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About the author

Pamela Bradley has over 40 years' experience in teaching history. She is the author of 13 books on ancient cultures, including six popular secondary history textbooks, including *Ancient Egypt: Reconstructing the Past; Ancient Greece: Using Evidence; Ancient Rome: Using Evidence; Cities of Vesuvius: Pompeii and Herculaneum (3rd edition); The Ancient World: a historical investigation into the past, Year 11*; and the present book, which is the 2nd edition of *The Ancient World Transformed: Societies, Personalities and Historical Periods*.

About the cover

The new cover of this book, *The Ancient World Transformed, Societies, Personalities and Historical Periods* (second edition) – as with the other two ancient history books in this new syllabus series – comes from an artistic representation related to the theme of transformation. This painting, *Entry of Alexander into Babylon*, or *The Triumph of Alexander* was created by the French painter and architect Charles le Brun in 1665, and is housed in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

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Introduction

Since the mandatory core study of the new NSW Ancient History syllabus (Part 1) has been addressed in the third edition of Pamela Bradley's *Cities of Vesuvius: Pompeii and Herculaneum*, published in 2018, this new text covers the remaining parts of the syllabus: Societies (Part II), Personalities (Part III) and Historical Periods (part IV).

Two new and two previous topics – 'Society in the Time of Darius and Xerxes', 'Qin Shi Huangdi: China's First Emperor', 'Akhenaten' and 'The Augustan Age' – have been moved to the digital, rather than the print, version of the book due to:

- the extensive nature of the options in the syllabus
- teacher requests for a Near Eastern topic
- new options on ancient China
- emphasis on new material in the Personalities section
- more recent discoveries and interpretations
- a new format with additional historical comment
- and extensive revision work

As with the previous edition, the topics:

- are associated with significant historical transformations and cultural innovations
- provide clear examples of the factors that contribute to the continuity of the past
- feature unusual, controversial and fascinating individuals and societies
- have been subjected to renewed scholarly scrutiny and reinterpretation in recent years
- provide opportunities for thoughtful conjecture due to the nature of the sources
- are among the most popular choices made by teachers and students for HSC study.

Change or transformation is a significant feature of each chapter, whether it occurred over a long period of time, as in the thousands of years that encompassed the societies of early 18th Dynasty and Bronze Age Crete, or the short dramatic careers of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut (almost 21 years), the heretic king Akhenaten (thought to be 17 years), Alexander the Great (13 years) and Qin Shi Huangdi (just over 10 years). It is hoped that students will gain a greater understanding of the forces of historical change in the pages of this book, whether violent or peaceful, sudden or gradual, and the repercussions of these changes.

The Ancient World Transformed: Societies, Personalities and Historical Periods:

- addresses the outcomes of the syllabus
- raises relevant historiographical issues
- focuses on primary and secondary texts by highlighting many of the longer quotes
- encourages debates that occur due to the limitations of the sources, as well as the varied ancient and modern interpretations
- includes colourful images that provide primary evidence, add interest, stimulate questioning and encourage students to enquire further
- provides the geographical and historical context of the subject matter with the addition of clear maps and chronological charts where dates are well documented
- includes more diagrammatic summaries and plans than in the previous edition

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- has margin glossary terms so that students are immediately aware of historical terms and concepts
- has numerous activities based on what students will be required to know for the HSC, as well as comment boxes that add crucial or interesting information
- includes chapter overviews with key ideas, important terms, stimulating images, a map, the key idea of the chapter, what we can learn today from a study of these options and an enquiry question
- incorporates a chapter review with an extensive summary of chapter content and questions that test the historical concepts and skills required of the syllabus.

Finally, it is worth remembering that it is impossible to ever really know the past, even when there is an abundance of sources. This book predominantly follows the general consensus among scholars based on the most recent archaeological and historical investigations. Of course, other interpretations may be proposed in the future in light of new discoveries, perspectives or by virtue of scientific advancements.

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PART 1
Ancient societies

CHAPTER

Chapter 1 Society in New Kingdom Egypt to the death of Amenhotep III

Chapter 2 The Bronze Age: Society in Minoan Crete

Chapter 3 Spartan society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC

Chapter 4 Persian society in the time of Darius and Xerxes (digital chapter)

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PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

This society in the first half of 18th Dynasty Egypt clearly reveals the degree and nature of continuity and change.

While the acquisition of the empire and the wealth that came with it, transformed society and opened up Egypt to foreign influences, there were many things which would always remain the same. You will need to identify both those factors that brought about change and those aspects of society that remained unchanged for millennia and the reasons for this.

Although Bronze-Age Crete has been described as the first great European civilisation, it is a society whose understanding is based predominately on conjecture due to its lack of any written narrative history and the ambiguous nature of much of its material remains. It is also a society shaped by the work and vision of one man (Sir Arthur Evans), whose various interpretations have been and continue to be questioned.

Sparta was a unique and mysterious society within the Greek world. It puzzled those outside its borders and was variously praised and criticised for some of its unusual features. However, due to its own lack of a literary narrative, its relative geographic isolation, the Spartans' suspicious nature, and the myth they created about themselves, their Greek contemporaries tended to have a view of their society as rigid and static. Despite knowing today that their society underwent many dramatic changes, still, little can be said about them with certainty.

Although society at the time of Darius and Xerxes was multicultural, much of our evidence is restricted to that of the Persians and Medes. This was a society where the ideology of the king permeated every aspect of life, from tolerance of diversity, fairness in law, administrative unification and stunning building programs.

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CHAPTER 1
Society in New Kingdom Egypt to the death of Amenhotep III

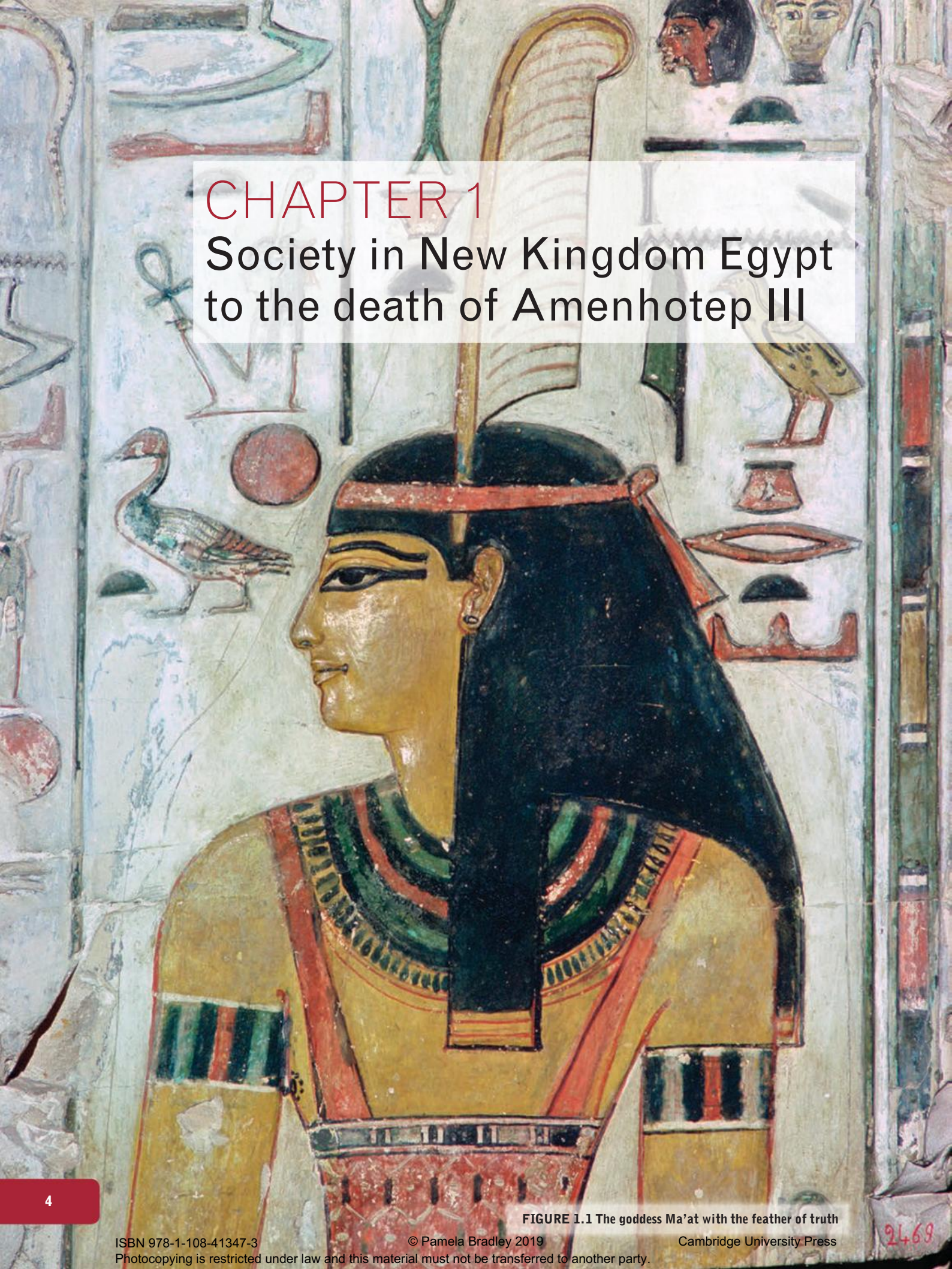

FIGURE 1.1 The goddess Ma'at with the feather of truth

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FIGURE 1.2 A map of Egypt showing Upper and Lower Egypt and the Black and Red Lands

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students will examine a range of archaeological and written sources and relevant historiographical issues of the New Kingdom Egypt society to the death of Amenhotep III, and their interrelated nature.
KEY ISSUES	• The historical and geographical context • Social structure and political organisation • The economy • Religion, death and burial • Cultural and everyday life

Turning my face to the south I did a wonder for you, I made the chiefs of wretched Kush come before you carrying their tribute on the backs. Turning my face to the north I did a wonder for you, I made the countries of the ends of Asia come to you carrying all their tributes on their backs.

SOURCE 1.1 Stela of Amenhotep III from his mortuary temple in western Thebes

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

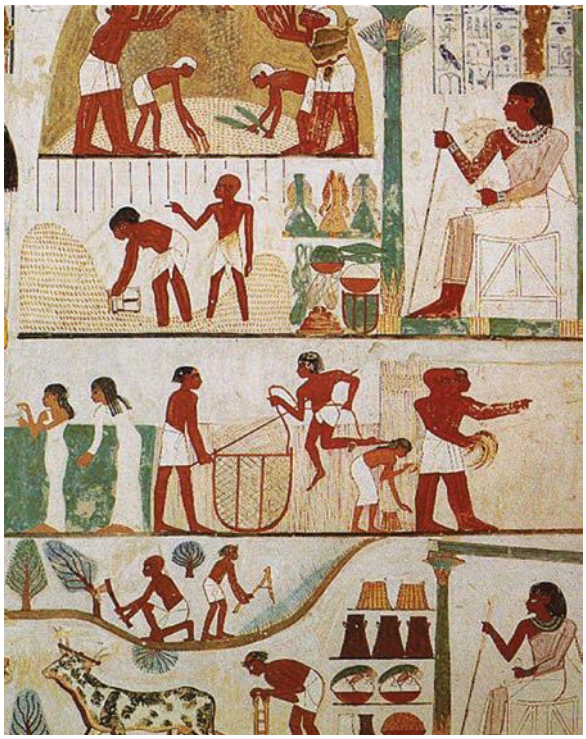

FIGURE 1.3 Seasonal agricultural activities from the Tomb of Nakht

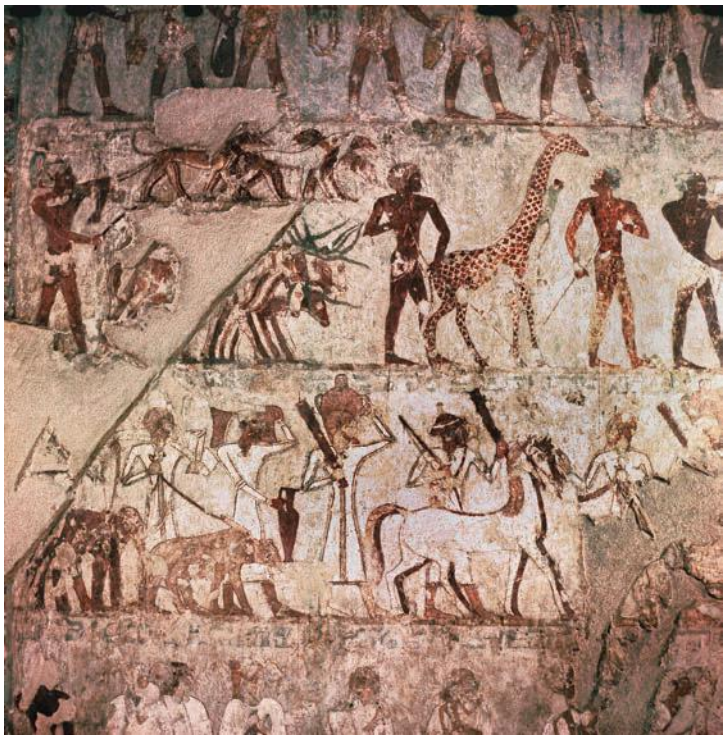

FIGURE 1.4 A scene of Nubian tribute bearers from the tomb of Rekhmire

Carefully study the images in Figures 1.3 and 1.4 and note what you can see in each one. What do these images suggest about the Egyptian economy during this period? What do you think was the importance of the peasant class in Egyptian society? What other questions do these images raise?

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CHAPTER 1 Overview

KEY IDEA

This society in the first half of 18th Dynasty Egypt clearly reveals the degree and nature of continuity and change. While the acquisition of the empire, and the wealth that came with it, transformed society and opened up Egypt to foreign influences, there were many things which would always remain the same. You will need to identify both those factors that brought about change and those aspects of society that remained unchanged for millennia, and the reasons for this.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Societies are always changing, and some, like our own, in dramatic and rapid ways. While we, like the ancient Egyptians in the time frame being studied, have to cope and adapt, we could learn something from them by maintaining those long-held values that have always worked within our society and created a certain stability. Not all change is necessarily beneficial.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- *ba*
- barque
- barter
- bier
- booty
- bureaucracy
- canopic jars
- cataract
- concubines
- corvée
- cuneiform
- dowager queen
- dynasty
- gypsum
- Heb-sed
- hierarchical
- hieratic script
- *ka*
- *khepresh*
- kohl
- lector priest
- lintel
- *ma'at*
- malachite
- Medjay
- muu
- necropolis
- obelisk
- ochres
- pectorals
- pharaoh
- pylon
- sarcophagus
- scimitar
- sem priest
- sennet
- silt
- tribute
- unguents
- vizier

Painting the picture

According to J. Baines and J. Málek, in *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, the New Kingdom refers to the period from c. 1550–1070 BC, which comprised the 18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties. However, this option covers only Egyptian society during the early and mid-18th **Dynasty** to the death of Amenhotep III in c. 1353.

This was a period when the simple introverted society of the Nile changed forever, as a series of strong, warrior **pharaohs** brought Syria, Palestine and Nubia under Egyptian influence and control. As a result of the acquisition of an 'empire', incredible wealth poured into Egypt in the form of **booty**, **tribute**, increased trade and gifts from neighbouring kings. 'Under the shock of empire, changes became so rapid that the old sanctions of life could no longer hold society within its distinct integrity.'[1]

Society was transformed not only by the influx of wealth, but also by foreigners in the workforce; the introduction of new ideas, products and processes that impacted on religion, daily life and art; changes in the structure and size of government; and a demand for more skilled workers

INQUIRY QUESTION

What was the power and influence of Amun-Re and its priesthood in Egyptian society?

dynasty a line of kings and queens from the same family

pharaoh from the Egyptian 'pero' or 'per-a-a', which was the designation for the royal residence and means 'Great House'. The honorific title of 'pharaoh' for a ruler did not appear until the New Kingdom

booty objects (spoil) taken from an enemy in war

tribute a contribution made by one ruler or state to another as a sign of submission or as the price of protection

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as pharaohs initiated massive building programs which reached an unprecedented scale. 'Nubian gold and goods imported from the empire combined with the sheer inexhaustible output of Egypt's workshops, created a golden age of wealth and luxury'.[2] This reached its peak in the long reign of Amenhotep III, who was referred to in his own day as *The Dazzling Sun-disk*. Egyptian society was unsurpassed in power and artistic magnificence, 'never again equalled in the 1500 years Egypt's pharaonic culture survived'[3] but 'the age of empire meant more than just wealth, power and luxury; it fostered a broadening of the intellectual horizon.'[4]

Despite the great changes that occurred in society, and the development of a wider view of the world, there were things which continued as before: the total dependence on the Nile for all aspects of life; the way the river and the perpetual sunshine determined the Egyptians' view of creation, the afterlife, the nature of their gods and their sense of morality; the nature of the god-king and his responsibilities to maintain divine order; the hierarchical nature of society and administration; the role of the peasant as the backbone of society and the importance of agriculture as the base of the economy; and the importance of the gods, funerary beliefs and the need to prepare for an afterlife.

1.1 The historical and geographical context

TABLE 1.1 A summary of major events

Pharaoh 1550–1353 BC	Developments
Ahmose 1550–1525	Expelled the foreign Hyksos from the Delta and reunited Egypt.
Amenhotep I 1525–1504	Reconquered Nubia, consolidated Egypt's control over it, rebuilt fortresses and appointed a viceroy in Nubia, took the first steps in developing the west bank at Thebes as the site of a vast **necropolis** and founded a special workforce to build the royal tombs.
Thutmose I 1504–1492	Led two important military campaigns to Nubia and western Asia. His Syrian campaign reached the Euphrates. He ordered superb additions to the god Amun's temple at Karnak and began the process of all future kings in building his tomb in the Valley of the Kings.
Thutmose II 1492–1479	In his short reign, he quelled a revolt in Nubia and brought one of the princes of Kush to be held as a hostage by the Egyptians.
Hatshepsut (female) 1473–1458	Hatshepsut, the queen of Thutmose II, became regent for the heir, Thutmose III, but usurped the throne and ruled as a king for about 20 years in a co-regency with Thutmose III. Her reign was a time of internal peace and vigorous growth. She sent a trading mission to the land of Punt but her top priority was her building program and devotion to 'her father', the god Amun.
Thutmose III 1479–1425	Possibly the greatest pharaoh to occupy the throne of Egypt and one of the most significant pharaohs of the New Kingdom. He spent the first 20 years of his sole reign beyond the borders of Egypt fighting his country's enemies, maintaining Egyptian control and developing an effective administration. He built with the same energy as he had fought against his enemies and was a patron of the arts.
Amenhotep II 1427–1401	Amenhotep was a ruthless but successful warrior and, like his father, the epitome of the 'warrior king'.

necropolis cemetery or 'city of the dead'

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TABLE 1.1 *(continued)*

Pharaoh 1550–1353 BC	Developments
Thutmose IV 1401–1391	Thutmose IV's reign was a turning point in terms of the empire as diplomacy, rather than war, was employed to deal with foreign powers. He entered into diplomatic relations with the powerful king of Mitanni and an alliance was sealed with the arrival of a Mitanian princess to join the pharaoh's harem.
Amenhotep III 1391–1353	When Amenhotep III came to the throne, Egypt was on the verge of the most magnificent period in its history and there was nearly half a century of peace and prosperity in the empire as he reaped the benefits of his predecessors.

FIGURE 1.5 Amenhotep III

FIGURE 1.6 The colossi of Amenhotep III at Thebes

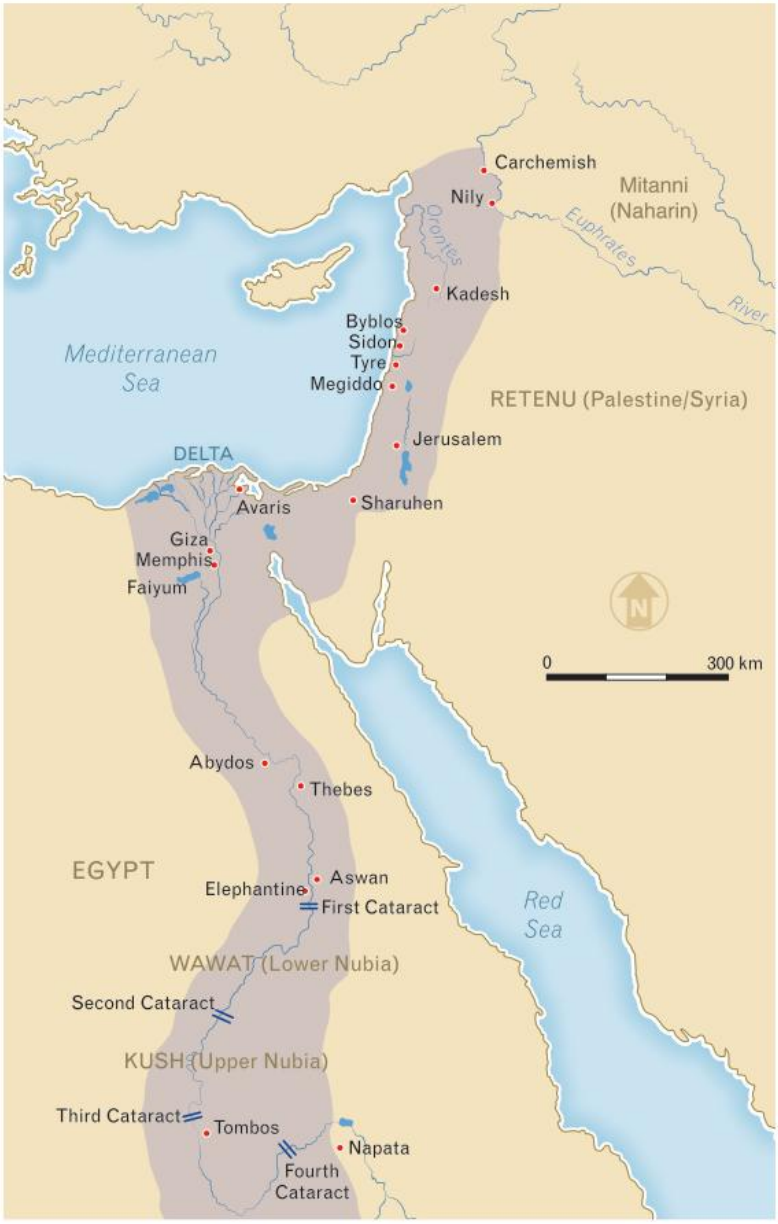

FIGURE 1.7 Map of the Egyptian 'empire' in the mid-18th Dynasty

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Geographical setting, natural features and resources

Ancient Egypt owed much of its character to the nature of the Nile River, the length and shape of the river valley, the enclosing deserts and the climate. The river and the sun were the two great forces that dominated the lives of the ancient Egyptians.

They referred to their land as Kemet (the Black Land) which comprised:

- the wide triangular, fan-shaped delta, crisscrossed by distributaries of the Nile. This is a place of lush swamps and meadows and moister, milder climate.
- the fertile Faiyum, a depression 50 metres below sea level that caught the surplus flood waters and served as a reservoir when the Nile was low. It was rich in wildlife.
- the long fertile strip on either side of the Nile River hemmed in by sandstone and then limestone cliffs, which in some places was so narrow that the hills almost rose up out of the river. The southern boundary of the Black Land was at Elephantine (modern Aswan) where the river was restricted by what was known as the 1st **Cataract**.

cataract rocky interruptions to the flow of a river, causing rapids

silt fine soil carried and deposited by water (alluvial)

The Black Land got its name from the dark rich **silt** deposited over the valley flats when the Nile broke its banks at the same time every year. Kemet was divided into *The Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt*: Upper Egypt (Shemau) and Lower Egypt (To-mehu). See Figure 1.2.

The Red Land or Deshret refers to the desert plateaus and cliffs bordering the valley, where the Egyptians buried their dead, built their tombs and hunted wild animals. This was the only part of the desert that they regarded as part of Egypt proper although they exploited the Eastern Desert with its high, forbidding mountains for its minerals, gold and supply of semi-precious and building stones. There were several routes through these mountains which followed dried river beds called wadis. The desolate rocky desert west of the Nile was known as the Libyan Desert and was broken only by a line of oases.

Other areas under Egyptian control at this time were:

1 Nubia, which comprised Wawat (Lower Nubia from the Egyptian border at the 1st Cataract to the 2nd Cataract) and Kush (Upper Nubia to the vicinity of the 4th Cataract)

2 Palestine

3 Syria, which included the coastal cities of Phoenicia and extended as far as the Euphrates River.

FIGURE 1.8 An aerial or satellite view of the Red and Black lands

FIGURE 1.9 The line of demarcation between the Red and Black Lands at modern Luxor

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The annual inundation

According to Herodotus, 'the Nile is a great river' and works 'great changes',[5] referring to its life-giving waters in a country that very rarely saw rain.

- During June, the Nile began to rise. Green water (containing vegetable matter) appeared everywhere along the valley between Aswan and Memphis.
- The water continued to rise and by August it was a dark muddy colour caused by eroded material.
- The floodwater reached its peak in September and after several weeks the level began to drop.
- By May the following year the river level was at its lowest.

FIGURE 1.10 The 1st Cataract

The timing of the flood and the height of the waters were critical for the inhabitants of Egypt as they determined everything from the mundane tasks of the farmer, to the work of the huge bureaucracy of government officials (irrigation, re-surveying the land, marking boundaries, digging canals and building dykes), to the coronation of a king.

Resources of Egypt and its empire

TABLE 1.2 The resources of Egypt and its empire

Egypt – The 'Two Lands'
River valley and delta Water for irrigation; rich silt; mud (mud bricks) and clay (pottery); papyrus (paper, baskets, boats); crops (emmer, wheat, barley and flax for linen, fruit, vegetables and vines); domesticated animals (cattle, goats, sheep, geese); water birds and fish
Desert cliffs Sandstone, limestone and granite for building temples, tombs, monuments and statues
Eastern and Western deserts Basalt, diorite, quartzite, alabaster, gold, copper and semi-precious stones for buildings, crafts, and decorative and ritual arts, as well as natron for mummification and lead ore galena (kohl)
Sinai Copper, turquoise, hydroxide malachite
The Egyptian 'empire'
Nubia Gold, cattle, exotic products from tropical Africa: incense, ebony, ivory, animal skins and live animals
Palestine–Syria Valuable metals: copper, lead, silver; semi-precious stones: lapis lazuli, rock crystal; timber: cedar; grain and animals

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Significant sites

Thebes

Although the traditional capital of Memphis in Lower Egypt still played a vital role during the New Kingdom, it was the city of Thebes or *Waset* (modern Luxor), 800 kilometres south of the Mediterranean in Upper Egypt, that was the main political and religious centre during the 18th Dynasty. Most of what we know of Thebes today relates to stone-built temples and rock-cut tombs, although it is believed to have had a population of about 75 000 and to have covered 93 square kilometres. On the east bank was the city itself, the Temple of Luxor, and the cult Temple of Karnak, dedicated to the state god Amun, which each new pharaoh embellished with monuments: pylons, obelisks, hypostyle halls, sanctuaries and processional avenues of ram-headed sphinxes. On the west bank of the Nile, opposite the city of Thebes, was the Theban necropolis where pharaohs and powerful nobles were buried and where the pharaohs built their massive mortuary (funerary) temples.

Valley of the Kings

The Valley of the Kings was the heart of the Theban necropolis and was known as *The Great and Majestic Necropolis of the Millions of Years of the Pharaoh, Life, Strength, Health in the West of Thebes*. It was Thutmose I who first ordered the construction of his rock-cut tomb in the arid, desolate and isolated gorge lost among rocky ravines at the base of a pyramid-shaped mountain referred to as 'The Peak'. Within this valley all New Kingdom pharaohs were buried.

Malkata

On the west bank of the Nile at Thebes was the sprawling 32-hectare site of Malkata (Arabic for 'where things are picked up'), a massive mud-brick and timber palace complex built for Amenhotep III. It was called the *House of Rejoicing* and became his main place of residence in the latter part of his reign. It was a veritable city, consisting of several residential palaces for the king, his wives and children; quarters for his concubines (harem); a temple to Amun; administrative halls and audience rooms; private apartments and elite villas for nobles; quarters for palace workers; gardens and a great pleasure lake for the king's chief wife, Tiy. There were also royal workshops and a workers' village. A causeway linked it to the king's funerary temple almost 1.5 kilometres away, and a system of canals connected it to the Nile. A large harbour or quay provided access for both commercial and administrative traffic.

FIGURE 1.11 Aerial view of the Valley of the Kings

ACTIVITY 1.1

1. What do you understand by the terms 'Black Land' and 'Red Land'?
2. What lands outside *Kemet* impacted the life of the people in the 'Two Lands' of Upper and Lower Egypt?
3. Explain what Herodotus meant when he wrote 'The Nile is Egypt' and that the river 'works many changes'.
4. Describe the benefits that the Nile brought to the people of Egypt.

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5 List two valuable resources the Egyptians derived from each of the following:
   - the deserts
   - Nubia
   - Palestine and Syria.
6 Identify the major differences between the left and right banks of the river at Thebes.
7 Interpret what Figure 1.10 suggests about transportation along the Nile into Nubia.
8 Use Figure 1.11 to describe the Valley of the Kings.
9 Describe what Malkata was and who built it.

1.2 Social structure and political organisation

Egyptian society and its political organisation were strictly **hierarchical**. At the head of both was the god/king from whom all property, personal freedom, religious and secular powers, status and rank were transferred to others. The state (its lands and people) was the king's property and responsibility.

Social groups

The king, with his god-like status, remote and isolated from his subjects, was the capstone of a social pyramid.

hierarchy graded in order from highest to lowest

vizier a minister of state who in ancient Egypt was second only to the king

1 Royalty: pharaoh, queen consort, dowager queen, secondary wives, royal concubines, royal sons and daughters.
2 Great nobles and high officials: **vizier** (second only to the king), Viceroy of Kush (in control of Nubia), treasurers, high priest of Amun and royal steward of the king's domain.
3 Lesser officials: scribes in every area of society and administration, mayors of towns, police officers, numerous officials responsible to the great nobles and army officers.
4 Skilled craftsmen employed in temple workshops, on royal and noble estates, and on tomb construction and decoration. At the lower end of this class were the tradesmen.
5 Peasant farmers and agricultural labourers who formed the bulk of the population.
6 Slaves: thousands of captives were employed in the households and on the estates of the wealthy, on lands and in workshops of temples, on public works and in the army. Some slaves reached positions of responsibility in the bureaucracy and in the household of the pharaoh.

Roles and images of the pharaoh

For over 3000 years, though political, social and economic conditions may have changed and despite the individual abilities of particular rulers, and some changes in the images of royalty, the basic depictions of divine power always remained the same.

The pharaoh was regarded as:

- the earthly form of the falcon god, Horus
- the son of Re, the sun-god
- Horus, the son of Osiris, when he ascended the throne
- Osiris when he died
- the son of the imperial god Amun-Re during the New Kingdom and often shown wearing the feathers of Amun.

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Ma'at

The pharaoh was also the earthly representation of the concept of **ma'at** established at the time of creation. Without *ma'at* there would be chaos in both the physical and spiritual worlds. The divine personification of *ma'at* was the goddess by the same name, whose ostrich feather represented truth.

ma'at refers to the ancient Egyptian concepts of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice

As the interpreter of divine order on earth, the king ruled by 'divine utterance' and the royal scribes never failed to laud his great wisdom.

> Every speech in thy mouth is like the words of Harakhti; thy tongue is a balance: more accurate are thy lips than the tongue of the balance of Thoth. What is there that thou dost not know? Who is there that is as wise as thou? ... If thou sayest to the waters, 'Come upon the mountain', a flood floweth directly at thy word for thou art Re. ... Authority is in thy mouth and perception is in thy heart. The activity of thy heart is the Temple of Ma'at ... All is done according to they will, and whatever thou sayest is obeyed.

SOURCE 1.2 Cited in George Steindorrf & Keith C. Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, revised by K.C. Seele, p. 83

It was important that the king's divine powers be rejuvenated at the Heb-sed Festival every 30 years (see p. 39) and when he died – because the people feared an outbreak of chaos and disorder – it was imperative to have the next king crowned as soon as possible in order to re-establish harmony, stability and security in the kingdom.

FIGURE 1.12 The Goddess Ma'at with the feather of truth

Ma'at could only be maintained if the king carried out his divine responsibilities. These included:

- upholding what was right and dispensing justice
- performing sacred rituals in all the temples of the land, including daily rituals, and attending all important religious festivals, as well as constructing and restoring temples.
- providing prosperity and nourishment for both the people and the land by controlling the waters of the Nile and the fertility of the soil, and being responsible for good harvests and trade within and outside Egypt. The connection between king and the provision of water was always stressed.
- protecting the country and its people by supervising defences against all physical enemies, as well as chaotic and evil forces. The symbolic image of the pharaoh, since the beginning of Egyptian history, as a smasher of heads continued throughout the New Kingdom, with his towering figure striding forward and grasping in his left hand the hair of a captive or captives while the mace-head or scimitar in his right hand is about to beat out the enemies' brains. Also, the frequent depictions of kings hunting wild animals in the desert and hippopotami in the Nile symbolically represented the king overcoming the evil chaotic forces of the god Seth.

The 'warrior pharaoh' image

Many pharaohs of the New Kingdom were true warrior kings, like Thutmose I, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II who led their troops in war. Others directed or participated in campaigns only in the first years of their reigns. No matter what the abilities of the pharaohs, or whether their reigns were peaceful, they were always depicted in the monumental inscriptions as heroic warrior kings.

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A king is he, mighty of arm, the excellent fortress of his armies, the iron will of his people. He attacks every land with his sword, without there being millions of men behind him, throwing and striking his target every time he stretches out his hand. His arrows do not miss; mighty of arm, his equal does not exist, Montu on the battlefield.

SOURCE 1.3 S. Yeivin, *Journal of The Palestine Oriental Society*, 14 (3), p. 194

In the texts and images of the 18th Dynasty, warrior pharaohs are:

- known by Horus names such as Mighty in Strength (Thutmose III), Who Conquers all Lands by his Might (Amenhotep II) and Great in Strength, Smiter of Asiatics (Amenhotep III)
- associated with Montu, the winged war god of Thebes
- described as superhuman in the midst of battle; larger-than-life in their chariots, with the reins fastened around their waists and vastly outnumbered, their arrows always finding their mark and the enemy utterly powerless against them
- shown wearing the ***khepresh***. This crown was added to the collection of royal regalia. It was made of blue leather covered with gold studs and was not just worn in battle, but also whenever a pharaoh wanted to emphasise his warlike powers and military feats
- depicted with the **scimitar** as well as other royal sceptres (pastoral crook and whip or flail)
- shown 'smiting the enemy' and with Nubians and Asiatic peoples symbolically under their feet; for example, on the base of the king's throne or footstool
- depicted as a sphinx
- recorded as heroic and as a great athlete. This image was repeated in the stelae records of their hunting forays, especially in northern Syria. No one could equal the kings' athletic prowess with the bow, and the inscriptions claimed that they hunted large numbers of elephants, captured herds of wild bulls and killed many lions in the space of hours. Despite their personal hunting abilities, it seems that some of these expeditions, like the large-scale bull hunt at Wadi Natrun in the early years of Amenhotep III, when he supposedly killed 96 wild bulls, were staged affairs, probably 'intended as a very public demonstration of the king's ability to control wild forces and so bring order to chaos'.[6]

khepresh the blue war crown of the pharaoh

scimitar a sword-like weapon with a curved cutting edge

The Armant Stela of Thutmose III was set up as a record of the mighty deeds of the king in which both his military and his sporting achievements might be preserved.

If ever he spent a moment of relaxation, hunting in a foreign country, the size of his catch would be greater than the bag of his entire army. He slew seven lions by shooting in the space of a moment, and he brought off a herd of 12 bulls in one hour, and by the time breakfast came, the tails thereof were on his own rump. He cut down 120 elephants in the land of Niya [Syria] on his return from Naharin, when he had crossed the Euphrates, destroyed the towns on both its banks ... and set up his triumph stela upon its bank. He got a rhinoceros by shooting, in the southland in Nubia ... He set up his stela there, as he had done at the ends of Asia.

SOURCE 1.4 D. Redford, *The Wars in Syria and Palestine of Thutmose III*, pp. 154–5

FIGURE 1.13 A New Kingdom pharaoh in his war chariot wearing the blue *khepresh* or war crown

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ACTIVITY 1.2

1. Identify which group in the social hierarchy were the backbone of society and why.
2. Identify the symbol of the goddess Ma'at and its meaning.
3. Describe in your own words what Source 1.2 is saying about the pharaoh.
4. Outline the changes in kingly regalia that were associated with the new image of the warrior pharaoh.
5. Use Sources 1.3 and 1.4, as well as Figure 1.13, to explain how these depictions relate to the king's divine responsibilities. Were they a form of symbolic propaganda?
6. In one page of writing, explain the role played by the king in preventing 'chaos' in Egyptian society.

