measure, and carpenters are ready, in great numbers, with their tools, to erect their buildings for them.
2. As for what is within the camp, it is set apart for tents, but the outward circumference hath the resemblance to a wall, and is adorned with towers at equal distances, where between the towers stand the engines for throwing arrows and darts, and for slinging stones, and where they lay all other engines that can annoy the enemy, all ready for their several operations. They also erect four gates, one at every side of the circumference, and those large enough for the entrance of the beasts, and wide enough for making excursions, if occasion should require. They divide the camp within into streets, very conveniently, and place the tents of the commanders in the middle; but in the very midst of all is the general’s own tent, in the nature of a temple, insomuch, that it appears to be a city built on the sudden, with its market-place, and place for handicraft trades, and with seats for the officers superior and inferior, where, if any differences arise, their causes are heard and determined...
3. When they have thus secured themselves, they live together by companies, with quietness and decency, as are all their other affairs managed with good order and security. Each company hath also their wood, and their grain, and their water brought them, when they stand in need of them; for they neither sup nor dine as they please themselves singly, but all together. Their times also for sleeping, and watching, and rising are notified beforehand by the sound of trumpets, nor is anything done without such a signal; and in the morning the soldiery go everyone to their centurions, and these centurions to their tribunes, to salute them; with whom all the superior officers go to the

general of the whole army, who then gives them of course the watchword and other orders, to be by them carried to all that are under their command; which is also observed when they go to fight, and thereby they turn themselves about on the sudden, when there is occasion for making sallies, as they come back when they are recalled in crowds also.

4. Now when they are to go out of their camp, the trumpet gives a sound, at which time nobody lies still, but at the first intimation they take down their tents, and all is made ready for their going out; then do the trumpets sound again, to order them to get ready for the march; then do they lay their baggage suddenly upon their mules, and other beasts of burden, and stand, as at the place of starting, ready to march; when also they set fire to their camp, and this they do because it will be easy for them to erect another camp, and that it may not ever be of use to their enemies...
5. When, after this, they are gone out of their camp, they all march without noise, and in a decent manner, and everyone keeps his own rank, as if they were going to war. The footmen are armed with breastplates and head-pieces, and have swords on each side; but the sword which is upon their left side is much longer than the other, for that on the right side is not longer than a span...
6. This is the manner of the marching and resting of the Romans, as also these are the several sorts of weapons they use. But when they are to fight, they leave nothing without forecast, nor to be done off-hand, but counsel is ever first taken before any work is begun, and what hath been there resolved upon is put in execution presently; for which reason they seldom commit any errors; and if they have been mistaken at any time, they easily correct those mistakes...
7. Now they so manage their preparatory exercises of their weapons, that not the bodies of the soldiers only, but their souls may also become stronger: they are moreover hardened for war by fear; for their laws inflict capital punishments, not only for soldiers running away from the ranks, but for slothfulness and inactivity, though it be but in a lesser degree; as are their generals more severe than their laws, for they prevent any imputation of cruelty toward those under condemnation, by the great rewards they bestow on the valiant soldiers; and the readiness of obeying their commanders is so great, that it is very ornamental in peace; but when they come to a battle, the whole army is but one body, so well coupled together are their ranks, so sudden are their turnings about, so sharp their hearing as to what orders are given them, so quick their sight of the ensigns, and so nimble are their hands when they set to work; whereby it comes to pass that what they do is done quickly, and what they suffer they bear with the greatest patience...
8. This account I have given the reader, not so much with the intention of commending the Romans, as of comforting those that have been conquered by them, and for the deterring others from attempting innovations under their government. This discourse of the Roman military conduct may also perhaps be of use to such of the curious as are ignorant of it, and yet have a mind to know it. I return now from this digression.

Questions for Discussion

What is it, besides, raw fighting ability that gives Roman armies the edge over rival states? What does this source tell us about Roman culture or Josephus, a general defeated by Roman armies?

17. Gaius: Roman Slave Laws (Roman Empire, 161 CE)

Slavery existed throughout the ancient world, although its practice varied widely. In this selection from a textbook on Roman law, the jurist Gaius explains the legal status of slaves and citizens, as well as the different categories of freemen. Gaius frequently refers to the *Lex Aelia Sentia*, a law established in the Roman Empire in 4 CE, which regulated the manumission (freeing) of slaves. For this reading, note that a *vindicta* is a ceremonial rod used in the formal manumission of slaves. In the ceremony, a Roman official would touch the slave with a *vindicta*, symbolizing the granting of freedom. This act was part of a legal process that could confer Roman citizenship upon a freed slave, depending on specific conditions. The *Lex Fufia Caninia* was a Roman law enacted in 2 BCE which limited the number of slaves that could be freed by will and controlled the rapid increase of freemen in Roman society. Latins, originally Latin-speaking communities in Italy and later colonial subjects, had some rights but not full Roman citizenship.

Source: Gaius. *Institutes of Roman Law*. Translated and commented by Edward Poste. Revised by E. A. Whittuck. Introduction by A. H. J. Greenidge. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904.
<https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/gaius-institutes-of-roman-law>

- (8) The whole of the law by which we are governed relates either to persons, or to things, or to actions; and let us first examine the law of persons.
- (9) The first division of men by the law of persons is into freemen and slaves.
- (10) Freemen are divided into freeborn and freedmen.
- (11) The freeborn are free by birth; freedmen by manumission from legal slavery.
- (12) Freedmen, again, are divided into three classes, citizens of Rome, Latins, and persons on the footing of enemies surrendered at discretion. Let us examine each class in order, and commence with freedmen assimilated to enemies surrendered at discretion.
- (13) The *Lex Aelia Sentia* enacts that slaves who have been punished by their proprietors with chains, or have been branded, or have been examined with torture on a criminal charge, and have been convicted, or have been delivered to fight with men or beasts, or have been committed to a gladiatorial school or a public prison, if subsequently manumitted by the same or by another proprietor, shall acquire by manumission the status of enemies surrendered at discretion.

- (14) Surrendered enemies are people who have taken up arms and fought against the people of Rome and having been defeated have surrendered.
- (15) Slaves tainted with this degree of criminality, by whatever mode they are manumitted and at whatever age, and notwithstanding the plenary dominion of their proprietor, never become citizens of Rome or Latins, but can only acquire the status of enemies who have surrendered.
- (16) If the slave has not committed offences of so deep a dye, manumission sometimes makes him a citizen of Rome, sometimes a Latin.
- (17) A slave in whose person these three conditions are united, thirty years of age, full ownership of the manumitter, liberation by a civil and statutory mode of manumission, i.e. by the form of *vindicta*, by entry on the censor's register, by testamentary disposition, becomes a citizen of Rome: a slave who fails to satisfy any one of these conditions becomes only a Latin.
- (18) The requisition of a certain age of the slave was introduced by the *Lex Aelia Sentia*, by the terms of which law, unless he is thirty years old, a slave cannot on manumission become a citizen of Rome, unless the mode of manumission is by the form of *vindicta*, preceded by proof of adequate motive before the council.
- (19) There is an adequate motive of manumission if, for instance, a natural child or natural brother or sister or foster child of the manumitter's, or a teacher of the manumitter's child, or a male slave intended to be employed as an agent in business, or a female slave about to become the manumitter's wife, is presented to the council for manumission.
- (20) The council is composed in the city of Rome of five senators and five Roman knights above the age of puberty: in the provinces of twenty recuperators, who must be Roman citizens, and who hold their session on the last day of the assize (judicial session). At Rome the council holds its session on certain days appointed for the purpose. A slave above the age of thirty can be manumitted at any time, and even in the streets, when the praetor (elected magistrate of justice) or pro-consul is on his way to the bath or theatre.
- (21) Under the age of thirty a slave becomes by manumission a citizen of Rome, when his owner being insolvent leaves a will, in which he gives him his freedom and institutes him his heir (to take over the liabilities), provided that no other heir accepts the succession.
- (28) Latins have many avenues to Roman citizenship.
- (29) For instance, the *Lex Aelia Sentia* enacts that when a slave below the age of thirty becomes by manumission a Latin, if he take to himself as wife a citizen of Rome, or a Latin colonist, or a freedwoman of his own condition, and thereof procure attestation by not less than seven witnesses, citizens of Rome above the age of puberty, and begets a son, on the latter attaining the age of a year, he is entitled to apply to the praetor, or, if he reside in a province, to the president of the province, and to prove that he has married a wife in accordance with the *Lex Aelia Sentia*, and has

had by her a son who has completed the first year of his age: and thereupon if the magistrate to whom the proof is submitted pronounce the truth of the declaration, that Latin and his wife, if she is of the same condition, and their son, if he is of the same condition, are declared by the statute to be Roman citizens.

- (36) Not every owner who is so disposed is permitted to manumit.
- (37) An owner who would defraud his creditors or his own patron by an intended manumission, attempts in vain to manumit, because the *Lex Aelia Sentia* prevents the manumission.
- (38) Again, by a disposition of the same statute, before attaining twenty years of age, the only process by which an owner can manumit is fictitious vindication, preceded by proof of adequate motive before the council.
- (39) It is an adequate motive of manumission, if the father, for instance, or mother or teacher or foster-brother of the manumitter, is the slave to be manumitted. In addition to these, the motives recently specified respecting the slave under thirty years of age may be alleged when the manumitting owner is under twenty; and, reciprocally, the motives valid when the manumitting owner is under twenty are admissible when the manumitted slave is under thirty.
- (40) As, then, the *Lex Aelia Sentia* imposes a certain restriction on manumission for owners under the age of twenty, it follows that, though a person who has completed his fourteenth year is competent to make a will, and therein to institute an heir and leave bequests; yet, if he has not attained the age of twenty, he cannot therein enfranchise a slave.
- (41) And even to confer the Latin status, if he is under the age of twenty, the owner must satisfy the council of the adequacy of his motive before he manumits the slave in the presence of witnesses.
- (42) Moreover, by the *Lex Fufia Caninia* a certain limit is fixed to the number of slaves who can receive testamentary manumission.
- (43) An owner who has more than two slaves and not more than ten is allowed to manumit as many as half that number; he who was more than ten and not more than thirty is allowed to manumit a third of that number; he who has more than thirty and not more than a hundred is allowed to manumit a fourth; lastly, he who has more than a hundred and not more than five hundred is allowed to manumit a fifth: and, however many a man possesses, he is never allowed to manumit more than this number, for the law prescribes that no one shall manumit more than a hundred. On the other hand, if a man has only one or only two, the law is not applicable, and the owner has unrestricted power of manumission.

Questions for Discussion

What do the legal restrictions on manumission reveal about Roman law and Roman attitudes towards slavery and Roman citizenship?

