EMERGENCE AND SPREAD OF BELIEF SYSTEMS

Scientific studies show that primitive hominids had spiritual rituals, and early river civilizations had organized worship of common gods. After 2000 BC, major religions and philosophical systems took many centuries to develop. Their followers spread their beliefs over vast geographic areas. From primitive Animism to Islam, major belief systems became an important aspect of culture and cultural diffusion.

Early societies believed different gods controlled natural circumstances and certain human behaviors. Interpretation of natural events (floods, storms, earthquakes) or humans' dreams, fantasies, and death led early people to sense unexplainable forces at work. They assigned names and characteristics to these forces. These forces evolved into general conceptions and myths of gods. As civilizations grew, shamans and priests developed ideas into organized beliefs, rituals, and ethical practices connected with certain gods.

The search for order led some polytheistic societies to elevate certain gods into roles of control and supremacy such as that of Zeus for the ancient Greeks and Jupiter for the Romans. Other societies rejected polytheism in favor of monotheism—the conception of a single God. As travel became more common and civilizations grew and made both friendly and hostile contacts with others, isolated, localized religions blended and became more universal. Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam grew into great cultural forces. As they spread, they became vehicles for cross-cultural progress for humankind.

1 Animism (holds there is a conscious life within every object. A spirit directs the object's being and affects conditions in the world)

Mini Assessment

1 Asoka brought Maurya rule in India to its height and was responsible for the spread of
   1 the Phoenician alphabet
   2 Buddhism
   3 Aryan invasions
   4 camel transportation in the Sahara

2 The Silk Route became an avenue of
   1 economic decline
   2 moral guidance
   3 cultural diffusion
   4 maritime invasion

3 The kingdoms of Nubia and Numidia became cultural bridges between
   1 Africa and the Mediterranean
   2 China and Phoenicia
   3 Mediterranean and Persia
   4 Persia and China

Constructed Response:

“I have ordered banyan trees to be planted along the roads to give shade to men and animals. I have ordered mango groves to be planted. I have ordered wells to be dug every half mile, and I have ordered rest houses to be built.”

— Asoka, Rock Edicts

1 How did Asoka try to help travelers?

2 How does this edict indicate Asoka was different from other rulers of ancient time?
### JUDAISM

**Origins** Canaan (Palestine / Israel, Judah); c. 1500-1000 BC; (Abraham) Moses, Solomon, David, prophets, and judges

**Sacred Texts** Torah (Mishna and Talmud), Hebrew Bible

**Organization** autonomous local synagogues led by rabbi

**Beliefs** Judaism was the first organized religion to teach monothelism; God had special covenant with the ancient Israelites to bring God’s message to humanity by their example; seeks a just and peaceful world order; prohibition of images

**Practices** strict discipline through daily prayer, family relationships, ethical behavior (Ten Commandments), ritual practices, dietary laws, individual prayer, and public observances (Passover, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur)

**Divisions** wide variations of individual adherence to dietary and Sabbath behavior

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### ISLAM

**Origins** Arabia (570-632 AD), Prophet Muhammad

**Sacred Texts** Qur'an (English: Koran); Shari'ah (*the way*) - the laws and regulations for Muslim life and conduct

**Organization** community structure (once an empire headed by a caliph, now some entire countries are Islamic states - Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan); in others local communities in separate mosques

**Beliefs** monotheists (commitment in faith, obedience, and trust to one and only God - Allah); "Five Pillars": shahada (profession of faith in God); salat (ritual prayer, performed five times a day facing Mecca); zakat (alms giving); sawm (fasting); hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca); sometimes jihad (literally, "striving in the way of God" - varies from sacred war to striving to fulfill the ethical principles of the Qur'an)

**Practices** The Shari’ah is the creed and worship of the community (*umma*), as well as a code of ethics, a culture, a system of laws, an understanding of the function of the state; main festivals: Id al-Fitr (breaking of the fast at the end of Ramadan) and Id al-Adha (sacrifice)

**Divisions** Sunnis (majority) follow Rightly Guided Caliphs (a kind of "mandate of heaven" authority) and Shi‘ite (minority) contend leadership flows from descendants of Ali (Prophet Muhammad’s son-in-law)

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### CHRISTIANITY

**Origins** Palestine, 1st century BC, founder Jesus of Nazareth

**Sacred Texts** Christian Bible (Old and New Testaments)

**Organization** Roman and Orthodox churches have hierarchal rule by chief bishop (Pope or Patriarch), archbishops, bishops, pastors; in Protestant sects, congregations tend to be more autonomous

**Beliefs** monotheist; Jesus was and is the Messiah or Christ promised by God in the prophecies of the Old Testament; freed believers from sin and offered resurrection and salvation in an afterlife; Trinity (one God in essence is viewed as 3 personifications: Creator (Father), Redeemer (Son), and Sustainer (Holy Spirit))