Roles of the vizier and members of the religious, administrative and military elites

No matter what divine powers the king was believed to possess, in practice he relied on the support and cooperation of others to run the country on his behalf. 'Government in Egypt was by royal decree, the system of administration was the sum of these decrees.'[7]

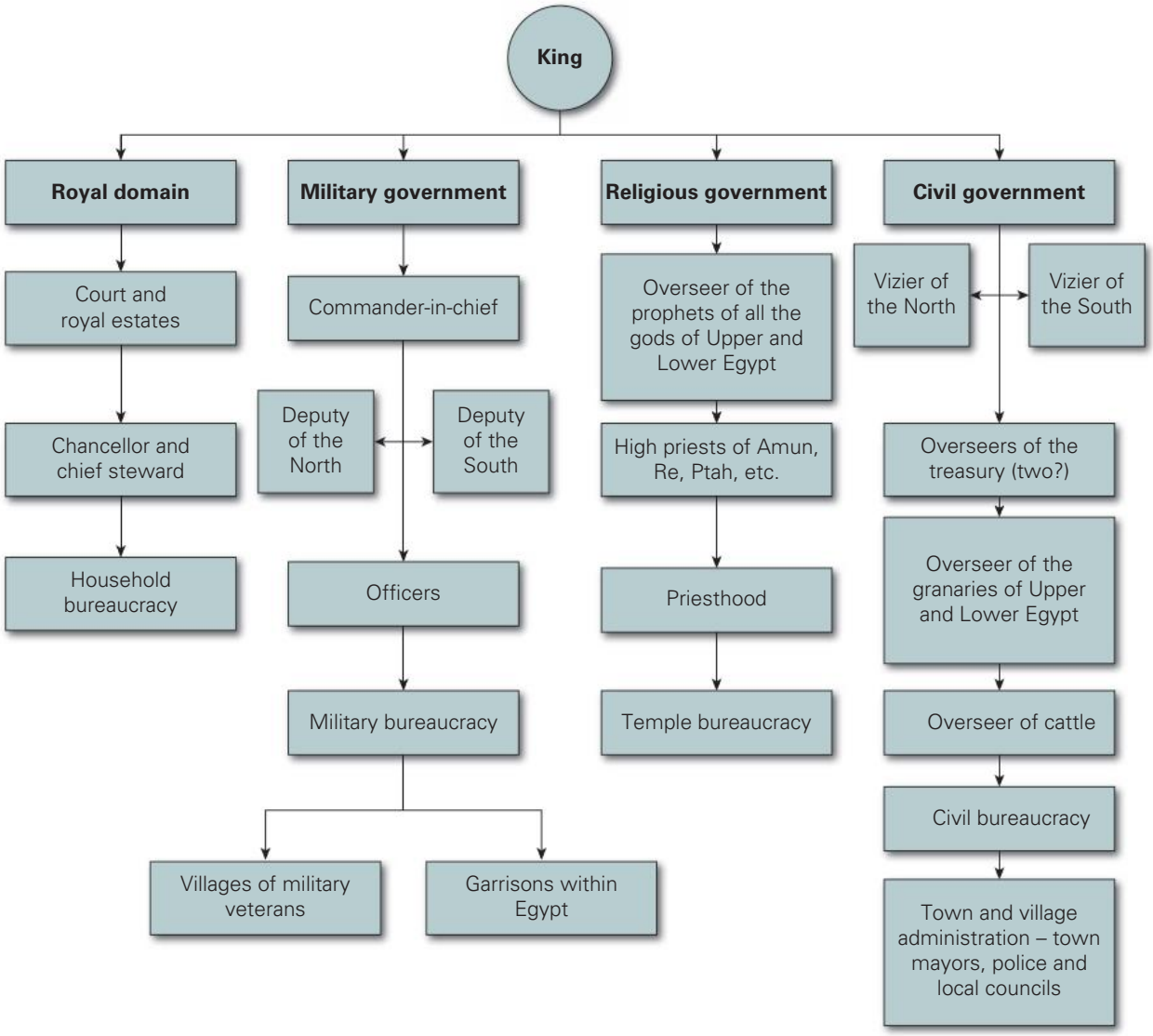

FIGURE 1.14 The structure of the government during the 18th Dynasty

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The king appointed a group of dedicated, competent and supportive nobles and officials to be his closest advisors, to whom he delegated authority and made known his wishes. These men, who reported directly to the king, maintained control of the four major divisions of the administration: the civil government, the religious government, the administration of the army and the royal domains (the court and royal estates). These 'king's men' were supported by deputies and a vast hierarchical **bureaucracy**. Most of these men were buried in the Theban necropolis.

bureaucracy a body of officials administering government departments

Vizier (Tjaty)

The vizier was the pharaoh's chief minister – second only to the king in power. He headed a bureaucracy of thousands of officials and held court every day: he heard from ministers, read dispatches and listened to petitioners, then relayed all the business to the king

A text in the splendid tomb of Rekhmire, the vizier to Thutmose III, and known as *The Installation of the Vizier*, gives a detailed account of the activities and responsibilities of a vizier. The text is in two parts:

1 the king's installation speech
2 the description of the duties of a vizier.

His majesty said to him:
Look to the office of vizier
Watch over all that is done in it,
It is the pillar for the whole land.
Being a vizier, it is not sweet, it is bitter as gall.
He is the copper that shields the gold of his master's house
He is not one who bends his face to magistrates and councillors,
Not one who makes of anyone his client.

SOURCE 1.5 The Installation of the Vizier, Rekhmire, in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature,* p. 20

The king also outlined the code of behaviour the vizier was expected to follow: to accept all petitioners; to allow a man to plead his innocence; to treat all equally 'whether he be mayor, or district governor or common person';[8] to give reasons for dismissing a petitioner; to refrain from losing his temper improperly; and to take into account other cases in the archives when making judgements.

A New Kingdom vizier shouldered enormous responsibilities. Fortunately, he had the support of the *overseer of the treasury*, the *overseer of the granaries of Upper and Lower Egypt*, the *chief steward* and the *overseer of works.* Some of the responsibilities of the vizier included:

- maintaining law and order in all civil cases and presiding over the highest court of justice in the land. He could be called upon to make a ruling on a tax issue, a dispute over a property boundary or contract, an accusation against an official or a case where there was a deficiency in offerings made to the gods.
- supervising the king's residence and being kept informed of everything that was taken in and out of the palace
- appointing and supervising officials
- assessing and collecting taxes
- receiving tribute and meeting delegations from foreign lands
- supervising the vast temple workshops and estates
- controlling public works
- supervising the royal necropolis and ensuring the care of the tomb builders of Deir el-Medina
- controlling all movement of traffic up and down the river
- maintaining all records and controlling archives
- equipping ships and dispatching agents when the king was on campaign.

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Viceroy of Kush

In the countries of the empire outside Egypt, such as Palestine and Syria, the administration was usually in the hands of local princes, watched over by garrisons of Egyptian soldiers. However, in Nubia (Wawat or lower Nubia, and Kush or upper Nubia), which had virtually become an extension of Egypt, there was a special viceroy with great independence. He controlled the lands from Elkab in Upper Egypt to the southern frontier of the empire, which at the time of Thutmose III was near Napata.

The best sources for the role of Viceroy of Kush are the records of Merymose, during the reign of Amenhotep III, and wall paintings and inscriptions in the tomb of Huy, who held the position during the reign of Amenhotep's grandson, Tutankhamun. The powerful official who held this position was responsible for protecting his province from internal and external threats; the construction of temples, fortresses, canals and storehouses; the administration of justice; and the delivery of all payments (taxes and tribute) to the pharaoh on time. These were shipped to Thebes and often presented to the king by the viceroy in person.

> In his capacity as 'overseer of the gold mines of Amun', Merymose was responsible for the gold output of the Sudan area, which was divided into the 'the gold of Kush' obtained between the 2nd and 3rd cataracts and the 'gold of Wawat' from the eastern Nubian desert, as well as the gold that came from the mines of Barramiya to the east of Edfu.

SOURCE 1.6 Joann Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King: Amenhotep III*, p. 46

The overseer of the treasury

The man who held this position looked after all aspects of the economy. This was particularly difficult since Egyptian business was carried on by the system of barter. The treasurer was directly responsible for:

- the calculation of taxes
- the amount to be paid to workers on royal estates
- the economic affairs of the temples
- payments to the army
- the distribution of tribute paid from foreign princes and plunder from military campaigns.

High Priest of Amun and other priests

During the New Kingdom, the High Priest of Amun (First Prophet of Amun) was Overseer of Prophets of all the Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. Because this position was a political appointment by the king, the person appointed usually had a high-profile career at court or in the civil bureaucracy.

The highest-ranking priests (First, Second, Third and Fourth Prophets or fathers of the gods) in all cults held positions permanently. Lower ranks of priests (*wabu* or pure ones) were part-time, living for three months in the temple and for the rest of the year carrying on with normal life.

As temples were centres of learning, there were many specialist priests: funerary and embalming, medicine, astronomy and architecture. **Lector priests** specialised in the knowledge of the sacred writings and were often skilled in magic. It was these priests who read or spoke the prayers and spells during festivals and funerals. The **sem priest**, who was always depicted wearing a leopard-skin garment, was the chief funerary priest and conducted the rites at the entrance to the tomb. (See Figure 1.15.)

lector priest the priest who recited prayers and spells at festivals and funerals

sem priest a priest dressed in a leopard skin who conducted the funerary rites at the entrance to the tomb

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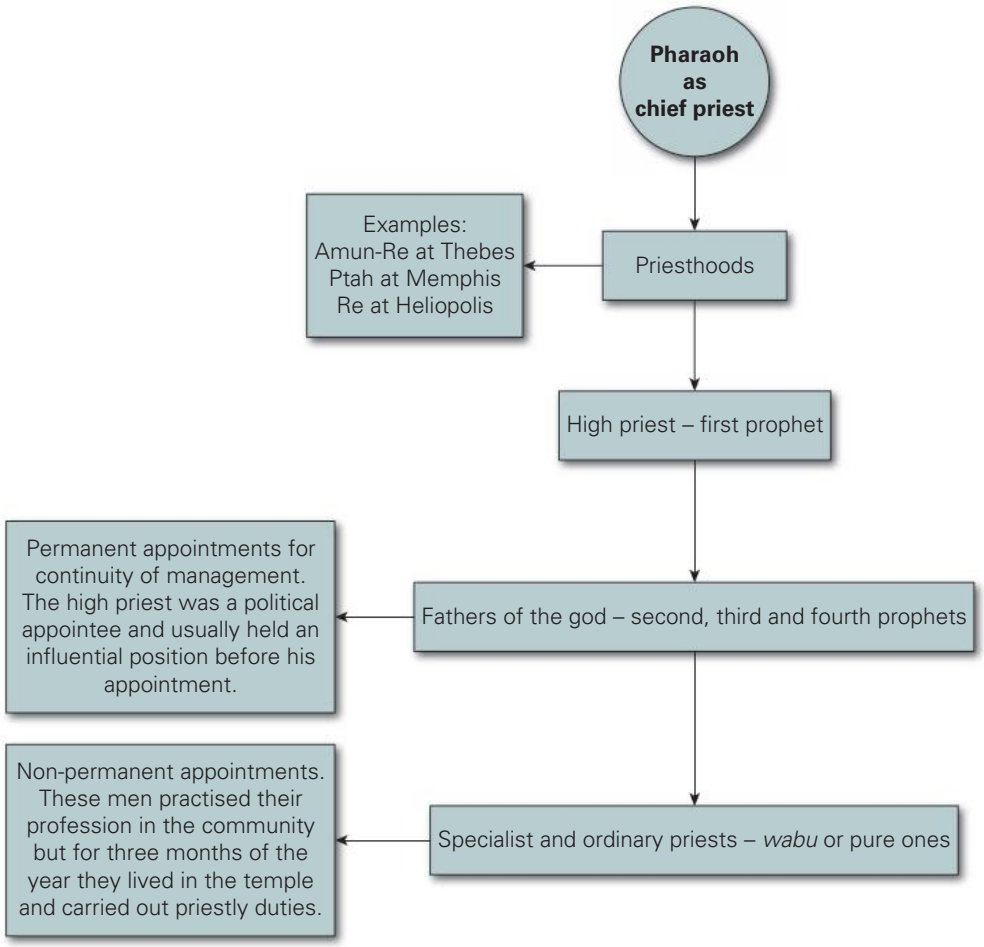

FIGURE 1.15 Diagram of the structure of a priesthood

ACTIVITY 1.3

1. Propose what is meant by 'government in Egypt was by royal decree, the system of administration was the sum of these decrees'.
2. Identify who was second in command to the king.
3. Explain what Thutmose III was suggesting about the vizierate in the following statements:
   - 'It is the pillar of the whole land.'
   - 'It is as bitter as gall.'
   - 'He is the copper that shields the gold of his master's house.'
   - 'He is not one who bends his face to magistrates'.
4. Describe how a vizier was expected to behave.
5. Discuss what his duties indicate about the nature of the civil bureaucracy that he ran.
6. Where was Nubia? What were the names given to Lower and Upper Nubia?
7. Describe why it was necessary for the viceroy of Nubia to have great independence.
8. Evaluate what Source 1.6 suggests about the men chosen by the pharaoh to govern Nubia.
9. Suggest what would happen to the economy if the Treasurer did not do his job properly.
10. Explain what gave the High Priest of Amun so much power.

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Nature and role of the army

During the reign of Thutmose III the Egyptian army became professional and the king was its supreme commander, in keeping with his image as a warrior pharaoh. The military organisation included the fighting force, with its hierarchy of field officers, and the military administration, with highly placed officers in charge of recruits, supplies, communications, accounts, records and other operations.

Detailed written accounts of the campaigns of Thutmose III provide evidence of soldiers on the march and in camp, as well as in the midst of battle.

Medjay Nubians used by the Egyptians as mercenary soldiers and as police in Egypt

The infantry and chariotry

The infantry was recruited from conscripts and volunteers from about one-tenth of the male population, as well as from foreigners, like the Nubian **Medjay** (elite archers). It comprised three groups dependent on differences in skill and experience:

1 an elite group of first-class warriors
2 a corps of seasoned soldiers
3 the newest recruits.

Within the infantry were spearmen, bowmen, axe-bearers and club slingers, as well as scouts, spies and messengers. Most foot soldiers wore a simple kilt and went barefoot. Weapons included short bronze daggers, long two-edged swords, spears, the powerful composite bow adopted from the Hyksos, battle-axes and throwing sticks. Troops fought in tightly packed groups of 200–250 in divisions of 5000 that were often named after the gods, such as the Division of Amun and Division of Re.

The infantry often carried out long sieges, but siege warfare was not well developed and usually consisted of minimal equipment such as ladders and climbing irons.

Amenhotep II was possibly the first Egypt king to use chariotry as a separate part of the army. This was the elite corps (*maryannu*) in the Egyptian army and those who led this unit were distinguished men of high birth, including sons of pharaohs. Amenhotep III appointed his father-in-law, Yuya, as lieutenant commander of chariotry. The charioteers' barracks were the royal stables. Chariots were light with two wheels and two horses, and manned by a driver, usually an Asiatic, responsible for manoeuvring the chariot, and a fighter armed with a spear, bow and arrow. Chariot forces were used as a strike weapon ahead of the infantry and routed the enemy at the end of battle.

In the early 18th Dynasty there was no navy as a specialised unit, but ships transported infantry troops and equipment to campaigns and the infantry sometimes fought from ships, firing arrows at hostile vessels, as in the war to liberate Egypt from the occupying Hyksos. Thutmose III used the navy as part of his strategy to land men and equipment in the ports of Syria in his campaign against the Mitanni. By Amenhotep III's time, there was a royal fleet, led by the king's own ship. Careers in the royal fleet seem to have been hereditary.

During this period, the army was used to:

- protect Egypt from invasion
- extend Egypt's borders
- keep the princes of Western Asia and Nubia in check and deal with periodic revolts, often on the accession of a new king
- deal with the growing influence of the kingdom of the Mitanni beyond the Euphrates River
- garrison subject towns and fortresses
- act as bodyguards for the king during tours of inspection and festivals
- help on public works where necessary
- accompany trading and mining expeditions, and expeditions to search for water in the deserts
- redeploy to guard borders and to police trade routes and mining areas.

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When not on active service, mercenaries were quartered in residence cities and capitals throughout Egypt, and military colonists were settled on farms which their families could inherit if one son was available for the army.

> Come [let me tell] you of the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors; The general, the troop commander, the officer who leads, the standard bearer, the lieutenant, the scribe, the commander of fifty, and the garrison captain ... He is awakened at any hour ... he toils until the Aten sets in his darkness of night. He is hungry, his belly hurts; he is dead while still alive. When he receives the grain ration, having been released from duty, it is not good for grinding. He is called up for Syria. He may not rest. There are no clothes, no sandals ... His march is uphill through mountains. He drinks water every third day; it is smelly and tastes of salt. His body is ravaged by illness, the enemy comes, surrounds him with missiles, and life recedes from him ... his body is weak, his legs fail him ... his wife and children are in their village; he dies and does not reach it. If he comes out alive, he is worn out from marching. Be he at large or be he detained the soldier suffers.

SOURCE 1.7 Papyrus Lansing, A Schoolbook: Be A Scribe, trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 172

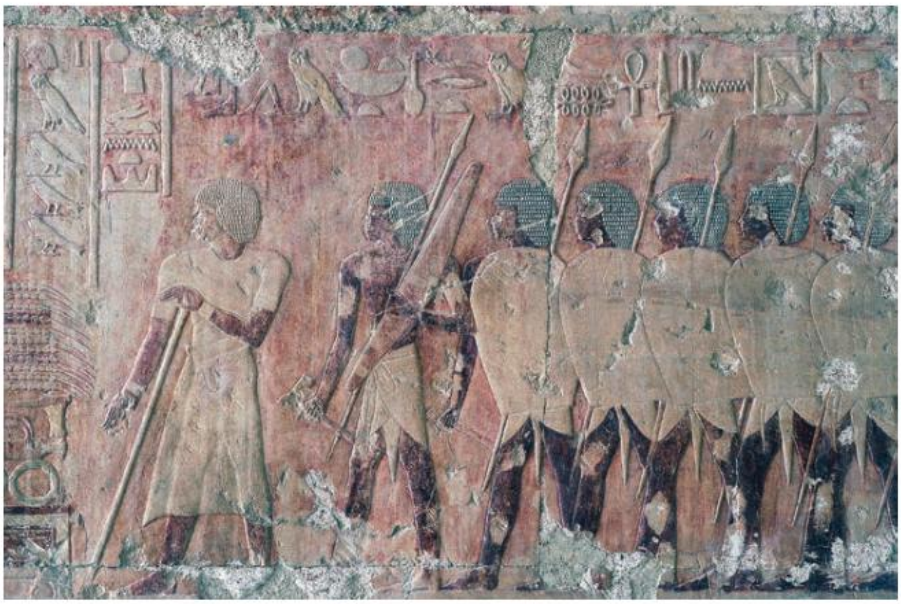

FIGURE 1.16 Infantry accompanying a trading expedition

Captives and rewards

Captives were distributed to some officers as a reward. Others were put to work in Egypt's mines, quarries and on temple lands. Although the lion's share of the booty taken in campaigns went to the god Amun, officers received a share, including male and female slaves. Ordinary soldiers received only a small share of the booty taken after battle. Officers were rewarded for outstanding bravery, merit and loyalty with the 'gold of valour' (necklace of gold decorations, often flies) presented in public by the pharaoh, and often a grant of land.

> I let you know what favours came to me. I have been rewarded with gold seven times in the sight of the whole land, with male and female slaves as well. I have been endowed with many fields.

SOURCE 1.8 The autobiography of Ahmose, son of Abana, trans. M Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 12

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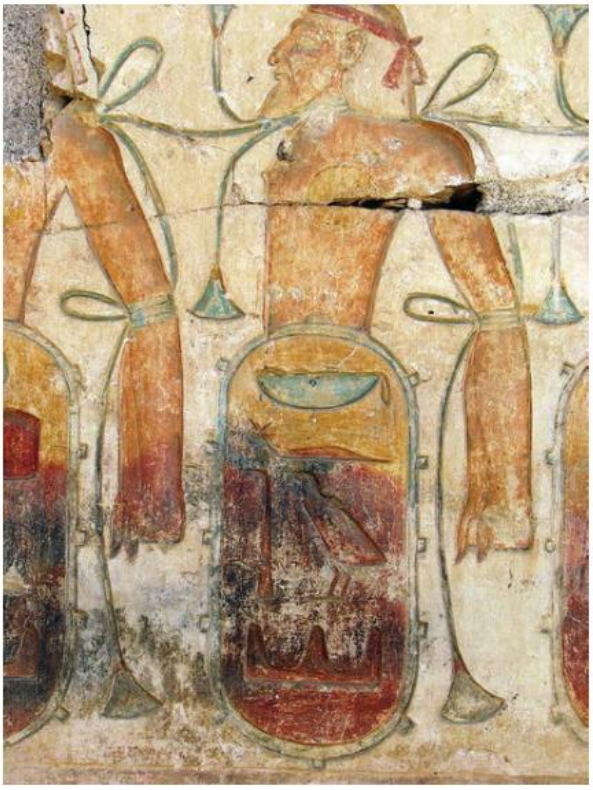

FIGURE 1.17 Syrian prisoners captured by the Egyptian army

ACTIVITY 1.4

1. Who were the Medjay and what role did they play in the Egyptian army?
2. What was the elite unit in the Egyptian army? By what name was it known?
3. Describe how the Egyptians used ships during military campaigns.
4. Propose why it was essential for the earlier militias to be transformed into a professional army during this period.
5. Read Source 1.7 carefully and note where this extract comes from.
   - What is the theme of this passage?
   - What members of the military elite are mentioned here?
   - Make a list of the conditions supposedly suffered by the ordinary Egyptian soldier.
   - Although there may be some truth in it, why is it overly exaggerated?
6. Deduce what Figure 1.16 indicates about the role of Egyptian military forces during peace time.
7. What happened to those the army captured and how were Egyptians rewarded for bravery or for performing a particular service to the king?

Roles and status of royal and non-royal women

The 18th Dynasty surpassed previous ages in the prominence and acknowledged influence of women.

Although queens in all periods of Egyptian history were regarded very highly, the 18th Dynasty was notable for a number of exceptional and influential queens. Of all the royal women, the most important was the queen consort: Great King's Wife. If she also happened to be the mother of the heir-apparent, her status was further enhanced. The **dowager queen** was also held in high regard, as were royal daughters.

dowager queen a title given to the widow of a previous king to distinguish her from the wife of the present king

The queen consort was identified with the goddesses Ma'at, Hathor and Isis. The cow horns and solar disk of Hathor became part of the queen's vulture headdress. Queen Tiy, the consort of Amenhotep III, was presented as the incarnation of Hathor at her husband's jubilee and in a temple built by him in Nubia.

Some royal women during this period were also closely linked to the cult of Amun as the Divine Consort or God's Wife of Amun, which entitled them to a large and wealthy estate and the labour to work it, as well as a group of priestesses, singers and musicians to which most high-ranking women at court belonged.

Queens and some royal daughters were prominent in public life. They were present at royal audiences, went on tours of inspections of building sites with their husbands, fathers or sons, and attended investitures of important officials, presentations of rewards and dedications.

Hatshepsut, the daughter of Thutmose I, wife of Thutmose II and co-ruler with Thutmose III, ruled in Egypt as pharaoh for close to 22 years, part of that time as pharaoh, and Queen Tiy, the wife of

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Amenhotep III, was consulted on internal and external affairs relating to the state. She is believed to have influenced her husband on diplomatic matters and corresponded with powerful foreign rulers who held her in high regard. She was the first queen consort to have her name associated with her husband's on official inscriptions and was represented in colossal statues and as a sphinx, the symbol of royal power.

> After her marriage to the young Amenhotep III she rapidly gained power and influence. Her name was twinned with that of her husband throughout his reign ... She became a key figure in his court. She took an active role in politics and corresponded on her own behalf with foreign dignitaries who clearly respected her wise counsel. The sheer number of surviving representations of the queen indicate her importance to the king. She provided the female element that brought balance to Amenhotep's role as pharaoh, and in the same way that gods' figures carried his features, so those of the goddesses are shown with those of his beloved wife. Tiy is shown wearing traditionally divine regalia.

SOURCE 1.9 Joann Fletcher, *The Sun King*, pp. 70–2

Except for royalty and some members of the upper classes, most women did not read and write, and positions in the bureaucracy were restricted to men. The duty of upper-class women was to support their husbands in their careers. They:

- were permitted to appear in public
- had freedom to visit and mix with men at banquets
- could carry out acceptable activities outside the home, such as those associated with the cult and mortuary temples: honorary priestesses, musicians and singers.

FIGURE 1.18 Queen Tiy wearing a crown with the cow horns and solar disk of Hathor and the feathers of Ma'at

FIGURE 1.19 Colossal statues of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiy with their daughter Sitamun

In theory, women of all classes were the equal of men in the eyes of the law. They could:

- inherit, purchase, lease and sell property
- hire or buy slaves
- continue to administer their own property even when married
- make legal contracts, go to court as a plaintiff or defendant and give evidence
- live alone without the protection of a male guardian
- retain their property if divorced and claim a share of any property, except in cases of adultery.

Married women were more respected than unmarried women. With motherhood, a woman's status increased and the more children she had, the greater her standing in society and the happier her husband would be, since a man was praised for his offspring. The birth of sons further enhanced her status but Egyptians were affectionate parents to all children, no matter the gender. Mothers and sons – even pharaohs and their mothers – had particularly close relationships. Boys were given instructions to look after their mothers in their old age and sons often honoured their mothers in their tombs.

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Double the food your mother gave you,
Support her as she has supported you;
She had a heavy load in you.
But she did not abandon you.
When you were born after your months,
She was yet yoked [to you]
Her breast in your mouth for three years.
As you grew and your excrement disgusted,
She was not disgusted ...
She kept watching over you daily

SOURCE 1.10 Instructions of Ani, trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian literature*, vol. II, p. 141

The chief role for a woman in all classes was as Mistress of the House, but in upper-class households, with servants and slaves, this was purely supervisory.

In the special craftsmen's village of Deir el-Medina, women carried out all activities in the village while the men were away in the Valley of the Kings working in the royal tombs.

As in other classes, the peasant women's chief duty was in the home but the evidence shows them helping their husbands in the fields: gleaning, harvesting flax, winnowing, carrying baskets to the storehouse and providing refreshments.

Among the slave class, women worked in the household as bakers, as personal attendants for the mistress and as entertainers. As in many societies, they were also prostitutes.

On this day, a declaration concerning her property was made by the Citizeness Nau-nakht before the following court ... She said 'As for me I am a free woman of the lane of pharaoh. I bought up these eight servants [children] and gave them an outfit of everything such as is usually made for those in their station. ... As for these eight children of mine they shall participate in the division of the property of their father in one single division ...

SOURCE 1.11 J. Cerny, 'The Will of Nau-nakht', *Jounal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 31 pp. 29–53

FIGURE 1.20 An ostrakon from Deir el-Medina showing a mother suckling a baby

FIGURE 1.21 A woman working in the fields with her husband in the hereafter

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ACTIVITY 1.5

1. Recall the title given to the chief consort, and identify the dowager queen.
2. How was the queen during this period:
   - identified with the goddesses of Egypt?
   - sometimes linked to the cult of Amun?
3. Use the text in Source 1.9 and Figures 1.18 and 1.19 to provide evidence for the power held by Queen Tiy, consort of Amenhotep III.
4. In what ways were Egyptian women equal to men in the eyes of the law?
5. Outline the activities women could indulge in publicly.
6. Identify the most respected women in all classes of society and why.
7. Rewrite in your own words the quote from the *Instructions of Ani* in Source 1.10.
8. Evaluate why the women in the village of the tomb workers, Deir el-Medina, had more freedom than most others of similar status.
9. Describe what Source 1.11 reveals about a well-to-do female from Deir el-Medina.

Scribes

Egyptians were great record keepers. Those who could read and write the hieroglyphic and **hieratic script**, and had a grasp of measurements, were employed at all levels in society such as in the civil, military and religious hierarchies, on the estates of the king and nobles, as well as in villages. The skills of the scribe were essential for the smooth running of the government. Some scribes moved all the way up the official ladder, reaching influential positions such as *scribe of the treasury, scribe of recruits, scribe of the granary and the pharaoh's fields* and *scribe of the divine offerings of Amun*. Amenhotep, son of Hapu, was possibly the most outstanding official in the outstanding reign of Amenhotep III. His career began as an inferior royal scribe and ended as minister of all public works.

hieratic script a simplified version of the hieroglyphic script in which the images were replaced with strokes

cuneiform one of the earliest systems of writing used in the Near East, distinguished by wedge-shaped marks made by a stylus on clay tablets

Scribes were not subjected to hard physical labour or conscripted for the army, and they were not subject to taxation. They regarded their profession as superior to most. Those who were involved in the diplomatic area of government had to master the art of writing and interpreting **cuneiform**.

Scribes:

- wrote letters and dispatches
- surveyed the land
- measured the height of the crops to assess the taxes
- took the census
- recorded items of trade
- measured and recorded gold supplies in the temples
- recorded the allocation of equipment and rations to the royal tomb workers.

> Set your sight on being a scribe; a fine profession that suits you. You call for one: a thousand answer you. You stride freely on the road. You will not be like a hired ox. You are in front of others ... I instruct you to make you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to the treasury and granary. To make you receive the ship-load at the gate of the granary. To make you issue the offerings on feast days. You are dressed in fine clothes; you

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own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king. Male and female slaves are about you ...

SOURCE 1.12 Papyrus Lansing, A Schoolbook: Be A Scribe, trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 171

FIGURE 1.22 A statue of Amenhotep, son of Hapu, a famous New Kingdom scribe

ACTIVITY 1.6

1. What qualifications did a scribe who hoped to progress to a high position need to have?
2. Why were scribes so essential in Egyptian society?
3. In your own words, describe the benefits of studying to become a scribe according to the Papyrus Lansing (Source 1.12).
4. Why do you think many high officials are often shown in the seated pose of a scribe with his writing palette?
5. Research Amenhotep, son of Hapu, and outline his advancement to become one of the most respected officials in the state.

Craftsmen, tradesmen and agricultural workers

A COMMENT ON SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THESE SOCIAL GROUPS

- The depictions of craftsmen and peasants in the wall paintings, on which historians rely for much of their knowledge of these social groups, are far from realistic. They show only some of the processes involved in crafts and trades, and not all activities carried out during the agricultural calendar. They show nothing much of the harsh conditions artisans experienced in crowded and overheated workshops, and almost never identify the craftsmen by name. Although the peasant farmer was the backbone of society and faced many frustrations and dangers, the depictions of agricultural life in the tombs of the great nobles generally represented rural life in an idealised form and the peasants as good-natured, happy people who joked and sang as they worked.
- In the contemporary written sources relating to the crafts and agricultural occupations written by scribes to encourage their students to work hard at their scribal skills, the opinion of the conditions of these two groups is very negative.

Many of the tombs of the officials reveal glimpses into royal, temple and estate workshops depicting portrait sculptors, goldsmiths, silversmiths, jewellers, bronze workers, coppersmiths, stone vase makers, master carpenters, masons and painters. Towards the bottom of the hierarchy were the potters, plasterers, brick makers, weavers and leather workers.

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There was also a select group of artisans – a predominantly hereditary workforce (*Servants in the Place of Truth*) – who lived in the protected village of Deir el-Medina and worked on the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings. They were supervised by the vizier and provided with monthly rations of emmer wheat flour for making bread and barley for making beer. In addition, the men received deliveries of vegetables, wood, pottery, and equipment and tools from government warehouses. Bonuses of meat, natron and oil were paid from time to time, and on their days off, they could supplement their income by other means. There is more evidence of their working and living conditions than for others in this class, and we know many of their names.

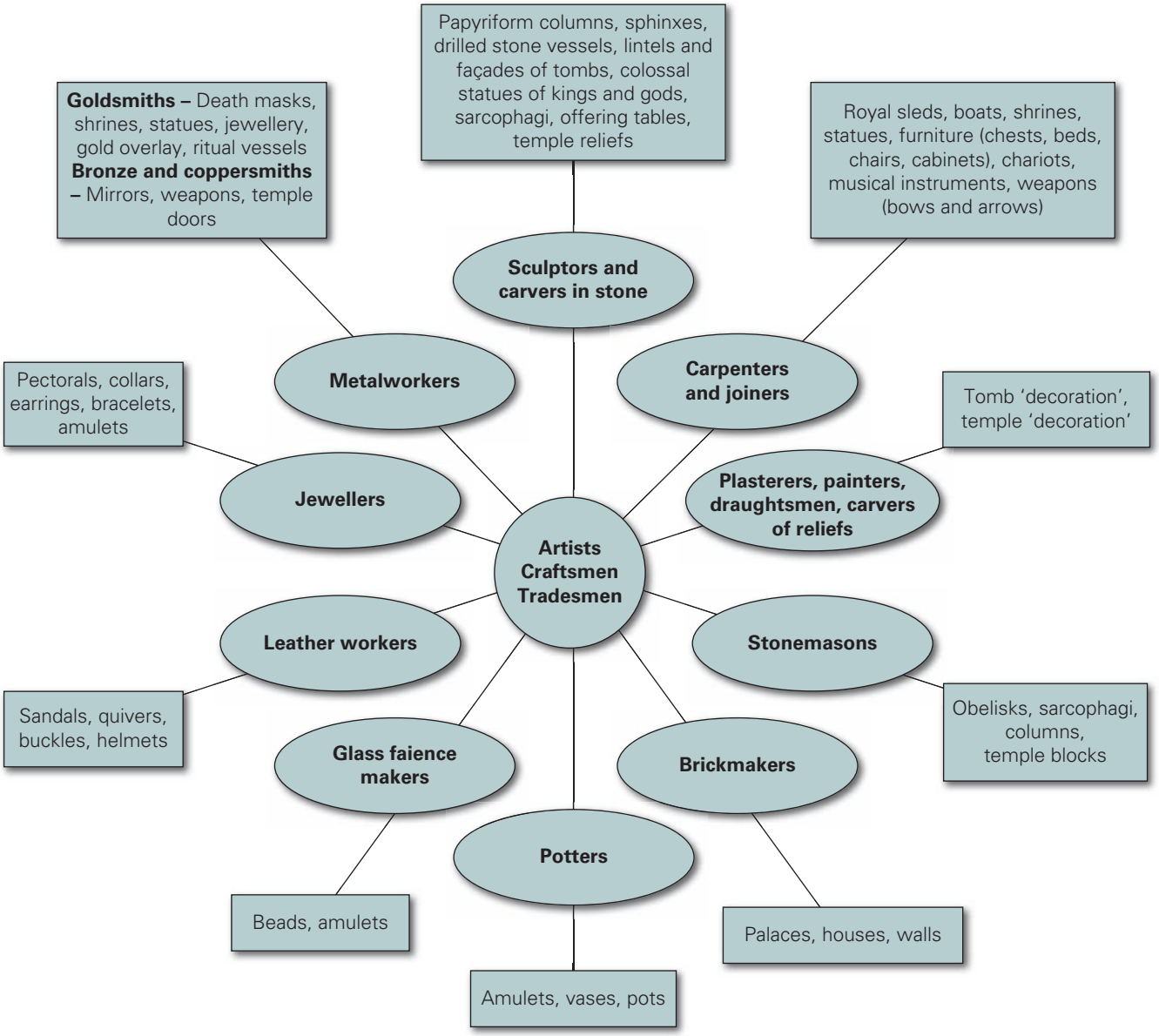

FIGURE 1.23 Diagram of the range of skilled craftsmen and tradesmen employed in the workshops of the temples and on large estates

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The agricultural peasants, who were the backbone of Egyptian society, were not slaves but tenant farmers working the lands of the pharaoh, the nobles and the temples, sharing their harvests and livestock with their landlords. Agriculture was back-breaking work and farmers faced the possibility of seasonal catastrophes such as low flood levels, drought, famine and plagues, overzealous scribes, heavy taxation and the annual **corvée**. The conditions of herders were far worse. They moved about with their cattle, had to negotiate swamps and crocodiles, and were punished if the cattle lost weight or were stolen, killed or died of disease.

corvée forced recruitment of farmers to work on buildings and community tasks such as major water and land management schemes

FIGURE 1.24 Metal processing and brick laying from the tomb of Rekhmire

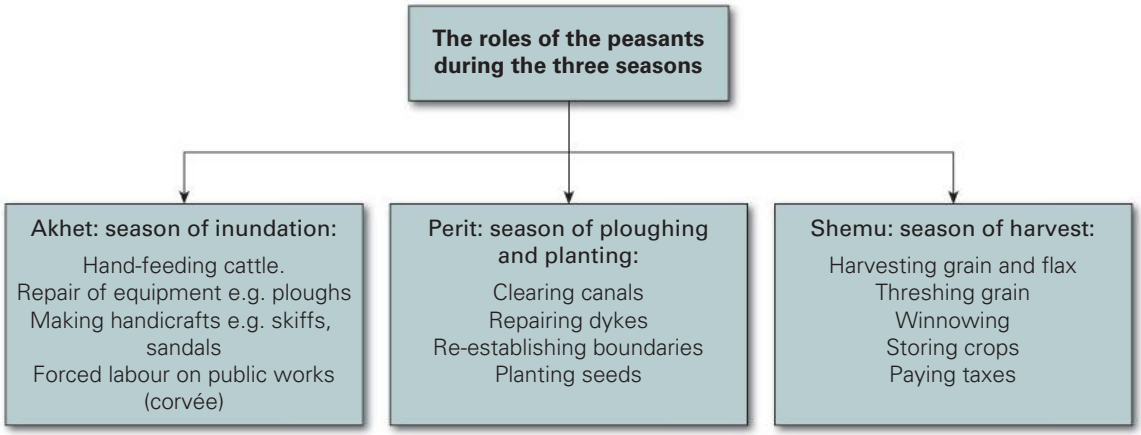

FIGURE 1.25 Diagram of the activities of the peasants during the three seasons of the calendar

> [Comes] the inundation and soaks him, he attends to his equipment. By day he cuts his farming tools; by night he twists rope. Even his midday hour he spends on farm labour. He equips himself to go to his field as if he were a warrior. The dry field lies before him. When he reaches the field, he finds it [broken up]. He spends time cultivating, and the snake is after him. It finishes off the seed as it is cast into the ground. He does not see a green blade. He does three ploughings with borrowed grain.