18. *Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus* (Roman Empire, 171-175 CE)

Marcus Aurelius was a Roman emperor during the Pax Romana, or sustained period of peace and prosperity during the Roman Empire. The last of the “five good emperors”, Marcus Aurelius left behind his meditations on the lessons he learned from friends and family and how to live a virtuous life. These personal writings express his Stoic philosophy, a Hellenistic worldview that emphasizes virtue and asserting control over one’s emotions. Content from the *Meditations* reveals aspects of Roman society and continues to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Source: Marcus Aurelius. *Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*. Translated by George W. Chrystal. London: S. C. Brown & Company, 1902. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/55317/55317-h/55317-h.htm>

Book I

3. Of my mother I learned to be pious and generous; to keep myself not only from evil deeds, but even from evil thoughts; and to live with a simplicity which is far from customary among the rich.
5. My tutor taught me not to favour either green or blue at the chariot races, nor, in the contests of gladiators, to be a supporter either of light or heavy armed. He taught me also to endure labour; not to need many things; to serve myself without troubling others; not to intermeddle in the affairs of others, and not easily to listen to slanders against them.
6. Of Diognetus I had the lesson not to busy myself about vain things; not to credit the great professions of such as pretend to work wonders, or of sorcerers about their charms, and their expelling of Demons and the like; not to keep quails (for fighting or divination), nor to run after such things; to suffer freedom of speech in others, and to apply myself heartily to philosophy. Him also I must thank for my hearing first Bacchius, then Tandasis and Marcianus; that I wrote dialogues in my youth, and took a liking to the philosopher’s pallet and skins, and to the other things which, by the Grecian discipline, belong to that profession.
15. The counsels of Maximus taught me to command myself, to judge clearly, to be of good courage in sickness and other misfortunes, to be moderate, gentle, yet serious in disposition, and to accomplish my appointed task without repining. All men believed that he spoke as he thought; and whatever he did, they knew it was done with good intent. I never found him surprised or astonished at anything. He was never in a hurry, never shrank from his purpose, was never at a loss or dejected. He was no facile smiler, but neither was he passionate or suspicious. He was ready to do good,

to forgive, and to speak the truth, and gave the impression of unperturbed rectitude rather than of a reformed character. No man could ever think himself despised by Maximus, and no one ever ventured to think himself his superior. He had also a good gift of humour...

16. I learned from my father gentleness and undeviating constancy in judgments formed after due reflection; not to be puffed up with glory as men understand it; to be laborious and assiduous. He taught me to give ready hearing to any man who offered anything tending to the common good; to mete out impartial justice to every one; to apprehend rightly when severity and when clemency should be used; to abstain from all impure lusts; and to use humanity towards all men. Thus he left his friends at liberty to sup with him or not, to go abroad with him or not, exactly as they inclined; and they found him still the same if some urgent business had prevented them from obeying his commands...

Book II

1. Say this to yourself in the morning: Today I shall have to do with meddlers, with the ungrateful, with the insolent, with the crafty, with the envious and the selfish. All these vices have beset them, because they know not what is good and what is evil. But I have considered the nature of the good, and found it beautiful: I have beheld the nature of the bad, and found it ugly. I also understand the nature of the evil-doer, and know that he is my brother, not because he shares with me the same blood or the same seed, but because he is a partaker of the same mind and of the same portion of immortality. I therefore cannot be hurt by any of these, since none of them can involve me in any baseness. I cannot be angry with my brother, or sever myself from him, for we are made by nature for mutual assistance, like the feet, the hands, the eyelids, the upper and lower rows of teeth. It is against nature for men to oppose each other; and what else is anger and aversion?
3. Whatever the Gods ordain is full of wise forethought. The workings of chance are not apart from nature, and not without connexion and intertexture with the designs of Providence. Providence is the source of all things; and, besides, there is necessity, and the utility of the Universe, of which you are a part. For, to every part of a being, that is good which springs from the nature of the whole and tends to its preservation. Now, the order of Nature is preserved in the changes of elements, just as it is in the changes of things that are compound. Let this suffice you, and be your creed unchangeable. Put from you the thirst of books, that you may not die murmuring, but meekly, and with true and heartfelt gratitude to the Gods.
4. Think of your long procrastination, and of the many opportunities given you by the Gods, but left unused. Surely it is high time to understand the Universe of which you are a part, and the Ruler of that Universe, of whom you are an emanation; that a limit is set to your days, which, if you use them not for your enlightenment, will depart, as you yourself will, and return no more.
5. Hourly and earnestly strive, as a Roman and a man, to do what falls to your hand with perfect unaffected dignity, with kindness, freedom and justice, and free your soul from every other

imagination. This you will accomplish if you perform each action as if it were your last, without wilfulness, or any passionate aversion to what reason approves; without hypocrisy or selfishness, or discontent with the decrees of Providence. You see how few things it is necessary to master in order that a man may live a smooth-flowing, God-fearing life. For of him that holds to these principles the Gods require no more.

11. Do every deed, speak every word, think every thought in the knowledge that you may end your days any moment. To depart from men, if there be really Gods, is nothing terrible. The Gods could bring no evil thing upon you. And if there be no Gods, or if they have no regard to human affairs, why should I desire to live in a world void of Gods and without Providence? But Gods there are, and assuredly they regard human affairs; and they have put it wholly in man's power that he should not fall into what is truly evil. And of other things, had any been bad, they would have made provision also that man should have the power to avoid them altogether. For how can that make a man's life worse which does not corrupt the man himself? Presiding Nature could not in ignorance, or in knowledge impotent, have omitted to prevent or rectify these things. She could not fail us so completely that, either from want of power or want of skill, good and evil should happen promiscuously to good men and to bad alike. Now death and life, glory and reproach, pain and pleasure, riches and poverty—all these happen equally to the good and to the bad. But, as they are neither honourable nor shameful, they are therefore neither good nor evil.

Book III

16. We have body, soul, and intelligence. To the body belong the senses, to the soul the passions, to the intelligence principles. To be affected by the imagery of sense belongs to the beasts of the field no less than to us. To be swayed by gusts of passion is common to us with the wild beasts, with the most effeminate wretches, with Nero and with Phalaris. Moreover, the possession of a mind to guide us to what seems fitting is shared by us, with atheists, with traitors to their country, and with such as shut their doors and sin. If, then, all the rest is common as we have seen, there remains to the good man this special excellence; to welcome with pleasure all that happens or is ordained, not to defile the divinity enthroned in his breast, not to perturb it with a crowd of images, but to preserve it in tranquillity, and obey it as a God: to observe truth in all he says, and justice in his every action. And though others may not believe that he lives thus in simplicity, modesty, and contentment, he neither takes this unbelief amiss from any one, nor quits the road which leads to the true end of life, at which he ought to arrive pure, calm, ready to take his departure, and accommodated without compulsion to his fate.

Book IV

3. ...Recollect the maxim that all reasoning beings are created for one another, that to bear with them is a part of justice, and that they cannot help their sin. Remember how many of those who lived in enmity, suspicion, and hatred, at daggers drawn, have been stretched on their funeral pyres, and turned to ashes. Remember and cease from your complaints. Is it your allotted part in the

world's destiny that chagrins you? Be calm, and renew your knowledge of the alternative, that "Either providence directs the world, or there is nothing but unguided atoms;" and recollect the many proofs that the Universe is as it were a state. Do the ills of the body still have power to touch you? Reflect that the mind, once withdrawn within itself, once grown conscious of its own power, has no concern with the motions, rough or smooth, of the breathing body. Remember, too, all that you have heard and assented to concerning pain and pleasure. Are you distracted by the poor thing called fame? Think how swiftly all things are forgotten. Behold the chaos of eternity which besets us on either side. Think how empty is the noisy echo of acclamation; how fickle and how scant of judgment are they who would seem to praise us, and how narrow the bounds within which their praise is confined. All the earth is but a point in the Universe; how small a corner of that little is inhabited, and even there how few are they and of how little worth who are to praise us! Remember then that there ever remains for you retirement into the little field within. And, above all, be neither distraught nor overstrained. Hold fast your freedom: consider all things as a man of courage, as a human being, as a citizen, as a mortal. Readiest among the principles to which you look let there be these two: Firstly, things external do not touch the soul, but remain powerless without; and all trouble comes from what we think of them within. Secondly, all things visible change in a moment, and are gone for ever. Recollect all the changes of which you have yourself been a witness. The world is a succession of changes: life is but thought.

Questions for Discussion

How would you sum up Marcus Aurelius' worldview after reading excerpts of the *Meditations*. How do his values differ from contemporary ones, if at all?

19. Selections from the Christian Bible (Eastern Roman Empire, 45-100 CE)

Jesus of Nazareth was a Jewish preacher and religious leader who lived in the first century CE in Roman Palestine. Christians believe Jesus was the incarnation of God or Messiah (Christ) sent to save humanity. Books written in koine Greek about Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), recount his life, death, and resurrection. They were written between 65-100 CE and highlight important Christian teachings as well as describe the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus—central events in Christian theology. The earliest Christian sources, also in koine Greek, are letters by Paul of Tarsus, a Jewish Pharisee who converted to the new faith. Paul wrote to Christian communities in Corinth, Galatia, Philippi, Rome, and Thessalonica. His letters emphasized the spiritual equality and unity of all Christians, helping to establish Christianity as a universal faith with membership open to all.

Source: *Selections from the Christian Bible*. American Standard Version. 1901.
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_\(American_Standard\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard))

Matthew 5:1-12

And seeing the multitudes, he [Jesus] went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: ² and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. ¹² Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.

Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? ²⁶ And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? ²⁷ And

he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. ²⁸ And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? ³⁰ Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, ³⁴ and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. ³⁶ Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? ³⁷ And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

John 19:15-30

¹⁵ They therefore cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him! Pilate [Roman governor] saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. ¹⁶ Then therefore he delivered him unto them to be crucified. ¹⁷ They took Jesus therefore: and he went out, bearing the cross for himself, unto the place called The place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha: ¹⁸ where they crucified him, and with him two others, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. ¹⁹ And Pilate wrote a title also, and put it on the cross. And there was written, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. ²⁰ This title therefore read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city; and it was written in Hebrew, and in Latin, and in Greek. ²¹ The chief priests of the Jews therefore said to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but, that he said, I am King of the Jews. ²² Pilate answered, What I have written I have written. ²³ The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. ²⁴ They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith,

They parted my garments among them,
And upon my vesture did they cast lots.

²⁵ These things therefore the soldiers did. But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold, thy son! ²⁷ Then saith he to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.

²⁸ After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. ²⁹ There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth. ³⁰ When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit...

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³ But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. ¹⁴ For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵ For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; ¹⁷ then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. ²⁸ There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise.

Questions for Discussion

Imagine how Jewish people in the first century might have understood the Sermon on the Mount (Blessed are the poor, meek, merciful, etc.). Similarly, imagine the impact of Paul's message (e.g., the social equality of Christians, the promise of eternal life) on people living in the first century such as Gentiles (non-Jewish people), slaves or women. Why might these groups have found his teachings appealing or transformative?