**Practices** Two principal rites (sacraments): Baptism, initiated converts; and the Eucharist, a sacred meal with prayers, chants, and scripture readings (Mass)

**Divisions** Western European (Latin Church) branch and a Byzantine (or Orthodox Church) branch. The Western church was in turn divided by the 16th century Reformation into the Roman Catholic Church and a large number of smaller Protestant churches: Lutheran, Calvinist (Reformed), Anglican, and sectarian
**HINDUISM**

**Origins** Indus Valley c. 1500-500 BC - based on Aryan invaders practices

**Sacred Texts** Vedas (including Upanishads) and epics (Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana)

**Organization** Individual temple rituals assisted by members of Brahmin class (priests)

**Beliefs** Polytheistic; commitment to an ideal way of life (dharma) and notion of action, especially religious or ritual action (karma) to purify human acts during rebirths of the soul so as to leave the material world (moksha) and become part of the eternal universal spirit of life (Brahman Nerguna)

**Practices** Self-denial, fasting to purify the soul, individual rituals (initiations, marriages, funerals) assisted by members of Brahmin class (priests)

**Divisions** Variety of sects devoted to Vishnu, Shiva, Shakti

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**BUDDHISM**

**Origins** India (c. 566-486 BC), founded by noble Siddharta Gautama ("Buddha"—the Enlightened One)

**Sacred Texts** Tripitaka - narrative scriptural text Buddha’s teaching (sutras)

**Organization** Independent sanghas - monastic orders

**Beliefs** Four Noble Truths: (duhkha) all beings suffer in a cycle of rebirth (samsara) in which their actions (karma) keep them wandering; suffering itself has a cause (pratity, asamut, pada); suffering and rebirth can cease (nirvana)

**Practices** Eightfold Path - combines ethical practices and disciplining training in meditation to achieve enlightened wisdom (panna)

**Divisions** Numerous sects based on schools of meditation such as Theravada (South & S. E. Asia) and Mahayana (China, Korea, Japan)

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**CHINESE PHILOSOPHIES: CONFUCIANISM**

**Origins** Ancient China, teacher / political advisor Confucius or Kongzi (c. 551-479 BC)

**Sacred Texts** Analects - guide to ethical principles of correct behavior, moral judgment, and social order

**Organization** The Confucian school functioned as a recruiting ground for government positions, which were filled by those scoring highest on examinations in the Confucian classics

**Beliefs** Social order stems from benevolence (kindly acts, generosity), traditional rituals, filial piety (child’s respect for parents), loyalty, respect for superiors and for the aged, social interaction is shaped by convention; correct behavior follows a natural pattern (li)

**Practices** Maintain domestic order, preserve tradition, and maintain a constant standard of living for the taxpaying peasants

**Divisions** (none)

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**CHINESE PHILOSOPHIES: DAOISM (TAOISM)**

**Origins** China, Laozi (Lao-tzu c. 6th century BC) and Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu c. 369-286 BC)

**Sacred Texts** The Daode Jing, and the Zhuangzi

**Organization** Independent monastic orders

**Beliefs** Seek tranquility by excluding desire, impulse, and aggression; live in harmony with nature and accept life’s inevitable changes; create action (wei) by shaping desires (yu); yin and yang—balance and harmony in life

**Practices** Monasticism and the ritual of community renewal, and study revealed scriptures; Taoist writings reflect some Buddhist influences

**Divisions** Numerous sects (faith healing through the confession of sin; spiritualism; visionary communication with deities)
Expansion of Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism through Conquest and Trade

Christianity Expands

Christianity emerged in the Jewish culture during the 1st century AD. It spread from Palestine through the Mediterranean world dominated by Rome. In the 4th century, it became the official religion of the Roman Empire.

During its early history, the Christian Church remained independent of any government. From the 4th century to the 18th century, however, it accepted the protection of emperors, kings, and princes and became closely allied with secular governments.

By the middle of the 1st century AD, missionaries were spreading the new religion among the peoples of Egypt, Syria, Anatolia, Greece, and Italy. Christianity was transformed from a Jewish sect to a world religion and organized itself as a permanent institution under the leadership of its bishops. Early Christian theological development was the interpretation of the faith in terms of concepts drawn from Greek philosophical thought. Many theological disputes upset the early Christian Churches. Some disputes alienated the churches of Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Armenia. This created a schism in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire. Later, the lack of unity hurt Christians' chances of holding back the Islamic invasion in the 7th century.

In the West, Roman rule was ended by the Germanic invasions of the 5th century. The Church was strengthened by the guidance of leaders as St. Augustine (354-430) and Pope Gregory I (590-604). The Roman Church survived to become the main civilizing influence in Europe during the Middle Ages.

Buddhism Expands

Buddha (Siddartha Gautama, c. 566-486 BC) lived during great social and religious change in India. Aryans continued to settle the Ganges. Commerce and cities were developing rapidly. Differences later arose over the Buddha's teaching (charma) and the rules of the order (vinaya).