SOURCE 1.13 Some of the misfortunes of the peasant, from Papyrus Lansing, 'A Schoolbook: Be A Scribe', trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II pp. 170–1

ACTIVITY 1.7

1. Discuss how we know about the role of craftsmen in Egyptian society and to what extent this view is distorted.
2. If you were arranging craftsmen in a hierarchy, who would you put at the top and why? Who would you place at the bottom and why?

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3 In what ways were the lifestyle and conditions of the craftsmen employed in constructing the royal tombs different from others in society?
4 Evaluate the reliability of the views of agricultural labourers depicted in the tombs of the nobles.
5 Which do you think would have been the busiest time in the calendar for farmers?
6 Make a list of the difficulties faced by the peasant farmers.

1.3 The economy

Egypt's economic institutions, under strong centralised government, were subject to royal authority. The king was the owner of all the land, and the central government, through its officials, collected and redistributed the country's resources and employed those whose goods and services benefited the state.

The importance of the Nile to the Egyptian economy

The basis of the economy was agriculture, in which 90 per cent of the population was employed, but all Egyptians – including the nobles and high officials – depended on the Nile for their survival.

The annual rise and fall of the Nile, which varied from year to year, was of great concern to everyone as it determined the amount of land fertilised by the silt, the area planted to crops, the success of the harvests and the amount of tax that could be levied. If the Nile flood was too high, lives, property and animals were destroyed; too low and there were food shortages and famine.

Nilometers were built along the Nile to measure the maximum, minimum and average flow of the flood. Usually these were built in the form of a staircase leading from the river. As the floodwaters rose up through the staircase, the amount of water was determined by grooves cut into the walls. Ancient records indicate that when the river rose to 7.5 metres at Elephantine Island (Aswan) there was enough water to supply the needs of the country. A flood level over 8 metres was dangerously high, while a height of 6 metres was perilously low.

FIGURE 1.26 A nilometer at Elephantine

A COMMENT ON...

Hapi the God of inundation

- Hapi, greatly celebrated by the Egyptians, was the god of the annual flooding of the Nile. Some of his titles were *Lord of the Fishes and Birds of the Marshes* and *Lord of the River Bringing Vegetation*. The annual flooding of the Nile was called the *Arrival of Hapi.*
- He was typically depicted as a male with loin cloth and ceremonial false beard, but, in keeping with the symbolism of fertility and the bringing of a rich and flourishing harvest, he was depicted with pendulous female breasts, a large belly and bearing offerings. Also, he was usually blue or green and adorned with river plants such as papyrus or lotus.
- He was thought to live within a cavern at the supposed source of the Nile near Aswan, and his cult was located at the 1st Cataract.

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Praise to you, Hapi, sprung from the earth come to nourish Egypt!
You flood the fields that Re has made, to satisfy all who thirst ...
You feed men and herds with your meadow gifts.
Oh Joy when you come! ...
People's lives are changed by your coming ...
You fatten the herds, your might fashions everything, None can live without you. People are clothed with the flax from your fields. All types of craft exist because of you. All books of godly words are products from your sedges (reeds) ...
If your rise is insufficient, the people dwindle.
A year's supply is lost.
The rich man looks concerned, everyone is seen with weapons,
Friends do not attend to each other
Cloth is wanting for one's clothes ...

SOURCE 1.14 J. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 372–3

The Nile provided:

- the water for irrigation and the rich silt to produce the agricultural staples: emmer wheat for bread, barley for beer, vegetables and dates, flax for linen cloth, vineyards and orchards, and livestock breeding
- fish and water fowl for food
- the raw materials for building and crafts: mud bricks for domestic architecture and the papyrus reed for the manufacture of paper, flat-bottomed fishing and fowling skiffs, sandals, baskets and rope
- transportation and communication.

The river was the chief highway of the ancient Egyptians. It, and its associated network of canals, linked the scattered villages and towns along its 900-kilometre length from the delta to the 1st Cataract. The inhospitable desert on both sides made journeys overland difficult, while the Nile current and prevailing winds made travel up and down the river easier.

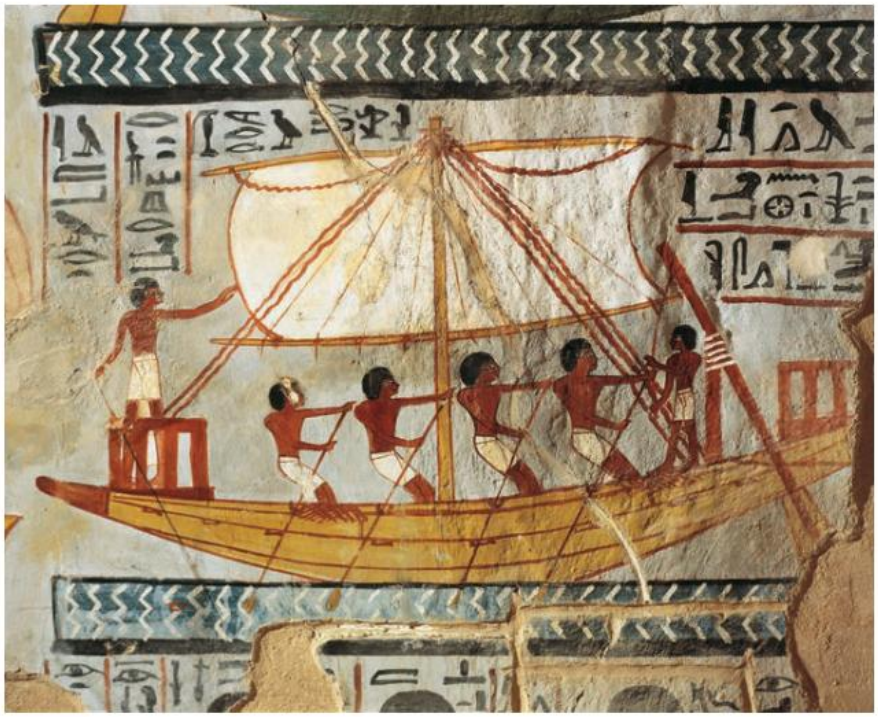

FIGURE 1.27 A wall painting of a boat sailing on the Nile

The types of craft found on the river during the New Kingdom included: papyrus skiffs; barges for transporting blocks of hard stone, including the massive obelisks from their source to building sites; cargo ships for trading crops and goods between villages and importing resources from beyond Egypt; and enormous decorated boats with crescent bow and stern, large sails and cabins used by royalty and the nobility for inspections of their estates. All along the Nile were wharves and quays attached to the lands of temples and nobles.

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ACTIVITY 1.8

1. Clarify why the timing and height of the annual flood was of vital concern for all Egyptians.
2. How was the height of a flood measured?
3. Describe who Hapi was and the symbolism of the way he was depicted.
4. Read the extract of the Hymn to Hapi in Source 1.14 and explain what it says about the way 'People's lives are changed' by his coming.
5. Explain how the Nile benefited the Egyptian economy.

Economic exchange: taxation and barter

Ancient Egypt has been called a 'supply state' in which all products for consumption were delivered to the state or temple institutions and then redistributed (food and other goods) to the general population.

Since the basis of life in Egypt was agriculture, farmers carried the load of taxation. They were taxed on a large portion of their harvested grain, plus the produce of their gardens, orchards and vineyards and on any yearly increase of livestock from cattle to geese. For this reason, a yearly census was carried out, and to prevent farmers cheating, the tax scribes measured the height of the crops and assessed the amount taxable before the crops were harvested. If the farmers had any surplus left after paying taxes and feeding their families, they could **barter** in the local market. It must be said however, that the surpluses among the peasants were small and local trade was limited. There is evidence that tax scribes often used force to make sure farmers paid the right amount of tax and did not cheat. There was virtually no way a peasant farmer could store grain for a bad season.

barter exchanging one product for another

What was collected from the peasants was stored in granaries on the king's domain, on the estates of the leading nobles and in the temples. The agricultural produce collected as taxes was rationed out to tradesmen and craftsmen. They, however, could make extra income by doing private jobs. The contribution of the people to major building works was also considered a form of taxation.

His wife has gone down to the merchants and found nothing for barter. Now the scribe lands on the shore. He surveys the harvest. Attendants are behind him with staffs. One says 'Give grain'. 'There is none'. He is beaten savagely. He is bound and thrown into the well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbours abandon them and flee. When it's over there is no grain.

SOURCE 1.15 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, pp. 170–1

FIGURE 1.28 A cattle inspection for tax purposes from the tomb of Nebamun

There are very few tomb paintings of local and international market scenes. The two that are most informative for local and international trade come from the tomb of Kenamon (Mayor of Thebes and Overseer of Granaries during the reign of Amenhotep III) and from the Deir el-Medina tomb of Ipuy, a sculptor.

In Kenamon's tomb a Syrian trading vessel pulls up at the quayside, possibly in Thebes. The scene shows freight being unloaded by several men. Locals, both men and women, are sitting in stalls covered by awnings,

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FIGURE 1.29 A market scene from the tomb of Ipuy

FIGURE 1.30 Tribute bearers from Nubia

selling their wares of cloth, sandals, loaves of bread and cakes. There is some weighing going on and a Syrian bargaining with one of the local merchants.

In Ipuy's tomb, sailors are seen leaving their boat carrying sacks of grain. A woman is selling bread, there is an exchange of fish for grain, another buyer checks out a cake or loaf of bread and another is bartering for vegetables.

Booty, tribute and foreign trade

According to the propaganda in the Egyptian records, all wealth that entered Egypt as the result of the growth of empire – whether from booty taken during campaigns, products of normal international trade or gifts from powerful kings – was described as tribute.

A large proportion of this wealth went into the treasury of Amun-Re. This powerful priesthood controlled one of the largest and richest economic establishments in Egypt, with vast estates and herds of cattle, mining deposits, fleets of ships, revenue from taxes and a huge labour force.

Some idea of the amount and quality of the booty can be gauged by what was collected on only one campaign each, carried out by Amenhotep II and Thutmose III (see Table 1.3).

Paintings from the tombs of high officials show tribute-bearing delegations such as:

1 Nubian princes and their servants carrying gold rings, and bags of gold dust, semi-precious stones, elephant tusks, giraffe tails, ebony boomerangs, furniture of precious woods, animal skins, oxen and bound captives with their wives and children.

2 Syrians in their heavily embroidered gowns, presenting finely crafted vessels in gold, silver and stone, weapons, part of their yearly harvest, male and female slaves, valuable metals, great herds of animals and timbers such as cedar that were extremely valuable in an almost treeless Egypt.

TABLE 1.3 An example of booty taken during one year's campaign by each of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II

Booty collected by Thutmose III's army after the Battle of Megiddo	Plunder taken from Palestine and Syria by Amenhotep II in year 2 of his reign
Captives at officer rank – 550	Captives – 340
Their wives – 240	Horses – 250
Vessels of fine gold – 6800	Chariots, some worked with gold – 924
Copper vessels – 50 000	Fine bronze suits of armour – 2
Horses – 210	Ordinary suits of armour – 200
Chariots – 300	Silver tent poles – 7
	Cows – 1929
	Goats – 2000
	Sheep – 20 500

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There was also a great deal of normal trading between Egypt and the surrounding lands that were not part of the so-called empire, such as the island of Crete in the Mediterranean and Punt in East Africa, and diplomatic 'gift-giving' (often in the form of gold and jewellery) with the great kingdoms of Babylon, Naharin and Hatti.

> A bed of ebony overlaid with ivory and gold; three beds of ebony overlaid with gold; one large chair of ebony overlaid with gold; nine chairs of ebony overlaid with gold. The weight of the gold on all these things is seven minas, nine shekels and the weight of the silver one mina, eight and a half shekels.'

SOURCE 1.16 Part of a list of gifts being sent to the King of Babylon by Amenhotep III outlined in a letter, cited in Joann Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King: Amenhotep III*, p. 129

ACTIVITY 1.9

1. What was the form of exchange in Egyptian society?
2. Identify what is meant by the statement that Egypt was a 'supply state'.
3. Explain why the agricultural sector of the economy carried the tax burden.
4. Describe how the taxes were assessed.
5. What do Source 1.15 and Figure 1.28 indicate about the punishments meted out for a farmer's failure to pay taxes? Do you think Source 1.15 might not be entirely reliable? Why?
6. Explain what the sketchy surviving scenes from the tombs of Kenamon and Ipuy indicate about trade along the Nile.
7. Describe the difference between booty and tribute.
8. Assess why temple inscriptions refer to trading goods as tribute.
9. Identify who obtained the lion's share of booty and tribute. Why?

Crafts, industry and technology

With the influx of wealth into Egypt, there was an ever-increasing need for highly trained artists and craftsmen with the skill and imagination to meet the demands of:

- the kings, as they initiated massive building projects, dedicated luxury items to the gods and filled their tombs with the finest funerary objects
- the upper classes, as their tastes became more sophisticated, their lifestyles more opulent and their tombs more elaborate
- the army, for equipment such as chariots and weapons.

Building materials, tools, techniques and construction of temples and tombs

Artefacts produced in workshops

The paintings from the tomb of Rekhmire (vizier) or from the joint tomb of Apuki and Nebamun (royal sculptors) show a range of craftsmen working in the temple and royal workshops. However, the scenes are not totally realistic as the tomb artist was selective in his choice of activities and techniques. There are:

- sculptors working in granite, basalt, limestone, quartzite, schist and diorite. Sculptors used bronze chisels and mallets to shape the stone, and hard diorite stones and sand for polishing. Portrait sculptors, producing statues of kings and gods, required exceptional skills. (See pp.48–9)

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- goldsmiths hammering with pounders gold and gold foil into shape to make ritual vessels, shrines, death masks and jewellery. Once an object was hammered into shape, other craftsmen used a pointed bronze tool to chase (punch) a design or dedicatory text into it. When several parts of an object had to be joined (brazed), charcoal furnaces were used. The heat from these furnaces was increased by blowpipes. Brazing was a very skilful operation requiring speed and accuracy. An inscription in the tomb of Rekhmire refers to goldsmiths and silversmiths as 'making many ritual jugs in gold and silver in all kinds of workmanship which will last forever'.[9]

pectorals elaborate necklaces worn on the breast

- jewellers brazing to fit lapis lazuli, carnelian, turquoise and faience beads into gold, and drilling into stone beads with bow drills to make **pectorals**, collars, earrings and bracelets
- metal workers smelting ingots of copper and tin (bronze) in large furnaces fuelled with charcoal, controlled by foot bellows and pouring material into moulds to make temple doors, mirrors and weapons. There is evidence of two types of casting or moulding. The use of pottery or stone moulds was the most common. Another form was known as the lost-wax technique where the object was first modelled in wax, then covered in clay. When the clay was heated, the wax melted, leaving a rigid clay mould into which molten metal was poured.
- carpenters working in cedar, ebony and meru woods with axes, pull saws, adzes, chisels and bow drills to produce coffin sleds, shrines, furniture and chariots. Carpenters made 'furniture in ivory and ebony, in sennedjem-wood and meru-wood [wood from tropical Africa] and in real cedar from the heights of the terraced hills' (Lebanon).[10]
- leather makers soaking hides in jars of oil and then stretching them over a board, hammering and scraping until the oil is absorbed into the skin and cutting out shapes for sandals, satchels, helmets and quivers.

FIGURE 1.31 Craftsmen from the Tomb of Rekhmire

ACTIVITY 1.10

1. Why was there a greater need for skilled craftsmen during this period?
2. Make a list of materials used in temple and royal workshops.
3. Examine the image of craftsmen at work from the Tomb of Rekhmire (Figure 1.31) and list every category of craftsmen you can identify.
4. What techniques were used in the metal industry?

pylon a large ornamental gateway of a temple used as a billboard for royal propaganda

Temple and obelisks

The magnificent temples of the 18th Dynasty and their large decorative **pylons**, designed for impressiveness and durability, were built of stone:

- fine white sandstone brought from Gebel es-Silsila, south of Thebes
- high-quality limestone from Tura near modern Cairo

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- red granite (for **obelisks**, **lintels**, door thresholds and colossal statues) from the area around modern Aswan
- red quartzite, black granite and travertine (Egyptian alabaster) were used in smaller quantities.

obelisk a pillar of stone tapered towards the top and surmounted by a pyramid-shaped stone which was usually gilded

lintel the crossbeam support for a doorway

Tools used for quarrying soft stone included picks of stone or hard bronze and wooden levers. It was once believed that harder stones were extracted by pounding with hard dolorite balls 12–30 centimetres in diameter and weighing about 5.5 kilograms. This is now believed to be wrong, and that these stone balls played the role of 'ball bearings' to allow the obelisk to be rolled around.

Stone pounding tools were used to dress and polish hard stones. Stone masons utilised copper and various forms of bronze tools. For laying out large spaces, the builders used a grid system based on a cubit (about 52.5 centimetres) measured by a cubit rod and knotted surveying cords and stakes.

The removal and transport of huge stones for obelisks and statues was a massive task. The size of an unfinished obelisk at Aswan gives some idea of the experience and skill needed to cut out a block as long as 91 metres. When a faultless area of the desired size was found, a team of at least 50 men dug a series of trenches around the future block. They continued digging down past the level of the block's base and then undercut it with continued pounding. The blocks, some weighing as much as 450 tonnes, then had to be slid or levered out of position and onto a sled without cracking and dragged to the river or canal over a base of mud or lime to prevent friction. They were loaded onto a specially constructed boat made of sycamore to be transported to the building site, usually Thebes. According to the inscription in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple, the boat was towed by three rows of nine barges with each row headed by a pilot boat. The exact method of raising and placing an obelisk in position has not been firmly established, but the use of ramps, ropes and levers are possible theories.

The use of stone enabled the pharaohs to decorate the walls and columns of the temples with carved and brilliantly painted scenes and hieroglyphs. The sandstone temples blazed with colour – blues, greens, yellows and reds – and were filled with numerous statues 'of costly gritstone' and 'of every splendid costly stone'.[11] The Third Pylon built for Amenhotep III has been described in the following way.

> . . . worked with gold throughout, with the god's shade [image] in the likeness of a ram, inlaid with real lapis lazuli and worked with gold and costly stones. The like has never been made. Its pavement was made pure with silver, the portal in its front firmly set [there are] stelae of lapis lazuli, one on each side. Its twin towers reached to the sky, like the four supports of heaven.

SOURCE 1.17 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 46

FIGURE 1.32 The remains of the pylon at the Temple of Luxor

FIGURE 1.33 A massive obelisk in situ at Aswan

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Possibly the most beautiful piece of temple architecture of this period was the large airy court of the Temple of Luxor, with 96 graceful papyrus-bud columns and a central colonnade which surpassed any previously built. According to W. C. Hayes, 'in their proportions and spacing, the towering shafts are as noble as any which Egyptian architecture has produced'.[12]

ACTIVITY 1.11

Describe in an extended answer the materials and techniques used in building temples, including the temple obelisks.

Rock-cut tombs

The construction of the royal rock-cut tombs that penetrated deep into the rocky cliffs of the Valley of the Kings were a massive undertaking. For example, the tomb of Hatshepsut had passages and stairways 213 metres deep into the mountain, curving downwards to her burial chamber 97 metres below ground level. The procedures involved in the construction of a royal tomb were as follows:

- Stone masons excavated into the cliffs using copper or bronze spikes which, when pounded with a wooden mallet, split the rock.
- The plasterers followed, smoothing down the walls with a layer of **gypsum** and whitewash.
- Draughtsmen outlined the layout of the text and pictures in red ink with any mistakes marked in black by a master draughtsman.
- Sculptors carved reliefs using bronze chisels.
- Painters used **ochres** (red, brown and yellow), derivatives of copper (blue and green), whitewash and soot ground and mixed with water and sometimes gum.

gypsum a common mineral (hydrated calcium sulfate) used to make plaster

ochres mixtures of hydrated oxides of iron and other earthy materials ranging in colour from pale yellow to orange and red

However, sometimes the rock surfaces crumbled and the biggest problem was lighting. A form of lighting the dark tunnels had to be found that did not create smoke. The tomb workers from Deir el-Medina were provided with lamps that consisted of wicks made from greased pieces of linen placed in pottery bowls that were filled with salted oil. The salt prevented the wicks from smoking. Not only would smoke have made it difficult for the workers to see, but it would have damaged the paintings. Wicks were issued daily and it seems that each gang of workers went through an enormous number each day.

FIGURE 1.34 Painted reliefs in a royal tomb

Other buildings

Because stone was reserved for sacred buildings and Egypt lacked adequate supplies of timber, mud brick was the main building material used for royal palaces, fortresses, towns and temple enclosure walls. Despite the use of mud brick, royal palaces and lodges were built to reflect the Egyptians' love of nature, with walls and floors plastered and painted with huge murals or covered with inlaid glazed tiles.

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1.4 Religion, death and burial

TABLE 1.4 Egyptian gods and goddesses

Household or village gods worshipped by the ordinary people in shrines. These included Taweret (hippopotamus goddess of childbirth), Bes (bearded dwarf god of fertility, dance and music), Meretseger (snake goddess of the peak) and Bastet (cat goddess).
Local gods worshipped by the priests in cult temples throughout Egypt. Over the centuries many local cult deities coalesced. Some well-known cult gods and goddesses were Hathor, cow-headed or cow-eared goddess of fertility whose cult centre was at Dendera; Horus, the falcon-headed god whose temple was at Edfu; and Khnum, the ram-headed god whose cult centre was at Elephantine. The high priest of the cult carried out the daily rites on behalf of the king.
Funerary gods such as Osiris, the mummiform god of the Underworld and rebirth; Isis and Nephthys, wife and sister to Osiris; Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the necropolis and embalming; and Thoth, the ibis-headed god of writing, time, magic and messenger of the gods.
State gods such as Re/Atum, the creator sun-god whose cult centre was at Heliopolis; Ptah, the creator god whose cult centre was at Memphis; and Amun, the god of empire whose cult centre was at Thebes.

Religious developments

The most significant religious developments in this period were:

1 raising Amun, the local god of Thebes, to prominence at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, increasing his status above all other gods – first as national god and then as god of empire – and finally associating him with Re so he would have no rival
2 initiating the prestigious position of *Gods Wife of Amun* for select women of the royal family, which gave them a prominent position in the cult of Amun (Ahmose)
3 taking the first steps in developing the west bank at Thebes as the site of a vast necropolis (Amenhotep I)
4 beginning of the process of building the royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings and separating tomb and mortuary temple (Thutmose I)
5 increasing the status of the High Priest of Amun with the right to supervise the cults of all other gods, holding the title of *Overseer of prophets of all the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt* (Hatshepsut)
6 linking their mortuary (funerary) temples with Amun, so they became a virtual Amun temple (Hatshepsut and her successors)
7 adding power and prestige to the cult of Amun (Thutmose III).

Amun-Re

Amun was referred to as the 'hidden one' and depicted in human form wearing a headdress of tall ostrich feathers, plus the sun-disk of Re. Like many gods, he was part of a divine triad or 'family': Amun, his divine wife, Mut, and their divine son Khonshu.

Amun was believed responsible for leading Egypt's armies to victory and each king added more and more to Amun's cult temple at Karnak in Thebes (obelisks, pylons, courts, avenues of sphinxes and statues) and endowed it with vast wealth, lands and captives. The priests of Amun had great economic, religious and political influence: they controlled one of the richest and largest establishments in Egypt, were exempted from certain taxes and could influence and validate the selection of a king through oracles.

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I gave you valour and victory over all lands
I set your might, your fear in every country
The dread of you as far as heaven's four support
I magnified your awe in every body,
I made your person's fame traverse the Nine Bows.
The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp.
I stretched my own hands out and bound them for you.

SOURCE 1.18 A speech by Amun-Re in the prologue of the poetical stela of Thutmose III at Karnak Temple, M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 36

FIGURE 1.35 A representation of the God Amun

FIGURE 1.36 Ram-headed sphinx representing Amun as part of the processional way at Karnak

Cult festivals

The public could only participate in cult worship during religious festivals when the image of the god was taken out of the temple. The three most important of these were the:

1 Festival of Osiris at Abydos during which the god's life and death were re-enacted

2 Beautiful Feast of the Valley at Thebes, dedicated to Amun, during which the god's statue left the Temple of Karnak on a gilded barge to visit the mortuary temples of the kings on the west bank and stayed overnight in the temple of the reigning king. After crossing the Nile, the god's **barque** and its priestly bearers, accompanied by soldiers, musicians and dancers, proceeded by canal to the edge of the desert and then via one of the temple causeways.

barque a ceremonial boat for carrying the statue of a god in a procession, carried on the shoulders of priests

3 Festival of Opet, dedicated to Amun, was held in the second month of the inundation, lasting for between two to four weeks. During the festival, the statues of Amun, his divine 'wife' Mut and divine 'son' Khonsu were taken from the Temple of Karnak in sacred barques and carried via the sphinx-lined processional way to the Temple of Luxor (southern Opet or harem), 3 kilometres to the south. Crowds of ordinary people followed the procession – many who came from far afield – and were welcomed by dancers, and great offerings of meat and bread were made to the god, after which it was distributed among the waiting

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crowds. The festival actually focused on the transformation of the king and worshippers believed that in the inner sanctuary of Luxor temple, Amun would ritually unite with the mother of the reigning king so that she could once more give birth to the royal *ka*. 'At the culmination of events, the king entered the sanctuary, merged with his new-born *ka* in a secret ritual and then reappeared as the son of Amun-Re, replenished and vibrant with divine power.'[13] At the end of the 'visit', the divine barques returned via the river to Karnak.

Heb-sed festival

The most important ceremony in the life of the king, apart from his coronation, was the **Heb-sed** festival or king's jubilee. It was usually held after the king had been on the throne for 30 years. Amenhotep III held three jubilees in years 30, 34 and 37 of his reign. The festival's main purposes were:

Heb-sed the king's jubilee, generally held every 30 years to rejuvenate the king's powers and reinforce his authority to rule

1 to symbolically rejuvenate the king's powers so that he could continue to rule effectively
2 to commemorate the king's accession to the throne by re-creating the coronation ceremony.

It was held on the first day of Perit or the *Season of Coming Forth* when the land – renewed by the flood – was prepared for planting. All the chief officials and priests throughout the kingdom had to attend, and a huge complex of buildings prepared. The celebrations lasted for five days. Apart from an opening procession, presentation of gifts, visits to shrines and demonstrations of loyalty, the most significant elements of the festival carried out by the king were:

FIGURE 1.37 A king during his Heb-sed

- a re-enactment of the coronation on dual thrones: the king was crowned once with the White Crown of Upper Egypt and once with the Red Crown of Lower Egypt
- the Dedication of the Field ceremony, during which the king, wearing a short kilt with a bull's tail attached, 'ran' a course over a rectangular piece of land that represented Egypt to prove he was still fit to rule. He did this twice, once as the king of Upper Egypt and once as the king of Lower Egypt. He carried with him a document like a will that symbolised his inheritance and his right to rule
- the handing of the *was*-sceptre to symbolise the welfare of the people
- the firing of arrows to the four points of the compass to signify that the land of Egypt was protected.

ACTIVITY 1.12

1 Describe what the priests of Amun wrote about the god's benefits to the king in Source 1.18.
2 Account for what their motivation might have been in doing this.
3 Discuss the religious purpose of the Festival of Opet.
4 What was the Beautiful Feast of the Valley?
5 What was the significance of the king's Heb-sed?
6 Look carefully at Figure 1.37. Describe the particular Heb-sed ceremony being performed and explain its significance.

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Creation myths

Each of the important cult centres had its own version of the creation of the world in which its god played a major role. However, the three main creation myths centred on the gods Atum/Re at Heliopolis, Thoth at Hermopolis and Ptah at Memphis. Although they varied from one another in some of the details, the myths contained a number of common elements:

1 At first the whole world was in darkness and covered with water (the waters of chaos or the primeval ocean called Nun).

2 A mound of earth or an island (the primeval mound) emerged from the waters.

3 The first god appeared on this mound, brought light to the darkness and created life (the First Time or Zep Tepi) in the form of the other gods.

The myths vary in the way that the creator gods expressed their creativity. In the Heliopolitan myth, Atum gave birth to the twins Shu (God of air) and Tefnet (Goddess of moisture) either by masturbating or spitting them out, so beginning the procreation of the Ennead or nine gods from the one. In one of the Hermopolis versions, Thoth as Lord of Divine Words uttered a sound (the word) to bring the cosmos into being. The Memphite creation myth tells of Ptah bringing the world into being by first thinking it in his heart and then speaking the words.

These myths in their complete form hold deep metaphysical meanings that are almost impossible for people in the modern world to appreciate. See p. 46 for the symbolism of this creation myth expressed in cult temples.

The myth of Osiris

During the New Kingdom, Osiris was worshipped as a god of vegetation, grain and the rising Nile, but more importantly as the king of the Underworld. The Egyptians believed that Osiris was killed by his jealous brother Seth, who enclosed him in a chest and threw it into the Nile. The chest was later washed up on the shore of Byblos (Lebanon).

Osiris' wife, Isis, found her husband's body in Byblos, accompanied it back to Egypt and hid it in the papyrus thickets of the delta. In one version of the story she became pregnant to the dead Osiris by magical means and gave birth to a son, Horus. Seth discovered his brother's body left unattended in the delta, cut it into 14 pieces and scattered them all over Egypt. Isis and her sister, Nephthys (Seth's wife), searched for the pieces and collected all parts of the body. Re sent Anubis, god of embalming, and Thoth to help them.

They put all the pieces together and wrapped them in bandages. Thoth gave Isis the words to say over her husband and she and Nephthys changed themselves into birds to fan the life back into Osiris. After his resurrection, Osiris maintained his kingdom in the Underworld where he ruled as king. His son Horus took revenge on Seth and was given the throne of Egypt by the gods.

A COMMENT ON...

The Osiris myth and some of the Osirian burial practices

As well as illustrating the Egyptians' belief in resurrection and an afterlife with Osiris in the Underworld, the myth explains some of the Osirian burial practices. For example:

- The body of Osiris was placed in a chest (coffin)
- The body parts were preserved and wrapped in linen bandages (mummification)
- Special words were spoken over the body (funerary spells and prayers)
- Isis and Nephthys mourned the dead Osiris (the two *dryt* mourners in the funeral procession)

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- Isis and Nephthys were transformed into birds and fanned the life back into Osiris' body. These two winged goddesses were featured on canopic chests, coffins and sarcophagi spreading their wings around the body and its internal organs.

In wall paintings, Osiris was depicted as a mummified king with green or black-coloured skin. Green was associated with new growth which emerged from the black Nile mud. Black was the colour which Egyptians associated with resurrection and eternal life.

Funerary customs, rituals and texts

In Egyptian religion, old beliefs were rarely discarded, new ideas and concepts were merely tacked on. This is why Egyptians could believe in an afterlife in which the deceased would spend eternity in the company of the circumpolar stars as an *akh*; at the same time as being restricted to the burial chamber and chapel as a *ka*, but also visiting the world of the living inhabiting the Elysian Fields (Fields of Reeds) and travelling across the sky and through the underworld with the sun god as a *ba*.

SOURCE 1.19 R.O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, p. 12

Beliefs about life after death

The Egyptians saw the cycle of life, death and rebirth all around them (sun, Nile flood and growth). They believed that each person had a:

- physical body, *khat*, which must be preserved after death
- double or life force called a **ka**. The *ka* left the body after death but remained in the tomb in the form of the *ka* statue that had to be provided with offerings
- soul or **ba** which enjoyed eternal existence
- spiritual intelligence or *akh*. This shining luminous intelligence severed ties with the body and earthly existence.

ka the life force or double

ba the soul represented as a human-headed bird that could revisit the tomb whenever it wanted

There seems to have been:

1 an Osirian afterlife in the Fields of Reeds, based on the landscape of the delta. There, the deceased – reunited with their families – lived in ease and prosperity sailing among the lakes and visiting cities. It was an afterlife where harvests never failed, crops grew tall and labourers did all the hard work.

2 an afterlife with Re the sun-god, sailing in his barque across the sky.

3 a combination of the two where the deceased sailed with Re and his crew for 12 hours across the sky during the day and for 12 hours in the underworld of Osiris where each hour was separated by massive gates guarded by serpents. Re's chief enemy in this region was the serpent Apopis. At dawn the barque emerged in the east.

FIGURE 1.38 The *ba* hovering over a mummy

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FIGURE 1.39 The Field of Reeds from the Book of the Dead found in a tomb in Deir el-Medina

FIGURE 1.40 The sun god sailing through the Underworld

Passing to the afterlife

'No other nation in the ancient world made so determined an effort to vanquish death and win eternal life' and to rely on magic to achieve it.[14]

Before entering the domain of Osiris to be judged, the deceased denied his/her sins before 42 gods. These denials, some of which are seen below, were called negative confessions.

I have not caused pain
I have not ordered to kill
I have not increased or decreased the measure
I have not cheated in the fields
I have not falsified the plummet of the scales
I have not killed
I have not made anyone suffer.

SOURCE 1.20 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 125

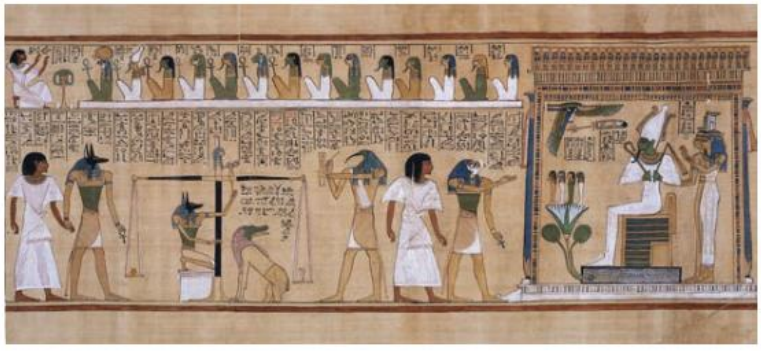

FIGURE 1.41 The judgement before Osiris and the weighing of the heart

Then Anubis, the jackal-headed god, led the deceased into the Hall of Ma'at (Truth) where Osiris sat enthroned. The heart of the deceased was weighed in a set of scales against a feather of truth while Thoth recorded the judgement. If the heart failed, Ammut (a composite monster: hippopotamus, crocodile and lion) devoured the deceased. If the deceased passed the judgement he/she was led by Horus before Osiris and the heart was declared to be true. The deceased then passed to the afterlife.

The fate of the deceased in the afterlife depended on a range of funerary equipment that included papyrus rolls of religious texts, prayers and magical spells, collectively called The Book of the Dead or more

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accurately, as the Egyptians knew them, the *Chapters of Coming Forth by Day*. These were placed between the legs of the deceased or inside hollow Osiris figures to ensure the wellbeing of the deceased in the next life.

Other texts might be found on the walls of an 18th Dynasty pharaoh's tomb – but not in the tombs of non-royals.

The Egyptians believed in the principle of sympathetic magic and the power of symbolism. For example:

- Amulets (charms) of a particular colour, material and shape were placed on the body for protection, regeneration and rebirth (scarab).
- Moulds in the shape of Osiris, filled with Nile mud and planted with corn seeds, were placed in the tomb, and when they grew the green-figured Osiris would magically aid in regeneration and rebirth.
- Ushabtis, or small models of workers or answerers with hoes, picks, seed bags and water pots were placed in the tomb to do the hard work for the deceased in the afterlife.
- Ritual objects such as magical bricks, model boats, magic oars and boomerangs were included to help the deceased on their journey to the next life.
- Items of everyday life such as food and drink (either real, or in the form of wall paintings and models) were placed in tombs for life in the next world.