20. The Passion of Perpetua (Roman Empire, 202 or 203 CE)

The religion of imperial Rome required citizens to sprinkle grains of incense on a fire and pour wine as a libation to deified emperors. Because Romans believed the gods protected their armies and prevented internal strife, these sacrifices were considered a civic duty essential to the security and stability of the state. Christians' refusal to participate in this practice, rooted in their monotheistic beliefs, brought them into conflict with imperial authorities. Roman emperors such as Decius and Diocletian launched major waves of persecution, but ultimately, Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 CE) granted Christians religious tolerance. This excerpt from the prison diary of Perpetua, a Christian martyr executed in Carthage in 203 CE, begins with her father urging her to renounce her Christian identity. Perpetua, a young mother with an infant, refuses. She also records prophetic visions while incarcerated.

Source: *The Passion of SS. Perpetua and Felicity, MM.* Translated from the original Latin by Cristina Calhoon. Originally published in 1931 by Sheed and Ward. Translation by C. Calhoon is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). <https://archive.org/details/passionofssperpe00perp/page/2/mode/2up>

While we were still under house arrest (lit. under custody) and my father wished to upend my convictions with his words and—because of his affection—he persisted in driving me away from my faith, I said: “Father, by way of example, do you see this vase standing here, a jug or some such?” He said: “I do.” And I told him: “Can it be called anything else than what it is?” And he said: “No.” “So I too cannot be called anything else than what I am, a Christian.”

Then my father, provoked by this word, hurled himself at me as if to tear out my eyes, but he only shook me roughly and left defeated, he and his diabolical reasons. Then for a few days I thanked the Lord for my father's absence and was relieved. In the same period of a few days we were baptized, and the Spirit told me not to seek anything else from the water except the flesh's endurance to suffering. After a few days we were admitted into the prison, and I was frightened, because I had never experienced such deep darkness. What a grim day! Because of the crowd the heat was intense, the soldiers harassed us, (but) worst of all there I was tormented by anxiety for my baby.

Then Tertius and Pomponius, blessed deacons who were providing for us, arranged for a bribe that we—having been sent to a better part of the prison—may relax (there) for a few hours. Then all the others leaving the dungeon had some time to themselves. I breastfed the baby already exhausted by hunger. Anxious for him I spoke to my mother and comforted my brother, I entrusted them with the child; I was wasting away because I had seen them languish because of me. For

many days I endured such anxieties; and I obtained permission to keep the child with me in prison; I immediately felt better and was relieved from the hardship and anxiety about the baby, and suddenly the jail became for me a palace, where I would rather be than in any other place.

Then my brother said to me: “My lady sister, you are now in such great grace that you may ask to be shown whether it will be martyrdom or release.” And I, since I knew I spoke with the Lord, whose grace I had experienced so abundantly, made a bold promise, saying to him: “Tomorrow I will report back to you.” And I did ask, and this was shown to me: I see a bronze ladder exceptionally high, touching the sky and so narrow that people could only climb in single file, and to the sides of the ladder all kinds of iron weapons were attached: there were double-edge swords, spears, hooks, single-edge swords, short spears, so that—should anyone climb carelessly or without looking upwards—he would be mangled and his flesh remained attached to the weapons. And under the ladder stretched a serpent of exceptional size, who laid in wait to attack the climbers and terrified them into not climbing. Saturus, who later on gave himself up voluntarily because he had instructed us and had not been present at the time when we were captured/arrested, went first. And he reached the top of the ladder, turned around and said to me: “Perpetua, I expect you, but watch out lest the dragon bite you. I said: “in Jesus Christ’s name, he will not hurt me.” And he (the dragon) slowly put out his head from below the ladder, almost afraid of me, and I set my foot on his head and went up as if stepping on the first step. And I saw a widespread garden with a white-haired man dressed as a shepherd sitting in the middle, tall, milking his sheep, and all around stood many thousand white-clad people. He raised his head, looked at me and said: “Welcome, child,” and he called out to me and gave me about a morsel of the curd that he was milking; and I accepted it with my hands together and ate it; and all those around said: “Amen.” At the sound of his voice I woke up, still tasting some sort of sweetness.

And immediately I reported to my brother, and we understood that the suffering/martyrdom was about to come and began to no longer hold any hope in this world.

After a few days the news spread that our case would be heard. My father, worn out with weariness, arrived from the city and came up to me to drive me from my beliefs, saying: Daughter, have pity on my white hair; have pity on your father, if I am worthy to be called father by you; if I raised you to the prime of life by these hands, if I preferred you to all your brothers: don’t dishonor me in the eyes of men. Look at your brothers, look at your mother and aunt, look at your child who will not be able to live after you. Let go of your pride, do not make us all into pariahs, for none of us will speak freely should you have suffered any punishment.

He kept saying these things because of his fatherly devotion, kissing my hands, throwing himself at my feet and crying he called me not daughter but lady and mistress. I was saddened by my father’s situation because he alone, of all my kin, would not rejoice about my suffering. I comforted him saying: “What will happen on that prisoners’ platform is God’s will. Know that we have not been created in our own power (i.e., masters of our own destiny; as independent beings) but in God’s power.” He went away from me in a gloomy mood.

On another day, while we were eating, we were suddenly whisked away to the hearing. We came to the forum. The news immediately spread through the places near the forum and a huge mass of people formed. We went up the platform. All the other prisoners confessed when questioned. When my time came, my father showed up there with my child and dragged me off the step saying: "Make the sacrifice, have pity on the baby." The governor Hilarianus, who at that time—as a replacement for the late proconsul Minucius Timinianus—had received the authority to inflict capital punishment, said: "Spare your father's white hair, spare the baby's young age. Make the sacrifice for the welfare of the emperors." I answered: "I won't." Hilarianus asked: "Are you a Christian?" and I answered: "I am." Since my father stood firm to make me recant, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrown down and he was beaten with a rod. My father's situation saddened me as if I had been beaten myself, I so grieved for his wretched old age. Then the governor sentenced all of us to the beasts, and we happily went down into the jail. Because the baby had become accustomed to be breastfed by me and to remain with me in jail, I immediately sent the deacon Pomponius to my father to request the child, but my father did not want to give him. As God wished, the baby no longer missed being breastfed nor did my breasts become inflamed so that I was not tormented by anxiety for my baby or by the pain in my breasts...

Questions for Discussion

What's your impression of Perpetua and what does her diary reveal about the Roman legal system and its relationship to early Christian communities? How does Perpetua's relationship to her father speak to our time?

21. The Theodosian Code (Roman Empire, 438 CE)

In the centuries after Jesus of Nazareth's death, his followers did not agree among themselves about important points of theology, such as how to understand the nature of Christ's divinity and humanity. Beginning with the Council of Nicaea (325 CE), what became orthodox Christianity developed out of Church Councils convoked to settle theological debates. In 380 CE, Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity the empire's official religion. Selections from the *Codex Theodosianus*, or Theodosian Code, a compilation of Roman laws commissioned by Emperor Theodosius II, illustrate the shift from a polytheistic society to a Christian one. For this reading, know that Church imperial authorities used the terms heretics and schismatics to describe people outside accepted doctrine or who threatened unity. Manichaeans were practitioners of a new religion spreading across the Mediterranean world.

Source: Thatcher, Oliver J., ed. *The Library of Original Sources*. Vol. IV of *The Early Medieval World*. Milwaukee: University Research Extension Co., 1907. <https://origin.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/codex-theod1.asp>

- C. Th. XV.xii.1:** Bloody spectacles are not suitable for civil ease and domestic quiet. Wherefore since we have proscribed gladiators, those who have been accustomed to be sentenced to such work as punishment for their crimes, you should cause to serve in the mines, so that they may be punished without shedding their blood.
- C. Th. XVI.v.1:** It is necessary that the privileges which are bestowed for the cultivation of religion should be given only to followers of the Catholic faith. We desire that heretics and schismatics be not only kept from these privileges, but be subjected to various fines.
- C. Th. XVI.x.4:** It is decreed that in all places and all cities the temples should be closed at once, and after a general warning, the opportunity of sinning be taken from the wicked. We decree also that we shall cease from making sacrifices. And if anyone has committed such a crime, let him be stricken with the avenging sword. And we decree that the property of the one executed shall be claimed by the city, and that rulers of the provinces be punished in the same way, if they neglect to punish such crimes.
- C. Th. XVI.vii.1:** The ability and right of making wills shall be taken from those who turn from Christians to pagans, and the testament of such are one, if he made any, shall be abrogated after his death.

- C. Th. XI.vii.13:** Let the course of all lawsuits and all business cease on Sunday, which our fathers have rightly called the Lord's day, and let no one try to collect either a public or a private debt; and let there be no hearing of disputes by any judges either those required to serve by law or those voluntarily chosen by disputants. And he is to be held not only infamous but sacrilegious who has turned away from the service and observance of holy religion on that day.
- C. Th. XV.v.1:** On the Lord's day, which is the first day of the week, on Christmas, and on the days of Epiphany, Easter, and Pentecost, inasmuch as then the [white] garments [of Christians] symbolizing the light of heavenly cleansing bear witness to the new light of holy baptism, at the time also of the suffering of the apostles, the example for all Christians, the pleasures of the theaters and games are to be kept from the people in all cities, and all the thoughts of Christians and believers are to be occupied with the worship of God. And if any are kept from that worship through the madness of Jewish impiety or the error and insanity of foolish paganism, let them know that there is one time for prayer and another for pleasure. And lest anyone should think he is compelled by the honor due to our person, as if by the greater necessity of his imperial office, or that unless he attempted to hold the games in contempt of the religious prohibition, he might offend our serenity in showing less than the usual devotion toward us; let no one doubt that our clemency is revered in the highest degree by humankind when the worship of the whole world is paid to the might and goodness of God.
- C. Th. XVI.i.2:** We desire that all the people under the rule of our clemency should live by that religion which divine Peter the apostle is said to have given to the Romans, and which it is evident that Pope Damasus and Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic sanctity, followed; that is that we should believe in the one deity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with equal majesty and in the Holy Trinity according to the apostolic teaching and the authority of the gospel.
- C. Th. XVI.v.iii:** Whenever there is found a meeting of a mob of Manichaeans, let the leaders be punished with a heavy fine and let those who attended be known as infamous and dishonored, and be shut out from association with men, and let the house and the dwellings where the profane doctrine was taught be seized by the officers of the city.

Questions for Discussion

How did patterns of life in Roman cities change during the fifth century? Discuss the implications of using legal measures to enforce religious conformity. How do you imagine people reacted to the Theodosian Code?

22. Procopius: The Plague of Justinian (Byzantine Empire, 542 CE)

Epidemics resulting in population declines and societal disruption occurred on a regular basis in the ancient world. One of the most destructive was the Plague of Justinian, which is believed to have been caused by the same bacterium responsible for the Black Death. What we know is that the plague ravaged the Mediterranean Basin, Europe, and the Near East between 541 and 549. Named after Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, who contracted the disease and survived, this epidemic disrupted his plans for territorial expansion and significantly weakened the Byzantine Empire, or the eastern half of the Roman Empire centered in Constantinople. Procopius, a sixth-century historian, was an eyewitness to the epidemic in the Byzantine capital. Carbuncles are swollen lumps under the skin, typically pus-filled bumps.

