

The International Bronze Age
and Its Aftermath: Trade, Empire
and Diplomacy, 1600-500 B.C.E.

The West
CHAPTER 2

Government in the New Kingdom

- Hyskos introduced new military technology and international links to Egypt
- Pharaoh (“great house”) - final authority in political, legal, military and religious matters, served as the link between humanity and the gods
- Centralized bureaucracy supervised by the vizier and divided into two administrative regions
- Priesthood acquired enormous influence, due to the great wealth amassed by temples

Building an Empire from Canaan to Nubia

- Military technology, well-developed logistics and a belief in Egyptian superiority
- Expanded north into the Levant and south into Nubia
- Egypt acquired enormous wealth
- Exchange of ideas and traditions between Egyptians and conquered peoples

Women in the New Kingdom

- Complete equality between men and women on matters of property, business and inheritance
- Women held roles of importance and power in religious practice
- Female divinities reflected reverence for women

The Growth of Hittite Power

- Imperial expansion in order to exploit resources of neighbors
- Administration centered on fortified cities
- Multiethnic empire: seven written languages, in addition to Hittite
- The Great King was source of all property and power
- Religion co-opted divinities from all subject peoples

The Kingdom of Babylonia

- 1400 B.C.E. Kassite dynasty seized control, ushering in 250 years of prosperity
- Highly centralized administration
- Lavish expenditure on public works and buildings
- Learning flourished, especially literature, medicine and science
- Preserved the intellectual legacy of earlier Mesopotamian civilizations

The Kingdom of Assyria

- Under Ashur-Uballit (ca. 1365-1330 B.C.E.) Assyria pursued commercial and diplomatic links with Egypt
- Westward expansion led to clashes with Hittites
- Under Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.E.) Assyria became the dominant power in Mesopotamia

Minoan Crete

- Economic and political administration revolved around four “palaces”: Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia and Zakros - centers for produce collection and distribution
- Thriving long-distance trade: extensive commercial links throughout eastern Mediterranean
- Rulers maintained tight control over the production of wealth
- Developed a simplified hieroglyphic script: Linear A

Mycenaean Greece

- Warlike, hierarchical society
- No political unity: several small kingdoms centered on highly fortified palaces
- Cultivated extensive commercial and diplomatic contacts: established colonies on Asia Minor and Cyprus
- Used Linear B script: an early form of Greek

Two Coastal Kingdoms

- Small, mercantile kingdoms served as buffer states between the Egyptians, Hittites and Mycenaeans
- Ugarit: rich in natural resources and wealthy from trade, developed the common ancestral alphabet for all modern alphabets
- Troy: famed in legend, produced fine textiles and bred horses

The Raiders of Land and Sea

- Collapse of Mycenaean Greece and Hittite Empire
- Mass migration by land and sea in eastern Mediterranean brings destruction to region
- Military and economic decline of Egypt
- Economic and political breakdown of Mesopotamian kingdoms

The Phoenicians: Merchants of the Mediterranean

- Dynamic maritime culture emerged in eastern Mediterranean
- Established political and commercial connections in North Africa, Spain, Italy, France and even Britain
- The Phoenician alphabet spread throughout the Mediterranean, becoming the source of all Western writing

Neo-Assyrian Imperialism

- Highly militarized empire: used terror to gain and maintain control
- First empire to control the Tigris, Euphrates and Nile river valleys
- Ashurbanipal (669-626 B.C.E.): first monarch to attempt cultivating a dominant, uniform culture in a multiethnic empire

The Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire

- Nabopolassar (625-605 B.C.E.) seized control of much of the Assyrian Empire
- Creation of the “Hanging Gardens of Babylon” by Nebuchadnezzar II (604-562 B.C.E.)
- Foundation of modern astronomical science, in Babylonian observations and calculations

The International Bronze Age and the Emergence of the West

- Exchange of commodities and ideas through expansion of international trade and cultivation of diplomatic links
- Dissemination of language and traditions through the development of multiethnic empires
- Creation of complex pattern of cultural diffusion across the Mediterranean region