Mummification

The state of many of the royal mummies indicates that the Egyptians had reached a high standard of embalming by the middle of the New Kingdom. Some New Kingdom developments included:

- removal of the brain either through the nose or an incision in the neck
- a lower incision point in the abdomen usually covered with a metal incision plate
- preservation and protection of toenails and fingernails by binding and the addition of tubular stalls
- changes in the position of the arms: in a crossed position for royalty

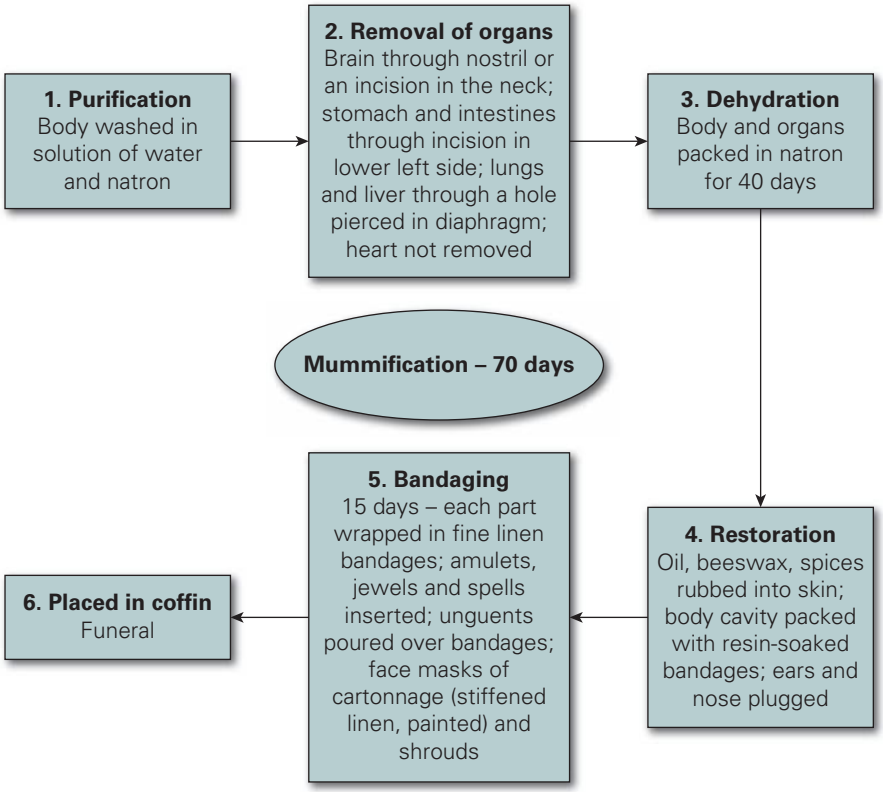

FIGURE 1.42 Diagram of the process of mummification

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- application of resin to the skin as insulation against moisture
- more elaborate methods of packing the body, including the limbs, to retain a life-like appearance.

The funeral and 'Opening of the Mouth'

The corpse was placed on a boat-shaped **bier** to cross the river to the west bank where it was transferred to a sled, either drawn by oxen or men, for the journey to the tomb. A *tekenu* (skin of a bull, symbol of rebirth) accompanied the coffin and the chest, inside which were the **canopic jars**.

bier a moveable stand on which a body or coffin was carried to the tomb

canopic jars pottery or stone jars with animal and human heads that contained the embalmed stomach, liver, lungs and intestines

muu ancestral spirits who met the deceased at the mouth of the tomb, represented by real dancers dressed in kilts and high conical hats

anthropomorphic giving human features to something that is not human

sarcophagus a large stone outer coffin

Dryt mourners – usually female relatives – representing Isis and Nephthys when they restored life into Osiris were part of the funeral procession. Professional mourners wailed, swooned, pulled out their hair, threw dust over their bodies and beat their breasts. Offering bearers carried food, flowers, wine and beer for the banquet to be held at the mouth of the tomb, followed by a large assortment of funerary equipment.

A sem priest conducted proceedings and a lector priest chanted prayers and magic spells. At the tomb, **muu** dancers – dressed in kilts and conical headdresses of papyrus stalks, representing ancestral spirits or divine ferrymen – met the coffin.

The 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony was held to magically restore the deceased's powers of speech, sight and hearing. The mummy case was supported by a priest wearing a jackal mask who touched the face of the mummy with a chisel, an adze and a rod incorporating a snake head. The ceremony was carried out by the eldest son dressed as a sem priest. Whoever performed this ceremony inherited the position and property of the deceased.

The **anthropomorphic** mummy case was then anointed, a wreath of flowers placed around its neck and put into the **sarcophagus** in the burial chamber with the funerary equipment.

> Fair burial comes in peace when your 70 days are completed in the house of embalming. You are placed on a bier and drawn by young cattle. May the ways be opened by sprinkling of milk until you reach the entrance of your tomb chapel. May your mouth be opened by the lector priest and your purification be performed by the sem priest. May Horus adjust your mouth. May he open for you your eyes, your ears, your members, your bones so that your natural functions are complete.

SOURCE 1.21 L. Maniche, *The City of The Dead*, p. 10

FIGURE 1.43 A funeral procession

FIGURE 1.44 Mourners at a funeral procession

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FIGURE 1.45 The 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony

ACTIVITY 1.13

1. How does Faulkner in Source 1.19 explain the complicated nature of the Egyptian afterlife?
2. Describe the difference between the *ka* and the *ba*.
3. Recall why the *ba* was depicted as a human-headed bird.
4. Describe what Figure 1.39 suggests about the afterlife in the Field of Reeds.
5. Describe the Judgement before Osiris.
6. Explain the purpose of the Book of the Dead.
7. Explain the employment of sympathetic magic in Egyptian burial practices and provide several examples.
8. Describe what an anthropomorphic mummy case and a canopic chest was.
9. What role did the following play in the funeral:
   - *dryt* mourners
   - muu dancers
   - sem and lector priests?
10. Evaluate the significance of the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony, where was it performed and by whom.

Temples and tombs

Cult temples

Cult temples like the Temple of Luxor and the Temple of Karnak were referred to as mansions or houses of the gods. Like domestic houses, they were built with entrances (pylons and forecourt); reception areas (hypostyle halls); storerooms (side rooms for the god's treasures and possessions); areas for the preparation of food (breweries, bakeries and butchery); areas for washing and purification (wells and sacred lakes); and living and sleeping rooms (the god's inner sanctuary).

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FIGURE 1.46 The remains of the cult temple complex of Amun at Karnak

As well as a 'house' of the gods, they were regarded as a symbol of the original primeval island which emerged from the 'waters of chaos' that covered the earth and from which the god first appeared. Its architectural features replicated in stone the physical features of the island and the original sanctuary of reeds. These features included:

- wavy courses of the mud-brick enclosure wall to represent the waters that surrounded the island of creation
- pylons that represented the towers of woven reeds that guarded the original sanctuary on the primordial mound
- columns of the hypostyle hall that symbolised the lush vegetation on the island of creation: papyrus, lotus and palms
- ceilings that represented the skies above the mound – decorated with golden stars on a blue background
- darkness of the sanctuary that symbolised the darkness out of which the mound and creator emerged
- sacred lake that symbolised the primordial waters of Nun.

Mortuary temples

Mortuary temples, like that of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri on the west bank, were places where the funerary rites of Egyptian rulers were performed (the cult of the dead). These temples, built on the plain or against the cliffs, were separated from the tomb to avoid tomb robbery. A special group of mortuary priests offered prayers, food, drink and incense on behalf of the deceased king or queen. In the tombs of the nobles the cult of the dead was performed in the tomb chapel before a *ka* statue of the deceased.

Tombs

On the west bank of the Nile, opposite Luxor and Karnak, was the Theban necropolis (city of the dead). The tombs of royalty were cut into the limestone cliffs of the desolate Valley of the Kings. These tombs sloped down from one corridor to another. Despite the builders' precautions to deceive tomb robbers (pits,

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false walls, blind passages and entrances sealed with rubble), robbery was rife, probably carried out by necropolis workers or guards.

The tombs of the nobles/great officials were scattered over the limestone cliffs facing the Nile valley at a number of sites: Deir el-Medina, Sheik abd el-Qurna and Dra abu el-Naga. Because these involved a great investment in money and time, many were left unfinished. Most were of a conventional T-shape with impressive entrances, upper rock-cut chambers including a chapel, a vertical shaft that opened in the floor of the chapel and a subterranean burial chamber.

It is not really accurate to use the term 'decoration' when speaking of the paintings and reliefs on the walls of tombs. The purpose was not to make them attractive, as they were never meant to be seen, but to help the deceased on his or her journey to the afterlife. There was a distinction between the decoration of the tombs of royalty and those of non-royals.

The walls of 18th Dynasty royal tombs were covered with funerary texts: excerpts from The Book of the Dead, The Book of the Duat (the nightly progress of the sun-god's journey through the Underworld and re-emergence at dawn) and the Litany of Re. The corridors of the tomb represented the various stages of the journey through the underworld and the obstacles to be overcome. Other scenes show the king or queen making offerings before various gods and standing before Osiris.

The tombs of the 18th Dynasty noble/official class were chiefly concerned with the concept of rebirth and in commemorating the deceased's achievements in life. These colourful tombs featured:

- ceilings, generally decorated with geometrical patterns
- funerary scenes of the tomb owner receiving offerings, aspects of the funeral procession, the symbolic journey to Abydos and the 'Opening of the Mouth' ritual
- scenes of everyday life related to the office of the deceased and more symbolic scenes of fishing and fowling in the marshes, hunting in the deserts and banquets.

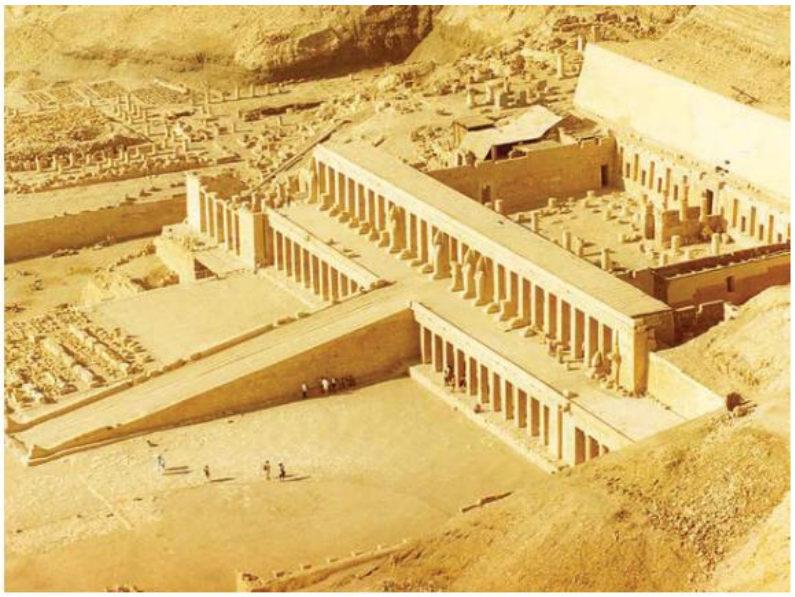

FIGURE 1.47 The mortuary temple of Hatshepsut

ACTIVITY 1.14

1. Study Figure 1.46 and note all the features of the cult complex of Amun at Karnak you can see.
2. List the main architectural features of cult temples and explain their symbolism.
3. What was the purpose of a mortuary temple?
4. How did the tombs of royal and non-royals differ in regard to:
   - location
   - design
   - decoration?

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1.5 Cultural and everyday life

Art

> The course of art in Egypt paralleled to a large extent the country's political history, but it depended as well on the entrenched belief in the permanence of the natural, divinely ordained order. Artistic achievement in both architecture and representational art aimed at the preservation of forms and conventions that were held to reflect the perfection of the world at the primordial moment of creation and to embody the correct relationship between humankind, the king, and the pantheon of the gods. For this reason, Egyptian art appears outwardly resistant to development and the exercise of individual artistic judgment, but Egyptian artisans of every historical period found different solutions for the conceptual challenges posed to them.

SOURCE 1.22 T. Garnet, H. James, P. F. Dorman, Egyptian art and architecture, www.britannica.com

The high quality of craftsmanship among the booty and tribute that came from Palestine and Syria during the 18th Dynasty influenced Egyptian art. The rich and traditional forms were greatly enhanced by a greater use of bronze and silver (the latter not found in Egypt), a more natural and lively feeling, and an adaptation of some of the foreign forms of ornamentation.

The wall paintings and reliefs, statues, funerary goods, household objects and jewellery produced for the court and the families of pharaoh's officials reveal:

- a high standard of technical excellence
- beauty and elegance
- a lively imagination and love of novelty
- lavish use of rich materials
- a trend towards naturalism, especially in the reign of Amenhotep III.

faience a glaze made by heating quartz sand with soda until the quartz melted and solidified

> Small-scale artefacts in wood, stone, metal and ivory, glass and **faience** produced at Malkata testify to the remarkable skill of the craftsmen there. Egyptian faience ware was manufactured in a range of colours at this time from various shades of blue, turquoise, and purple to red, green, yellow and white ... the oldest known glass factory was situated in the palace complex. It produced delicate perfume bottles and kohl tubes, mostly in cobalt blue.

SOURCE 1.23 Joann Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King: Amenhotep III*, p. 129

Also, fragments from the Malkata palace show that it was decorated with naturalistic scenes painted on plaster and on glazed tiles.

In Luxor Museum, there is a magnificent red quartzite statue of Amenhotep III, 2.5 metres high, 'which for its serene beauty is unrivaled among thousands of sculptures surviving from ancient Egypt'.[15] It represents Amenhotep as a god-king, wearing the crown that symbolises his authority over the Nile Valley, as well as identifying him as the creator-god Re-Atum. There is also an excellently-crafted head of Amenhotep in the British Museum.

The sculptor employed by the king or the temple had to have an extensive knowledge of the qualities of all the stones, as well as Egyptian mythology, religious ritual and forms of worship, the conduct of festivals, the characteristics of the gods and the attributes of kingship. The following extract, inscribed on a stela, shows how an esteemed sculptor described his own attributes.

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I am an artist that excels in my art, a man above the common herd in knowledge. I know the proper attitude for a statue of a man, I know how a woman holds herself . . . the way a man poises himself to strike with the harpoon, the look in an eye at its moment, the bewildered stare of a man roused from sleep, the way a spearman lifts his arm, the tilt of a runner's body. I know the secret of making inlays that fire cannot melt or water dissolve.

SOURCE 1.24 P. Montet, *Everyday Life in Egypt*, p. 159

The many beautiful sculptured reliefs in temples took two forms: sunk relief (figures cut into the material) and raised relief (background cut down to allow figures to stand above the surface). Some of the most exquisite reliefs are to be found in the tomb of Amenhotep III's vizier, Ramose.

Because of its imperishability, gold was particularly valuable for funerary items such as death masks and coffins, as well as ritual vessels, jewellery such as earrings and pectorals, and for gilding fine wooden objects with gold leaf or foil.

FIGURE 1.48 Cobalt blue faience jars

Writing and literature

Apart from tomb biographies, monumental inscriptions, prayers and hymns, there were other forms of writing produced in the New Kingdom. These included:

1 Love poems: these were recorded on two papyrus manuscripts (Papyrus Chester Beatty and Papyrus Harris) and a Cairo vase. The poems are 'not spontaneous outpourings' of sentiment, but 'bear the stamp of deliberate artistry'.[16] They are written in the first person by a young man or woman to the opposite sex. Some alternate between a male and female speaker. The lovers refer to themselves as 'brother' and 'sister'.

2 Tales: these are works of imagination and most combine a blend of the human and divine. In the story of *The Doomed Prince*, the main characters are human but the animals are as if from fairy tales. *The Two Brothers* is mythological.

3 School copybooks used to develop the characters of young scribes: *Be A Scribe* is part of *A Schoolbook* found recorded on a papyrus (Papyrus Lansing). It was devoted to the theme of being a scribe and was a compilation of praise for the scribal career compared with other professions, as well as advice and recommendations to the pupil to study hard.

4 Wisdom literature or didactic literature (intended for instruction): this form was popular in all periods of Egyptian history. *The Instructions of Ani*, in which a father gives advice to his son, is different in several ways from previous wisdom literature because the scribe, Ani, was not one of the elite but rather a minor official. His words, although addressed to his son, were really advice to the ordinary Egyptian. Ani advised his son about:
   - getting married and setting up house
   - behaviour when visiting friends and the 'house of god'
   - avoiding strange women and drunkenness
   - preparing a burial place
   - treating his mother with respect
   - anger and fighting.

In the extract from the *Instructions of Ani* (Source 1.25), he instructs his son about being a guest in another's home.

Do not enter the house of anyone,
Until he admits you and greets you:
Do not snoop around in the house.
Let your eye observe in silence.
Do not speak of him to another outside,
Who was not with you;
A great deadly crime.

SOURCE 1.25 Instructions of Ani, in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, pp. 136–7

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ACTIVITY 1.15

1. Discuss how Source 1.22 explains the concept of continuity and change in Egyptian art. Find two statements in this source that reveal these concepts.
2. How were traditional forms of art enhanced during this period?
3. What remains found at Malkata testify to the remarkable skill of craftsmen during the reign of Amenhotep III?
4. Use the text and Source 1.24 to describe the attributes required of a royal sculptor.
5. Describe the different forms of relief carving.
6. What was hieratic writing? Compare it with hieroglyphic writing in form and function. Refer back to p. 25 on scribes.
7. Name the main genres of Egyptian writing.
8. Research:
   - the funerary artefacts found in the tombs of Yuya and Thuya (Queen Tiy's father and mother) and assess them for technical excellence, beauty and elegance, and lavish use of rich materials.
   - a full translation of *The Instructions of Ani* and assess its value as a document for understanding Egyptian society.

Daily life and leisure

An Egyptian's daily activities depended on social class.

The extensive households of wealthy nobles and officials comprised family (wives, sons, unmarried daughters, sisters and widowed relatives) and **concubines**, as well as supervisors (stewards, bailiffs and scribes), carpenters, bakers, butchers, brewers, cup bearers, sandal and fly whisk bearers, listeners, barbers, hairdressers, manicurists, nurses, gardeners, porters and musicians, and a host of slaves from stable hands to those who waited on tables.

concubine a woman who lives with a man and has a sexual relationship with him but is not his wife

unguents soft, perfumed ointment-like preparations, used to moisturise and heal

kohl a fine black powder made from antimony (a metal) and used to darken around the eyes

malachite a green copper ore used to protect the eyes

sennet a board game similar to draughts

Most Egyptians of the upper classes paid particular attention to their appearance, and due to the hot, dry climate of Egypt were careful about personal hygiene. They washed frequently; removed body hair with tweezers, knives and hooked razors; oiled and perfumed their bodies with **unguents**; protected the eyes with **kohl** (black) and **malachite** (green); and had numerous recipes for problems such as body odour, bad breath, wrinkles and baldness. For example, the Ebers Medical Papyrus suggested a combination of cinnamon, myrrh and frankincense as a mouth freshener, and a mixture of roasted ostrich egg, tortoise shells and gallnuts from the tamarisk tree for body odours. Both men and women wore cosmetics and kept their hair short, wearing elaborate wigs on social occasions, some elaborately curled, others of a short Nubian style. Hairdressers were important members of the household.

Leisure activities indulged in by the upper classes included:

- listening to music played on flutes, harps, lutes and tambourines
- playing board games such as **sennet**, or reading something like the *Story of Sinhue*
- enjoying pets such as dogs, cats and monkeys
- fishing and fowling in the marshes
- hunting in the deserts in chariots with dogs, nets, lassos, and bows and arrows
- collecting animals such as gazelles, wild bulls, lions and ostriches for personal menageries
- holding banquets.

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It is easy to build up a picture of these banquets from the tombs of nobles such as Nebamun. The main features of a banquet included:

1 servant girls greeting guests and presenting them with lotus flowers and perfumed incense cones worn on the head. During the night, these cones melted and the perfumed oil ran down over the guests' wigs and clothing.

2 some guests sitting in high-backed chairs, others on stools, being offered bowls of the finest wines and delicacies. They urged each other to 'celebrate the joyful day' and 'cast behind thee all cares and mind thee of pleasure'.[17] Drunkenness was tolerated as both men and women drank to excess.

3 musicians, singers, female dancers and acrobats.

Everyday life and leisure in the villages of workmen and peasants was far different. As well as looking after their many children, the women supplemented their meagre issue of clothing by spinning, weaving and dressmaking, grinding corn, carrying water and doing laundry. The evidence suggests that the villagers in the village of Deir el-Medina needed little excuse for a party during which there was a plentiful supply of beer and wine, and that many of them sketched, read popular stories and played draughts. Peasants worked hard but they are often shown relaxing, enjoying a beer, fishing and boating, as well as playing their flutes.

FIGURE 1.49 Playing sennet

FIGURE 1.50 A scene from a wall painting of a banquet

A COMMENT ON...

The meaning of many of the leisure activities shown in tomb paintings

There is a difference of opinion among historians about the meaning of some of the scenes of fishing, hunting and banqueting in tomb paintings.

- One view is that these themes represent activities enjoyed by the tomb owners during their lifetime and which they hoped would be transformed into reality in the next life and to provide a familiar environment for the *ka* throughout eternity.
- Another view is that the scenes have a much deeper significance and are symbolic, referring to rebirth and overcoming evil. Individual features in the fishing and fowling scenes (the tilapia fish and duck) point to rebirth and assistance on the path to eternal life; scenes of hunting wild animals in the deserts (home of the god of chaos, Seth) represent victory of good over evil; and the presence of lotus flowers in banqueting scenes is a symbol of rebirth. In one of the creation myths, the sun god was born from a lotus flower.

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Housing and furnishings

All residences, from palaces to small peasant houses, were constructed predominantly of mud brick and timber.

- Palaces and villas of the nobles reflected the opulent tastes of the New Kingdom and the Egyptian love of nature. They were cool retreats with lakes, fishponds, extensive walled gardens of sweet-smelling trees and flowers, orchards of figs, pomegranates, date palms and vines. The natural theme continued indoors with friezes or walls covered with glazed tiles inlaid with lotus, garlands, reeds, fruit, birds and butterflies; and painted or glazed floors with fish, lotus, papyrus rushes and ducks. The interior shone with brilliant colours.
- Country villas were probably one-storey, while urban villas were often multi-storeyed with a basement for domestic activities such as baking bread, brewing beer and making cloth; a family living area above street level; and another level for the master. The furniture appears to have been elegant and sensible: high-backed chairs, stools and chests (often of cedar inlaid with gold, ivory and ebony); chairs and beds with woven cord bases often with lion-paw legs; couches piled high with cushions; stands for holding water, food and wine; and alabaster vases and lamps.
- The whitewashed, one-storeyed houses of the craftsmen in Deir el-Medina opened straight onto the street. Flat roofs with access via a staircase at the back acted as a cool terrace. The entrances were furnished with offering tables, family busts and brick platforms, which acted as seats by day and beds at night. Floors were of hard packed earth or plaster with rush matting. Furniture was minimal: beds, baskets for storage, stools, small tables and a chair or two.
- The mud-brick houses of peasants were probably very basic and their size would depend on the number of people in the extended family.

FIGURE 1.51 A wall painting of the gardens of a country villa

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Food and clothing

The main meals were taken at sunrise and sunset, but it appears that breakfast was not a family affair in a nobleman's household. He ate his food while dressing and it appears that his wife was also offered food while having her hair done. Whether the other members gathered together for a family meal is not known.

For most of the population, barley beer, emmer bread, dates, figs and vegetables such as leeks and garlic were the staple food. The upper classes ate meat, game, fowl and fish, a variety of breads and cakes and drank both grape and date wine.

Linen – both coarse and fine – was made from flax and was the material from which the brief loin-cloths worn by peasants and craftsmen and the kilts and long, slim sheaths worn by more well-to-do men and women were made. Upper-class men also wore a stiffened triangular 'apron' over their kilts on more formal occasions, and women wore finely pleated, transparent gowns tied under the bust to wear over their sheaths. Many people went barefoot or wore papyrus and palm-fibre sandals, but leather and woven linen sandals were worn for formal occasions. Colourful jewellery – pectorals, bracelets, earrings and rings – completed the attire of those from the well-to-do classes.

ACTIVITY 1.16

1. What evidence is there that upper-class Egyptians:
   - cared for their appearance
   - paid particular attention to personal hygiene?
2. What was the purpose of 'perfume cones' presented at banquets?
3. Use the text and Figure 1.51 to describe an Egyptian villa owned by a member of the elite.
4. Discuss the perspectives of leading scholars on the meaning of many leisure scenes depicted in tomb paintings.

Health of 18th Dynasty Egyptians as revealed by human remains

Historians have been aware of medical problems, procedures and practices in ancient Egypt since first coming across the many medical papyri from a number of historical periods.

It was not until human remains (embalmed bodies, particularly those of royalty) were analysed, using modern technology such as CT scans and DNA analysis, that the health or otherwise of Egyptians became apparent. The royal mummies in the Cairo Museum have proved to be a wealth of information for age and medical conditions such as arthritis, the presence of infectious diseases such as malaria, the effect of worm parasites, the existence of anaemia, evidence of broken bones, dental inflammation, congenital defects and cancer. The causes of death, hotly debated as in the case of Hatshepsut, also appear to have been solved.

It was once believed, based on x-rays taken in the 1980s, that several pharaohs, including Amenhotep III had suffered a debilitating form of arthritis known as AS (ankylosing spondylitis). However, in more recent detailed CT scans of 13 New Kingdom kings and queens, there appeared to be no evidence of 'the erosion of the sacroiliac joints or fused facet joints which are a hallmark of AS'.[18] They found instead evidence of ossification along the vertebrae, which is a sign of a lesser form of arthritis common among people over 40. Since the mummies with this condition belonged to pharaohs who died at a relatively old age (by Egyptian standards) it is likely that, rather than some deformity of the spine, they probably suffered only mild back pain or stiffness. Amenhotep III was around 50 when he died.

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The CT Scans and DNA studies also revealed that royalty had no immunity against most of the complaints that ordinary Egyptians suffered from. However, due to the common practice among Egyptian royalty of marrying their siblings, they were also likely to suffer from congenital defects, such as the malformed club foot and possible cleft palate of Tutankhamun.

When Hatshepsut's mummy was positively identified – by a missing tooth, and a liver in a box that bore her royal cartouche – and studied by Zawi Hawass, there were some medical surprises.

A COMMENT ON...

Health of 10 royal mummies

During an intensive study of 10 royal mummies including Amenhotep III, Yuya and Thuya (Queen Tiy's parents) and others thought to be related to Tutankhamun, it was discovered that many of them had suffered from a severe form of malaria (*Plasmodium falciparum*). Although it could be debilitating, it is possible that since malaria was common in Egypt, most people would have built up an immunity to it.

The study of the health and medical problems faced by ancient Egyptians of the New Kingdom is ongoing.

FIGURE 1.52 A CT scan being carried out on an 18th Dynasty mummy

ACTIVITY 1.17

1. Propose how we know about the many health problems that plagued ordinary ancient Egyptians.
2. Discuss how modern science has provided valuable information on the health/illness of ancient Egyptian royalty and nobility, and helped solve some enduring beliefs about the cause of death of specific pharaohs.
3. Recall what common disease and health condition was recently found among Egyptian royalty.
4. Discuss the ethical issues involved in studying Egyptian mummies even via non-invasive methods.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

1.1 THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- *Kemet* ('Black Land'): Delta, Faiyum and long Nile Valley. Surrounded by deserts. Areas under Egyptian control or influence: Nubia, Palestine and Syria.
- The Nile River dominated and shaped Egyptian society – provided resources: food, materials for crafts, mud for mud bricks. Deserts: building stone; Nubia: gold, ivory and ebony; Syria/ Palestine: metals, timber.
- Thebes: southern political and religious centre; Valley of the Kings: royal necropolis on west bank at Thebes; Malkata: palace complex of Amenhotep III on west bank.

1.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

- Hierarchical society from king to peasant.
- King's role based on *ma'at* (divine order, rightness); new image of the king (a warrior pharaoh) larger-than-life, additions to regalia (*khepresh* and scimitar).
- Vast hierarchical bureaucracy headed by vizier (second to the king); Viceroy of Kush in charge of Nubia; High priest of Amun (overseer of all other gods).
- A new professional army with its own hierarchy – chariotry the elite contingent, utilisation of Medjay mercenaries (Nubian bowman). Army accompanied trading and mining expeditions during peacetime. Opportunities for rewards and advancement.
- Royal women prominent and influential – Hatshepsut became a king; Tiy (chief consort of Amenhotep III) influenced her husband, communicated with foreign rulers, highly honoured. Queens now wearing vulture headdresses. Non-royal women expected to become Mistress of the House and mothers, especially of sons. Were equal to men in the eyes of the law.
- Scribes: employed at all levels of society, some reached very influential positions. Skills needed for smooth running of empire. Had benefits: no taxation, no conscription.
- Hierarchy of craftsmen from royal sculptors to brick makers. Agricultural workers provided for all classes in society.

1.3 THE ECONOMY

- All land and resources owned by the king. A centralised economy.
- Society relied totally on annual inundation: too high or too low a flood could prove disastrous. Nile also important for transportation.
- Economic exchange in the form of barter; main source of revenue from taxation (farmers carried this load, census determined what percentage of produce paid as taxes); taxes in kind distributed to other groups in society. Other forms of revenue: booty, tribute and trade.
- Technology advanced – seen particularly in temple and tomb construction.

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1.4 RELIGION, DEATH AND BURIAL

- Different classes of gods: household gods, local cult gods, funerary gods and state gods.
- Religious developments: separation of tomb (Valley of the Kings) with mortuary temples (on edge of desert).
- Amun-Re, predominant state god: believed responsible for all successes; received lion's share of booty, tribute and buildings (cult complex at Karnak); associated with significant annual festivals (Opet and Beautiful Feast of the Valley); and with royal mortuary temples.
- Importance of myth of Osiris in funerary beliefs and practices e.g. mummification, and judgement before Osiris: Egyptians believed individuals had a: *khat, ka, ba* and *akh.* Several beliefs about life after death: Field of Reeds or travelling in the barque of the sun god across the sky and through the underworld.
- The fate of the deceased depended on copies of the various 'books' of prayers and spells (*Book of the Coming Forth by Day, Book of What is in the Netherworld*) and ushabtis (models of workers) placed in the tomb, plus amulets on the body. Also, the importance of the 'Opening of the Mouth' ceremony at the tomb entrance.
- Tombs of royals and non-royals differed in size, form and 'decoration'.

1.5 CULTURAL AND EVERYDAY LIFE

- Art reflected a high standard of technical excellence, beauty, elegance, imagination and novelty, and a trend towards naturalism.
- Writing and literature: main genres included tomb biographies, monumental inscriptions, prayers, hymns, love poems, tales, school copybooks and wisdom literature (Instructions).
- Upper classes paid particular attention to appearance and hygiene; leisure activities depended on social class: upper classes played sennet, hunted and attended banquets; other classes enjoyed drinking, boating, fishing, listening to tales, playing music (flutes) and dancing.
- Houses varied from country and city villas of nobles, one-storeyed houses of craftsmen in Deir el-Medina and mud-brick houses of peasants; food staples: bread, beer, wine, vegetables, dates, figs and occasionally meat.
- The ancient medical papyri and modern scans of mummies have revealed the chief health problems: infertility, miscarriages, broken bones, skin and eye diseases, scorpion bites, digestive and dentistry problems; rheumatism, malaria and even cancer.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following terms in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- *ba*
- corvée
- Heb-sed
- *khepresh*
- *ma'at*
- nilometer
- obelisk
- vizier

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

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Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) Recall what caused most:
- problems for peasant farmers
- Egyptian health problems.

2) Discuss what aspects of Egyptian society remained the same through much of its history.

3) Describe what changes occurred in the:
- epithets, regalia and images of the 18th Dynasty pharaohs
- Egyptian army during this period.

4) Summarise the perspective of:
- craftsmen and agricultural workers depicted in the tombs of the nobles
- the writer of Papyrus Lansing about being a slave compared with other professions
- Ani in his advice to ordinary Egyptian citizens in his *Instructions.*

5) Describe how significant to Egyptian society was the:
- maintenance of *ma'at*
- role of vizier
- skills of the scribes.

6) Discuss the significance to the king of the:
- Heb-sed festival
- Opet festival.

7) Summarise the debate among scholars about the meaning of the leisure activities painted on the walls of tombs.

Historical skills

1) Analyse the following statements from the ancient sources. To what do each of these refer?
- 'The activity of thy heart is the temple of *ma'at* … all is done according to thy will.'
- 'A king is he, mighty of arm, the excellent fortress of his armies, the iron will of his people.'
- 'He is not one who bends his face to magistrates and councillors, not one who makes of anyone his client.'
- 'You feed men and herds when you come with your meadow gifts … people's lives are changed by your coming.'
- 'The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp. I stretched my own hands out and bound them for you.'
- 'May Horus adjust your mouth. May he open for you your eyes, your ears, your members'.

2) Assess the power and influence of Amun-Re and the Amun priesthood in Egyptian society.

3) Evaluate what the evidence reveals about the importance of the Nile to the Egyptian economy.

4) Discuss the statement that 'no other nation in the ancient world made so determined an effort to vanquish death and win eternal life'.

5) Comment on the statement that 'one feature of the imperial age of Egyptian history was the prominence of (royal) women'.

6) Research Queen Tiy and assess her influence during the reign of her husband Amenhotep III.

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CHAPTER 2
The Bronze Age: Society in Minoan Crete

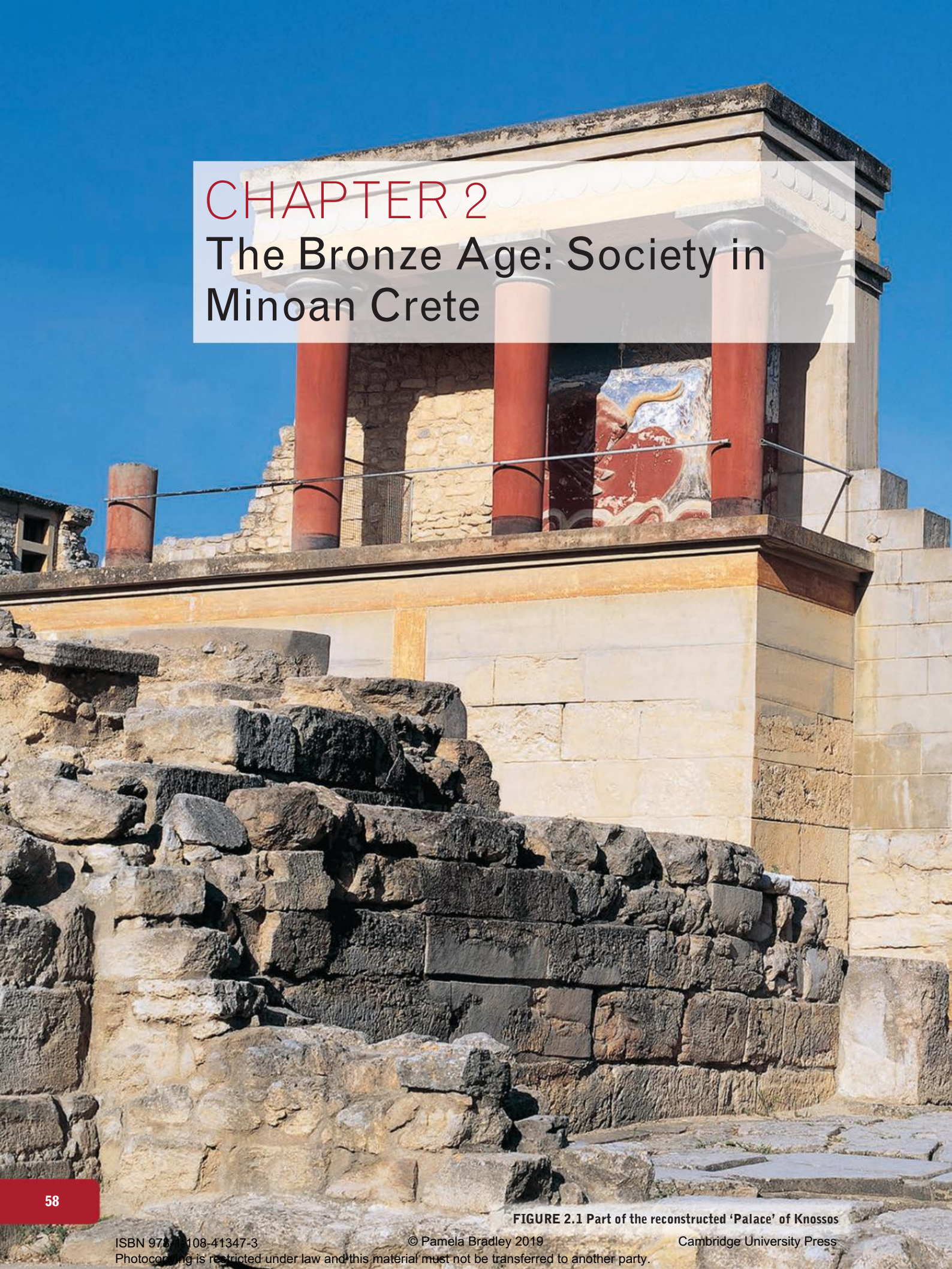

FIGURE 2.1 Part of the reconstructed 'Palace' of Knossos

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FIGURE 2.2 Map of Crete's location in the Eastern Mediterranean

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?	
FOCUS	Students examine a range of archaeological and written sources and relevant historiographical issues of the Bronze Age – Minoan Crete.
KEY ISSUES	• the historical and geographical context • social structure and political organisation • the economy • religion, death and burial • cultural and everyday life

Out of the inchoate mass of pottery and stone, metal and faience, clay tablets and seals, walls and pavements, he [Arthur Evans] had to achieve a synthesis.

SOURCE 2.1 Joan Evans, *Time and Chance: The Story of Arthur Evans and his forbears*, p. 350

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 2.3 An inscribed gold goddess seal. National Archaeological Museum, Athens © Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports / Archaeological Receipts Fund

FIGURE 2.4 A bronze bull and bull leaper

Carefully study the images in Figures 2.3 and 2.4 and note all the details you can see. What does Figure 2.3 suggest about sacred symbols, and the status of women in Minoan Crete? What do you think is happening in Figure 2.4? Consider the possibility of this image as a representation of a religious ritual.