Source: Procopius. *The Persian War, Book II*, in *History of the Wars, Books I and II*. Translated by H. B. Dewing. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914. (Pages 452-473.)
<https://archive.org/details/procopiuswitheng01procuoft/page/n7/mode/2up>

It started from the Egyptians who dwell in Pelusium. Then it divided and moved in one direction towards Alexandria and the rest of Egypt, and in the other direction it came to Palestine on the borders of Egypt; and from there it spread over the whole world, always moving forward and travelling at times favorable to it. For it seemed to move by fixed arrangement, and to tarry for a specified time in each country, casting its blight slightly upon none, but spreading in either direction right out to the ends of the world, as if fearing lest some corner of the earth might escape it. For it left neither island nor cave nor mountain ridge which had human inhabitants; and if it had passed by any land, either not affecting the men there or touching them in indifferent fashion, still at a later time it came back; then those who dwelt round about this land, whom formerly it had afflicted most sorely, it did not touch at all, but it did not remove from the place in question until it had given up its just and proper tale of dead, so as to correspond exactly to the number destroyed at the earlier time among those who dwelt round about. And this disease always took its start from the coast, and from there went up to the interior.

And in the second year it reached Byzantium in the middle of spring, where it happened that I was staying at that time. And it came as follows. Apparitions of supernatural beings in human guise of every description were seen by many persons, and those who encountered them thought that they were struck by the man they had met in this or that part of the body, as it happened, and immediately upon seeing this apparition they were seized also by the disease. Now at first those who met these creatures tried to turn them aside by uttering the holiest of names and exorcising them in other ways as well as each one could, but they accomplished absolutely nothing, for even

in the sanctuaries where the most of them fled for refuge they were dying constantly. But later on they were unwilling even to give heed to their friends when they called to them, and they shut themselves up in their rooms and pretended that they did not hear, although their doors were being beaten down, fearing, obviously, that he who was calling was one of those demons. But in the case of some the pestilence did not come on in this way, but they saw a vision in a dream and seemed to suffer the very same thing at the hands of the creature who stood over them, or else to hear a voice foretelling to them that they were written down in the number of those who were to die. But with the majority it came about that they were seized by the disease without becoming aware of what was coming either through a waking vision or a dream. And they were taken in the following manner. They had a sudden fever, some when just roused from sleep, others while walking about, and others while otherwise engaged, without any regard to what they were doing. And the body showed no change from its previous color, nor was it hot as might be expected when attacked by a fever, nor indeed did any inflammation set in, but the fever was of such a languid sort from its commencement and up till evening that neither to the sick themselves nor to a physician who touched them would it afford any suspicion of danger. It was natural, therefore, that not one of those who had contracted the disease expected to die from it. But on the same day in some cases, in others on the following day, and in the rest not many days later, a bubonic swelling developed; and this took place not only in the particular part of the body which is called *boubon*, that is, "below the abdomen," but also inside the armpit, and in some cases also beside the ears, and at different points on the thighs.

Up to this point, then, everything went in about the same way with all who had taken the disease. But from then on very marked differences developed; and I am unable to say whether the cause of this diversity of symptoms was to be found in the difference in bodies, or in the fact that it followed the wish of Him who brought the disease into the world. For there ensued with some a deep coma, with others a violent delirium, and in either case they suffered the characteristic symptoms of the disease. For those who were under the spell of the coma forgot all those who were familiar to them and seemed to lie sleeping constantly. And if anyone cared for them, they would eat without waking, but some also were neglected, and these would die directly through lack of sustenance. But those who were seized with delirium suffered from insomnia and were victims of a distorted imagination; for they suspected that men were coming upon them to destroy them, and they would become excited and rush off in flight, crying out at the top of their voices. And those who were attending them were in a state of constant exhaustion and had a most difficult time of it throughout. For this reason everybody pitied them no less than the sufferers, not because they were threatened by the pestilence in going near it (for neither physicians nor other persons were found to contract this malady through contact with the sick or with the dead, for many who were constantly engaged either in burying or in attending those in no way connected with them held out in the performance of this service beyond all expectation, while with many others the disease came on without warning and they died straightway); but they pitied them because of the great hardships which they were undergoing. For when the patients fell from their beds and lay rolling upon the floor, they kept putting them back in place, and when they were struggling to rush headlong out of their houses, they would force them back by shoving and pulling against them. And when water chanced to be

near, they wished to fall into it, not so much because of a desire for drink (for the most of them rushed into the sea), but the cause was to be found chiefly in the diseased state of their minds. They had also great difficulty in the matter of eating, for they could not easily take food. And many perished through lack of any man to care for them, for they were either overcome by hunger, or threw themselves down from a height. And in those cases where neither coma nor delirium came on, the bubonic swelling became mortified and the sufferer, no longer able to endure the pain, died. And one would suppose that in all cases the same thing would have been true, but since they were not at all in their senses, some were quite unable to feel the pain; for owing to the troubled condition of their minds they lost all sense of feeling.

Now some of the physicians who were at a loss because the symptoms were not understood, supposing that the disease centred in the bubonic swellings, decided to investigate the bodies of the dead. And upon opening some of the swellings, they found a strange sort of carbuncle that had grown inside them. Death came in some cases immediately, in others after many days; and with some the body broke out with black pustules about as large as a lentil and these did not survive even one day, but all succumbed immediately. With many also a vomiting of blood ensued without visible cause and straightway brought death. Moreover I am able to declare this, that the most illustrious physicians predicted that many would die, who unexpectedly escaped entirely from suffering shortly afterwards, and that they declared that many would be saved, who were destined to be carried off almost immediately. So it was that in this disease there was no cause which came within the province of human reasoning; for in all cases the issue tended to be something unaccountable. For example, while some were helped by bathing, others were harmed in no less degree. And of those who received no care many died, but others, contrary to reason, were saved. And again, methods of treatment showed different results with different patients. Indeed the whole matter may be stated thus, that no device was discovered by man to save himself, so that either by taking precautions he should not suffer, or that when the malady had assailed him he should get the better of it; but suffering came without warning and recovery was due to no external cause. And in the case of women who were pregnant death could be certainly foreseen if they were taken with the disease. For some died through miscarriage, but others perished immediately at the time of birth with the infants they bore. However, they say that three women in confinement survived though their children perished, and that one woman died at the very time of childbirth but that the child was born and survived.

Now in those cases where the swelling rose to an unusual size and a discharge of pus had set in, it came about that they escaped from the disease and survived, for clearly the acute condition of the carbuncle had found relief in this direction, and this proved to be in general an indication of returning health; but in cases where the swelling preserved its former appearance there ensued those troubles which I have just mentioned. And with some of them it came about that the thigh was withered, in which case, though the swelling was there, it did not develop the least suppuration. With others who survived the tongue did not remain unaffected, and they lived on either lisping or speaking incoherently and with difficulty.

Now the disease in Byzantium ran a course of four months, and its greatest virulence lasted about three. And at first the deaths were a little more than the normal, then the mortality rose still higher, and afterwards the tale of dead reached five thousand each day, and again it even came to ten thousand and still more than that. Now in the beginning each man attended to the burial of the dead of his own house, and these they threw even into the tombs of others, either escaping detection or using violence; but afterwards confusion and disorder everywhere became complete. For slaves remained destitute of masters, and men who in former times were very prosperous were deprived of the service of their domestics who were either sick or dead, and many houses became completely destitute of human inhabitants. For this reason it came about that some of the notable men of the city because of the universal destitution remained unburied for many days.

And it fell to the lot of the emperor, as was natural, to make provision for the trouble. He therefore detailed soldiers from the palace and distributed money, commanding Theodorus to take charge of this work; this man held the position of announcer of imperial messages, always announcing to the emperor the petitions of his clients, and declaring to them in turn whatever his wish was. In the Latin tongue the Romans designate this office by the term *Referendarius*. So those who had not as yet fallen into complete destitution in their domestic affairs attended individually to the burial of those connected with them. But Theodorus, by giving out the emperor's money and by making further expenditures from his own purse, kept burying the bodies which were not cared for. And when it came about that all the tombs which had existed previously were filled with the dead, then they dug up all the places about the city one after the other, laid the dead there, each one as he could, and departed; but later on those who were making these trenches, no longer able to keep up with the number of the dying, mounted the towers of the fortifications in Sycae [Galata], and tearing off the roofs threw the bodies there in complete disorder; and they piled them up just as each one happened to fall, and filled practically all the towers with corpses, and then covered them again with their roofs. As a result of this an evil stench pervaded the city and distressed the inhabitants still more, and especially whenever the wind blew fresh from that quarter.

At that time all the customary rites of burial were overlooked. For the dead were not carried out escorted by a procession in the customary manner, nor were the usual chants sung over them, but it was sufficient if one carried on his shoulders the body of one of the dead to the parts of the city which bordered on the sea and flung him down; and there the corpses would be thrown upon skiffs in a heap, to be conveyed wherever it might chance. At that time, too, those of the population who had formerly been members of the factions laid aside their mutual enmity and in common they attended to the burial rites of the dead, and they carried with their own hands the bodies of those who were no connections of theirs and buried them. Nay, more, those who in times past used to take delight in devoting themselves to pursuits both shameful and base, shook off the unrighteousness of their daily lives and practiced the duties of religion with diligence, not so much because they had learned wisdom at last nor because they had become all of a sudden lovers of virtue, as it were—for when qualities have become fixed in men by nature or by the training of a long period of time, it is impossible for them to lay them aside thus lightly, except, indeed, some divine influence

for good has breathed upon them—but then all, so to speak, being thoroughly terrified by the things which were happening, and supposing that they would die immediately, did, as was natural, learn respectability for a season by sheer necessity. Therefore as soon as they were rid of the disease and were saved, and already supposed that they were in security, since the curse had moved on to other peoples, then they turned sharply about and reverted once more to their baseness of hearts and now, more than before, they make a display of the inconsistency of their conduct, altogether surpassing themselves in villainy and in lawlessness of every sort. For one could insist emphatically without falsehood that this disease, whether by chance or by some providence, chose out with exactitude the worst men and let them go free. But these things were displayed to the world in later times.

During that time it seemed no easy thing to see any man in the streets of Byzantium, but all who had the good fortune to be in health were sitting in their houses, either attending the sick or mourning the dead. And if one did succeed in meeting a man going out, he was carrying one of the dead. And work of every description ceased, and all the trades were abandoned by the artisans, and all other work as well, such as each had in hand. Indeed in a city which was simply abounding in all good things starvation almost absolute was running riot. Certainly it seemed a difficult and very notable thing to have a sufficiency of bread or of anything else; so that with some of the sick it appeared that the end of life came about sooner than it should have come by reason of the lack of the necessities of life.

And, to put all in a word, it was not possible to see a single man in Byzantium clad in the *chlamys* [cloak], and especially when the emperor became ill (for he too had a swelling of the groin), but in a city which held dominion over the whole Roman empire every man was wearing clothes befitting private station and remaining quietly at home. Such was the course of the pestilence in the Roman empire at large as well as in Byzantium. And it fell also upon the land of the Persians and visited all the other barbarians besides.