Around 250 BC, the Asoka tried to make Buddhism the state religion of the Maurya Empire and spread it throughout Asia. Asoka sent missionaries to Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Southeast Asia, and
Indonesia. Buddhism carried Indian culture into these areas and northward into Central Asia, a crossroads of creeds from all parts of Asia and the Near East.

Between the 7th and 13th centuries AD, Buddhism declined in India. Muslim invaders persecuted Buddhists. Gradually, it blended back toward Hindu tradition.

Buddhist monks moved into China in the 1st century AD and became very influential at the Chinese court. They blended their texts with Daoist (Taoist) terminology and adopted Chinese stress on the importance of the family. In the 9th century, Chinese emperors persecuted Buddhists, destroying many temples and confiscating monastery lands. Buddhism never regained its influential position in Chinese life.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan from Korea about the 6th century, and it became the state religion from 710-784. During the 9th century, there was a mixing of Buddhism with various Japanese Shinto (animist) practices.

**ISLAM EXPANDS**

In 610 AD, the Prophet Muhammad (b. 570) received revelations convincing him he was God's messenger. From that time, Islamic civilization spread rapidly through the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East and North Africa, the Fertile Crescent, and eastward toward India.

Through the Qur'an and the sunna, and his military leadership, Muhammad left ideas for the foundations of an Islamic community that eventually became a great empire.

After his death (632 AD), the Prophet's followers chose his father-in-law, Abu Bakr (r. 632-34), as successor (caliph). He and the next two caliphs continued to expand Islam's boundaries. By 656, their conquests stretched from Persia to Lybia and from Armenia to Egypt. When Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali, became the fourth caliph, Islam's followers split into two groups. Ali was murdered in 661, and his Shi'ite followers rejected the Sunni Caliph Muawiya, who founded the Umayyad Dynasty (661-750 AD). Umayyad rulers continued expansion and consolidation of Islam into India, China, North Africa, and Spain. They made Arabic the official language, built roads, used a common currency, and set up a provincial government system.

**TIME CAPSULE**

During the Neolithic Revolution 10,000 years ago, bands of hunter-gatherers began to form agricultural villages. In river valleys, certain villages grew, prospered, and produced broader cultures. The need for trade, protection, and irrigation moved groups to interact and pool resources into formative civilizations with cities and social institutions. As civilizations developed resources, they formed economic interdependencies, built great public works of architecture, organized spiritual beliefs into religions, and created bodies of literature and scientific and technical knowledge. By the Roman and Han Eras, civilizations interacted steadily and changed as they progressed. As new nomadic groups entered them – peacefully and forcibly – societies absorbed, remade, and diffused global cultures into great imperial systems.

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1 sunna also sunnah (the way of life prescribed as normative in Islam, based on the teachings and practices of Mohammed and on analysis of the Koran)
2 caliph also califi (male leader of the nation of Islam, example – successor to Mohammed)
MULTI-CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. Which best characterizes the difference between hunter-gatherer societies and Neolithic agricultural societies?
   1. Agricultural life was more organized but promised a steady supply of food in one place.
   2. Hunter-gatherer societies provided a more secure and leisurely way of life.
   3. Hunter-gatherer societies were small, simple, and more politically stable.
   4. Agricultural societies lacked time for making tools, utensils, and pottery.

2. Production of larger quantities of food drew Neolithic farmers to the Tigris and Euphrates, Nile, Indus, and Huang He River Valleys because of the:
   1. ease of defense
   2. availability of water and richer soils
   3. rich deposits of minerals for iron production
   4. freedom from oppressive governments

3. In Ancient Egypt, the early pharaohs' belief in their own divinity led them to:
   1. be mummified for their afterlife
   2. conquer surrounding peoples
   3. rule with the aid of viziers
   4. maintain large standing armies

4. How did Mesopotamian civilization differ from that in ancient Egypt?
   1. Slavery was forbidden.
   2. No written language emerged.
   3. Organized religion was lacking.

5. As societies became more complex, economic decision-making based on tradition gave way to other systems because of the need for:
   1. change and flexibility
   2. consistency
   3. cultural diffusion
   4. religious observances

6. Which was a result of the other three?
   1. increased invasions by Teutonic tribes
   2. the decline of the Roman Empire
   3. loss of power by the Roman Senate
   4. high taxes and economic chaos

Base your answers to questions 7 and 8 on the diagram below and your knowledge of global history.

Which is a common theme among these texts of ancient civilizations?
   1. the interplay of good and evil
   2. the high status enjoyed by women in ancient societies
   3. the problems created by caste systems
   4. the process of assimilation

Anthropologists theorize that early farmers developed polytheistic worship systems reflective of their:
   1. strong belief in universal human rights
   2. devotion to kings and emperors
   3. advances in learning and technology
   4. struggle to deal with the natural environment