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CHAPTER 2 Overview

KEY IDEA

Although Bronze Age Crete has been described as the first great European civilisation, it is a society whose understanding is based predominately on conjecture due to its lack of any written narrative history and the ambiguous nature of much of its material remains. It is also a society shaped by the work and vision of one man (Sir Arthur Evans), whose various interpretations have been, and continue to be, questioned.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

A study of Bronze Age Crete allows us in the modern world to understand the effects of continuing destructive events, both natural and man-made, on society and the changes that are necessary in response to these. Also, it was a society that appears to have given predominance to women in some fields.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- ashlar masonry
- autonomous
- barter
- chthonic
- cod pieces
- conjecture
- disarticulated bones
- epiphany
- faience
- frescoes
- gypsum
- iconographic
- *koulouras*
- *larnakes* (sing. *larnax*)
- libations
- lustral basins
- magazines
- ossuaries
- *pithoi* (*pithos*)
- polytheistic
- *rhyton*
- sistrum
- thalassocracy
- theocracy
- *tholoi* (*tholos*)
- trepanation
- votive offerings

Painting the picture

INQUIRY QUESTION

What evidence is there for the apparent predominance of women in Minoan society?

The sophisticated Bronze Age civilisation of Crete (c. 3000–1100 BC) – first referred to as 'Minoan' by the British archaeologist Arthur Evans in 1900 after the legendary King Minos of Crete – is poorly understood. The only contemporary written records that have survived on clay tablets are 'temporary jottings of inventories and lists'[1] and much of the archaeological material is ambiguous. The written sources by later Greeks (Homer, Herodotus and Thucydides), who lived c. 900–1300 years after the Minoan culture reached its peak, are unreliable.

Arthur Evans, who unearthed the palace complex at Knossos, fundamentally shaped our understanding of the Minoan culture by placing too much emphasis in his interpretation of the buildings on the legends of Minos and the later Greek sources. He fashioned Minoan Crete, declaring it 'a place of beauty, grace, and transcendence, a peaceful, matriarchal paradise in harmony with nature, overseen by a great Mother Goddess.'[2]

In the light of recent finds, modern archaeologists have taken a more critical view of Evans' interpretations, but although a revised picture of Minoan society has emerged, the evidence is still incomplete. Much of what is written today still relies to a considerable degree on **conjecture**.

conjecture the expression of an opinion without sufficient evidence for proof

The archaeological record reveals that during each phase of the Bronze Age in Crete, society experienced significant changes that included the beginning of a form of writing known as Linear A found on clay tablets; a change in settlement patterns with the building of 'palaces' that were religious, economic, social and administrative centres, reflecting a growing population and a complex social system; changes in religious and burial practices; an altered natural and cultural environment due to destructive events such as earthquakes and fires, including the impact of the Thera (Santorini) eruption on climate and human activities such

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as deforestation and long-term intensive agricultural cultivation leading to soil erosion; the destruction and subsequent rebuilding of 'palaces' and other significant buildings; the introduction of a second script, Linear B, found in archives all over Crete; a takeover by the Mycenaeans from mainland Greece and the abandonment of 'palace' complexes.

In the myths of later Greeks, 'Crete's ancient inhabitants were revered and remembered as representatives of a sophisticated culture that, with its distinctive art, language, system of government, and maritime abilities, became Europe's first great civilization'.[3]

2.1 The historical and geographical context

As a result of the changes that occurred over time, the Cretan Bronze Age has been divided into chronological eras based on systems devised by the archaeologists Arthur Evans and Nikolaos Platon.

1 Evans used changes in pottery styles to divide Minoan civilisation into Early Minoan, Middle Minoan and Late Minoan, each with further subdivisions.

2 Platon used 'palace' building and destruction as the basis of his system: the Pre-Palace Period (c. 3000–1900), Old or First Palace Period (c. 1900–1700), New or Second Palace Period (c. 1700–1450), Final or Third Palace Period (c. 1450–1300) and Post-Palace Period (c. 1300–1100).

It should be remembered that there is a lot of controversy over Minoan dates and these are only approximate. Also, some scholars have called into question the nature and purpose of these 'palace' complexes, presenting an array of arguments for regarding these buildings as Bronze Age temple complexes. Based on the examples from other cultures – Egypt, Anatolia and Mesopotamia – they believe Cretan palaces could be interpreted as temples. However, for simplicity the term 'palace' rather than 'palace/temple' will be used throughout this option, even though the so-called palaces had a significant religious purpose.

TABLE 2.1 Changes over time in Bronze Age Crete using Platon's chronological divisions

Pre-Palace Period c. 3000–1900 BCE	• People lived in mixed farming villages of about 100 people • Specialised pottery production and wool spinning and weaving • Some indications of active trading with other areas e.g. Egypt and the Near East • Appearance of pictographic script • Earliest peak sanctuaries • Some burials in caves but also in round and rectangular tombs
Old or First Palace Period c. 1900–1700	• Population growth and a change in organisation of society • Palace complexes developed as religious (communal rituals), political, social and economic centres with huge storage and redistributive facilities • Kamares pottery ware made at this time • Writing in the form of Linear A developed, although the hieroglyphic script still used • Palaces destroyed by fire, probably from a significant earthquake
New or Second Palace Period c. 1700–1450	• Palaces rebuilt: Knossos, Zakros, Phaistos • Prosperity and relative stability continued but perhaps not as peaceful as Evans suggested as towns were fortified • Construction of great houses or villas reflecting a stratified society • The beginning of monumental mural art (frescoes) • First Linear A on pots • Catastrophic destruction event probably caused once again by earthquake and fire. Thera eruption?

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TABLE 2.1 *(continued)*

Final or Third Palace Period c. 1450–1300	• Knossos labyrinth repaired • Linear B writing appears • Palaces abandoned with exception of Knossos and Archanes where there was reoccupation • Still much workshop and economic activity • Crete now occupied by Mycenaeans (military in character) from mainland Greece • Settlements now at higher altitudes and inaccessible locations indicate a need for greater security.
Post-Palace Period c. 1300–1100	Mycenaean domination of Aegean World

A COMMENT ON...

Seismic activity in the vicinity of Crete

The most active seismotectonic structures in that region is the Hellenic Arc and Trench (H-AT) system. The island of Crete occupies the central segment of H-AT just to the north of the front where the tectonic plates of Africa and Eurasia converge. ... Therefore, the shallow and intermediate-depth seismicity in the area of Crete is very high. In addition, these processes produce other important geodynamic phenomena, such as volcanic eruptions along the South Aegean Sea island arc, as well as tsunamis.

Source: Cited in G. A. Papadopoulos, *A Seismic History of Crete*

No earthquake in the history of Crete has been the sole cause of cultural dislocation or radical change, except architecturally. In some instances, we know that rebuilding or new building took place immediately after an earthquake. There are other instances when it took decades for a major public monument to be restored or renewed ... The historical record indicates that Evans was right to favour earthquakes as the likely cause of most major destructions at Knossos. It is unlikely, however, that each prehistoric earthquake at Knossos represents island-wide devastation.

SOURCE 2.2 Colin F. Macdonald, *Defining Earthquakes and identifying their consequences in North Central Crete during the Old and New Palace Periods*, 2, pp. 2–3

The geographical environment

In the middle of the wine-dark sea there is a land called Crete, a beautiful and plentiful land surrounded by water and filled with people without number and ninety cities.

SOURCE 2.3 Homer, *The Odyssey*, XIX, 172

Crete's natural environment, and its geographic position in the eastern Mediterranean midway between Europe, Africa and Asia (Greece to the north, Libya and Egypt to the south and south-east, and Syria and Lebanon [ancient Phoenicia] to the east), played a significant role in the 'genesis, evolution and character of Minoan civilization.'[4]

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FIGURE 2.5 Map of the main mountains of Crete and significant sites

Natural features of Crete

- Crete is 260 kilometres from east to west and 55 kilometres at its widest.
- The island's most notable landform feature is the east–west chain of mountains that exceed 1800 metres in height, with higher peaks covered in snow until early spring: the White Mountains peak (2453 metres) in the west, Mt Ida (2456 metres) in the centre and Mt Dikte (2148 metres) in the east. In Minoan times the mountain slopes were heavily wooded.
- Within the ranges are upland plains, some as high as 1000 metres, and fertile intermontane valleys watered by the mountain run-off.
- All around the island there are narrow coastal plains, but in the central south between Phaistos and Aghia Triada is the large Mesara Plain: 200 square kilometres.
- Bays and harbours dot the coastline and the climate is generally pleasant with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters.
- The limestone mountains are cut by deep gorges and pitted with caves – particularly in the east – used during the Bronze Age as religious sanctuaries and for burials. Caves and peaks were also associated with the gods.

The archaeologist D. G. Hogarth recorded the following description of the Dictean Cave in 1901.

> There is a shallow hall to the right and an abysmal chasm to the left, the last not matched in Crete for grandeur, nor unworthy of a place among the famous limestone grottoes of the world. The rock at first breaks down sheer, but as the light grows dim, takes an outward slope, and so falls steeply still for two hundred feet into an inky darkness.

SOURCE 2.4 D. G. Hogarth, *Monthly Review*, Jan–Mar, 1901

FIGURE 2.6 Mount Ida

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FIGURE 2.7 Goat herding in the mountains of Crete today

FIGURE 2.8 Olive groves and grain

Resources

The Minoans had no major deposits of metals, although they became known for their metal-crafting skills. Those craftsmen who used a variety of materials such as copper, lead, silver, gold and ivory worked with imported materials. However, their mountains, plains, valleys and sea provided the Minoans with plentiful resources such as:

- limestone, **gypsum**, calcite, marble and serpentine used in construction, paving and the making of religious vessels
- timber for shipbuilding and construction. Cypress trees were tall, straight and suitable for building, and once cut the wood became stronger and harder
- clay for pottery bowls, ***pithoi*** and writing tablets
- arable soil that produced barley, emmer wheat, figs, lemons, mulberries, almonds, pears, pomegranates, grapes (raisins and wine), olives (fruit and oil), vegetables (peas, lentils, cabbages, beans and asparagus), honey and plants of which the flowers, leaves and roots provided medicines and coloured dyes (madder, woad and saffron)
- domestic animals, such as sheep, goats, pigs and cattle, which provided skins, wool, meat and milk. Wild animals such as boar and antelope were hunted in the mountains
- fish, octopus and shellfish that were eaten, and the mucus from the hypobranchial gland of the Murex mollusc provided a purplish/red dye.

gypsum a common mineral (hydrated calcium sulfate) used to make plaster

pithoi (sing. *pithos*) large clay storage jars

Significant sites

All the following sites feature 'palaces' built with relatively similar features.

Knossos

- Built on a hill overlooking the fertile lands of the Karaitos River, 5 kilometres from the north coast.
- The oldest, largest and dominant palace site.
- Features of the 'New Palace': 22 000 square metres in area; three storeys on the western side, two storeys on the eastern side; a huge rectangular central court; maze of chambers (living and administrative quarters), shrine rooms, pillar crypts and corridors giving it a labyrinthine character; a grand staircase; elaborate **frescoes**; storage **magazines**; and piped drainage, flushing toilets and internal light wells.

frescoes paintings done on plaster while it is still wet and fresh

magazines storerooms usually configured in rows

Phaistos

- Built on a prominent ridge on the southern coastline overlooking the large fertile Mesara Plain and with views across to Mt Ida and the sacred cave of Kamares.

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lustral basins basins used for ritual washing and purification

koulouras (sing. *kouloura*) round, stone-lined storage pits built into the ground

- A palace site almost as old as Knossos and believed by archaeologist N. Marinatos to have been a site for religious ceremonies associated with the grain harvest.
- Palace features: 8400 square metres in area; an elegant ceremonial stairway terminating in a wide entryway 9.75 metres across; a large well-paved central court 51.5 metres by 22.3 metres.
- **Lustral basins**; magazines; living quarters; and storage vats possibly for grain storage.

Mallia

- Built on a fertile plain east of Knossos close to the coast and surrounded by a town.
- A palace site not as old as Knossos and Phaistos and appears more of a regional centre for storage of grain and oil for north-eastern Crete.
- Features: 8000 square metres in area; a huge ceremonial western court (48 metres by 22 metres) linked by a causeway to eight large **koulouras**; extensive storage magazines – larger than Knossos – and workshops.

Zakros

- Located on the extreme eastern side of Crete. The town was built on a hill with a road leading to a sheltered bay with good conditions for shipping.
- The 'new palace' area appears to have been a trading centre.
- Palace features: small (less than half the size of Knossos); a circular pool fed by an underground spring; an archive of Linear A tablets; organised workshops; storerooms filled with large numbers of stone and pottery vessels; wine and olive presses; a smelting furnace; caches of bronze ingots (from Cyprus) and solid bronze-casting moulds; ivory tusks (from Syria), obsidian (from Melos) and Cretan perfumes; and a purple dye workshop. See the section on towns, p. 72.

Aghia Triada

- Located 3 kilometres from Phaistos in the south of Crete looking out to Mt Ida.
- A palace linked by a paved road to the harbour where there were huge storage buildings indicating trading activities.
- Palace features: very small 'palace' or villa – 135 square metres; Knossos-like frescoes; an irregular-shaped central court with seating arrangements; causeways; remains of an altar; and an archive room with clay seals.

Gournia

- Located on a hill overlooking a harbour on the north coast.
- A palace in the centre of a Late Minoan town with cobbled streets and over 50 small houses built close together. It was a trading town judging by the oil presses, forges and seal impressions found there.
- Palace features: 1850 square metres with an irregular central courtyard or 'town centre' and a stepped area for watching ceremonial displays. See the section on towns (p. 72) for further details on Gournia and the economy.

> The chief archaeological value of Gournia is that it has given us a remarkably clear picture of the everyday circumstances, occupations, and ideals of the Aegean folk at the height of their true prosperity.

SOURCE 2.5 Harriet Boyd's Site Publication cited in *The Gournia Excavation*

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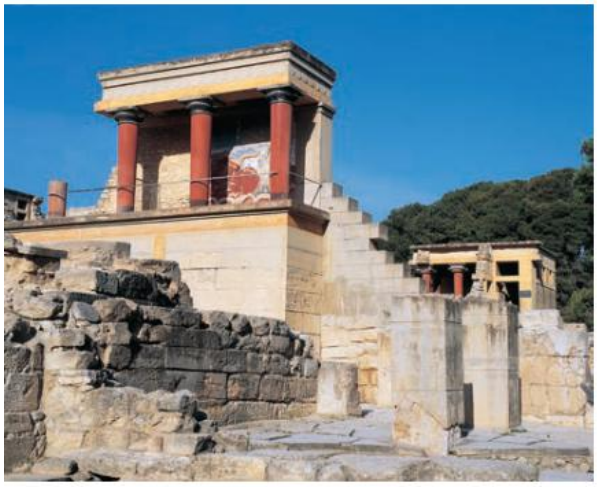

FIGURE 2.9 The remains of a part of the reconstructed site of the 'Palace' of Knossos

There are other small, fragmented palatial buildings at Khania, Arkhanes, Petras and Galatas.

ACTIVITY 2.1

1. How did changes in pottery styles and palace construction aid in building up a broad chronological sequence of Minoan society?
2. Outline how the location of Crete contributed to its development into a maritime society.
3. Identify the most notable landform feature on the island of Crete. How might this have:
   - provided much needed resources
   - influenced the development of their religion?
4. What benefits were provided by the nature of Crete's fertile lowland and upland plains, and coastline?
5. Discuss what Figures 2.7 and 2.8 indicate about the products on which ancient Minoan society was built.
6. Why does Crete suffer so many seismic upheavals?
7. Identify what all the major archaeological sites have in common.
8. Explain what great advantage the palace complex of Phaistos had.
9. What evidence is there that Zakros and Gournia were trading towns?

2.2 Social structure and political organisation

There is insufficient evidence to be certain about anything in the social and political organisation of Minoan society, although it does appear that it was **stratified** with an aristocratic/wealthy elite and an administrative bureaucracy associated with the palace complexes. As well, there were scribes; craftsmen and artists; farmers and fishermen; and labourers and slaves.

As far as the political organisation was concerned, it was bound to have changed over time. Some scholars suggest that Crete was divided into separate principalities or chiefdoms that were **autonomous** political units. Others believe that each palace site was in an arrangement with Knossos whereby the minor rulers were forced to accept the overlordship of Knossos. Both forms might have existed at various times.

stratified layered

autonomous independent, self-governing

Issues relating to the identity and gender of the ruler/s

One of the most controversial issues relates to the question of the identity and gender of the ruler.

1 Was there a powerful king, ruling from Knossos, whose name or title was Minos?

2 Was the ruler a religious personage: a priest/king?

3 Was the ruler a female who held a high religious position?

When Arthur Evans unearthed and reconstructed the palace of Knossos at the beginning of the 20th century, he became convinced that he had found evidence of the existence of King Minos, spoken of in the legends and the ancient sources. According to Thucydides, Minos was 'the first person known to us by tradition as having established a navy' and who 'made himself master of what is now called the Hellenic [Aegean] Sea and ruled over the Cyclades [a group of islands], into most of which he sent the first colonies …'[5]

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Later, Evans changed his view, believing Minos was not a particular king, but that 'Minos' was a title, like 'pharaoh', inherited by successive rulers. He also believed that the person with that title was a priest-king like those in Egypt and other Near Eastern civilisations. Despite the evidence that came to light revealing the prominence of women in Minoan society, Evans, despite living 50 years of his life during the Victorian era, appears to have assumed 'that ... it was natural for a ruler to be a man',[6] and then tried to confirm his view with a misrepresentation of the following archaeological evidence:

1 The fresco referred to as the 'Prince of the Lilies' is a striding male figure crowned with a headdress of lilies and feathers. It was reconstructed from fragments that Evans believed belonged to the figure of a priest ruler. However, 'the Prince of the Lilies' fresco has been proven to be a composite picture of fragments of a male, a female and a sphinx or goddess. This fresco cannot be used to support the existence of either a male or female ruler.

2 The 'Throne Room' was reported by Evans to *The Times* in 1900 as 'The Council Chamber of Minos' (later recognised to have a religious purpose). He spoke of the gypsum throne with its high back, embedded in a stucco wall as 'the noble throne of Minos'.[7] However, later scholars believe that the 'Throne Room' indicated a female occupant. The wall frescoes of griffin-headed sphinxes were usually associated with women, and the anatomically shaped seat of the throne appears to have been designed for the buttocks of a female, possibly a priestess who dressed as a goddess. The number of depictions of women – particularly in frescoes – are more prominent than men and might point to a priestess ruler.

Although no burial of a Minoan king has ever been found in Crete, one piece of evidence that some scholars say could depict a male ruler is the clay medallion-style seal found in the palatial ruins at Khania: the 'Master Impression'. It shows a huge male figure standing on top of what could be a palace or shrine and holding what appears to be a sceptre. In 2008, C. Boulotis in *From Mythical Minos to the Search for Cretan Kingship* suggested that this figure is an image of a male ruler and that the sceptre is symbolic of a royal power bestowed by the gods. However, it is just as likely to represent a god protecting the state.

Archaeologists cannot say for sure if the rulers of Crete were male or female.

1 Gerald Cadogen, in 1990, said, 'I am much less certain that the rulers of Minoan Crete until 1450 were men rather than women'.[8]

2 Louise Hitchcock, in 1999, proposed the view that, as with Hatshepsut in Egypt, the fresco might depict a female dressed as a male.

iconography related to the subject matter of an image, picture or other representation

3 Peter Warren, in 2002, stated that, based on the **iconographic** evidence, 'the ruler … is at least as likely to have been a female as a male'.[9]

4 History researcher Rodney Castleden, in *Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, says that it is tempting to see a powerless king, with his mainly ceremonial role, 'run by a powerful priestess as an earthly parallel to the Minoan myth of a relatively insignificant male god, Velchanos, who was subordinate to a more powerful goddess'.[10]

FIGURE 2.10 The The Grand Staircase at Knossos looking down into the labyrinth of rooms

There is no evidence in ancient Crete of the usual signs of a male-dominated society common to the eastern Mediterranean in the 2nd millennium BC.

A palace elite

It is clear from the frescoes and seal inscriptions that there was a privileged class, probably wealthy, that included both men and women. The members of this elite group probably lived in the large houses

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and villas around the palaces and it is possible that the men may have met from time to time to share a banquet, judging by the areas identified as communal dining rooms in the palace complexes of Knossos, Mallia, Phaistos and Zakros. It also appears that members of this elite group had religious functions. To what extent these functions were part-time or full-time is not known.

Due to the size of the palace complexes with their obvious economic features – extraordinary storage areas and workrooms for artisans – there must have been some form of bureaucratic organisation of officials, supervisors and scribes, although there is no particular official known to us, except for a few images that may have depicted a member of the palace guard.

The difficulty of understanding the bureaucracy in the Early and Middle Minoan periods is that, despite the huge number of clay tablets found in the archives of the palaces, the earliest type of script, Linear A, has yet to be deciphered.

The obvious ceremonial aspects of the palaces, and the images on frescoes, seals and vases, reveal the importance of priestesses and priests among this elite. It is quite possible that the Cretan government was a **theocracy**.

theocracy a system of government administered by a priest-king or by priests and priestesses

Priestesses and priests

It seems that a female goddess was central to Minoan worship, which might explain why there are more women shown in priestly roles: making offerings, pouring libations and performing ritual sacrifices as on the Aghia Triada sarcophagus.

These young women of childbearing age performed the sacred dances and had the most important seats when at major rituals. There is ample evidence of their opulent sacral garments, which they donned when they transformed themselves into a goddess.

> When numbers of priestesses dressed in this way and danced themselves to a pitch of religious ecstasy, the sight must have inspired awe among the beholders. It is easy to identify with the excited crowd of onlookers in the miniature frescoes.

SOURCE 2.6 R. Castleden, *The Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, p. 140

It is not known if these priestesses came from particular families and passed their 'priestly' duties down through the family line, but they were certainly more prominent in the religious sphere than the men.

Priests are harder to identify. On the seals, they are depicted with short-cropped hair, a long garment wrapped around the body and carrying a ceremonial axe. There is an interesting image of a male lyre player on Side A of the Aghia Triada sarcophagus, dressed as a woman. This raises the question of whether there

FIGURE 2.11 A priestess at an altar on the Aghia Triada sarcophagus

FIGURE 2.12 A priestess from the so-called Procession Fresco

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was a subordinate group of eunuch priests, as in other Eastern cultures, who were 'nominal priestesses in the service of the deity'.[11]

The role and status of women

Images of women occur more frequently in the Minoan archaeological record than men, but most of what is known about the role and status of Minoan women is biased towards those from the wealthy upper classes and those associated with religious activities. The evidence suggests that they occupied an important, if not dominant, position within the practice of religion. The 'Procession Fresco' from the Knossos labyrinth 'depicts a priestess, or a priestess **epiphany** of the goddess, receiving tribute and worship from two approaching lines of men.'[12]

epiphany a manifestation or revelation of a divine being

Scholars have to speculate about the role of upper-class women outside the religious sphere. It appears that they were permitted to appear freely in public. They are depicted in the crowd scene frescoes ('Grandstand Fresco') as well-dressed and groomed, animated and mixing with the men.

It is not known, however, if they held any important positions in state affairs apart from their priestly roles, and because of the lack of records, their legal position is hard to judge.

Not much is known about ordinary women, but it seems likely that since religion was concerned with matters of fertility, the main role for a woman was as a mother. However, there is no visual evidence of families or of mothers with children. These women would have been involved in the usual domestic activities of grinding grain and spinning and weaving thread for the family.

FIGURE 2.13 Elite women fresco

There is evidence in the Linear B tablets of the importance of women in producing textiles in the palace complexes where they were expected to produce different kinds of cloth and to meet deadlines. J. T. Killen, in *The Wool Industry of Crete in the Late Bronze Age*, estimated that there might have been close to 1000 women working at Knossos in a variety of specialist roles: carders who combed the fleece; spinners; weavers and dyers; and finishers and embroiderers, as well as overseers.

Craftsmen and agricultural workers

Craftsmen were found working in palaces and towns. Those who were employed in the palace workshops were probably full-time workers. There were seal carvers and textile workers at Knossos; bronzesmiths at Phaistos; lapidaries at Knossos, Mallia and Phaistos; and ivory carvers at Zakros. Craft occupations included:

- architects and engineers
- builders (stone masons, carpenters, plumbers, plasterers and tilers)
- potters and leather makers
- metal workers, **faience** and glass manufacturers
- painters, sculptors and jewellers
- boat builders.

The Minoan towns depended to a large extent on the vital contribution of agricultural workers (farmers and herders) for resources, food and labour. However, despite the identification of small rural settlements throughout Crete as well as the excavation of agricultural tools and equipment, and our knowledge of the crops and animals raised, very little is known about the status of these rural workers. For example, did they own their own land or work for the great landowners?

faience a glaze made by heating quartz sand with soda until the quartz melted and solidified

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ACTIVITY 2.2

1 What is meant by a 'stratified society'?
2 How did Arthur Evans:
   - change his mind about the identity of the person he referred to as Minos
   - interpret what he found in terms of his 20th-century patriarchal view
   - misinterpret the fresco called 'Prince of Lilies' and the so-called 'Throne Room of Minos'?
3 What evidence have various scholars presented of a:
   - female ruler
   - male ruler?
4 Reflect on why this question continues to be controversial.
5 Identify any evidence to support the idea of a:
   - bureaucratic elite
   - theocracy.
6 Examine why is it believed that a theocracy might have been led by a priestess rather than a priest.
7 Investigate the evidential bias in the role and status of women in Minoan society.
8 Evaluate what is known about the status and role of women outside the religious sphere.

2.3 The economy

The palace economy

The source of Minoan wealth and early exchange was predominantly agriculture, livestock breeding, textile goods and fine pieces of art. Evidence of these early transactions is found in the widespread use of seals. As there was no coinage, all exchange was by barter.

With the advent of the palaces, the economy became more centralised. With access to the rich agricultural lands, the palaces had control of the collection, storage and redistribution of these products. From an economic standpoint, it was natural for craftsmen to concentrate in workshops in the palaces where agricultural surpluses and imports were collected and from where goods were distributed. Also, foreign trade was controlled by the palaces, in a form of 'royal exchange', or trade between rulers via envoys. So, the palaces were centres of:

- collection (goods from the countryside and overseas)
- storage (agricultural products and wool clip)
- production (crafts and industries)
- consumption (food, payments and religious dedications)
- regulation (internal exchange and external trade).

The main sources of evidence of the palace economy are the:

1 Linear B clay tablets with lists of agricultural products such as wool clip and the number of livestock under the palaces' control

FIGURE 2.14 Large *pithoi*

2 giant storage jars, or *pithoi*, extensive magazines and stone sub-floor pits or silos (*koulouras*).

The importance of agriculture

The importance of crop growing and livestock raising can be gauged predominantly from the storage facilities and textile workshops at the palace complexes, as well as the badly eroded clay tablets inscribed in Linear B found at Knossos and dated to the period after 1450 BC.

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One of the economic signs in the Minoan script was a plough, which was fundamental to food production. Some of the clay tablets even name the oxen that pulled the ploughs and the oxen-drivers. On other tablets are recorded:

- the rations of grain (wheat and barley)
- the last vintage of 14 000 litres of wine gathered at Knossos
- the 9000 litres of olives from the Mesara Plain
- the number of vines (420) and fig trees (1770 from one estate alone) planted around Knossos
- the flocks of 100 000 sheep in the final year (c. 1380) of Knossos; and the number of lambs for future flocks, as well as target figures for flocks and wool production
- the names of sheep, officials and owners on some tablets.

Evidence from the New Palace period suggests that there was large-scale breeding of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. The sheep and goats would have been driven from the lowlands to feed on the upland pastures in the summers, as they still are today. Goats, and other animals depicted in upland cave drawings, indicate that there was some form of pastoral rituals held in the caves, possibly based on sympathetic magic. Cattle were used for milk, as draught animals and for skins, while the bull was a sacred animal in Minoan society and used in major religious rites such as bull leaping. Horns of Consecration were found throughout the palaces and bull sacrifice was one of the most powerful religious acts, particularly at funerals.

While some agricultural products such as barley were used exclusively for food, products like wine were used predominantly in temple and religious ceremonies for such rituals as libations and sacred communions.

Honey, used as a form of sugar in everyday life, was dedicated, according to the tablets, to the goddess Eleuthia. It was probably added to the wine for consumption in the sanctuaries.

Olives and figs were not only a source of food but also seem to have been sacred to the Minoans. Olives were picked at two distinct states of ripeness, depending on what the oil was to be used for: lighting, cooking, a body oil or in the manufacture of perfume.

A COMMENT ON...

Olive oil production

The manufacture of oil was a major industry in Bronze Age Crete and a source of overseas exchange. Its importance is evident in the number and size of the *pithoi* and storage facilities in the palace complexes and the number of olive presses used to extract the oil found in both palaces and towns.

The best example of an ancient press was unearthed at Vathy Petro near Arkhanes. The oil from the olive was used for cooking, lighting, cleansing the body and as a component in the manufacture of perfume. Perfumed oil was a luxury item used on the body, sprinkled on clothes and exported around the eastern Mediterranean. What appears to have been a perfume workshop (crucibles, jars and a Minoan form of a portable stove) has been found at the palace of Zakros.

The role of towns in the economy

It appears that palace complexes (economic centres) were built where towns already existed and some of these towns were production centres (pottery, weaving and metal work) as well as 'gateway communities' for internal and external trade. The village of Myrtos appears to have specialised in weaving, judging by the presence of spindle whorls, loom weights, spinning bowls and dye tubs. The island town of Mochlos was a gateway for the importation of raw materials and shipment of finished products, and a limestone road linked the specialised Minoan port of Kommos to Phaistos and Aghia Triada.

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TABLE 2.2 Two production and trading towns

Gournia	Zakros
• Well-placed for communication along the east–west route along the north coast of the island, and also between the north and south coasts. • A regional production centre of bronze tools and weapons, pottery, stone vases and wine. • An active trade emporium with overseas connections to other parts of the Aegean and Near East. • A harbor complex that included: – a monumental ship yard with fortifications and towers – ship sheds, which were two long, narrow chambers, each 25 metres long and 5 metres wide – store rooms with sizeable storage jars. • A cobbled road that ran from the ship sheds and harbour to the township. • Stepped terraces probably planted with vines, olives and grain, the only products that flourished close to the sea. Possibly locally produced wine exported in locally made *pithoi*.	• Town located within 100 metres of modern shoreline. • A harbour connected to the palace by a road. • A number of workshops (unworked stone, loom weights, sheets of metal and faience). • A large 'foundry' for casting molten metal by the palace, and a dye and perfume 'factory' in the palace • Pottery, metal goods and textiles rather than agricultural produce stored within the palace. • An elephant tusk, six ox-hide ingots and Cannanite jars found in west wing of the palace and wealth of the site indicate that the town was a collection and distribution centre for trade and a gateway to the East. • Houses in the town had olive and wine presses. • The town specialised in wine production and possibly export of wine to the Cyclades (islands within the Aegean Sea).

FIGURE 2.15 Gournia today, site of an ancient functioning harbour

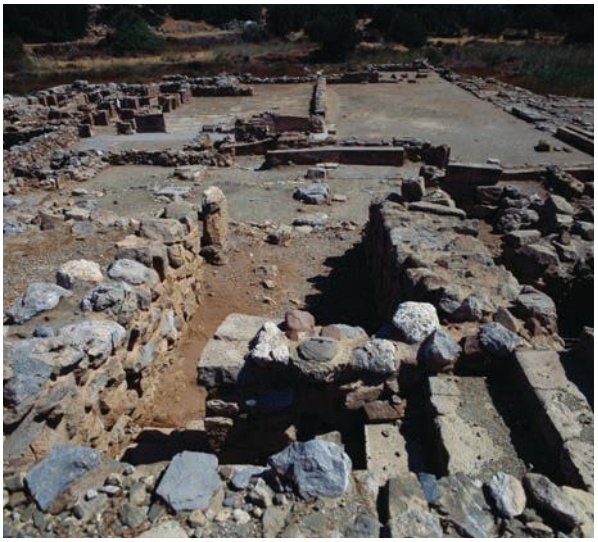

FIGURE 2.16 The remains of a bronze-smelting kiln for the hot metal from Zakros

Trade and economic exchange in the Mediterranean areas

The typical form of exchange (trade) throughout the Mediterranean during the Bronze Age was directed by rulers or temples via royal emissaries. Although it is possible that there might have been some independent side activities, trade was usually linked to foreign affairs. Two shipwrecks of the late Bronze Age found off the Turkish coast point to cargo 'made up of very specific consignments' that was part of the system of 'royal exchange'.[13]

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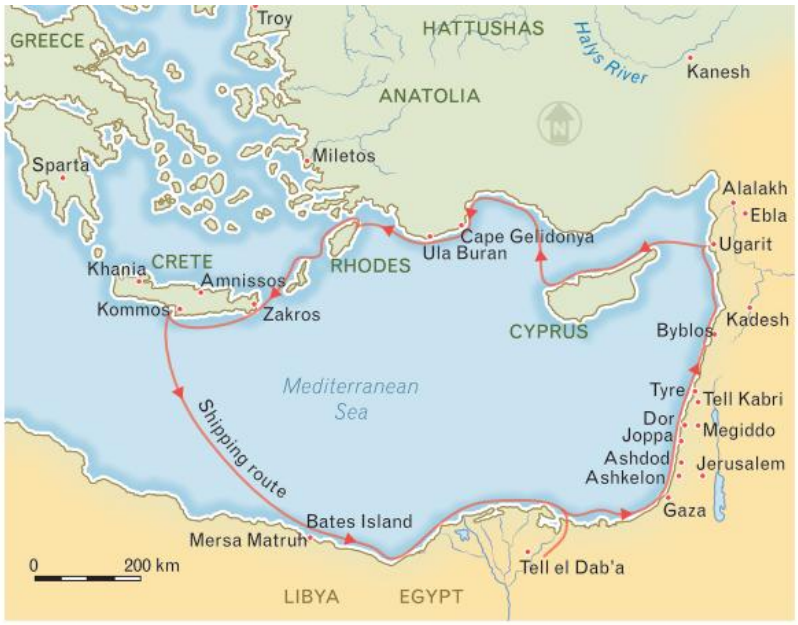

FIGURE 2.17 Map of sea routes and areas of Minoan trade

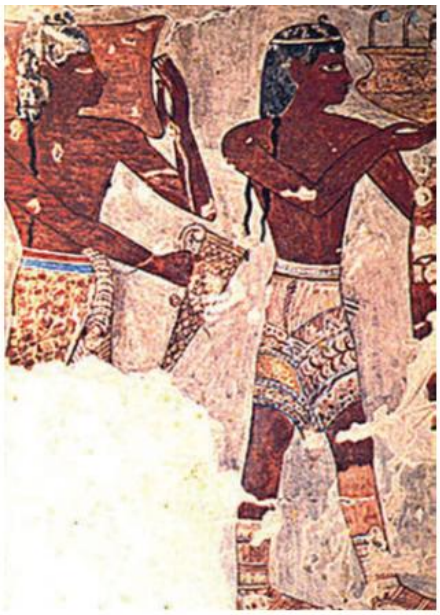

FIGURE 2.18 Figure of Minoans (Keftiu) trading with Egypt

> There are records of trade with the Minoans themselves, 'gifts from the princes (or leaders) of the Land of Keftiu and of the isles which are in the midst of the sea.' These were probably direct exports to Egypt of manufactured goods from the Cretan temples (palaces). In return, the Egyptians sent gifts of gold, ivory, cloth, stone vessels containing perfume, chariots, probably monkeys and Nubian slaves.

SOURCE 2.7 R. Castleden, *The Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, p. 7

The Cretans traded with the Egyptians, who referred to them as Keftiu ('people from the islands in the sea') and regarded them as 'gift-bearers' or 'bringers of tribute'. In the tomb paintings of several 18th Dynasty Egyptian officials (a vizier and priest of Amun), the Minoans are depicted bringing 'gifts' such as pottery; stone-carved vessels, one shown with a bull's head; a model bull; a ***rhyton***; copper 'pillow' ingots; and a large sword. Minoan pottery – Kamares Ware – has been found at many sites in Egypt as far afield as the Delta, middle Egypt and Aswan in Upper Egypt.

From impressions left on seals, it seems that the Minoans imported flax and **papyrus** from Egypt in exchange for timber and woollen textiles.

As well as Egypt, there is evidence – particularly in the form of Middle Minoan pottery – that the Minoans traded with the islands of the Aegean, particularly Thera, copper-containing Cyprus, Anatolia (modern Turkey), Canaan and the coast of the Levant. Some of the best Minoan art is found in Akrotiri on Thera, and in 2009, while excavating at Tel Kabri in Israel, archaeologists discovered Minoan-style frescoes.

rhyton (pl. *rhyta*) container for liquid offerings or drinks

papyrus material made from plant fibre (Egyptian papyrus plant) resembling paper

ACTIVITY 2.3

1. Identify the form of exchange in Minoan Crete. How did this work?
2. Draw a diagram showing the role of the palaces in the Minoan economy.
3. Discuss what Figures 2.17 and 2.18 reveal about the economy.
4. Identify the information revealed by the Linear B tablets about agriculture. Are these a reliable source for our understanding of this important branch of the economy?