Questions for Discussion

How do you think contemporary societies would react to a similar kind of pestilence? Did you doubt anything from Procopius' account? What might Procopius' account omit about the experiences of common people or the broader Mediterranean world?

23. Selections from the Quran (Arabian Peninsula, 7th Century CE)

The Arabic word for God is Allah and this is what Arabic-speaking Muslims, Christians, and Jews call God. Muslims (those who surrender to Allah) believe that God spoke words through the Prophet Muhammad in the city of Mecca and elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula between 610 and 632 CE. These revelations were memorized and written down by Muhammad's followers, and eventually compiled into a book of 114 chapters known as the Koran or Quran, which literally means "the recitation." Rendering it into any language other than classical Arabic is considered an interpretation, since translations lose the beauty and oral power of the original. Nonetheless, the following English-language selections convey several core Islamic teachings, including belief in one God, the importance of charity and fasting, and Islam's connection to older Abrahamic faiths.

Source: Pickthall, Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: An Explanatory Translation*. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1930. <https://www.islam101.com/quran/quranPickthal/trans-pickthal.text>

The Opening Chapter 1

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. ² Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; ³ The Beneficent, the Merciful. ⁴ Master of the Day of Judgment,

⁵ Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help. ⁶ Show us the straight path, ⁷ The path of those whom Thou hast favoured; Not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

Allah Is the God of Adam and Moses Chapter 2

³⁵ And We said: O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat ye freely (of the fruits) thereof where ye will; but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrong-doers. ³⁶ But Satan caused them to deflect therefrom and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were; and We said: Fall down, one of you a foe unto the other! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time.

⁴⁰ O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you, and fulfil your (part of the) covenant, I shall fulfil My (part of the) covenant, and fear Me.

⁴⁹ And (remember) when We did deliver you from Pharaoh's folk, who were afflicting you with dreadful torment, slaying your sons and sparing your women: that was a tremendous trial from your Lord.

⁵³ And when We gave unto Moses the Scripture and the criterion (of right and wrong), that ye might be led aright. ⁵⁴ And when Moses said unto his people: O my people! Ye have wronged yourselves by your choosing of the calf (for worship) so turn in penitence to your Creator, and kill (the guilty) yourselves. That will be best for you with your Creator and He will relent toward you. Lo! He is the Relenting, the Merciful.

⁶² Lo! Those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans – whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doeth right – surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them neither shall they grieve.

Care for Orphans and the Needy

¹⁷⁷ It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the prophets; and giveth wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the Allah-fearing.

Fasting and Ramadan

¹⁸³ O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil); ¹⁸⁴ (Fast) a certain number of days; and (for) him who is sick among you, or on a journey, (the same) number of other days; and for those who can afford it there is a ransom: the feeding of a man in need – but whoso doeth good of his own accord, it is better for him: and that ye fast is better for you if ye did but know –

Warfare

¹⁹⁰ Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors. ¹⁹¹ And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you (there) then slay them. Such is the reward of disbelievers.

¹⁹² But if they desist, then lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. ¹⁹³ And fight them until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrong-doers. ¹⁹⁴ The forbidden month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in retaliation. And

one who attacketh you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who ward off (evil).

Praise to Allah

²⁵⁵ Allah! There is no deity save Him, the Alive, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and He is never weary of preserving them. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous.

No Compulsion in Religion

²⁵⁶ There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is henceforth distinct from error. And he who rejecteth false deities and believeth in Allah hath grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer, Knower. ²⁵⁷ Allah is the Protecting Guardian of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.

²⁵⁸ Bethink thee of him who had an argument with Abraham about his Lord, because Allah had given him the kingdom; how, when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who giveth life and causeth death, he answered: I give life and cause death. Abraham said: Lo! Allah causeth the sun to rise in the East, so do thou cause it to come up from the West. Thus was the disbeliever abashed. And Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.

Alms to the Poor

²⁶³ A kind word with forgiveness is better than almsgiving followed by injury. Allah is Absolute, Clement. ²⁶⁴ O ye who believe! Render not vain your almsgiving by reproach and injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day. His likeness is as the likeness of a rock whereon is dust of earth; a rainstorm smiteth it, leaving it smooth and bare. They have no control of aught of that which they have gained. Allah guideth not the disbelieving folk.

²⁷¹ If ye publish your almsgiving, it is well, but if ye hide it and give it to the poor, it will be better for you, and will atone for some of your ill-deeds. Allah is Informed of what ye do. ²⁷² The guiding of them is not thy duty (O Muhammad), but Allah guideth whom He will. And whatsoever good thing ye spend, it is for yourselves, when ye spend not save in search of Allah's Countenance; and whatsoever good thing ye spend, it will be repaid to you in full, and ye will not be wronged.

The Birth of Jesus

Chapter 19

¹⁶ And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East, ¹⁷ And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our Spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man. ¹⁸ She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee, if thou art God-fearing. ¹⁹ He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son. ²⁰ She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste?

²¹ He said: So (it will be). Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained. ²² And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place. ²³ And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten! ²⁴ Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee, ²⁵ And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee...

⁸⁸ And they [the Christians] say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a son. ⁸⁹ Assuredly ye utter a disastrous thing ⁹⁰ Whereby almost the heavens are torn, and the earth is split asunder and the mountains fall in ruins, ⁹¹ That ye ascribe unto the Beneficent a son, ⁹² When it is not meet for (the Majesty of) the Beneficent that He should choose a son.

Final Judgement

Chapter 67

⁵ And verily We have beautified the world's heaven with lamps, and We have made them missiles for the devils, and for them We have prepared the doom of flame. ⁶ And for those who disbelieve in their Lord there is the doom of hell, a hapless journey's end! ⁷ When they are flung therein they hear its roaring as it boileth up, ⁸ As it would burst with rage. Whenever a (fresh) host is flung therein the wardens thereof ask them: Came there unto you no warner?

⁹ They say: Yea, verily, a warner came unto us; but we denied and said: Allah hath naught revealed; ye are in naught but a great error. ¹⁰ And they say: Had we been wont to listen or have sense, we had not been among the dwellers in the flames.

Questions for Discussion

Based on what you have read, discuss the similarities and differences between Islam and Christianity.

24. Fiscal Rescript of Caliph Umar II (Arab Empire, 720 CE)

Caliphs, or successors to the Prophet Muhammad, were the leaders of the Islamic community after 632 CE. Umar II, the eighth Umayyad caliph (r. 717–720), issued a fiscal rescript, or formal edict, that dealt primarily with the issue of equitable taxation as well as other matters such as the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Umar II made it clear that non-Arab converts to Islam possessed the same rights and responsibilities as Arab Muslims. For this reading, note that zakat is the obligatory almsgiving Muslims pay to help the poor. Jizya refers to the tax paid by non-Muslims, while an imam is a prayer leader and the head of the local community. “People of the Book” refers to Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians—monotheists who possess a sacred scripture.

Source: Gibb, H. A. R. “The Fiscal Rescript of ‘Umar II.” *Arabica* 2, no. 1 (1955): 1–16.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4055283>. Used with permission. Do not redistribute without permission of the rights holder.

1. As for al-Islam, verily God sent Muhammad to all men everywhere, as He hath said: “And we have not sent thee save universally to men as a messenger of good tidings and of warning” [Quran 34:28]. And he hath said: “O ye people, verily I am the Messenger of God to you all” [Quran 7:7]. And God, blessed and exalted is He, hath said in that wherewith He commands the Believers in regard to the associators: “Then if they repent and observe the prayer and pay the zakat, they are your brethren in the Faith” [Quran 9:2]. This is His decree and law; to follow it is obedience to God, to depart from it is rebellion. Wherefore summon to al-Islam and command thereto, for God hath said: “And who is better of speech than he who summons to God, and doeth good, and saith I am indeed one of the Muslims” [Quran 41:32].
2. Wherefore, whosoever accepts Islam, whether Christian or Jew or Magian (Zoroastrian), of those who are now subject to the jizya and who joins himself to the body of the Muslims in their abode, and who forsakes his abode wherein he was before, he shall enjoy all the privileges of the Muslims and shall be subject to all the duties laid upon them; and it is their duty to associate with him and to treat him as one of themselves. But as for his land and his dwelling, they are of the booty which God has given to the Muslims collectively; and had these persons accepted Islam thereon before God should give the conquest to the Muslims, it would remain their property; but it is now the booty given by God to the Muslims collectively.
3. And whosoever is now engaged in warfare against the Muslims, let him be summoned to Islam before he is engaged in battle; if he accepts Islam, he shall enjoy the privileges of the Muslims and be subject to the duties laid upon them, and he shall retain what he had of family and property

when he accepted Islam. And if he be of the people of the Book and pay the jizya and withhold his hand from injury to the Muslims, we accept that from him.

7. And we hold that the hima (protected grazing area) should be made free for the use of the Muslims collectively; for they were set aside and the animals collected in alms were placed in them that there might thereby be a source of strength and of benefit for those entitled to a share in the alms. But corruption has entered into their use, and certain among the people have made accusations in regard to them. Wherefore we consider it good to avoid making use of their hima and to hold ourselves free from suspicion in regard to them, seeing that matters in regard to them are in this case. And the Imam is but as any one of the Muslims in regard to them, seeing that matters in regard to them are in this case. And the Imam is but as any one of the Muslims in regard to them; he is but the rain which God sendeth down upon His servants, and all of them share in it equally.
8. Fermented grape juice (tila') (thickened grape juice) holds no good for Muslims; it is but wine which is abusively called by the name of grape juice, and for which God has supplied substitutes which render it superfluous and divers wholesome beverages. And I know that men say: "'Umar, God be pleased with him, held it lawful, and certain men of the best of the former generation drank it." Truly, a draught of it was brought to `Umar, God be pleased with him, which had been cooked until it became thick and strong, and when it was brought to him he said: "Is this fermented grape juice (tila')?", meaning thereby the tar (tila') which is smeared on camels; then on tasting it he said: "There is no harm in this," so that people were led into confusion about it after `Umar's death. As for those of your righteous men who drank it, they did so before it was taken as an intoxicant. Now the Apostle of God said: "Forbidden is every intoxicant to every Muslim." Wherefore I do not hold it right that the reprobate should make for himself filth of God's wholesome mercies; and we consider that Muslims universally should keep themselves free of it and should regard it as unlawful, since it is one of the most comprehensive of gates by which sins enter in, and one of which I am most fearful lest by reason of it there should afflict the Muslims a calamity that would involve all of them in destruction.
12. Those from whom the jizya tax is exacted are of three categories: the cultivator who pays his jizya from his produce; the artisan who produced his jizya from his earnings; and the merchant who lays out his money and pays his jizya from that. And the practice in regard to these is one and the same.
13. As for the Muslims, the only obligation upon them is the alms on their properties; when they pay it into the public treasury, they receive a written indemnity for it, and there is no further claim upon them in respect of their properties in that year.
15. We hold that an Imam should not engage in trade, and that no trading should be permitted to any government agent in his office of government over which he is placed. For when a chief engages in trade, he appropriates to himself an advantage and obtains certain things which involve injury to those whom he governs, even if he desires not to do so.

Questions for Discussion

What was the purpose of Umar II's fiscal rescript? Discuss its implications for the structure of the new Islamic Empire.

25. The Poetry of Rumi (Asia Minor, 1207-1273 CE)

Jalal al-Din Rumi was a 13th-century Persian poet and scholar. Born in 1207 in the region of present-day Afghanistan, he spent much of his life in Konya, in what is now modern-day Turkey. Rumi practiced Sufi Islam, a mystical branch of the faith that emphasizes personal experience and a direct connection with the divine, rather than strict adherence to Islamic law. Although Rumi lived during the Middle Ages, and not the ancient world, his poetry continues to resonate with modern audiences through its exploration of universal themes such as love, suffering, and spiritual truth. Historically, Sufism played a major role in the spread of Islam, especially among Turkic peoples and communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: Davis, F. Hadland. *Wisdom of the East-The Persian Mystics-Jalalu'd-Din Rumi*. London: John Murray, 1920. <https://archive.org/details/ThePersianMysticsRumiByFrederickHDavis>

Self-Aggrandisement and Vainglory No Part of Love

A lover was once admitted to the presence of his mistress, but, instead of embracing her, he pulled out a paper of sonnets and read them to her, describing her perfections and charms and his own love towards her at length. His mistress said to him, “You are now in my presence, and these lovers’ sighs and invocations are a waste of time. It is not the part of a true lover to waste his time in this way. It shows that I am not the real object of your affection, but that what you really love is your own effusions and ecstatic raptures. I see, as it were, the water which I have longed for before me, and yet you withhold it. I am, as it were, in Bulgaria, and the object of your love is in Cathay [China]. One who is really loved is the single object of her lover, the Alpha and Omega of his desires. As for you, you are wrapped up in your own amorous raptures, depending on the varying states of your own feelings, instead of being wrapped up in me.”

Love Needs No Mediator

When one has attained Union with God he has no need of intermediaries. Prophets and apostles are needed as links to connect ordinary man with God, but he who hears the “inner voice” within him has no need to listen to outward words, even of apostles. Although that intercession is himself dwelling in God, yet my state is higher and more lovely than his. Though he is God’s agent, yet I desire not his intercession to save me from evil sent me by God, for evil at God’s hand seems to me good. What seems mercy and kindness to the vulgar seems wrath and vengeance to God-intoxicated saints.

Humanity the Reflection of the Beloved

Parrots are taught to speak without understanding the words. The method is to place a mirror between the parrot and the trainer. The trainer, hidden by the mirror, utters the words, and the parrot, seeing his own reflection in the mirror, fancies another parrot is speaking, and imitates all that is said by the trainer behind the mirror. So God uses prophets and saints as mirrors whereby to instruct men, viz., the bodies of these saints and prophets; and men, when they hear the words proceeding from these mirrors, are utterly ignorant that they are really being spoken by “Universal Reason” or the “Word of God” behind the mirror of the saints.

The Wine Everlasting

O babbler, while thy soul is drunk with mere date wine,
Thy spirit hath not tasted the genuine grapes.
For the token of thy having seen that divine Light
Is this, to withdraw thyself from the house of pride.

A Mother Whose Children Were in the Beloved's Keeping

A woman bore many children in succession, but none of them lived beyond the age of three or four months. In great distress she cried to God, and then beheld in a vision the beautiful gardens of Paradise, and many fair mansions therein, and upon one of these mansions she read her own name inscribed. And a voice from heaven informed her that God would accept the sorrows she had endured in lieu of her blood shed in holy war, as, owing to her sex, she was unable to go out to battle like the men. On looking again, the woman beheld in Paradise all the children she had lost, and she cried, “O Lord! they were lost to me, but safe with Thee!”

All Religions Are One

In the adorations and benedictions of righteous men
The praises of all the prophets are kneaded together.
All their praises are mingled into one stream,
All the vessels are emptied into one ewer.
Because He that is praised is, in fact, only One.
In this respect all religions are only one religion.
Because all praises are directed towards God's Light,
These various forms and figures are borrowed from it.

The True Mosque

Fools laud and magnify the mosque,
While they strive to oppress holy men of heart.
But the former is mere form, the latter spirit and truth.

The only true mosque is that in the hearts of saints.
The mosque that is built in the hearts of the saints
Is the place of worship of all, for God dwells there.
So long as the hearts of the saints are not afflicted.
God never destroys the nation.

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Questions for Discussion

Characterize Rumi's vision of true love and spirituality. How might authorities from the Abrahamic faiths take issue with these poems?

26. Mesoamerican Creation Narrative (Central America, ca. 1550 CE)

The *Popol Vuh* is a foundational text of Maya literature and culture. It contains the creation myth and early history of the K'iche' Maya, an indigenous people from what is now modern-day Guatemala. Like many ancient traditions, its stories were passed down orally for generations. After the Spanish conquest of the Americas, an anonymous K'iche' author transcribed the text around 1550 CE using the Roman alphabet introduced by Spanish missionaries. The *Popol Vuh* remains a vital window into Maya cosmology, language, and identity.

Source: *Popul Vuh*. Translated by Delia Goetz and Sylvanus Griswold Morley. Edited by Adrián Recinos. Los Angeles, CA: Plantin Press, 1954. <https://omnika.org/texts/27>

I. Chapter 1

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, in silence; all motionless, still, and the expanse of the sky was empty.

This is the first account, the first narrative. There was neither man, nor animal, birds, fishes, crabs, trees, stones, caves, ravines, grasses, nor forests; there was only the sky.

The surface of the earth had not appeared. There was only the calm sea and the great expanse of the sky.

There was nothing brought together, nothing which could make a noise, nor anything which might move, or tremble, or could make noise in the sky.

There was nothing standing; only the calm water, the placid sea, alone and tranquil. Nothing existed.

There was only immobility and silence in the darkness, in the night. Only the Creator, the Maker, Tepeu, Gucumatz, the Forefathers, were in the water surrounded with light. They were hidden under green and blue feathers, and were therefore called Gucumatz. By nature they were great sages and great thinkers. In this manner the sky existed and also the heart Heaven, which is the name of God and thus He is called.

Then came the word. Tepeu and Gucumatz came together in the darkness, in the night, and Tepeu and Gucumatz talked together. They talked then, discussing and deliberating; they agreed, they united their words and their thoughts.

Then while they meditated, it became clear to them that when dawn would break, man must appear. Then they planned the creation, and the growth of the trees and the thickets and the birth of life and the creation of man. Thus it was arranged in the darkness and in the night by the Heart of Heaven who is called Huracán.

Then Tepeu and Gucumatz came together; then they conferred about life and light, what they would do so that there would be light and dawn, who it would be who would provide food and sustenance.

Thus let it be done! Let the emptiness be filled! Let the water recede and make a void, let the earth appear and become solid; let it be done. Thus they spoke. Let there be light, let there be dawn in the sky and on the earth! There shall be neither glory nor grandeur in our creation and formation until the human being is made, man is formed. So they spoke.

Then the earth was created by them. So it was, in truth, that they created the earth. Earth! they said, and instantly it was made.

Like the mist, like a cloud, and like a cloud of dust was the creation, when the mountains appeared from the water; and instantly the mountains grew.

Only by a miracle, only by magic art were the mountains and valleys formed; and instantly the groves of cypresses and pines put forth shoots together on the surface of the earth.

And thus Gucumatz was filled with joy, and exclaimed: "Your coming has been fruitful, Heart of Heaven; and you, Huracán, and you, Chipi-Caculhá, Raxa-Caculhá!" "Our work, our creation shall be finished," they answered.

First the earth was formed, the mountains and the valleys; the currents of water were divided, the rivulets were running freely between the hills, and the water was separated when the high mountains appeared.

Thus was the earth created, when it was formed by the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, as they are called who first made it fruitful, when the sky was in suspense, and the earth was submerged in the water.

So it was that they made perfect the work, when they did it after thinking and meditating upon it.

I. Chapter 2

Then they made the small wild animals, the guardians of the woods, the spirits of the mountains, the deer, the birds, pumas, jaguars, serpents, snakes, vipers, guardians of the thickets. And the Forefathers asked: "Shall there be only silence and calm under the trees, under the vines? It is well that hereafter there be someone to guard them."

So they said when they meditated and talked. Promptly the deer and the birds were created. Immediately they gave homes to the deer and the birds. "You, deer, shall sleep in the fields by the

river bank and in the ravines. Here you shall be amongst the thicket, amongst the pasture; in the woods you shall multiply, you shall walk on four feet and they will support you. Thus be it done!" So it was they spoke.

Then they also assigned homes to the birds big and small. "You shall live in the trees and in the vines. There you shall make your nests; there you shall multiply; there you shall increase in the branches of the trees and in the vines." Thus the deer and the birds were told; they did their duty at once, and all sought their homes and their nests.

And the creation of all the four-footed animals and the birds being finished, they were told by the Creator and the Maker and the Forefathers: "Speak, cry, warble, call, speak each one according to your variety, each, according to your kind." So was it said to the deer, the birds, pumas, jaguars, and serpents.

"Speak, then, our names, praise us, your mother, your father. Invoke then, Huracán, Chipi-Caculhá, Raxa-Caculhá, the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, the Creator, the Maker, the Forefathers; speak, invoke us, adore us," they were told.

But they could not make them speak like men; they only hissed and screamed and cackled; they were unable to make words, and each screamed in a different way.

When the Creator and the Maker saw that it was impossible for them to talk to each other, they said: "It is impossible for them to say our names, the names of us, their Creators and Makers. This is not well," said the Forefathers to each other.

Then they said to them: "Because it has not been possible for you to talk, you shall be changed. We have changed our minds: Your food, your pasture, your homes, and your nests you shall have; they shall be the ravines and the woods, because it has not been possible for you to adore us or invoke us. There shall be those who adore us, we shall make other [beings] who shall be obedient. Accept your destiny: your flesh shall be torn to pieces. So shall it be. This shall be your lot." So they said, when they made known their will to the large and small animals which are on the face of the earth.

They wished to give them another trial; they wished to make another attempt; they wished to make [all living things] adore them.

But they could not understand each other's speech; they could succeed in nothing, and could do nothing. For this reason they were sacrificed, and the animals which were on earth were condemned to be killed and eaten.

For this reason another attempt had to be made to create and make men by the Creator, the Maker, and the Forefathers.

"Let us try again! Already dawn draws near: Let us make him who shall nourish and sustain us! What shall we do to be invoked, in order to be remembered on earth? We have already tried with our first

creations, our first creatures; but we could not make them praise and venerate us. So, then, let us try to make obedient, respectful beings who will nourish and sustain us.” Thus they spoke.