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5 Outline the economic importance of the following:
   - the breeding of goats and cattle
   - the production of olive oil.
6 What is meant by 'gateway community'? Name two prominent centres that functioned in this way.
7 Which population centres specialised in:
   - weaving
   - metal work
   - wine production?
8 Explain what is meant by 'royal exchange' and what evidence supports this concept.
9 Examine how we know that the Minoans traded with Egypt. What types of goods did they exchange?
10 Assess the importance of agriculture to the Minoan economy.

The concept of thalassocracy

According to Thucydides, the 5th century BC Athenian historian, King Minos of Crete created a **thalassocracy**, and centuries before Thucydides, the Greek poet Hesiod spoke of Cretans from the city of Minos who sailed their black ship to sandy Pylos, a Bronze Age settlement on the Greek mainland.

thalassocracy mastery or control of the sea; having a maritime empire

> Minos is the earliest of those known to us by hearsay who made a navy. He exercised a power over the greater part of what is now known as the Hellenic Sea. He ruled over the Cyclades Islands and was the first to colonise many of them, driving out the Karians [people from the southern coast of modern Turkey] and setting up his own sons as leaders. He just as reasonably tried to clear away piracy from the sea, as much was he able, so that the revenues should come to him more easily.

SOURCE 2.8 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk 1.14

The problems with Thucydides' view of Minos ruling the seas, establishing colonies and installing his sons as governors, are that:

- he projected his own 5th-century BC view backwards, believing that, as in his own city of Athens, 'greatness and empire can only be gained by control of the sea'.[14]
- Arthur Evans, living at a time of Britain's sea power and empire, accepted Thucydides' view of a Minoan thalassocracy.

Modern views of this issue

1 Chester G. Starr, in the mid 20th century, wrote in *The Myth of the Minoan Thalassocracy* that Thucydides could not have known much about Minos, and invented Minoan imperial power in order to justify his own state's subjugation of the islands of the Aegean during the 5th century BC.
2 Later 20th-century scholars like Gerald Cadogen and Wolf-Dietrich Niemeier believe that the archaeological record at places like Thera, Kythera, Melos, Kos, Keos, Samos and Miletus on the coast of Asia Minor support Thucydides' view of Minoan expansion.
3 Those who don't support the view of a Minoan thalassocracy observed that the presence of Minoan goods around the Aegean could have simply been the result of trade. Also, examples of Minoan-style culture and artefacts – for example, the frescoes at Akrotiri on Thera – simply point to a sphere of influence (culture contact) rather than providing evidence of Minoan colonisation.

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ACTIVITY 2.4

1 Describe what Thucydides says about the existence of a Minoan thalassocracy in Source 2.8.
2 Explain how the idea of a Minoan maritime empire might have suggested itself to:
   - Thucydides (5th century BCE)
   - Arthur Evans (late 19th century Victorian era and early 20th century).
3 Outline the perspectives of modern scholars on this issue.
4 Conduct a class discussion on the evidence for and against this idea.

Crafts, industry and technology

At the height of Minoan society, craftsmen of widely varying skills gathered together in the palace complexes and towns.

Pottery

The Minoans produced an extensive variety of pottery during every stage of their culture, especially during the 'Palace Periods' where the greatest changes in living standards and technical developments took place. In the palace complexes, potters worked to please their patron's changing tastes and preoccupations. Also, as prosperity and trade increased, there was a need for larger pottery storage vessels. The large *pithoi* appeared about the same time as the pottery **larnakes** for burial.

larnakes (sing. *larnax*) small decorated pottery chests or containers used by Minoans for burying their dead

Initially, pottery was made on potters' disks and turntables, but these were hard to keep in motion. It was the invention of the potters' wheel at the beginning of the Middle Minoan Period (c. 1900 BC) that really transformed the industry. This allowed an increase in the volume of work and, more importantly, produced uniformly finer vessels such as the egg-shell-thin Kamares Ware of the First Palace Period (c. 1700). See pp. 93–4.

The discovery of Minoan kilns at Kommos, Aghia Triada, Knossos and elsewhere in Crete revealed how the Minoans fired their pottery. It seems that they used two types of kiln: an up-draught kiln and a cross-draught version, in which they could produce temperatures up to 800°C. The one excavated at Kommos was oval-shaped and made from limestone rubble held together with clay mortar.

> The potters, from experience, could judge the correct temperature of the fire and the timing of the glazing process with an accuracy that is surprising. They would have been able to judge the incandescence of the pots in the kiln and may have used test shards. From mistakes and successes, together with a great knowledge of the clay and the kiln, remarkable pottery was made in Minoan Crete.

SOURCE 2.9 B. Brennan, *Minoan Society: Interpreting the Evidence*, p. 69

Working in stone

Minoans were skilled at working with stone such as:

1 cutting and dressing blocks of limestone for the foundations and lower storeys of buildings, and for columns, paved roads and tombs
2 working with exotic and semi-precious stones to create graceful vases (from alabaster, porphyry, black obsidian, rock crystal, serpentine, steatite, basalt, veined limestone and marble) and inscribed sealstones (from steatite, agate, onyx, amethyst and even lapis lazuli).

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Very high levels of skill were needed to produce stone vases, often modelled on contemporary pottery types such as the *rhyton*. During the peak of Minoan culture, craftsmen used a copper tubular drill rotated by a bow to hollow out the interior of the stone, and emery, imported from Naxos, to give a smooth finish to the exteriors. See p. 93 for examples of the most beautiful of the *rhytons*.

> Traces of boring lathes have been found on the stone vases of this period. These must have been cylindrical metal tools which were rotated in the centre of the stone core and removed its inside with the help of water and emery, a hard mineral used for smoothing. The complex shaped vases were made up of different pieces which were stuck together. The outside of the vase took its final shape with the smoothing of the surface, while the relief decoration on some stone vases was made by metal knives, chisels and spear-heads, using a technique similar to that of seal carving.

SOURCE 2.10 http://ime.gr/chronos/02/crete/en/artsandtechnology/st_tec.html

Sealstones served predominantly practical purposes: as identification and security. The owner's 'signature' was pressed into a clay sealing on documents, closed jars, boxes and overseas consignments to make sure goods had not been tampered with. However, some were simply a form of art. The original seals were made from soft steatite and carved with a copper knife, but with the advancement of the cutting wheel, tubular drill and abrasives, harder and more beautiful stones were used (see p. 92).

Metalwork

Gold

The advanced technical processes used by goldsmiths in the manufacture of gold jewellery were:

- filigree – decorating the surface of the gold with patterns of fine wire
- granulation – decorating the surface with minute grains of gold
- inlaying of precious stones in cells
- embossing sheet gold with punches, moulds or stamps (see p. 93).

Bronze

Bronze came into use during the First Palace Period, but it only became a large-scale industry with the Second Palace Period.

Bronze is an alloy of 90% copper and 10% tin and, because copper had to be imported from Cyprus and Greece, the advanced technology involved in bronze-making was part of the palace economy.

The workshops at Knossos made armour and the finest swords and daggers in the Mediterranean area until the last years of the Minoan culture. The palaces also produced a wide variety of other objects: cooking and storage vessels such as cauldrons and jugs; mirrors; platters; votive and ritual objects such as double-axes; tools such as flat axes, chisels and scrapers; and ingots of bronze for export.

Evidence for Minoan copper smelting practices comes from the remains of an Early Minoan metallurgy workshop at Chrysokamino in Northern Crete.

> The site shows that here the Minoans used bowl-type furnaces with pierced clay chimneys designed to raise the temperature by increasing the flow of oxygen during the smelting of the ore. The clay-lined furnace would have been small, 20–40 cm. in diameter and constructed in a hollow in the ground. The chimney aided an updraft of air and this was also assisted by bellows that were used to pump in air.

SOURCE 2.11 P. P. Betancourt, 'The Chrysokamino Metallurgy Workshop', *Hesperia*, Supplement 36

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Two forms of bronze-making were used:

1 Solid casting in which the molten metal was poured into moulds of clay or stone that produced different shapes. Twelve different open and closed moulds were found in a workshop at Mallia, and at Zakros excavators found a casting pit (channels in the ground) for making ingots with curving sides to make them easier to carry on the shoulder. Six ingots found at Zakros weighed between 26 and 33 kilograms.

2 Sheet metal cut into different shapes, hammered over a wooden form and then riveted together, was the basis of the manufacture of cauldrons, jugs, pans and implements.

FIGURE 2.19 Large bronze ingot found at Zakros

ACTIVITY 2.5

1 Outline the reasons for the changes in the type and quality of pottery over time.
2 Suggest what Source 2.9 says about the skill of Minoan potters.
3 In what two areas were Minoan craftsmen skilled in using stone?
4 Explain what Source 2.10 reveals about techniques used in the production of fine stone vases.
5 Examine why it was necessary for the production of bronze to be part of the palace economy.
6 Assess what evidence there is for the:
   - existence of copper smelting
   - solid casting of bronze.

Textiles and dyes

Since textiles do not survive in the archaeological record, the importance of the Minoan textile industry has to be gauged from:

- information recorded on the Linear B tablets found at Knossos: the size of the sheep flocks; the number of weavers attached to the palace at Knossos (estimated at over 1000); the production targets of cloth for a year; and the different kinds of textiles or garments stored and described as 'with wedge pattern', 'with white fringes' and 'of better quality'
- frescoes in the palace of Knossos that show a great variety of coloured fabric patterns
- the tomb paintings in Egypt that depict trade envoys from Crete bringing cloth to the Egyptians, and the decorative Cretan textile patterns copied onto the tomb walls and ceilings
- the number of spindle whorls and loom weights found throughout Crete, as well as little tokens called *noduli*, such as in royal villa at Aghia Triada. Loom weights – some disk-shaped, some round, some cuboid – were used to weigh down the woven fabric to make it easier to work.

> At the time of the Villa's destruction, the administration of Aghia Triada was distributing or receiving 135 kg [45 units] of wool and giving receipts in exchange while a scribe was entering data on his tablet. The looms stored inside Room 27 could be somehow related to this activity: perhaps they were to be used in the processing of the wool on the tablet.

SOURCE 2.12 Pietro Mitello, 'Textile Industry and Minoan Palaces', *Ancient Textiles Series*, Bk 1

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The Minoans used the famous Murex mollusc to produce a deep rich reddish-purple dye from the mucus of its hypobranchial gland. It took hundreds of these boiled molluscs to give a reasonable amount of dye. Large deposits of the crushed shell and representations of the mollusc as a decorative element on Minoan pottery show its importance in the textile industry.

Also, a variety of plants were used to dye woollen cloth. These included:

- madder root (*Rubia tinctorum*, the common madder or dyer's madder) that produced an orange-red
- woad leaves (*Isatis tinctoria*, a flowering plant commonly called dyer's woad) that produced a blue dye
- saffron crocus stigmas (*Crocus cartwrightianus*, a wild flowering plant with red stigmas) that produced deep yellow dye; the collection of saffron is shown in frescoes
- mordants used to fix the dyes included lead, tin and alum. A dye factory has been found in the remains of the palace of Zakros.

FIGURE 2.20 The Murex mollusc shell

ACTIVITY 2.6

1. Outline why it is hard to gauge the extent of the textile industry in Minoan society. Provide three pieces of evidence that point to its significance in the economy.
2. What was the Murex mollusc and why was it so valued in Crete?
3. Explain why saffron plants were often shown in frescoes.

Building materials, techniques and construction

The construction of the Minoan palace complexes reveals the skills of Bronze Age architects and masons. The palaces were not only monumental (often on a number of levels) and built to take advantage of the landscape, but they were also precise (based on a unit of measurement referred to as the 'Minoan foot' or 30–36 centimetres) and sophisticated. See p. 94 for the architecture of these palaces.

A range of building materials was used:

- The finest dressed stone – **ashlar masonry** – was used for exterior walls, for facing important spaces, for staircases and for paving large courts. Dressed limestone was used at Knossos and Phaistos, and brown sandstone at Mallia.
- Rubble masonry – rough stones or rubble – were used for some external walls, as well as internal walls, and then plastered over and smoothed.
- Sun-dried bricks – held in timber frames and plastered over – were used for upper storeys because they were lighter.
- Timber was used for tapering columns, as bracing for walls, for horizontal beams and vertical posts, for flooring on upper floors and for windows and doors.

Construction was based on the column and beam method, where columns, made of timber with a base of stone, supported a flat ceiling. The building of palaces appears to have emphasised comfort, light and space as well as adjustment to the hot summer climate. The Minoan's advanced technology can be seen particularly in the drainage and sanitary engineering:

- Storm water from roofs and paved courtyards was carried away by an elaborate system of clay pipes and curved drains that slowed the run-off.

ashlar masonry masonry made of sawn, dressed, tooled or quarry-faced stone with proper bond

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- Water was kept off staircases by deep runnels that paralleled the fall of the steps and emptied into small settling tanks.
- Toilets comprised a wooden seat suspended over channels and sewage was flushed away with run-off water.

FIGURE 2.21 An example of ashlar masonry at Myrtos

ACTIVITY 2.7

1. Identify what building materials were used in the construction of Minoan palace complexes.
2. What evidence is there of the engineering skill of Minoan architects and builders?
3. Draw a mind map showing the tools and technologies used by Minoan craftsmen in their various industries.

2.4 Religion, death and burial

The lack of written sources and the fragmentary nature of the archaeological remains make it difficult to really understand the Minoans' religious beliefs, although it appears that:

polytheism the worhsip of many gods

- they had a rich and vibrant religious life
- they were **polytheistic**, although a female goddess was central to their religion
- they saw supernatural forces all around them that controlled the natural world, such as weather and fertility
- they believed that the human soul survived death
- priestesses played a vital role in religious life
- their gods and practices changed over the millennia
- at different times, there were deities associated with various areas and communities.

However, just how they saw their supernatural world and a possible afterlife, and the exact identity of their gods, is not clear.

Nature and identity of deities

N. Marinatos in *Minoan Religion: Ritual Image and Symbol* suggests that the Minoans worshipped a small group of deities that comprised a Great Goddess, daughter goddesses, a son or male consort and a male deity represented by a bull.

Some scholars believe, however, that the various goddesses, such as the so-called 'snake goddess', 'tree goddess' and 'mistress of animals', were just different forms of the Great Goddess.

Others think that over time, as in Egypt, goddesses blended together, adopting each other's attributes. If this were the case, it is difficult to identify the various deities.

The Great Goddess (Mother Goddess) mentioned in the later archives was referred to as Potnia or Lady of the Labyrinth, whose symbols were the double-axe, the pillar and the snake.

There are gold signet rings depicting a woman who is shown larger than the figures of others. For example:

1. A large woman sits under a tree with two females bringing her poppies, and a tiny male figure in the background is dressed as a warrior. This young inferior male deity might have taken the role of son or consort to the goddess. He might have been the one called Velchanos.
2. Two large males dance on either side of an even larger woman.

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Female goddess representations

1 One of the earliest representations of a goddess, found at Myrtos on the south coast of Crete and dated to c. 2500–2300 BC, was in the form of a pregnant woman. This was possibly a local fertility goddess.

2 The so-called 'Snake Goddess' was depicted in faience and ivory statuettes. The most famous of these, with snakes coiled around her arms and body, is dated to c. 1600 BC, and most commonly regarded as a fertility deity. See the comment box below.

3 Inscribed on a sealstone is an image of a goddess on a mountain flanked by lions or lionesses and referred to as the Mistress of the Animals. Perhaps this is the goddess referred to as Britomartis, who had a subordinate male companion (son, brother or consort) shown as a master of animals. This goddess, referred to as a hunter and protector of wild things that lived in the mountains, is shown with spear and shield. She and her consort might have been associated with peak sanctuaries.

4 A number of stylised figurines known as 'Goddess with upraised arms', and dated to c. 1400, were found around Knossos. Unlike the naturalism of the snake goddesses, these were rigid cylinders, crudely painted, with raised arms, exaggerated hands and necks and harsh and ugly faces. The common feature was the upraised arms that appear to be a form of blessing, but they wore different headdresses: a poppy, a dove, a snake and flowers. The so-called Poppy Goddess, found at the mountaintop sanctuary of Karphi, was 79 centimetres tall with slashed poppies on her head (as if the opium had already been released). Was this associated with some drug-induced ritual? Another had a dove on her head, possibly a symbol of her control over the realm of the sky.

5 In the Post-Palace Period there was a goddess of the caves, associated with childbirth and the Underworld, known as Eleuthia. Her sanctuary was the cave at Amnisos, south of Knossos.

FIGURE 2.22 One form of a so-called snake goddess

A COMMENT ON...

Snake Goddess representations

- When the small faience statuette of the 'Snake Goddess' was discovered by Arthur Evans in 1903, he immediately claimed it not only as a goddess, but as an aspect of the Mother Goddess as worshipped elsewhere in prehistoric cultures.
- The discovery of other finds of figurines made elsewhere on Crete were unconvincingly identified as, or associated with, the 'snake goddess'.
- Despite Evans' attempts, and others, to construct a view of Minoan religion by fitting the goddess into some religious context, there is little archaeological evidence to support the existence in the Minoan religion of a 'snake deity'.
- Other scholars have identified the Snake Goddess as a fertility deity.
- Perhaps it had a specific meaning for women alone, but what that was may never be known, or the figures could represent priestesses.

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Maybe because Minoan Crete is singularly lacking in any artistically interesting sculpture, art historians have tended to single out the 'Snake Goddess' for particular attention, causing us thereby to perceive it as being perhaps more important, and as occupying a more significant place in Minoan culture than it warrants. ... to identify the 'Snake Goddess' as a fertility deity is to impose upon it an interpretation that is so broad as to be virtually meaningless.

SOURCE 2.13 C. L. C. E. Witcombe, *Women in the Aegean: Minoan Snake Goddess*, arthistoryresources.net/snakegoddess/minoanculture.html

Religious symbols

Double-axe

The double-axe, or 'labrys', like the bull, is the symbol most associated with Minoan religion and it gave its name to the palace at Knossos: The Place of the Double Axe or labyrinth.

Although its significance is uncertain, it is likely to have been associated with the sacrifice of a bull. Double-axes are sometimes shown painted on pottery above a bull's head and are prominent on the Aghia Triada sarcophagus associated with a bull sacrifice. They were made in all sizes and materials – bronze, gold, lead and stone – as well as painted in frescoes, on pottery and inscribed on stone walls at Knossos. Large ones are often shown mounted in special holders in sacred places. The oldest double-axe so far excavated was found at Mochlos and dated to c. 2500 BC.

FIGURE 2.23 A double axe – labrys

A fresco at Knossos shows axes stuck into a wooden column, suggesting the act of placing them in stalactite crevices in cave sanctuaries. A mould found at Palaikastro shows a goddess or priestess holding aloft double-axes in each hand, perhaps indicating that it was a symbol of a powerful female deity.

Bulls and Horns of Consecration

There is no doubt that the bull was important in Minoan myth (the story of the half-man, half-bull Minotaur) and religion (the most important of the sacrificial animals). It was also a potent symbol of strength and associated with earthquakes and tsunamis. Depictions of bulls have been found everywhere throughout Minoan Crete: representations of bull leaping and bull wrestling, votive figurines of bulls and *rhytons* in the shape of bulls.

FIGURE 2.24 The Horns of Consecration

Stone and plaster Horns of Consecration, believed to represent the horns of the bull, were found throughout Knossos. The largest, measuring 2.2 metres high, is believed to have once been on the western façade of the palace. If the 'Grandstand Fresco' is to be believed, these symbols decorated the roof of the palace. They also marked sacred spaces such as the theatral area of Knossos. Often a double-axe was inserted between the horns.

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Birds

Birds of all kinds, particularly doves, are represented in frescoes. It is unlikely that these birds are purely decorative as frescoes are predominantly ritualistic. Birds are thought to be epiphanies of deities. They are found as **votive offerings**, on the heads of goddess figurines, between Horns of Consecration and sitting on top of double-axes such as in the painting on the Aghia Triada sarcophagus.

votive offering an offering given or dedicated in fulfilment of a vow or promise

Trees

Trees appear to have been symbols of life, renewal, rebirth and fertility, as well as having an association as 'divine birds' (incarnations of a goddess) who alighted in their branches. They are found depicted everywhere from frescoes and seals to gemstones. Often, a priestess is shown performing a ritual in front of a tree, and torn branches are shown laid on altars and planted between Horns of Consecration. The missing Mochlos Ring depicts a sacred tree growing from a shrine being ferried on the afterdeck of a boat.

Snakes

In ancient agricultural societies, snakes were regarded as the protectors of the grain supply and were also placated to prevent their bite. Because they lived in crevices, they were seen as the natural symbol of the earth and underworld deities and – because they shed and regrew their skin – they were regarded as symbols of renewal and fertility. In Late Minoan times, snake tubes were produced as domestic dwelling places for snakes.

Pillars and columns

Minoans regarded some inanimate objects such as pillars and special columns as incarnations of a deity. It has been suggested that these may have represented trees as well as the limestone stalagmites and stalactites in cave sanctuaries. In many palaces and large villas, special rooms were set aside as pillar crypts.

Sacral knots

A sacral knot was comprised of a piece of striped and fringed cloth knotted in a loop in the middle and worn by priestesses. The best example is that depicted on the famous fresco at Knossos known as La Parisienne (see p. 99).

ACTIVITY 2.8

1. Explain why it is very difficult to understand Minoan religious beliefs and the identity of Minoan deities.
2. Draw a diagram summarising the various representations of goddesses.
3. What does Christopher Witcombe (comment box) suggest about the emphasis placed on the Snake Goddess?
4. Suggest why the bull was such a potent religious symbol. How might the symbol of the double axe have been associated with the bull?
5. Explain the religious significance of:
   - birds
   - trees
   - pillars.

Religious places

Religious worship was held on mountain peaks, within caves, in houses, courtyards and 'temples'.

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Peak sanctuaries

Like many ancient people, especially pastoral societies, it appears that the Minoans believed that deities resided or appeared on mountaintops and were associated with the vagaries of weather that occurred on these windswept heights. These sites were propitious for meetings with the gods and were frequented regularly by nomadic pastoralists who followed their herds and flocks to the higher pastures during summer.

Long before the first temples appeared on the lowlands, the Minoans built shrines and worshipped gods on the more accessible mountains. Although these are referred to as peak sanctuaries, they were usually only at heights between 215–1200 metres above sea level (Mt Juktas at 775 metres and Mt Pyrgos at 685 metres). The highest, at 1185 metres, was at Karphi. Most peak sanctuaries were no more than an hour's walk from villages. Some were in direct line of sight from nearby palaces, the most important being the sanctuary on Mt Juktas, 13 kilometres south-west of Knossos. Only Mt Juktas remained in operation at the end of the Late Palace Period.

These sacred enclosures, of which only 35 have been positively identified, varied in appearance from place to place. Some were simply open spaces surrounded by a stone wall, others comprised a number of buildings, while still others had elaborately carved or painted shrines, paved terraces, tall bracketed masts, and walls and balustrades with sacral horns. L.V. Watrous, in *Some Observations on Minoan Peak Sanctuaries*, said that 'the differences might represent different functions: healing, fertility and rites of passage'.[15]

chthonic relating to the underground or underworld

Despite their design differences, the votive offerings were much the same: models of cattle, oxen, sheep and goats; figures of females with sacral garments; and lamps and libation vessels. There were also the remains of animal sacrifice and cultic meals.

> An imposing building was constructed on Mt. Iuktas consisting of three parallel terraces, oriented north-south ... On the west side of the uppermost terrace, a long-stepped altar overlies several cracks in the bedrock, one of which leads down to a natural chasm located between the two upper terraces which has so far been excavated to a depth of 10.50 m. without the bottom having been reached. The lowermost terrace consists of a series of five or six roughly square rooms in a single row, all opening uphill toward the west. On the downhill, side of this lowermost terrace to the east ... is a narrow bench which evidently served as a display space for votive offerings. Both the finds and the architecture at this particular peak sanctuary are of unparalleled magnificence among cult locales of this class, as one might perhaps have expected of the sanctuary which served the site of Knossos.

SOURCE 2.14 *Aegean Prehistoric Archaeology*, http://www.dartmouth.edu/~prehistory/aegean/

FIGURE 2.25 Drawing of a peak sanctuary

Caves

Due to their otherworldly and mysterious atmosphere, Minoans regarded caves as the abode of the **chthonic** earth deities. But not all caves in Crete, of which there are approximately 2000, were religious sites. Only 16 of those explored and documented were cultic centres. They had to fulfil certain requirements, like those at Skotino and Psychro. They needed to:

- be reached after a steep climb as a physical test of a worshipper's devotion
- be large and deep

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- have an awe-inspiring atmosphere of stalagmite and stalactite formations that might have suggested monsters, demons and deities to pilgrims
- have rock pools. The lower chamber of Skotino had a pool that at its widest was 20 metres. Votive offerings were found in the silt floor of this pool.

Cult activities associated with animal and human fertility, female maturation and male initiation were carried out within the cave. Sacrificial pyres were built and dancing and feasting performed outside the cave entrances.

The cave that has furnished by far the richest assortments of votive objects – double axes, daggers and swords – is the Arkalochori Cave, not far south of the newly discovered Palace of Arkalochori.

FIGURE 2.26 Interior of Skotino Cave used as a Minoan sanctuary

A COMMENT ON...

The votive hoard from the Cave of Arkalochori

- In 1912, local peasants collected 2 kilograms of Bronze Age weapons from the cave and sold them for scrap metal in Heraklion. Further exploration discovered masses of bronze votive weapons and a silver double axe.
- In 1934, a child found a gold double axe unearthed by a rabbit. To prevent the locals plundering the cave, archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos took over the excavation of the cave and in the process discovered two more cave chambers in which were hundreds of bronze, 25 gold and seven silver double axes; bronze long swords and daggers; gold votive weapons, ingots of copper and pottery shards. Among the hoard was the Archalochori Axe inscribed with 15 symbols. See p. 97 for the Phaistos Disk.
- The hoard, dated to c. 1500–1425 BC, was unique among Minoan cave deposits.

Pillar crypts

As a way of replicating the distant cave sanctuaries with their stalagmites and stalactites, pillar crypts were constructed deep within the palace complexes and large villas. Chthonic cult palaces linked back to the fruitfulness of the earth in Knossos. There were two rooms with pillars engraved with double-axes and shallow depressions on either side of the pillars, presumably for libations.

Since pillar crypts were often near storage magazines, it is possible that they were associated with harvest festivals.

FIGURE 2.27 A pillar crypt at Mallia

Palace shrines

From the evidence of the Grandstand Fresco at Knossos, painted pottery, small gems, a relief carved on a ceremonial *rhyton* from Zagros, and excavated sites at Knossos, Gournia and Vathy Petro, it appears that Tripartite Shrines were a familiar Minoan form, although it is impossible to know what activities were carried out before them.

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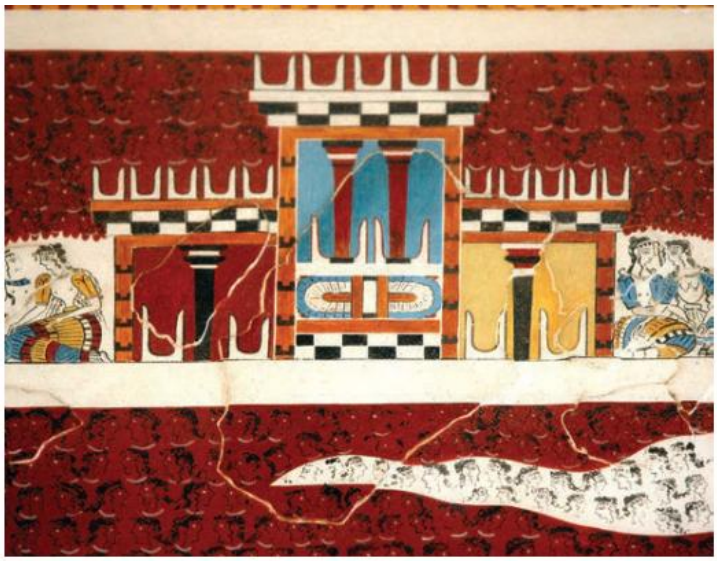

FIGURE 2.28 A tripartite shrine in the Grandstand Fresco at Knossos

At Knossos, just south of the so-called 'Throne Room', is what Arthur Evans described as a Tripartite Shrine because its columned façade was divided into three parts, the central section higher than the sides. The area behind the shrine – so he believed – was connected with the palace pillar crypts with depressions in the floor used for libations.

Also at Knossos is the small (1.5 by 1.5 metre) Shrine of the Double Axes. It was discovered still with its religious objects *in situ*, which included: large vases; a table of offerings; groups of cups and jugs; clay horns of consecration, each with a socket into which would be fitted double axes (evidence seen on seals and vase paintings); bell-shaped female figurines, one with a bird perched on her head; and a male figurine holding a dove.

ACTIVITY 2.9

1. Explain why mountain peaks and caves were chosen as places of worship.
2. Use the text, Source 2.14 and Figure 2.25 to describe in your own words the features of a peak sanctuary.
3. Despite the huge number of caves in Crete, why were only some chosen as sanctuaries?
4. What evidence is there that the Cave of Arkalochori was one of the most important sanctuaries in 15th-century Crete?
5. What was a pillar crypt and where would you expect to find one?

Religious practices

The details of Minoan religious practices are the subject of conjecture. Not much can be said with any certainty.

Goddess epiphanies

W. D. Niemeier in *The Function of the "Throne Room" in the Palace of Knossos* has suggested, along with other scholars, that the 'Throne Room' was a centre where a dramatic epiphany was staged. A priestess, dressed as a goddess and seated on the throne, flanked by griffins, received offerings as the epiphany of the Great Goddess.

> There are many images of religious ceremonies which show epiphanies of a goddess. Often, she is a small figure appearing as if in the distance, behind or above a group of ecstatically dancing priestesses. Sometimes the goddess appears in the midst of the priestesses manifesting as one of their number. We should visualize a common form of religious ceremony in which a group of priestesses sang, danced, chanted and performed sacrifices and other rituals, as a preamble to a climactic event in which the leading priestess . . . called the 'goddess impersonator' actually became the goddess.

SOURCE 2.15 R. Castleden, *The Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, p. 132

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Sacrifices

One of the most informative sources of evidence for animal sacrifices, apart from blood-stained altars and animal remains in the ashes of ceremonial pyres, is the Aghia Triada sarcophagus. The sacrifice depicted on the back side appears to be part of the funerary rites on behalf of the deceased on the opposite side of the sarcophagus. It shows the sacrifice of a bull, officiated by a priestess and the draining of the bull's blood. Two smaller animals are being carried to the tomb and two trussed-up kids lie beneath a table. The best animals were offered to the deities in return for a blessing.

FIGURE 2.29 One side of the Aghia Triada sarcophagus depicting a ritual with sacrificial animals

At the right is a shrine with a tree at its center. To the left of the shrine is an altar, above which is a libation jug and a basket-shaped vase (*kalathos*) full of fruit (?). A woman stands in front of the altar with her hands held palms down above it. Behind her is a sacrificial table on which a bull is strapped down for sacrifice. Below the table and fixed in the ground is a conical *rhyton* into which the bull's blood will drain and thus seep into the earth. Next to the *rhyton* and perhaps held in reserve for a second stage of the sacrifice are two **agrimia**. Behind the table is a flute player. Further to the left is a procession of female figures, only the first of whom is well preserved. This figure advances to the right with her arms outstretched and palms down. The indication of the hands' position and the arrangements for the blood to drip into the ground indicate that the sacrifice is to an earth ('chthonic') or underworld figure.

agrimia a type of goat with long horns that curl back, native to Crete

SOURCE 2.16 Jeremy B. Rutter, *Aegean Prehistoric Archeology*, http://www.dartmouth.edu/~prehistory/aegean/?

Human sacrifice

It seems from a discovery at Anemosphilia, on the side of Mt Juktas, that the Minoans may have resorted to human sacrifice periodically when facing natural catastrophes or social distress. Perhaps the myth of youths being fed to the Minotaur was a memory of human sacrifice in the distant past.

In the late 1970s, Yannis and Effie Sakellarakis excavated a small three-roomed temple dated c. 1700 (First Palace Period) at Anemosphilia, which contained evidence proving that human sacrifice did occur from time to time. They discovered the moment of death of a sacrificed youth of about 18, and the almost immediate death thereafter of what are thought to have been a priestess, priest and a serving attendant by means of an earthquake. Perhaps it was the recurring seismic activity that the Minoans believed necessitated a human sacrifice at that time.

In the central room were two clay feet, the remains of a life-sized wooden idol (its gender unknown) and 400 pottery vessels and offerings placed on both sides of the idol. In a room to the right was the body of the young sacrificial victim lying on a rectangular platform with his legs bent as if he had been bound. A long, incised bronze knife lay beside the body. Someone had cut his throat and collected his blood in a basin to be presented to the idol in the central room. At this point the earthquake struck. The three celebrants were apparently killed by fallen blocks. 'The position of the skeleton of the male celebrant suggests that he was running from the building when it collapsed' and killed him. It appears that during the earthquake 'the lamps placed inside the shrine burnt whatever was flammable'.[16]

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FIGURE 2.30 Clay votive offerings

There has been much recent academic work done by scholars on human sacrifice, which seems to have been not as unusual as once thought, and on crisis cults, when religious practices changed in response to natural disasters.

Votive offerings

A votive offering is a small object given, offered or dedicated at a sacred place in connection with a vow or promise to a god. These fall into a number of categories depending on what the supplicant is asking for, such as: health (moulds of hands, legs and parts of the body); fertility (figurines of a pregnant woman or a copulating couple); protection and fertility of livestock (models of animals); prosperity in a craft (tools); and success in a male initiation rite or in war (miniature swords, daggers and shields).

Feasts, dances and processions

There is strong evidence for:

- large-scale ritual feasting (remains of jugs, cups and dishes at Knossos)
- sacred dancing (frescoes at Knossos; a clay model of four women dancing arm in arm; and ecstatic dancing depicted on two gold rings)
- processions suggested by the raised walkways excavated at Knossos, Mallia and Phaistos, as well as the scenes depicted on the Harvester Vase and in the heavily restored Procession Fresco from Knossos. On the Harvester Vase, a priest, wearing a distinctive cloak and accompanied by a musician playing a **sistrum**, leads a procession of farmers carrying winnowing forks. It is probably a celebratory procession for the harvest. The Procession Fresco depicts two lines of male worshippers taking offerings to a female goddess/priestess. The proximity of the raised palace walkways to the grain storage areas suggest that these processions were of an agricultural nature.

sistrum a rattle used to accompany singing

Lustrations, libations and offerings

Areas (adyta) for ritual purification or cleansing (lustration) have been found in the palaces at Knossos and Zakros. Libations are liquids poured on the ground as an offering to the gods and spirits in pillar crypts. Offering tables found in palaces and large villas have small indentations for seeds, fruits, grain, pulses and honey.

FIGURE 2.31 A Minoan priestess conducting a funerary libation ceremony

Funerary customs and practices

Judging by the possessions and objects of value found in those tombs that have not been robbed (jewellery and weapons), and the remains of libations and offerings of food, it appears that the Minoans believed in some form of an afterlife.

They disposed of their dead by burial (inhumation) rather than cremation, the bodies placed in large *pithoi* or in decorated clay chests called *larnakes*. Some of these were large enough for several burials. N. Marinatos believed the painted designs of forests and mountains on the outside were meant to represent the landscape of the afterlife. The use of *larnakes* became more common over time; however, some bodies were simply laid on wooden biers or beds.

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Burials were communal rather than individual, although archaeologists don't know if these group burials comprised extended families or clans.

Cemeteries and tombs were used over and over again. This was possible because once the flesh was removed from the bones they were discarded or collected and neatly stacked in ossuaries or 'bone houses'. It seems that skulls were regarded as objects of reverence and the only part of the body worth keeping.

The communal cemetery at Mochlos was one of the largest and most important from the early Bronze Age. Another important cemetery was at Phourni near Arkhanes, but because its burials covered a 1000-year span, it presents a complicated picture.

FIGURE 2.32 A terracotta *larnax* chest coffin

FIGURE 2.33 The remains of a Minoan *tholos* tomb showing the *dromos* (entrance) and its typical domed roof

Different types of burials and tombs

- Simple inhumation in caves and rock shelters in the Early Minoan Period.
- Cist tombs – early Minoan box-shaped pits lined with stone.
- Rectangular 'house' tombs c. 2600–2300. Like houses, these were built above ground and found mostly in eastern Crete.
- *Tholos* tombs (pl. *tholoi*) – first built on the Mesara Plain near Phaistos and common in central and southern Crete, although only 70 have so far been excavated. *Tholoi* were free-standing circular, domed tombs that varied in size from 2.5 metres to 13 metres. They were made from rough masonry with roofs of wood and rushes waterproofed with plaster or clay.
- Chamber tombs – cut into the rock of a hillside and entered via a long, narrow sloping ramp. Chamber tombs were common in the New Palace Period (c. 1700–1450) and then again between 1300 and 1100 when they were used for prestigious Mycenaean warriors.
- The so-called Temple Tomb (exceptional) dated c. 1380 was found on the southern edge of Knossos. It was a two-storey free-standing pavilion with a paved court, walls and floors sheeted in gypsum, a blue ceiling and a sanctuary on the second storey. Although it could have been a royal tomb, there is no evidence of who was interred there.

A COMMENT ON...

Two exceptional Late Minoan *tholos* burials in the cemetery of Phourni

- Two women, almost certainly royal or of religious importance judging by the wealth of offerings, artefacts, and evidence of horse and bull sacrifices, were found in *tholoi* at Phourni.
- One woman was found in a *larnax*, placed in a foetal position with her head facing west. She was covered with small gold objects that probably belonged to gold necklaces. There were also three gold signet-rings, a golden clasp, a gold ring and two small golden caskets, iron beads and sealstones of bronze and **sard** buried with her.
- The other woman was laid out on a bier with her head facing a mirror. She wore a gold diadem and magnificent necklaces. Sixty-seven gold beads thought to have been part of her dress were recovered.

sard a variety of the mineral chalcedony, similar to carnelian

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ACTIVITY 2.10

1. Define the term epiphany.
2. What does Niemeier suggest was the real function of Evans' 'Throne Room of Minos'?
3. Describe how Source 2.15 suggests a leading priestess might 'become' a goddess.
4. Explain the significance of the Aghia Triada sarcophagus as a source.
5. Use Source 2.16 to make a list of the features of the funerary sacrifice depicted on the Aghia Triada sarcophagus.
6. What is meant by a 'crisis cult'? Explain why the discovery at Anemosphilia in the 1970s was probably an example of such a crisis cult.
7. What are votive offerings?
   - Where would you expect to find them?
   - How did their form reflect the request or vow being made to a god?
8. Discuss the difference between a lustration and a libation.
9. Outline how the Minoans disposed of their dead. Mention *larnakes* and ossuaries.
10. What were *tholos* tombs? Use the text, Figure 2.33 and comment box to describe a *tholos* tomb and burial.

Myths and legends

There are two interrelated myths associated with the Minoans and the legendary King Minos mentioned by Homer and Thucydides. A summary of these is as follows:

The Myths of Theseus and the Minotaur & Daedalus and Icarus

- Zeus in the form of a bull carried off a mortal woman, Europa, to Crete and fathered Minos there.
- Minos married Pasiphae who lusted after a bull sent to her husband by Poseidon for sacrifice.
- Pasiphae ordered the court craftsman, a skilled inventor named Daedalus, to make her a cow suit in order to copulate with the bull.
- She gave birth to the Minotaur – a half-bull, half-man creature – that Minos ordered to be imprisoned in the labyrinth built by Daedalus, and who fed on human flesh.
- Once Daedalus had completed the labyrinth for Minos, the king imprisoned him and his son, Icarus, so that no one would have access to the secrets of the labyrinth.
- In order to escape, Daedalus designed wings out of feathers and wax so that he and Icarus could escape the despotism of Minos.
- Daedalus told his son not to fly too high for fear the sun would melt the wax, but Icarus ignored his father's advice and his wings melted. He plunged into the sea and drowned.
- Daedalus successfully reached Sicily where he became famous as an inventor of great ingenuity.
- In the meantime, Minos waged war on Greece, during which the Athenians murdered his son, Androgeos. In vengeance, Minos demanded a regular tribute from Athens of young boys and girls to feed to the Minotaur.
- One of the youths sent to Crete was Theseus, the son of Aegeus, the king of Athens.
- Aegeus, reluctant to let his son sail off with the other victims under a black sail, made him promise to hoist a white sail on his return to indicate he had killed the Minotaur.
- On arriving in Crete, Theseus met Ariadne, Minos' daughter, who fell in love with him. She gave him a dagger and a ball of string to unroll the further he went into the maze in search of the Minotaur.
- He killed the Minotaur and he and Ariadne escaped Crete, but Theseus forgot to hoist the white sail, and his father waiting for his return saw the black sail and believed his son was dead. Aegeus threw himself into the sea that bears his name.

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FIGURE 2.34 A depiction of the Minotaur

2.5 Cultural and everyday life

The culture of the Minoans can only be deduced from artefacts that were predominantly made for a social elite. The creativity of many of these artistic objects 'indicates an intensely dynamic and original culture',[17] always changing, experimenting and searching for new creative forms.

Although one of the Minoans' greatest cultural achievements was the development of writing, but the only written records to have survived are economic jottings on clay tablets. There is no literature, poetry, stories, histories, biographies or religious texts. If the Minoans recorded such things, they were probably written on perishable materials such as Egyptian papyrus. It is ironic that the existence of a literary tradition may have perished in the fires that raged through the great palaces at different times during Minoan history, and yet it was these fires that baked the temporary clay tablet records, so preserving them until the 20th century.

Art

The greatest collection of Minoan art is still on Crete in the Museum at Heraklion, near Knossos.

> The art of the Minoan society reveals a lifestyle different than that prevailing in other places at that time. This was naturalistic art mostly reflecting the Minoans' love for nature. Motives from nature can be found in frescoes that often decorated palaces and the houses of the rich. Likewise, jugs were decorated with flora and fauna motifs, such as lilies, fish and birds.

SOURCE 2.17 Hila Berliner, *The History of Architecture* (2011)

Frescoes

The frescoes found in Knossos, Phaistos and Aghia Triada are possibly one of the earliest, truly naturalistic forms of European art.

The anonymous fresco painters were skilled artists who had to work fast while the lime plaster was still wet, although there may have been some over-painting after the plaster dried.

Paints were all derived from earth and chemical compounds, and the colours in general were rather limited. These included: black – carbonaceous shale; white – hydrate of lime; red – red ochre and haematite; yellow – ochre; blue – silicate of copper; and green – a mixture of yellow and blue. Other mixes could produce grey, maroon, brown and pink.

There were two broad categories of fresco:

1 palace/temple life

2 flora and fauna – lilies, irises, crocuses, a monkey collecting saffron, a cat stalking a pheasant, a deer jumping over rocks and flowers, dolphins and fish.

They appear to provide evidence for

- the physical appearance of the palace elite and the way they might have dressed
- religious activities such as festivals, processions and bull sports
- the high status of women
- the Minoan love of nature.
- court ceremonies.

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However, are they all that they seem?

> These famous icons *are* largely modern. Any keen observer at the museum can spot what survives of the original paintings amounts, in most cases, to no more than a few square inches. The rest of the painting is more or less a reconstruction, commissioned in the first half of the 20th century. The difficulty lies in whether a reproduction can be counted as an example of the original. How much of the original needs to be present for the artefact to be considered a copy of the real thing?

SOURCE 2.18 *Restoration of Minoan Paintings: Imitation or reproduction?* http://www.rsc.org/learn-chemistry/resource/res00001640/restoration-of-minoan-paintings-imitation-or-reproduction

There are other reasons to be cautious when interpreting these frescoes apart from their fragmentary nature, and possible inaccurate restorations by imaginative 20th-century artists.

> Most of the representational art surviving from the Minoan period ... should be treated as religious art. In the past, we have tended to assume because women are regularly depicted bare-breasted in the palace frescoes they were disrobed in this way in their normal everyday lives. If such representations are seen as religious art and the women seen as priestesses, temple attendants, dancers, or even goddesses ... it may well be that women uncovered their breasts only during acts of religious worship ... It is hard to tell, but Minoan art may be unrelated to the realities of everyday life in Bronze Age Crete ...

SOURCE 2.19 R. Castleden, *The Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, pp. 7–8

Another form of fresco painting, substantially complete, is the Aghia Triada sarcophagus, made from limestone, covered in plaster and painted with religious scenes.

FIGURE 2.35 The Dolphin Fresco in the so-called 'Queens' quarters'

Figurines, seals, stone *rhytons* and ivory carving

A characteristic of much Minoan artistic work is the precise and fine detail.

Figurines – ranging from 15 to 27 centimetres in height and made from ivory, gold, bronze, faience and ceramic – feature goddesses, bulls, other animals, birds and dancers. Many of these were votive offerings and were found in caves and rock crevices. Two of the outstanding ritual figurines, one in faience and one in ivory and gold, represent the snake goddess or her attendants.

Seal engraving was one of the greatest of the Cretan arts. These sealstones took several forms: three-sided prisms, signets and disks – and were made from steatite, agate, onyx, amethyst, carnelian, green and red jasper, lapis lazuli and chalcedony. The tiny scenes created on these small stones (1.5–2.5 millimetres) were complex compositions, featuring the same type of naturalism as seen in the frescoes. They depicted religious scenes, landscapes, boats, hunting scenes, architectural façades and studies of humans and animals, as well as hieroglyphics.

Of all the Minoan forms of stone carving, it is the ritual *rhytons* made from close-grained steatite, serpentine, obsidian and rock crystal, often covered in gold leaf, that are the most beautiful. 'The stone vase makers' art reached unparalleled heights'[18] after 1700 BC. Possibly the two most remarkable examples are:

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1 the Bulls' Head Rhyton found at Knossos, made of black steatite, possibly with gilded horns (these did not survive), nostrils of drilled holes for pouring libations, incised hair on head and muzzle, and inlaid eyes of jasper and rock crystal

2 the Crystal Rhyton found at Zakros, one of 50 magnificent pieces. It was carved from a single piece of rock crystal, is 16.5 centimetres tall and features a neck decorated with gilt and a handle of crystal beads.

Although it seems that ivory carving (figurines, combs, pins, plaques and seals) was one of the great Minoan arts carried out in the palace complexes, evidence is rather scanty due to the rate at which ivory decays when buried in the earth for any length of time. Syrian elephant and hippopotamus ivory was found in the remains of palace workshops at Phaistos and Zakros.

FIGURE 2.36 The Bull's Head Rhyton

Jewellery and decorative metalwork

Although there is no doubt that Minoan jewellery makers were influenced artistically by Egypt and the cultures of the Near East, they developed their own unique art, which reached a peak between 1700–1500 BC. Minoan jewellery took the form of diadems, necklaces, bracelets, rings, beads, pendants, armlets, headbands, clothes and hair ornaments, pectorals, chains and earrings, using a vast range of materials such as gold, silver, gold-plated bronze, rock crystal, carnelian, garnet, lapis lazuli, obsidian, jasper (red, green and yellow), amethyst, faience, enamel, ivory, shell and glass-paste.

Areas in which Minoan metalworkers revealed their artistic excellence were in the making of gold jewellery – such as pendants and inscribed signet rings – and decorated bronze daggers.

Two of the most outstanding pieces of Minoan gold jewellery are the Bee Pendant, which shows two bees arranged heraldically about a honeycomb, and the Master of Animals pendant.

Gold signet rings were in a class of their own, for they not only served as an item of jewellery but were used as seals in an administrative capacity. Rings were usually engraved with detailed miniature scenes representing hunting, bull-leaping, goddesses, religious practices, landscapes, plants, animals and mythical griffins. Refer back to Figure 2.3. When used as seals, they were pressed into soft clay or wax to identify a figure of authority, and to 'sign' political correspondence and orders for goods. Over 200 hundred rings and impressions have survived.

FIGURE 2.37 Crystal Rhyton

Minoan metalworkers were renowned for the production of the finest swords and daggers in the Mediterranean, their hilts decorated with inlays of gold and silver threads to create patterns (damascening) set off with patches of black enamel usually depicting hunting scenes. Some of the best examples of Minoan workmanship were found in the graves of the elite at Mycenae on the mainland of Greece.

FIGURE 2.38 The gold Bee (or Wasp) Pendant

Pottery

The finest Minoan pots were produced to please the palace elite who became patrons to palace potters and painters. These artists created vessels that were not only useful but also aesthetically pleasing – stirrup jars, collared *rhytons*, three-handled amphorae and beaked jugs – decorated with bold abstract and geometric patterns (spirals and abstract representations of organic forms), and with free-flowing designs inspired by nature.

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The decoration of pottery developed from the simple early Minoan designs of white lines, spirals and hatchings on a dark background.

1 The famous Kamares was produced during the First Palace Period. This pottery, with its eggshell-thin walls, featured a dark lustrous background painted over with various colours: red, yellow, orange and white. These 'beautifully-made and beautifully-decorated Kamares vessels are of a quality and refinement never again to be achieved in the Aegean World'.[19]

FIGURE 2.39 Kamares ware

2 The two outstanding styles of the Second Palace Period featured a pale-yellow background with darker designs. These are called the:
   - Marine Style, featuring triton shells, octopuses, seaweed, starfish and dolphins in a delicate free-flowing way that complemented the shape of the vessel
   - Floral Style, featuring plant forms used in a decorative patterning.

Architecture of palace complexes

The remains of the Minoan palaces, despite some differences in size, reveal similar monumental architectural features, such as:

- a central court oriented north–south that varied in size from palace to palace (Knossos and Mallia), leading to palace entrances
- east and west wings that housed 'royal' quarters, apartments, state rooms and shrines
- several storeys
- processional ways suggested by corridors and passageways that appear to provide a circulatory pattern
- 1-metre-wide raised stone causeways
- monumental entrance ways
- grand stone staircases (Knossos and Phaistos)
- porches and porticos with tapering columns
- light wells – deep openings cut into the mass of the structure which provided light and ventilation to interior rooms
- pillared halls that could be divided into smaller spaces by multiple doors
- stepped 'theatral areas' interpreted to accommodate a crowd for religious activities
- small rooms (crypts) for cult purposes
- craftsmen's workshops
- ground floor space devoted to long narrow storage rooms called magazines (18 at Knossos)
- drainage and water supply systems.

The labyrinth of Knossos

The Palace of Knossos was a massive architectural achievement that resembled a labyrinth with its connected corridors, twists and turns, staircases, small courtyards and cult rooms, reminiscent of the story of the Minotaur. Some of its particular features included:

- a total of 1500 rooms (sacred, living, reception, storage and workshops)
- a central courtyard (54 metres by 27 metres in area), around which were a series of apartments, each with its own character and connected by corridors and stairways

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- an East Wing of four to five storeys with balconies and accessed by a large staircase, magnificent frescoes and containing the so-called (by Evans) 'King's and Queen's' quarters
- a West Wing – with another courtyard for ceremonies and meetings with raised processional ways – accessed by a large staircase that included state rooms such as administrative offices, banquet halls, public warehouses and temples
- a north part of the palace with a purification pool that could accommodate 500 people to watch religious ceremonies and sports
- a series of pergolas, windows and air shafts to allow light and air into rooms
- bath rooms, running water and efficient drainage.

FIGURE 2.40 A model of the Palace labyrinth of Knossos

ACTIVITY 2.11

1. Why is Minoan art described as 'dynamic and original'?
2. What does Source 2.17 say about the dominant themes in Minoan art?
3. Use Source 2.18 to discuss the value of 20th-century reconstructions of the famous Knossos frescoes.
4. Examine what Castleden says in Source 2.19 as a warning when interpreting these frescoes.
5. Explain what is meant by 'seal engraving was one of the greatest of the Cretan arts'.
6. Suggest why there are few extant examples of the art of ivory carving.
7. Describe the image in Figure 2.36.
8. In what particular area did metalworkers reveal their incredible artistic excellence?
9. Describe the famous Kamares pottery. What themes were found on many styles of pottery?
10. Draw a simple diagram illustrating the architectural features of the palace at Knossos.
11. Research the speculative re-creation of parts of the palace of Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans and explain why reactions have been largely hostile, some calling it a case of archaeological delinquency.

Writing

Only a small elite group of Bronze Age people (scribes) ever developed literary skills and in Minoan Crete it was only the palaces that needed to keep records. The majority of the people had no real use for writing.

Arthur Evans was the first to identify the three Minoan scripts:

1. Hieroglyphs – pictographs carved on sealstones of which Evans identified 135, but the total is larger than this. This undeciphered script is believed to have appeared by 2100 BC but was still being engraved on seals around 1600 that were being entombed in buildings well after the adoption of both Linear A and Linear B scripts. 'It may be that the old pictographic signs acquired a special magic power associated with the remote past.'[20]
2. Linear A – the word 'Linear' was given to this native Minoan script as the signs ran in lines. Linear A signs, of which only 70 have been identified, were cut with a stylus into disposable clay tablets. This script, in use from c. 1770–1450 BC, was the main script used for keeping accounts and for dedicatory inscriptions. Recent discoveries, however, at Mallia and Khania seem to indicate that

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Linear A continued to be used for some time alongside Linear B. The number of tablets discovered so far at Knossos (five), Mallia, Phaistos, Aghia Triada (150), Tylissos, Khania (100) and Zakros (30) are too few to allow decipherment, although some signs are accessible because they were included in the later Linear B script.

3 Linear B – the greatest number of clay tablets found in Crete feature the Linear B script. Evans discovered fragments of over 3000 tablets at Knossos alone, more than 10 times the total number of Linear A tablets. It is believed that Linear B was developed at Knossos during the period following the 1450 disaster and the Mycenaean occupation of Crete. It has also been found at Greek mainland Mycenaean sites such as Mycenae, Pylos, Tiryns and Thebes. That the script is an early form of Greek was corroborated by Michael Ventris (a British code cipher) with the help of John Chadwick (a Greek scholar) who deciphered the script in 1953.

Since the clay tablets were meant as temporary records, it is highly likely that the Minoans used parchment or papyrus for recording longer and more important literary documents.

FIGURE 2.41 Linear B tablets

FIGURE 2.42 A Linear A tablet

The Phaistos Disk: an ancient enigma

In July 1908, while excavating at the palace at Phaistos, Italian archaeologist Luigi Pernier uncovered a round disk of fired clay (15 centimetres in diameter and 1 centimetre thick) in a basement cell of an underground depository. The disk was covered on both sides with a clockwise sequence of hieroglyphic signs spiralling towards the middle of the disk. These were stamped into the wet clay. Most scholars believe it is some form of script, but its purpose, meaning and place of manufacture are unknown, and decipherment is unlikely. Since its discovery, the Phaistos Disk has been one of the great mysteries of archaeology.

In the first few decades after its discovery, most scholars argued strongly against it being of Cretan origin. Some believed that the clay was not from Crete and others pointed to resemblances with Anatolian and Egyptian hieroglyphs. However, in 1934 Spyridon Marinatos excavated the Arkalochori Cave and found a bronze double-head ritual axe (labrys) inscribed with 15 symbols, some of which were glyphs identical to those on the disk.

1 Rodney Castleden suggests that the Phaistos Disk serves a religious purpose. Since some signs are repeated, the content of the disk might be refrains, suggesting a song or hymn, or a list of deities.

2 In 1976, Leon Pomerance, in *The Phaistos Disk: An Interpretation of Astronomical Symbols*, suggested the hieroglyphs on the disk represented a star map and, according to astronomer Michael Ovenden, recent computer simulations of the night sky in the period c. 2000 BC seem to confirm the 'relative positions of these constellations'[21] as depicted by the Phaistos Disk.

3 Colin McEvedy (1989) and Jerome Eisenberg (2008) believe that the Phaistos Disk is a modern fake, the suggestion being that the archaeologist Luigi Pernier was so jealous of Evans' work and successes at Knossos that he planted the forgery in the basement of the Phaistos Palace. Eisenberg points to the

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carefully crafted and evenly fired disk (unlike the accidentally fired and charred clay tablets), and the fact that no other text uses script stamps.

4 The general consensus seems to be that the disk is authentic, but scholars are unhappy that the museum in Heraklion in Crete, where the disk is housed, will not agree to have its date of manufacture confirmed by the method of thermoluminescence. Andrew Robinson, who does not subscribe to the forgery belief, still thinks it is imperative that it be tested 'as it will either confirm that new finds are worth hunting for, or it will stop scholars wasting their effort'.[22]

FIGURE 2.43 The Phaistos Disk

ACTIVITY 2.12

1 Outline what changes occurred in Minoan writing over time. How useful is Linear B as a source?
2 Explain the following statement: 'Since its discovery [1908], the Phaistos Disk has been one of the great mysteries of archaeology.'
3 Summarise the different scholarly 'takes' on this enigmatic artefact.
4 How could the controversy about its authenticity be solved? Why hasn't this happened?

Leisure

Like all aspects of Minoan society, evidence for everyday life is fragmentary and relies on educated guesswork.

Carved, inscribed, moulded and painted representations reveal that the Minoans were interested in physical activity, although it is not known exactly how much of the various sports were of a religious nature and what might have been part of a ritual struggle or of an initiation.

Acrobatics and bull sports

There are many representations of acrobatic performances: leaping, somersaulting, tumbling and vaulting, as well as running. A backward somersaulting youth is represented on the hilt of a gold sword, and an ivory carving found at Knossos shows a vaulting youth. Perhaps these performances were a prelude to the bull 'games'.

The Knossos frescoes showing bull leaping in the Central Court at Knossos in front of a crowd of onlookers are controversial. The restored frescoes (Arthur Evans) appear to show youths rushing at a charging bull front on, grabbing its horns and then vaulting onto its back using the butting action of the bull's head. There is no doubt that bull leaping was an integral part of Minoan life, but the controversy revolves around the impossibility of such a dangerous action as appears in the fresco. Scholars have proposed a number of possible alternatives.

1 John Chadwick, the Greek scholar who contributed to the decipherment of Linear B, proposed that the youths really vaulted over the bull's body from the side and not over its head, but that the Minoan artists were unable to depict this realistically. He also added that, as in a modern rodeo, it's possible several youths wrestled the bull's head down so that the vaulter could leap over it.
2 Lefteris Platon in his essay *Athletes and Sports* believes that because the sport was extremely risky and the casualty rate high, it is possible – based on the legend of the Athenian youths being sacrificed to the Minotaur – that foreign youths could have been used as vaulters.
3 Rodney Castleden has proposed a combination theory as expressed in the quote on the following page.

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Some members of the team distracted the bull by turning somersaults on the paved court; while the beast's attention was diverted, an acrobat might leap crosswise over its back. Other team members, the bull grapplers, hurled themselves onto the bull's horns to pad them with their own bodies and make the beast lower its head. While the bull's head was low, the bull leaper might dive between the horns to land, head and hands first, on the bull's back: momentum carried him on over the bull's tail, to land on his feet behind the bull.

SOURCE 2.20 R. Castleden, *The Minoans: Life in Bronze Age Crete*, p. 146

FIGURE 2.44 The Bull Leaping Fresco

Boxing

The evidence – the so-called Boxer Rhyton found at Aghia Triada, a miniature fresco from Tylissos, and the frescoes of lean and muscular adolescent boxers from Akrotiri in Thera (Santorina) – suggest that boxing was associated with an initiation ritual, involving strength and struggle, marking the passage of elite youths into manhood.

Hunting

Hunting of lions, bulls, boars, wild goats and deer was an activity that required group cooperation, skill and courage and was probably limited to the elite. Hunts were featured on Minoan-made daggers found in the graves of the mainland Mycenaeans. The famous Vapheio Cup, also believed to have been of Minoan origin, depicts scenes of bull capture. Robert Koehl, in *The Chieftain Cup and a Minoan Rite of Passage*, believes that hunting was part of a male initiation rite and when completed successfully the initiated youth received a special drinking cup.

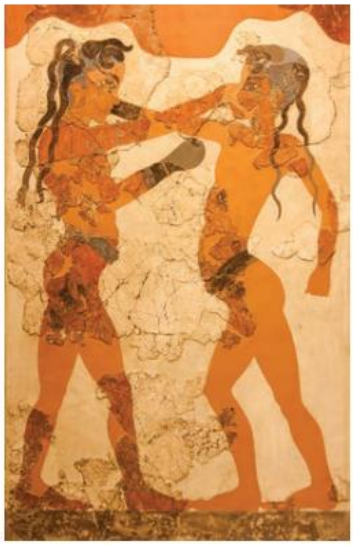

FIGURE 2.45 The Boxing Fresco from Thera

Banqueting and board games

The excavation and identification of what appear to be communal banqueting areas at Knossos, Zakros and Mallia, together with drinking cups and *rhytons*, seem to indicate some form of social gatherings of members of the elite.

There is evidence from all over Crete that Minoans of all classes enjoyed board games. One board, used by the elite, was found near Knossos and dated from c. 1700–1600 BC.

It was 95 centimetres by 55 centimetres and made from ivory, rock crystal, blue glass paste and gold and silver leaf. Gaming pieces found nearby were made from ivory.

Clothes, food and housing

It is hard to know if the Minoan people (the palace elite) depicted in the frescoes are as they really appeared or how they wished to be presented, as they are shown in an idealised form as in ancient Egypt. Both men and women are depicted with long dark hair in curls and ringlets, the men appear athletic with wide shoulders and small waists, the women with full hips and exposed breasts. Whether the clothes they are shown wearing in the frescoes are associated with religious ritual or everyday wear is also unknown.

Men are depicted:

- in loin cloths, either rolled around the waist or held up by a belt
- in patterned kilts that sloped down from back to front and reached the knees

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- in patterned shorts (hunters)
- with **codpieces** held up by a belt, which became more prominent after 1700 BC when they were worn with a stiffened kilt; these were later replaced with a beaded tassel
- bare-footed, in sandals and calf-length leather boots.

codpieces genital guards

Women appear to have used eyeliner, rouge and lip colouring, judging from the fresco La Parisienne, and are shown with hair piled on top of their heads, held in place by a band, as well as wearing a number of headdresses or hats. It is not likely that all women dressed as depicted in the frescoes. Those elaborate tight-waisted garments, that feature heavily flounced and colourfully patterned skirts and separate bodices with short tight sleeves that exposed the breasts, are more likely to have been associated with religious rituals. There is evidence that women also wore long robe-like dresses held in at the waist by girdles.

FIGURE 2.46 La Parisienne fresco of a woman wearing a sacral knot at the back of her neck

The type of food eaten by the Minoans probably depended on where they lived, and to changing environmental conditions over a 2000-year period. Evidence comes from:

- a knowledge of Cretan agricultural, pastoral and sea resources
- the types of products stored in the palaces
- organic residues found in Minoan pottery vessels and in the remains of ceremonial offerings
- the remains of slaughtered animals and deposits of animal bones
- skeletal remains of humans that can tell what percentage of a person's diet was marine protein compared with animal and vegetable protein.

The Minoans ate grains (barley and millet), a range of vegetables (lentils, peas, asparagus, beans and cabbage), olives and figs, seafood and meat. It seems that goat's meat was more commonly eaten than other forms. They used honey as a sweetener and herbs like coriander to flavour food, and other herbs (sage, laurel and rue, a narcotic stimulant) to impregnate wine with resin. As well as wine, Minoans drank barley beer, honey mead and milk.

Excavations in Minoan villages and towns such as Gournia, as well as a number of faience plaques found at Knossos and clay models, have revealed a variety of houses. These range from:

1 basic single-roomed houses opening onto a courtyard, from the earliest Bronze Age

2 houses of rough stone with small courts, and workrooms built up against each other and opening directly onto the streets

3 smallish two-storeyed stone or mud-brick town houses with flat roofs and windows; some with a columned light well and roof-top pergola

4 villas of the elite found at Knossos, Phaistos, Mallia and Tylissos. These comprised two to three storeys, the ground floor in ashlar masonry and upper storeys of wooden beams and brick. Some had five or more rooms on the ground floor, flights of steps to the upper floors, and one or two 'halls' either for a gathering of people or for cult purposes. Larger villas featured storage facilities, servants' quarters and bathing areas, and some had waste facilities and toilets.

FIGURE 2.47 A clay model of a two-storey house

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Not much has survived in the way of Minoan furnishings due to the recurrent destructions by earthquake and fire. Portable stools are featured in frescoes and some traces of beds can be gauged from Late Minoan tombs.

ACTIVITY 2.13

1 Like everything else about Minoan Crete, the dramatic representations of bull leaping over the back of charging bulls are controversial.
   - What part did Arthur Evans play in this controversy?
   - List the issues and the theories that have most often been debated.

2 Discuss the issue of the appearance of the Minoans represented in the frescoes:
   - Were they shown in an idealised form, or were the depictions close to reality?
   - Did the depictions reflect religious events?
   - How do we know the woman depicted in Figure 2.46 is a priestess?

3 Evaluate what Figure 2.46 reveals about Minoan housing.

Health of Bronze Age Minoans as revealed by human remains

It is difficult to gauge the general health of the Minoan population from the Early to Late Minoan periods since there are few complete skeletons and no remains of soft tissue. Archaeologists have had to deduce health from scattered bones and skulls accumulated in **ossuaries**.

ossuaries chests, boxes, buildings or sites made to serve as the final resting place of human skeletal remains

disarticulated bones separation of the bones of a skeleton

trepanation a crude process whereby a hole is drilled into a skull to relieve pressure after a head injury

> It is therefore only possible to confirm the existence of diseases that leave diagnostic lesions on bones, such as endemic malaria and anaemia caused by iron and other deficiencies ... it is not possible to confirm the existence of other acute diseases such as cholera, typhoid and smallpox, although they inevitably must have been present in a growing urban population.

SOURCE 2.21 *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, Volume 89, May 1996

In the 1980s, archaeologist Photini McGeorge studied 8000 **disarticulated bones** and 1500 skulls, and in the 1990s Darlene Weston studied 364 Late Minoan skeletons. The work of both of these scholars revealed the following about Minoan health and life expectancy:

- The life expectancy of males appeared to have declined from 35 years in the Early Minoan Period to 31 years in the Late Minoan Period, and the average life expectancy of women was approximately 28 years.
- There was high female mortality rate between the ages of 20–25, probably due to childbirth.
- The few women who survived beyond 45 had better health than men of an equivalent age.
- Dental health was not good: dental cavities, lost teeth and plaque were common, and seemed to get worse in the Late Minoan Period, possibly due to a change in diet.
- Sixteen out of Weston's sample of 364 skeletons revealed fractures, particularly in the lower leg. These healed fractures indicate some Minoan knowledge of bone setting, although there is evidence from McGeorge's samples that poorly set bones resulted in some distortion.
- Skulls found in the two Minoan cemeteries of Ailias and Armenoi indicate that **trepanation** had been carried out.

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The chemical analysis of bones showed that the people buried at Armenoi had no marine food in their diets, but in general they ate a fair amount of animal protein and plants. They suffered from a range of infectious and nutritional/metabolic diseases, as well as from dental caries.

SOURCE 2.22 http://www.interkriti.org/crete/rethymnon/armenoi necropolis.html

ACTIVITY 2.14

1. Outline what the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* says about the difficulties in deducing health from the scattered bones of ancient Minoans.
2. List the most recent findings from osteologists about Minoan health and life expectancy.

CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

2.1 THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- There is controversy over almost everything to do with Minoan society, including the dates for each of the significant 'palace' periods.
- Crete's location within the eastern Mediterranean was favourable for the development of its Bronze Age society, except for the seismic activity that affects the region.
- Crete's most notable landform features are the east–west mountain ranges, filled with caves, and its fertile coastal plains. Its resources included limestone, timber, wine, oil, barley, honey, sheep, goats, fish and the Murex mollusc (purple-red dye).
- Knossos, Phaestos, Mallia, Zakros, Aghia Triada and Gournia were all significant 'palace complex' sites, although none appears to have rivalled Knossos.

2.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

- Almost all the evidence for this society comes from material remains.
- A stratified society with an aristocratic, wealthy elite, although there is considerable debate over the identity and gender of the ruler. A possible theocracy, judging from frescoes and sealstones.
- Evidence of a vast bureaucracy focused on the palace complexes.
- There are more images of women in the archaeological remains, and a goddess seems to have been central to Minoan worship.
- There appears to have been a vast body of craftsmen working in palace workshops and towns.

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2.3 THE ECONOMY

- Crete had a centralised 'palace economy' with its main source of wealth coming from agricultural products. Palaces involved in collection, storage, distribution and consumption. Evidence from large *pithoi* and some economic signs on Linear B tablets. Exchange in the form of barter.
- Role of towns: Gournia and Zakros. 'Gateway' towns for imports and exports, evidence of trade from all over the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt. Controversy over a possible thalassocracy.
- Major industries included pottery, metal work (bronze-making and gold work), jewellery, textiles and dyes.
- Construction of palaces reveals skills of Minoan architects and builders. Use of ashlar masonry, columns and advanced drainage systems.

2.4 RELIGION, DEATH AND BURIAL

- Polytheistic religion: possibly a Great Goddess and images of other types of goddesses e.g. Snake Goddess.
- Religious symbols depicted everywhere such as the *labrys* (double-axe) horns of consecration, bulls, trees, pillars, birds and snakes. Places of worship included caves, mountain peaks, pillar crypts and palace shrines.
- Ritual practices included goddess epiphanies, sacrifices (Aghia Triada sarcophagus), perhaps occasional crisis sacrifices (human), feasts dances, processions, lustrations and libations.
- Disposal of the dead by inhumation (burial) in large *pithoi* and painted clay chests (*larnakes*), communal cemeteries and ossuaries (bone storage); cist tombs, *tholoi* (free-standing circular, domed tombs) and chamber tombs.
- Myths and legends relating to the Minoans: Theseus and the Minotaur, Icarus and Daedalus.

2.5 CULTURAL AND EVERYDAY LIFE

- Minoan art (frescoes, figurines, pottery, seals, metalwork) reveals a dynamic original culture, much of it precise and detailed (seal engravings). Frescoes depict palace life, flora and fauna. Most beautiful pieces are the *rhytons* (Bull's Head and Crystal Rhytons), gold Bee Pendant, Master of Animals Pendant and signet rings, and dagger hilts inlaid with gold, silver and ceramics. Kamares Ware and Marine-style pottery were outstanding.
- Monumental architecture (the Palace of Knossos): central court, three storeys high, labyrinth of rooms, processional ways, tapering columns, porticoes, light wells, 'theatral' area and elaborate drainage and water system.
- Architecture of palace complexes: Knossos, Phaistos, Malia, Zakros and other palace sites.
- Writing – three Minoan scripts: hieroglyphs, Linear A and Linear B, only the latter deciphered, predominantly economic subject matter. The Phaistos Disk, an ancient enigma, controversy over its authenticity.
- Some leisure activities appear to be related to religious rituals and occasions, e.g. bull leaping. Evidence of boxing, hunting and banquets. Frescoes provide some idea of appearance and dress of Minoans but perhaps an idealised depiction or wearing religious garb.
- Health of Bronze Age Minoans gauged from scattered bones and ossuaries: length of life, evidence of trauma and dental problems.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- epiphany
- *labrys*
- *lanarkes*
- lustral basins
- *pithoi*
- *rhyton*
- theocracy
- *tholoi*

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills and identify where they have been used throughout this study.

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) Identify the cause of the periodic destructive events that impacted Crete during the Bronze Age.

2) Make a list of the changes that occurred in Minoan society throughout its main chronological phases.

3) How significant was the:
- location of Crete in the eastern Mediterranean for its economy
- mountainous nature of Crete to its religious beliefs and practices?

4) What are the various debates among scholars surrounding:
- the identity and gender of a possible ruler
- a Minoan thalassocracy
- Evans so-called 'throne room' at Knossos
- the Phaistos Disk?

5) Examine the perspective of Rodney Castledon (*The Minoans*) on Minoan religion in the following statement: 'there are many images of religious ceremonies which show epiphanies of a goddess'.

Historical skills

1) Analyse the material remains from Minoan society to explain:
- the role of women in Minoan religion
- use and symbolism of the bull
- the nature of the textile industry
- the importance of agriculture.

2) Use the material evidence from the following sites and artefacts to explain various aspects of Minion worship.
- Anemosphilia
- The Cave of Arkalochori
- The Aghia Triada sarcophagus
- The cemetery at Phourni.

3) Explain the importance of Minoan metalworkers, stone workers and potters to the Minoan economy.

4) Discuss the suggestion that Minoan art, expressed in the frescoes, may be unrelated to the realities of everyday life in Bronze Age Crete.

5) Research the palace of Knossos in more detail and evaluate the skill of Minoan architects and builders.

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CHAPTER 3
Spartan society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC

FIGURE 3.1 A bronze statue of a Spartan soldier in red military cloak

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FIGURE 3.2 The territorial divisions of the Peloponnese showing the location of Laconia and Messenia

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students examine a range of archaeological and written sources and relevant historiographical issues of the Spartan society to the Battle of Leuctra 371 BC
KEY ISSUES	• The historical and geographical context • Social structure and political organisation • The economy • Religion, death and burial • Cultural and everyday life

Those who buried a dead person were not permitted to inscribe the name on a grave except in the case of a man who had died on campaign or a woman who had died in labour.

SOURCE 3.1 Plutarch, *On Sparta: Lycurgus*, 27

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 3.3 A 7th-century BC Laconian black-figured vase of a Spartan horse rider

FIGURE 3.4 Detail of hoplites and chariot from the Laconian-made Vix Krater (you will learn more about this on p.142)

Study the images in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 carefully and note what you see in each. What do these indicate about early Spartan art and some of their favourite pastimes? What other questions do these images raise?

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CHAPTER 3 Overview

KEY IDEA

Sparta was a unique and mysterious society within the Greek world. It puzzled those outside its borders and was variously praised and criticised for some of its unusual features. However, due to its own lack of a literary narrative, its relative geographic isolation, the Spartans' suspicious nature and the myth they created about themselves, their Greek contemporaries tended to have a view of their society as rigid and static. Despite knowing today that their society underwent many dramatic changes, still, little can be said about them with certainty.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

It is interesting today to note how a state-controlled society functioned in ancient times. We can learn much from the Spartans about discipline; loyalty to their own state and their comrades in arms; respect for those in authority; obedience to the law; community involvement in the upbringing of male children and adolescents; and the freedom of girls and women to participate in public life (except politics). At the same time, it is worth noting their dependence on the contribution of oppressed groups, and occasional brutality, to achieve their greatness.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- acropolis
- *agoge*
- autonomy
- blazon
- cenotaph
- eugenics
- hegemon
- helots
- *homoioi*
- hoplite
- *kleros* (sing.)
- krater
- *krypteia*
- kylix
- Laconia
- medimni
- oligarchy
- oracle
- paean
- Peloponnese
- *periokoi*
- phalanx
- *polis*
- rhetra
- *syssition* (sing.)
- votive

Painting the picture

The ancient Spartans and their austere and militaristic way of life, and the myth they created about themselves, not only intrigued their contemporaries, but have fascinated people for over 2500 years, so that even today they are part of our popular culture. There is no doubt that they were admired for their military prowess, courage and discipline, and praised for their unique constitution, which maintained stability within Sparta for centuries while other cities suffered political upheaval. Also, the freer lives of their women mystified other Greeks, while the treatment of their subject population (state-owned serfs) was regarded as brutal.