Then was the creation and the formation. Of earth, of mud, they made [man’s] flesh. But they saw that it was not good. It melted away, it was soft, did not move, had no strength, it fell down, it was limp, it could not move its head, its face fell to one side, its sight was blurred, it could not look behind. At first it spoke, but had no mind. Quickly it soaked in the water and could not stand.

And the Creator and the Maker said: “Let us try again because our creatures will not be able to walk nor multiply. Let us consider this,” they said.

Then they broke up and destroyed their work and their creation. And they said: “What shall we do to perfect it, in order that our worshipers, our invokers, will be successful?”

Thus they spoke when they conferred again: “Let us say again to Xpiyacoc, Xmucané, Hunahpú-Vuch, Hunahpú-Utiú: ‘Cast your lot again. Try to create again.’ ” In this manner the Creator and the Maker spoke to Xpiyacoc and Xmucané.

Then they spoke to those soothsayers, the Grandmother of the day, the Grandmother of the Dawn, as they were called by the Creator and the Maker, and whose names were Xpiyacoc and Xmucané.

And said Huracán, Tepeu, and Gucumatz when they spoke to the soothsayer, to the Maker, who are the diviners: “You must work together and find the means so that man, whom we shall make, man, whom we are going to make, will nourish and sustain us, invoke and remember us.”

“Enter, then, into council, grandmother, grandfather, our grandmother, our grandfather, Xpiyacoc, Xmucané, make light, make dawn, have us invoked, have us adored, have us remembered by created man, by made man, by mortal man. Thus be it done.

“Let your nature be known, Hunahpú-Vuch, Hunahpú-Utiú, twice mother, twice father, Nim-Ac, Nima-Tziís, the master of emeralds, the worker in jewels, the sculptor, the carver, the maker of beautiful plates, the maker of green gourds, the master of resin, the master Toltecat, grandmother of the sun, grandmother of dawn, as you will be called by our works and our creatures.

“Cast the lot with your grains of corn and the tzité. Do it thus, and we shall know if we are to make, or carve his mouth and eyes out of wood.” Thus the diviners were told.

They went down at once to make their divination, and cast their lots with the corn and the tzité. “Fate! Creature!” said an old woman and an old man. And this old man was the one who cast the lots with Tzité, the one called Xpiyacoc. And the old woman was the diviner, the maker, called Chiracán Xmucané.

Beginning the divination, they said: “Get together, grasp each other! Speak, that we may hear.” They said, “Say if it is well that the wood be got together and that it be carved by the Creator and the

Maker, and if this [man of wood] is he who must nourish and sustain us when there is light when it is day!

“Thou, corn; thou, tzité; thou, fate; thou, creature; get together, take each other,” they said to the corn, to the tzité, to fate, to the creature. “Come to sacrifice here, Heart of Heaven; do not punish Tepeu and Gucumatz!”

Then they talked and spoke the truth: “Your figures of wood shall come out well; they shall speak and talk on earth.”

“So may it be,” they answered when they spoke.

And instantly the figures were made of wood. They looked like men, talked like men, and populated the surface of the earth.

They existed and multiplied; they had daughters, they had sons, these wooden figures; but they did not have souls, nor minds, they did not remember their Creator, their Maker; they walked on all fours, aimlessly.

They no longer remembered the Heart of Heaven and therefore they fell out of favor. It was merely a trial, an attempt at man. At first they spoke, but their face was without expression; their feet and hands had no strength; they had no blood, nor substance, nor moisture, nor flesh; their cheeks were dry, their feet and hands were dry, and their flesh was yellow.

Therefore, they no longer thought of their Creator nor their Maker, nor of those who made them and cared for them.

These were the first men who existed in great numbers on the face of the earth.

I. Chapter 3

Immediately the wooden figures were annihilated, destroyed, broken up, and killed.

A flood was brought about by the Heart of Heaven; a great flood was formed which fell on the heads of the wooden creatures.

Of tzité, the flesh of man was made, but when woman was fashioned by the Creator and the Maker, her flesh was made of rushes. These were the materials the Creator and the Maker wanted to use in making them.

But those that they had made, that they had created, did not think, did not speak with their Creator, their Maker. And for this reason they were killed, they were deluged. A heavy resin fell from the sky. The one called Xecotcovach came and gouged out their eyes; Camalotz came and cut off their heads; Cotzbalam came and devoured their flesh. Tucumbalam came, too, and broke and mangled their bones and their nerves, and ground and crumbled their bones.

This was to punish them because they had not thought of their mother, nor their father, the Heart of Heaven, called Huracán. And for this reason the face of the earth was darkened and a black rain began to fall, by day and by night.

Then came the small animals and the large animals, and sticks and stones struck their faces. And all began to speak: their earthen jars, their griddles, their plates, their pots, their grinding stones, all rose up and struck their faces.

“You have done us much harm; you ate us, and now we shall kill you,” said their dogs and birds of the barnyard. And the grinding stones said: “We were tormented by you; every day, every day, at night, at dawn, all the time our faces went holi, holi, huqui, huqui, because of you. This was the tribute we paid you. But now that you are no longer men, you shall feel our strength. We shall grind and tear your flesh to pieces,” said their grinding stones.

And then their dogs spoke and said: “Why did you give us nothing to eat? You scarcely looked at us, but you chased us and threw us out. You always had a stick ready to strike us while you were eating.

“Thus it was that you treated us. You did not speak to us. Perhaps we shall not kill you now; but why did you not look ahead, why did you not think about yourselves? Now we shall destroy you, now you shall feel the teeth of our mouths; we shall devour you,” said the dogs, and then, they destroyed their faces.

And at the same time, their griddles and pots spoke: “Pain and suffering you have caused us. Our mouths and our faces were blackened with soot; we were always put on the fire and you burned us as though we felt no pain. Now you shall feel it, we shall burn you,” said their pots, and they all destroyed their [the wooden men’s] faces. The stones of the hearth, which were heaped together, hurled themselves straight from the fire against their heads causing them pain.

The desperate ones [the men of wood] ran as quickly as they could; they wanted to climb to the tops of the houses, and the houses fell down and threw them to the ground; they wanted to climb to the treetops, and the trees cast them far away; they wanted to enter the caverns, and the caverns repelled them.

So was the ruin of the men who had been created and formed, the men made to be destroyed and annihilated; the mouths and faces of all of them were mangled.

And it is said that their descendants are the monkeys which now live in the forests; these are all that remain of them because their flesh was made only of wood by the Creator and the Maker.

And therefore the monkey looks like man, and is an example of a generation of men which were created and made but were only wooden figures.

Part III

III. Chapter 1

Here, then is the beginning of when it was decided to make man, and when what must enter into the flesh of man was sought.

And the Forefathers, the Creators and Makers, who were called Tepeu and Gucumatz said: "The time of dawn has come, let the work be finished, and let those who are to nourish and sustain us appear, the noble sons, the civilized vassals; let man appear, humanity, on the face of the earth." Thus they spoke.

They assembled, came together and held council in the darkness and in the night; then they sought and discussed, and here they reflected and thought. In this way their decisions came dearly to light and they found and discovered what must enter into the flesh of man.

It was just before the sun, the moon, and the stars appeared over the Creators and Makers.

From Paxil, from Cayalá, as they were called, came the yellow ears of corn and the white ears of corn.

These are the names of the animals which brought the food: yac (the mountain cat), utiú (the coyote), quel (a small parrot), and hoh (the crow). These four animals gave tidings of the yellow ears of corn and the white ears of corn, they told them that they should go to Paxil and they showed them the road to Paxil.

And thus they found the food, and this was what went into the flesh of created man, the made man; this was his blood; of this the blood of man was made. So the corn entered [into the formation of man] by the work of the Forefathers.

And in this way they were filled with joy, because they had found a beautiful land, full of pleasures, abundant in ears of yellow corn and ears of white corn, and abundant also in pataxte and cacao, and in innumerable zapotes, anonas, jocotes, nantzes, matasanos, and honey. There was an abundance of delicious food in those villages called Paxil and Cayalá.

There were foods of every kind, small and large foods, small plants and large plants.

The animals showed them the road. And then grinding the yellow corn and the white corn, Xmucané made nine drinks, and from this food came the strength and the flesh, and with it they created the muscles and the strength of man. This the Forefathers did, Tepeu and Gucumatz, as they were called.

After that they began to talk about the creation and the making of our first mother and father; of yellow corn and of white corn they made their flesh; of corn-meal dough they made the arms and the legs of man. Only dough of corn meal went into the flesh of our first fathers, the four men, who were created.

III. Chapter 2

These are the names of the first men who were created and formed: the first man was Balam-Quitze, the second, Balam-Acab, the third, Mahucutah, and the fourth was Iqui-Balam.

These are the names of our first mothers and fathers.

It is said that they only were made and formed, they had no mother, they had no father. They were only called men. They were not born of woman, nor were they begotten by the Creator nor by the Maker, nor by the Forefathers. Only by a miracle, by means of incantation were they created and made by the Creator, the Maker, the Forefathers, Tepeu and Gucumatz. And as they had the appearance of men, they were men; they talked, conversed, saw and heard, walked, grasped things; they were good and handsome men, and their figure was the figure of a man.

They were endowed with intelligence; they saw and instantly they could see far, they succeeded in seeing, they succeeded in knowing all that there is in the world. When they looked, instantly they saw all around them, and they contemplated in turn the arch of heaven and the round face of the earth.

The things hidden [in the distance] they saw all, without first having to move; at once they saw the world, and so, too, from where they were, they saw it.

Great was their wisdom; their sight reached to the forests, the rocks, the lakes, the seas, the mountains, and the valleys. In truth, they were admirable men. Balam-Quitze, Balam-Acab, Mahucutah, and Iqui-Balam.

Then the Creator and the Maker asked them: "What do you think of your condition? Do you not see? Do you not hear? Are not your speech and manner of walking good? Look, then!

Contemplate the world, look [and see] if the mountains and the valleys appear! Try, then, to see!" they said to [the four first men].

And immediately they [the four first men] began to see all that was in the world. Then they gave thanks to the Creator and the Maker: "We really give you thanks, two and three times! We have been created, we have been given a mouth and a face, we speak, we hear, we think, and walk; we feel perfectly, and we know what is far and what is near. We also see the large and the small in the sky and on earth. We give you thanks, then, for having created us, oh, Creator and Maker! for having given us being, oh, our grandmother! oh, our grandfather!" they said, giving thanks for their creation and formation.

They were able to know all, and they examined the four corners, the four points of the arch of the sky and the round face of the earth.

But the Creator and the Maker did not hear this with pleasure. “It is not well what our creatures, our works say; they know all, the large and the small,” they said. And so the Forefathers held counsel again. “What shall we do with them now? Let their sight reach only to that which is near; let them see only a little of the face of the earth! It is not well what they say. Perchance, are they not by nature simple creatures of our making? Must they also be gods? And if they do not reproduce and multiply when it will dawn, when the sun rises? And what if they do not multiply?” So they spoke.

“Let us check a little their desires, because it is not well what we see. Must they perchance be the equals of ourselves, their Makers, who can, see afar, who know all and see all?”

Thus spoke the Heart of Heaven, Huracán, Chipi-Caculhá, Raxa-Caculhá, Tepeu, Gucumatz, the Forefathers, Xpiyacoc, Xmucané, the Creator and the Maker. Thus they spoke, and immediately they changed the nature of their works, of their creatures.

Then the Heart of Heaven blew mist into their eyes, which clouded their sight as, when a mirror is breathed upon. Their eyes were covered and they could see only what was close, only that was clear to them.

In this way the wisdom and all the knowledge of the four men, the origin and beginning [of the Quiché race], were destroyed.

In this way were created and formed our grandfathers, our fathers, by the Heart of Heaven, the heart of Earth.

III. Chapter 3

Then their wives had being, and their women were made. God himself made them carefully.

And so, during sleep, they came, truly beautiful, their women, at the side of Balam-Quitze, Balam-Acab, Mahucutah, and Iqui-Balam.

There were their women when they awakened, and instantly their hearts were filled with joy because of their wives.

Here are the names of their wives: Cahá-Paluna was the name of the wife of Balam-Quitze; Chomihá was the wife of Balam-Acab; Tzununihá, the wife of Mahucutah; and Caquixahá was the name of the wife of Iqui-Balam. These are the names of their wives, who were distinguished women.

They conceived the men, of the small tribes and of the large tribes, and were the origin of us; the people of Quiché.

There were many priests and sacrificers; there were not only four, but those four were the Forefathers of us, the people of the Quiché.

The names of each one were different when they multiplied there in the East, and there were many names of the people: Tepeu, Olomán, Cohah, Quenech, Ahau, as they called those men there in the East, where they multiplied.

The beginning is known, too, of those of Tamub and those of Ilocab who came together from there in the East.

Balam-Quitze was the grandfather and the father of the nine great houses of the Cavec; BalamAcab was the grandfather and father of the nine great houses of the Nimhaib; Mahucutah, the grandfather and father of the four great houses of Ahau-Quiché.

Three groups of families existed; but they did not forget the name of their grandfather and father, those who propagated and multiplied there in the East...



Questions for Discussion

What do the K'iche' (Quiché) gods want from human beings and what does the *Popul Vuh* reveal about the Mesoamerican environment? How does the *Popul Vuh* compare to other creation stories?

27. Maya Objects

This group of artifacts is from Maya civilization on the Yucatan Peninsula in modern-day Mexico. Although Maya civilization developed a writing system, relatively few of its written materials have survived into our time. At the Maya city of Palenque, a funerary mask made from jade was found in the tomb of the Maya king, K'inich Janaab' Pakal. At the Maya city of Chichen Itza, there is a well-preserved ballcourt (for playing a ceremonial game in which competitors tried to move a rubber ball through a circular ring) and an astronomical observatory. These objects should be analyzed in much the same way one would approach a written document. Consider function and purpose. Who were they for and what do they reveal about Maya society?

Jade Mask

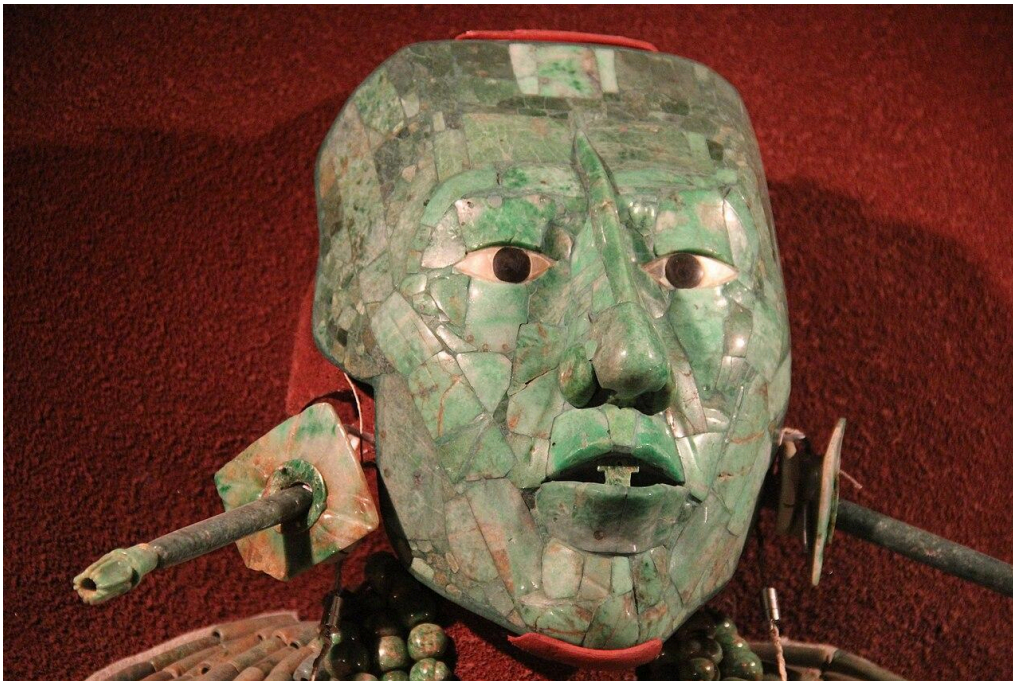


Figure 1: Jade mask (615-683 CE). *Maya Jade Mask of Kinich Hanab Pakal* by Gary Todd is in the [public domain](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maya_Jade_Mask_of_Kinich_Hanab_Pakal,_Ruler_of_Palenque,_615-683_AD.jpg). (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maya_Jade_Mask_of_Kinich_Hanab_Pakal,_Ruler_of_Palenque,_615-683_AD.jpg)

Embracing Couple



Figure 2: Embracing Couple (650-800 CE). [Figurine of Embracing Couple](#) © Dumbarton Oaks, Pre-Columbian Collection, Washington, D.C. Used with permission. Do not redistribute. (<https://museum.doaks.org/objects-1/info/22799>)

Observatory



Figure 3: Observatory (ca. 1000 CE). [The Caracol tower](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Caracol_tower,_Chichen_Itza,_Mexico.jpg) by Zrizi is licensed under [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/). (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Caracol_tower,_Chichen_Itza,_Mexico.jpg)

Ballcourt Goal



Figure 4: Ballcourt goal (ca. 1000 CE). Chichén Itzá Goal by Kåre Thor Olsen is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.5. (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chich%C3%A9n_Itz%C3%A1_Goal.jpg)

Questions for Discussion

What did these artifacts make you think about in relationship to Maya society, culture, and beliefs? For instance, what does the mere existence of an observatory and ballcourt in the ceremonial center of the Chichen Itza suggest? What does the embracing couple suggest about Maya views on love and social relationships?

Appendix: Using This Sourcebook with Primary Textbooks

The documents in this primary source reader supplement and reinforce [*World History, Volume 1: to 1500*](#) and [*World History: Cultures, States, and Societies to 1500*](#). One example of alignment for the latter is provided below.

Chapter 2: “Early Middle Eastern and Northeast African Civilizations”

- 1 [*The Epic of Gilgamesh*](#) (Mesopotamia, 18th Century BCE)
- 2 [*The Code of Hammurabi*](#) (Mesopotamia, 18th Century BCE)
- 3 [*The Book of the Dead*](#) (Egypt, ca. 16th Century BCE)
- 4a [*Egyptian Object: Board Game*](#) (Egypt, 1814–1805 BCE)
- 4b [*Egyptian Object: Razor Belonging to Hatnefer*](#) (Egypt, 1492–1473 BCE)
- 4c [*Egyptian Object: Wig*](#) (Egypt, 1040–992 BCE)
- 4d [*Egyptian Object: Sandal Socks*](#) (Egypt, 300–499 CE)

Chapter 3: “Ancient and Early Medieval India”

- 10 [*The Buddha: Sermons and Teachings*](#) (India, 6th Century BCE)
- 11 [*The Edicts of Ashoka*](#) (India, ca. 270 BCE)

Chapter 4: “China and East Asia to the Ming Dynasty”

- 5 [*The Mandate of Heaven*](#), selection from the *Shu Jing* (China, 6th Century BCE)
- 6 [*Sun-Tzu: The Art of War*](#) (China, ca. 500 BCE)
- 7 [*Confucius: Analects*](#) (China, 5th Century BCE)
- 8 [*Xunzi: The Nature of Man is Evil*](#) (China, ca. 275 BCE)
- 9a [*Chinese Object: Pottery Dog*](#) (China, Han dynasty)
- 9b [*Chinese Object: Cash Coins*](#) (China, Han dynasty)
- 9c [*Chinese Object: Pipa Player*](#) (China, Sui dynasty)

Chapter 5: “The Greek World from the Bronze Age to the Roman Conquest”

- 13 [Plato: *The Republic*](#) (Greece, ca. 327 BCE)
- 14 [Aristophanes: *Lysistrata*](#) (Greece, 411 BCE)
- 15a [Greek Object: Oil Lamp](#) (Greece)
- 15b [Greek Object: Suit of Armor](#) (Greece, 340–330 BCE)
- 15c [Greek Object: Theater of Epidauros](#) (Greece, 340–300 BCE)
- 15d [Greek Object: Oil Flask](#) (Greece, 550–530 BCE)

Chapter 6: “The Roman World From 753 BCE to 500 CE”

- 12 [The Ten Commandments](#) (Eastern Mediterranean, 6th Century BCE)
- 16 [Josephus on the Roman Army](#) (Roman Empire, 75 CE)
- 17 [Gaius: Roman Slave Laws](#) (Roman Empire, 161 CE)
- 18 [Meditations of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus](#) (Roman Empire, 171–175 CE)
- 19 [Selections from the Christian Bible](#) (Eastern Roman Empire, 45–100 CE)
- 20 [The Passion of Perpetua](#) (Roman Empire, 202 or 203 CE)
- 21 [The Theodosian Code](#) (Roman Empire, 438 CE)

Chapter 7: “Western Europe and Byzantium Circa 500 – 1000 CE”

- 22 [Procopius: The Plague of Justinian](#) (Byzantine Empire, 542 CE)

Chapter 8: “Islam to the Mamluks”

- 23 [Selections from the Quran](#) (Arabian Peninsula, 7th Century CE)
- 24 [Fiscal Rescript of Caliph Umar II](#) (Arab Empire, 720 CE)

Chapter 10: “The Americas”

- 26 [Mesoamerican Creation Narrative](#) (Central America, ca. 1550 CE)

- 27a [Maya Object: Jade Mask](#) (Central America, 615–683 CE)
- 27b [Maya Object: Embracing Couple](#) (Central America, 650–800 CE)
- 27c [Maya Object: Observatory](#) (Central America, ca. 1000 CE)
- 27d [Maya Object: Ballcourt Goal](#) (Central America, ca. 1000 CE)

Chapter 11: “Central Asia”

- 25 [The Poetry of Rumi](#) (Asia Minor, 1207–1273 CE)

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