However, nothing can really be said with certainty about the way they lived their lives in Sparta as they were geographically isolated; they deliberately falsified their history, maintaining that one man (Lycurgus) was responsible for all their political and social institutions; and they told only what they wanted others to know – were regarded as secretive masters of deception (necessary in a city that was like a military camp) – and discouraged foreigners from spending time in Sparta, periodically expelling any non-Spartans. Added to this is the fact that contemporary Athenian writers presented their own biases about Sparta.

Surprisingly, archaeological evidence has revealed that Sparta experienced a cultural golden age in the 7th and 6th centuries when their craftsmen, artists, poets and musicians were renowned throughout the Mediterranean world. However, the 5th and 4th centuries were marked by wars, which eventually had

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did Sparta's social institutions and foreign policy reflect its need to keep the helot population in check?

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Laconia the territory of the city-state of Sparta

Peloponnese the southern area of mainland Greece, separated from central Greece by the narrow Isthmus of Corinth

polis (pl. *poleis*) an independent city-state, its population and way of life

acropolis ('high-town') a high rocky outcrop, usually fortified; the stronghold of the community

perioikoi the free non-citizen inhabitants who lived in Spartan territory and played a significant economic role in Spartan society

helots state-owned agricultural serfs whose lives were determined by the state

a disastrous impact on Spartan society, as its citizen numbers steadily declined, its subject population became more rebellious and its leaders were pushed into a situation for which they were not suited. The humiliating defeat of the famed Spartan army at the hands of the Thebans at the Battle of Leuctra in 371 BC was the death knell for a society that Greek contemporaries considered mysterious and strange.

3.1 The historical and geographical context

The Spartans were Dorians, a warlike tribe of people, who entered Greece from the north about 1100 BC, possibly exploiting the breakdown of the former Bronze Age Mycenaean kingdoms. By the 10th century BC, there were five Doric villages in the Eurotas River Valley of **Laconia** (Lakonia), in the south-eastern **Peloponnese**: Pilana, Limnai, Mesoa, Kynosaura and Amyklai. The first four of these villages, built on small hills, eventually joined together sometime in the 9th century to form the city-state or ***polis*** of Sparta, centred on an **acropolis**, which, unlike in other Greek cities, was not fortified. By c. 750 BC, Amyklai, the southernmost of the five original settlements, also became part of this union of villages.

Other Dorians in Laconia – known as ***perioikoi*** (or *perioeci*; 'dwellers or men who lived in the houses around') – were made politically subordinate to the Spartans. Also, the Spartans enslaved the original non-Dorian inhabitants of Laconia as **helots**.

The *polis* of Sparta included not just the city, but also the countryside of Laconia, which is why the Spartans were referred to as Lacedaemonians.

The geographical environment of Laconia

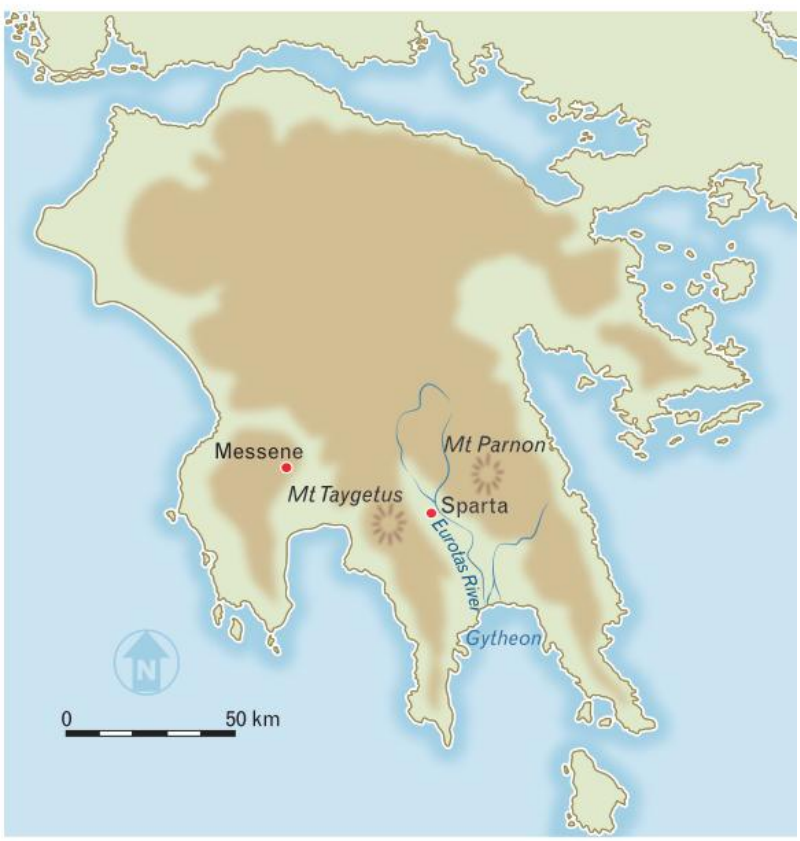

FIGURE 3.5 A map of the landforms of the Peloponnese

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The two most notable features of Laconia were the Eurotas River and its fertile valley, and the impressive mountain barriers that hemmed in the river valley on the west, east and north.

- Where the river entered Laconia from the mountains of the central Peloponnese – the Arcadian mountains – it carved out a small but fertile alluvial plain about 5 by 14 kilometres in size. The melting winter snows deposited mud over the valley floor which allowed intensive forms of agriculture and pastoral activities to be practised.
- The river flowed between high banks overgrown with reeds. At times, it was a raging torrent, while in the height of the hot, dry summer, it dwindled between sand banks.
- Sparta was located on the western side of the river at the head of this plain where a spur of the Arcadian mountains approached the city.
- Laconia extended a further 46 kilometres to the south, but as the valley was cut by a small ridge, the river flowed through a narrow gorge and over several falls as it made its way to the port of Gytheon on the Gulf of Laconia.
- Although the Eurotas River was not navigable in its southern section, the port of Gytheon provided Sparta with some direct contact with settlements in the eastern Mediterranean.
- The river provided the Spartans with a route to other parts of the Peloponnese despite its mountainous nature. By following the river to its source in the central Peloponnese, Spartans could link up with two other river systems: the Alpheus led to Olympia, and the Pamissos flowed down into the fertile plain of Messenia, described by the poet Tyrtaeus as 'good to plough and good to sow'.[1]
- Despite its fertility, the Eurotas Valley was subject to periodic earthquakes due to a geological fault that runs along its length.
- The tangled mass of scarcely populated mountains surrounding Sparta acted as a natural defence barrier, and isolated Sparta, not only from her immediate neighbours, but from the rest of Greece as well.
- To the west, the valley was dominated by Mt Taygetus, rising to 2407 metres. The thickly forested peaks and gorges of the ranges, full of wildlife, were the Spartans' favourite hunting grounds. They were often covered in snow in the harsh winters with few tracks passable. However, the sweltering heat of summer was tempered by the cool summer breezes from its slopes, and the melting snows, plus the perennial springs at the base of Mt Taygetus, gave the plain an oasis-like appearance with plentiful water, olive groves and fruit trees.
- To the east were the high limestone Parnon Ranges, with Mount Parnon rising to a height of 1839 metres and dropping to the river in a line of red hills.

FIGURE 3.6 Ruins of the theatre at Sparta with Mount Taygetus in the background

FIGURE 3.7 The Parnon Ranges

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FIGURE 3.8 The site of Sparta and its significant religious shrines

Site of Sparta

Unlike other Greek cities, Sparta was more like a collection of rural communities scattered over a number of hills, and for most of its history it was never enclosed by a fortified wall (until the 2nd century BC) as the surrounding mountains served that purpose.

Its acropolis, to the north, was built on a rocky spur, but was not fortified. Although the Temple of Athena of the Bronze House was on the acropolis, most of the other chief temples were either on the outskirts of town or several kilometres away:

- the Temple of Artemis Orthia was located between the village of Limnai and the Eurotas River
- the shrine of Menelaos and Helen (the Menelaion) was four kilometres from Sparta
- the sanctuary of Apollo at Amyklae was on a hilltop five kilometres south of Sparta.

stade an ancient Greek unit of length, based on the length of a typical sports stadium of the time (approximately 600 feet or 185 metres in length)

> The district of Amyclae, one of the most richly timbered and fertile in Laconia, lies about twenty **stades** from Sparta, and contains a temple of Apollo which is about the most famous of all the Laconian holy places.

SOURCE 3.2 Polybius, *Histories*, 5.19 from Perseus Digital Library

In the 5th century BC, the Athenian, Thucydides, said that if Sparta was ever deserted with just its temples remaining, people would find it hard to believe that it had ever been as powerful as it was represented as being. However, Pausanius, who visited the site in the 2nd century AD, many centuries after the decline of Sparta, identified and described in his *Description of Greece* many of the buildings that existed during his time. Some features of the site are quite detailed; others much less so.

1 In the centre of the city he mentioned that the agora (market place) – situated on a terrace – once had monumental buildings that dated from the 6th and 5th centuries BC, and that there was a building known as a *skias* (canopy), the Persian Colonnade or Stoa built after the Persian Wars – one of 20 colonnades identified by him – and even the chorus or dancing place where performances occurred during festivals. He also identified two gymnasia.

2 He described, in varying detail, some of the 63 temples, sanctuaries or sacred areas he identified and mentioned 24 statues of gods and Olympian victors; 20 hero shrines; seven ancient cult statues; and 22 tombs of famous men.

3 He described the main road that ran from the agora to the south.

The modern city of Sparta lies over the ruins of the ancient site, but any ruins present today were rebuilt during the Roman era.

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FIGURE 3.9 The remains of the Menelaion

Resources

- The rich agricultural lands of Laconia produced barley – the most common grain – as well as wheat, olives, grapes and figs.
- Bees were kept in numerous hives and Sparta was renowned for its honey.
- Spartans bred horses and raised flocks of sheep and goats, producing the much-prized fine Spartan wool and goats' milk cheeses.
- They kept pigs for their meat and the hides of their livestock were tanned and made into leather.
- The mountain forests of Taygetus provided timber, animals such as wild boar and venison, and according to Strabo, the ancient geographer, the mountains were quarried for marble and limestone.
- The coastline around the port of Gytheon provided the Spartans with fish and seafood. The Murex molluscs, from which the famous purple-red dye was made, were harvested in great numbers along the Laconian Gulf. This Murex dye was used to colour the Spartans' distinctive cloaks.
- There was a plentiful supply of clay for pottery, as well as iron ore.

FIGURE 3.10 Flocks of sheep along the Eurotas River during summer

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The historical context of Spartan society

TABLE 3.1 A chronological context of external events that impacted Spartan society

TIME FRAME	EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS
750–700 BC	• In the mid-8th century, a growing population in the narrow Eurotas Valley forced the Spartans to look elsewhere for land, which they found in the fertile plain of the neighbouring territory of Messenia to the west. The Spartans seized the lands of the Dorian inhabitants of Messenia (the First Messenian War) and forced them to work as Spartan serfs.
700–650	• This was a period of great prosperity in Sparta and its thriving culture included fine ceramics, stunning bronze work, carved ivories, architecture, music, poetry and a widespread trade with the East.
650–600	• Between 640–620 BC, a century after first reducing the Messenians to serfs, the Spartans were faced with a drawn-out rebellion by the Messenian helots (the Second Messenian War) helped by other Peloponnesian states, which was the beginning of a dramatic change in Spartan society. The Spartans eventually defeated and enslaved the Messenians, dividing up their lands as allotments for Spartans and incorporating Messenia into Spartan territory, a situation that continued for three centuries. • A dominant group had imposed itself on a subject race. H. Michel says, 'The Spartans lived on top of a volcano which might erupt at any time and safety was only to be bought at the price of unrelenting vigilance'.[2]
600–550	• Changes appeared in the Spartan way of life, which produced an austere, military society with devotion to duty and an iron discipline. There were some signs of stagnation in Laconian art as, according to Plutarch, 'all needless and superfluous arts' were outlawed.[3]
550–500	• The development of a highly efficient **hoplite** army not only allowed the Spartans to keep the Peloponnesian states, particularly Argos, in check, but also to eventually become the political and military **hegemon** of an alliance of Peloponnesian states (except for Argos) known as the 'Peloponnesian League' or 'Lacedaemonians and their Allies'. • By the beginning of the 5th century, Sparta was regarded as the leading state in Greece.
500–450	• During the first conflict at Marathon between the Greeks and the Persians in 490, the Spartans did not participate, but during the second invasion in 480–479, they assumed military and naval leadership, and can be credited with two of the most heroic battles at Thermopylae (King Leonidas) and Plataea (the regent Pausanius). • The following period saw the growth of Athenian naval power at the expense of Sparta's military power. Sparta's problems at home – an earthquake, a helot revolt and opposition within its alliance – caused it to withdraw from activities overseas. It began to feel threatened by Athenian democracy and expansion.

hoplite a heavily-armed infantry soldier

hegemon a political/military leader

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TIME FRAME	EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS
450–400	• This was a period of growing rivalry and jealousy between Athens and Sparta and their allies as Athens' naval power continued to grow at the expense of its own allies and those of Sparta. • In 431, the disastrous Peloponnesian War between these rival powers broke out, and except for a short interlude between 421–410, it lasted until 404. • The Spartans emerged victorious although the number of their citizen fighting men was drastically reduced, causing ultimate changes in Spartan society.
400–371	• This short-lived period, during which Sparta became the unrivalled hegemon of Greece, is often referred to as the Spartan 'empire'. However, Spartan 'rule over others' was fraught with problems: the Spartan citizen population had further declined; the helot problem continued to persist; the Spartans were autocratic and meted out excessive punishment to those disloyal to Sparta; Spartan officials and military commanders, once away from Sparta, were accused of greed and corruption and Sparta's rigid conservatism hindered it from developing an imaginative and efficient way of dealing with allies and subjects, and led to a failure to adapt to changing military tactics. • About 378, the Thebans mounted a challenge against Sparta in central Greece, and in 371 at Leuctra, the brilliant commander Epaminondas defeated the Spartans. A year later he marched down the Eurotas Valley (the first invader to ever do so) and restored Messenian independence. • 'The illusion of Spartan strength, for long sustained with systematical ingenuity, was now at an end.'[4] • Sparta began a steady decline after the defeat at Leuctra, with much of its territory finally parcelled out to Messenia, Tegea and Argos by the Macedonians in 338.

The Spartans in their homeland had a perennial problem. Their conquests of Laconia and Messenia in earlier centuries had left them with a subject population which, unlike the slaves of other Greek communities, had not been imported piecemeal from a variety of foreign lands. Sparta's helots were Greeks, conscious of their community and of their lost freedom. ...

Foreign expeditions had a profound disadvantage for Sparta in drawing off troops who might be needed to deter or defeat a rising of helots at home.

SOURCE 3.3 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 BC*, pp. 98 and 100.

Even at the peak of its power, 'what went on inside Sparta was a question that intrigued many Greeks of other cities' for the 'Spartans were the masters of deception'.[5] Any foreigners admitted to Sparta were subject to periodic expulsions, believed by their contemporaries to be a device for preserving Spartan secrets. They created an image that 'the political arrangements of their city were largely static and of very ancient origin',[6] falsifying their history, and employed a form of visual propaganda to deliver messages to non-Spartans.

There is little even today that can be said with certainty about Spartan society. The Spartans left no literary record of their own apart from a few fragments of poetry, and those who wrote about Sparta were predominantly Athenians like Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, and by the time of Plutarch the traditional view of Sparta was already well established.

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Modern reconstructions of Sparta's internal history have tended to draw heavily on Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus*. This is the source of many colourful claims which have become popular.

SOURCE 3.4 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek Political and Social History from 478 BC*, p. 218

A COMMENT ON...

The 'myth' of Sparta

- Many fanciful images of Sparta and the Spartans were prevalent during the 6th–4th centuries BC, but the most often admired image (rather idealised) was that it was some kind of model society: tough, but stable, disciplined and wisely governed; a society of equality and unity that put the interests of the state before that of the individual and where the inhabitants obeyed the state's laws without question.
- This view, based on the ancient authors, was further developed by the Romans, and throughout Western history, Sparta was admired for its patriotism, courage, discipline and the moral lessons that could be learnt from studying it.
- Only recently have scholars attempted to look more critically at the idealised image often presented by the ancient authors. However, each generation, depending on its main preoccupations, will continue to create its own image of Sparta.

ACTIVITY 3.1

1. What do Figures 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 reveal about the landform of the Peloponnese?
2. Using the text, and Figure 3.10, draw a mind map summarising the benefits provided by the mountains and the Eurotas River valley for the people of Sparta.
3. Describe in one paragraph for each of the following:
   - The site of the city of Sparta
   - How Sparta differed from other cities in Greece.
4. Come up with a suggestion to explain the differences in Thucydides' view of the city of Sparta and the record left by Pausanius.
5. Define the 'myth of Sparta' that prevailed until the modern era.
6. Explain what is meant by 'each generation, depending on its main occupations, will continue to create its own image of Sparta'.
7. Study Table 3.1 carefully, noting those events that brought about dramatic changes in Spartan society between 750–371.
8. Identify how Anton Powell explains in Source 3.3 the major factor that influenced Spartan society and foreign policy.

3.2 Social structure and political organisation

The issue of Lycurgus and the Great Rhetra

In the 7th century BC, Sparta experienced political upheaval in the form of:

1 rivalry for power between the two kings and their advisory council of aristocrats

2 resentment among the people at their exclusion from decision-making.

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According to the Spartans, and other ancient non-Spartan sources (Herodotus, Xenophon and Plutarch), a lawgiver called Lycurgus was responsible for setting up most of Sparta's social and political institutions.

He is supposed to have received an **oracle** from the god Apollo at Delphi in central Greece. On the basis of this oracle, referred to as the Great **Rhetra** and written as a prose poem, the Spartans changed their constitution.

oracle advice or prophecy received from a god through the mediumship of a priest or priestess in ancient times

rhetra a saying, public pronouncement or law

> Lycurgus ... brought an oracle about it from Delphi which they called a rhetra. It goes as follows: 'After dedicating a temple to Zeus Skullanius and Athena Skullania, forming phylai (tribes) and creating obai (divisions) and instituting a Gerousia of thirty elders, including the founder leaders (kings), then from season to season, meet between Babyka and Knakion so as to propose and withdraw. But the people must have the authority and power.

SOURCE 3.5 Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 6

However, despite what Plutarch says, it is unlikely that constitutional change was the result of one reformer. More likely, the 'constitution' evolved over time into the balanced form that other Greeks apparently admired.

The question is: was Lycurgus a real individual or a mythological personality?

Even Plutarch admits in the following source that it is hard to know the truth about this so-called reformer.

> In general, nothing can be said about Lycurgus that is not disputed, because there are different accounts of his birth, his death, his travels and what he did in making laws and political arrangements, but there is the least agreement amongst historians about the time period in which he lived.

SOURCE 3.6 Plutarch, *Lycurgus,* 1. 1–3

> Some say that he flourished at the same time with Iphitus, and in concert with him established the Olympic truce. Among these is Aristotle the philosopher, and he alleges as proof the discus at Olympia on which an inscription preserves the name of Lycurgus.

SOURCE 3.7 Plutarch, *Lycurgus,* 1. 1–3

Modern historians have also found it difficult to come to a conclusion about the existence of Lycurgus. He may have been an ancestral reformer, whose name was linked to the Spartan system of government, and later way of life, in order 'to give it prestige and standing in the community'.[7]

1 A. Andrewes says that 'if there was a real Lycurgus we know nothing of him'[8] and suggests that 'the perpetuation of his name was one of the most successful frauds in history'.[9]

2 W. G. Forrest says that if such a person did exist, the greatest thing he did was to take what he found and 'partly by accident, partly by design', made a system of it. He 'lay down a set of rules for the first time in Sparta's history'.[10]

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FIGURE 3.11 A 19th-century painting, by an unknown artist, of Lycurgus making his fellow citizens respect the institutions established by him

ACTIVITY 3.2

1 Summarise what Plutarch says about Lycurgus in Source 3.6.
2 Compare the opinions of Andrewes and Forrest about Lycurgus.
3 What was the Great Rhetra?

The Spartan political arrangement

The Great Rhetra mentions three main parts of the Spartan government:

1 dual kingship
2 a 30-member council (*gerousia*) of 28 elders (*gerontes*) and the two kings
3 a popular assembly (*ecclesia*) of all Spartiates aged over 30.

However, there was a very important fourth part of the constitution not mentioned in the Great Rhetra. This was added later because the Spartans believed that control by the *gerousia* was still dominant 'so they imposed upon it the authority of the *ephors* to act as a curb'.[11]

4 the *ephorate*, a body of five magistrates or *ephors*.

The Spartans, who had great respect for law and customs (*nomos*), appreciated the balance: monarchy (kings), **oligarchy** (*gerontes*) and democracy (people and *ephors*) within their system. Each element respected the rights of the others, so preventing situations where kings or generals stepped beyond the law, threatening the whole system.

oligarchy rule by the few

Aristotle concluded centuries later that Sparta's constitution was a happy balance of democracy and oligarchy. However, despite its democratic elements, Sparta's constitution was strictly an oligarchy because the 28-member *gerousia*, elected for life, was the main legislative, administrative and judicial body. 'In another sense we may see the whole Spartan community as an oligarchy in relation to the helots … an oligarchy within an oligarchy'.[12]

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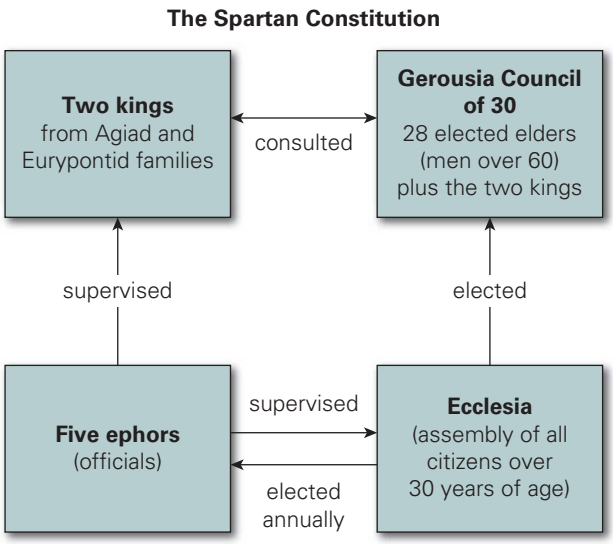

FIGURE 3.12 Diagram of the features of the Spartan constitution

The roles and privileges of the kings

TABLE 3.2 The roles and privileges of the two Spartan kings

Origin	Belonged to the two leading families (Eurypontids and Agiads) among original Dorian tribesmen (hereditary positions).
Succession	Succeeded by eldest son, but a son born prior to his father's accession to the throne had to give way to the firstborn after his father became king.
Political role	Sat as members of the *gerousia* (council of elders) and could take part in debates. Had no more power than the other 28.
Military role	Appointed as commanders-in-chief of the army, but after 507 BC only one king went on campaign; the other remained in Sparta. On campaign, the king was the ultimate authority.
Religious role	Acted as priests of the patron gods of their respective families. Carried out sacrifices on behalf of their patron gods, the state gods and prior to leaving for war and before a battle. Sent envoys to the Delphic oracle.
Legal role	Decided issues relating to heiresses and adoptions. Had jurisdiction over roads and highways.
Restrictions on power	Took an oath every three months before the *ephors* to rule in accordance with the laws, and every nine years the *ephors* took the omens to see if the gods still favoured the king. Kept a check on each other and were accompanied by two *ephors* on campaign. Could be cited to appear before the *gerousia* and *ephors* for misconduct and could be deposed by the people.
Special honours	Supported at the expense of the state and received income from lands of the *perioikoi*. Presented with skins and carcasses of animals sacrificed to the gods. Served first at public meals and given double portions of food. Given seats of honour at all festivals, and when they entered the assembly all – apart from the *ephors* – stood. Mourned publicly for 10 days after their death (see pp. 140–41).

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The kings of Sparta command the army on foreign expeditions and may supervise religious worship; beyond that their sovereignty [independent power and authority] does not extend.

SOURCE 3.8 Aristotle, *The Politics*, 1285a

Gerousia, ecclesia and *ephorate*

The gerousia *(council of elders)*

The *gerousia* comprised the two Spartan kings plus 28 *gerontes*: men over 60 years of age and past military service. The citizens in the *ecclesia* elected the members for life. Those elected were expected to be men of renown with nobility of character – 'the best and wisest of the good and wise'.[13] Selection was by acclamation (shouting and clapping). The members of the *gerousia*:

1 had wide judicial powers in serious criminal cases involving death, exile or disgrace of *homoioi*
2 could put kings on trial
3 proposed laws and framed the wording of the legislation to be approved or rejected by the *ecclesia*.

FIGURE 3.13 A modern statue of 5th century Spartan King Leonidas in Sparta

The selection [of *gerontes*] was made in the following way. The assembly gathered, and picked men were shut up in a nearby building where they could neither see nor be seen but could only hear the shouts of those in the assembly. These were brought in ... one by one in an order determined by lot, and each walked through the assembly in silence ... Whoever was met with the most shouting and the loudest, was the man declared elected. Then, wearing a crown, he made the round of the sanctuaries of the gods. He was followed by many young men full of admiration and praise for him, and by many women who sang in celebration of his excellence and proclaimed his good fortune in life.

SOURCE 3.9 Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 26

The ecclesia *(assembly)*

The *ecclesia* comprised all males over 30 years who were citizens. It:

- voted on proposed laws by shouting 'yes' or 'no', but could not debate issues, change motions or initiate legislation
- decided questions of peace and war, and appointed generals and admirals
- elected the *gerontes* and *ephors*
- decided rival claimants to the throne
- freed helots who displayed courage.

The five ephors (ephorate)

The five *ephors* were the chief officials (magistrates) of the state, who acted as a body and abided by a majority decision. They were democratically elected by the citizens in the *ecclesia* for one year, after which they had to account for their term of office. They:

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- controlled public finances and supervised lesser magistrates
- presided over the meetings of the *ecclesia*
- worked closely with the *gerousia* and attended court cases
- were the sole judges in criminal cases involving *perioikoi*
- had wide-ranging powers over the daily lives of citizens, including the training and discipline of boys
- supervised the **krypteia** and supposedly declared war on the helots at the beginning of their term of office
- swore an oath each month to uphold the powers of the kings provided the kings acted lawfully
- were influential in deciding foreign policy and met foreign envoys
- selected age groups to go to war, issuing orders to mobilise, selecting the royal bodyguard, giving orders to the generals and recalling them if they failed
- accompanied and supervised the kings on campaign (two *ephors*), reporting on their behaviour; they often appear to have been more powerful than the king.

krypteia means 'secret' and was used to describe a body of young men employed to periodically kill helots.

> Agesilaus (Agesilaos) to the ephors, greetings. We have subjugated the greater part of Asia, routed the Persians and established many strongholds in Ionia. But since your orders are that I come back by the date set, I am following after this letter, and shall nearly be there first. I do not hold the command in my own interest, but in that of our city and allies. After all, a genuinely dutiful commander is one who always exercises his command subject to the instructions of both laws and ephors

SOURCE 3.10 Plutarch, *Plutarch On Sparta: Sayings of Spartans*, p. 115

Once the Spartan form of government was fully evolved, it remained relatively stable throughout the 6th, 5th and 4th centuries while the rest of Greece experienced political upheaval. Also, Sparta's internal stability and good order was a result of the desire to avoid disunity among her citizens so that it could keep the helots under control.

ACTIVITY 3.3

1. Assess the accuracy of Aristotle the Athenian's view that the Spartan constitution was a balanced one.
2. Explain why Sparta's form of government was really an oligarchy.
3. Consult Table 3.2 and then assess the accuracy or not of Aristotle's view in Source 3.8.
4. Describe:
   - the qualifications for membership of the *gerousia*
   - the form of selection
   - the major duties of the *gerontes*.
5. What is your opinion of the form of election for such an important body?
6. Identify the qualifications for the membership of the *ecclesia*? Deduce their major responsibility.
7. Describe how the *ephorate* was a democratic element in the Spartan government.
8. Draw a diagram summarising the *ephors*' duties.
9. Deduce what the letter from King Argesilaus (400–460) to the *ephors* in Source 3.10 indicates about the power of the *ephors*.

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FIGURE 3.14 A bronze figure of a Spartan warrior wrapped in the famous red Spartan cloak

Social groups

As in many ancient cultures Spartan society was hierarchical.

Spartiates (*homoioi*)

At the top of the Spartan hierarchy were the two hereditary kings and an elite group of full citizens (males over 30) called Spartiates or ***homoioi***, of which there were never more than 9000–10 000. Their numbers steadily declined through the 5th and early 4th centuries BC.

Spartiates obtained their status through a combination of:

- birth, where both parents claimed descent from the original Dorian conquerors of Laconia
- successful completion of training laid down by the state (***agoge***). See p. 122 for the training of Spartan males
- election to a common 'mess' or military club (***syssition***). See p. 124 for the features of *syssitia*.

Spartiates were a warrior caste supported by the state with an allotment of state-owned land (***kleros***) and state-owned helots to work it, and were forbidden to engage in farming, trade and industry. They were subjected to disciplined and rigorous training, expected to be at the peak of physical fitness at all times, and lived by a strict code of honour which included total loyalty to the state, respect for those in authority and obedience of the laws. They preferred death in battle to defeat and were punished with loss of citizenship for cowardice.

Their lives were austere: they are believed to have lived without luxuries, survived on a relatively frugal though healthy diet, wore minimum clothing to toughen them up, and were not permitted to sleep at home until they reached 30 years of age.

homoioi 'similars' or 'peers', often wrongly translated as 'equals'

agoge a 'raising' or 'upbringing', referring to Spartan education

syssition (pl. *syssitia*) a military dining club

kleros (pl. *kleroi*) an allotment of land

Despite some differences in wealth and power – there are references to 'first families' – all *homoioi* were subjected to the same discipline and training, were equal under the law and had a right to participate in government.

When men attained citizenship, they were entitled to grow their hair long, 'in the belief that they would look taller and have a nobler, more fearsome appearance'.[14]

Perioikoi (*perioeci*)

This name comes from the two Greek words: '*peri*' meaning 'surroundings' and '*ockoi*' meaning 'householders', and '*perioikoi*' were often referred to as 'dwellers around'. They were:

- Dorian in origin and lived in communities spread throughout Laconia and Messenia, and on all major routes into Laconia
- self-governing: free to make their own laws and live their lives as they wished, but did not have full rights in Spartan society and could not make alliances with others in the Peloponnese peninsula
- integrated into the Spartan system as traders, fishermen, sailors, manufacturers and craftsmen; they gained their prosperity and protection from the Spartans and some became quite wealthy
- expected to fight for Sparta when a military emergency arose and formed half the Spartan army either as a separate unit or as part of the main **phalanx**
- subject to taxation and to Spartan magistrates if they committed a crime
- expected to attend the funeral of a Spartan king
- generally loyal to Sparta
- a buffer against escaping helots. It is possible that the *perioikoi* communities in Messenia kept the helots in remote areas in check.

phalanx a massed body of heavily armed infantry

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Inferiors

Spartiates who did not conform to the strict code of behaviour and did not abide by the laws lost their honour in Spartan society. For example, men who did not marry and produce children were ridiculed, and those who lost their citizenship, even temporarily, were shamed and shunned.

The loss of citizenship was an intolerable situation for a Spartan and could occur if he failed to submit to the strict discipline and training imposed by the state; if he failed to gain admission to, or due to poverty, could not contribute to one of the military 'messes'; if he surrendered to the enemy, or disgraced himself by cowardly behaviour in battle (called *tresantes* or 'tremblers'); or committed criminal offences within Sparta. These 'inferiors', as they were known, were forced to wear special clothes and go unshaven. They lost all their political rights; were avoided by everyone and ate and exercised alone; and had little chance of finding a wife for themselves and husbands for their daughters.

In Sparta, everyone would be ashamed to be associated with a coward in his mess or to have him as a wrestling partner.

> When sides are being picked for a ball game that sort of man is often left out ... and in dances he is banished to the insulting places ... in the street he is required to give way, as well as give up his seat even to a younger man ... he must explain to the girls of his family why they cannot get husbands.

SOURCE 3.11 Xenophon, *Spartan Society*, 9

There were others also referred to as 'inferiors':

- *partheniai* – the illegitimate children of Spartans and helot women
- *mothakes* – non-Spartans who participated in the Spartan educational system but did not go on to be citizens
- *neodamodeis* ('new people') – helots who were freed due to some form of commendable military service but did not share in the political rights of Spartans.

Helots

The helots were the original pre-Dorian inhabitants of Laconia and the inhabitants of Messenia conquered by the Spartans. There is no certain figure for the number of helots, although a few modern estimates suggest 170 000–224 000, something like 20 helots to each Spartan.

Unlike slaves in other states who were owned by individuals and could be bought and sold, the helots were state-owned agricultural serfs and could only be freed or disposed of by the state. They were allocated by the state to work the land of their Spartan masters to whom they were expected to pay a large portion of their agricultural produce, but they could keep for themselves any surplus above the fixed yearly quota.

Although they lived with their families and followed their own cults and rituals, their lives were arduous: they had no political or legal rights, and were unable to marry without their master's permission, or travel without government permission.

The helots served in the army as servants to Spartan soldiers during war and also as light-armed skirmishers in battle. A few fortunate ones were freed for bravery.

The Laconian helots were relatively cooperative, but the Messenians, who were the most downtrodden and exploited, posed a constant threat to the Spartans and were always under suspicion. They lived in fear of being beaten or even killed by the *krypteia*, or secret police (see p. 126). Despite the strict control Sparta exerted over them, the fear of a possible helot revolt influenced Sparta's foreign policy.

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In 464 BC, the helots took advantage of the disruption caused by a severe earthquake in Sparta to stage a mass revolt, recorded in Thucydides in Bk 1.101. The helot rebels withdrew to a strong position on the fortified hill of Mt Ithome in Messenia and it took the Spartan army, with the help of their allies, 10 years to bring the helots back under control.

ACTIVITY 3.4

1. What name were the Spartiates (Spartan citizens) known by? What did it mean?
2. Describe how one qualified for Spartan citizenship.
3. Describe what a Spartiate's day-to-day life might have been like.
4. State the meaning of *perioikoi*.
5. Describe the contributions the *perioikoi* made to Spartan society.
6. Identify the main difference in status between helots and *perioikoi*.
7. Explain how the *perioikoi* could have made life difficult for the Spartiates if they had chosen to.
8. Compare the helots to slaves in other Greek cities.
9. Describe the helots' chief role in the Spartan state.
10. What would have been the most humiliating thing that could happen to a Spartiate? Why?
11. Draw a diagram showing all those designated as 'inferiors' in Sparta.

The *agoge* or Spartan training system

The Spartiates were a military caste whose lives revolved around the army barracks and physical and military training known as the *agoge*.

The training of a Spartan:

1. started at an early age
2. was based on age groups
3. was geared to serving Sparta's needs, not those of the individual
4. taught social and moral values, and what it was to be a Spartan, which included:
   - prompt obedience to authority
   - endurance and the ability to withstand pain and hardship
   - courage and self-sacrifice
   - comradeship and loyalty.

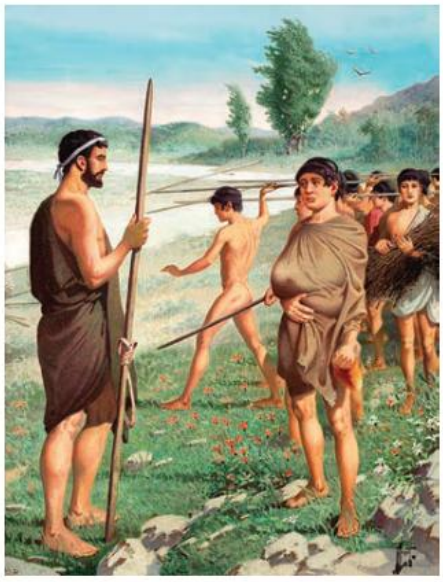

FIGURE 3.15 Boys being supervised by older Spartans

Age groups

It seemed that children were a form of common property. According to Plutarch, Lycurgus 'caused each man to be master of other people's children just as much as of his own'.[15] When a child was born it was inspected by the *ephors* and if 'puny or deformed or in any way poorly endowed for health or strength',[16] it was left to die, exposed to the elements at a chasm referred to as 'the place of rejection' below Mt Taygetus. Those approved as fit were presented to the goddess Artemis and reared by their mothers and nurses for six years.

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1 7–12: Boys entered the *agoge* at age seven when they left their homes to live with others of the same age. They were organised into units and an authority figure of great repute (the *paidonomos*) became the boys' public guardian, with the help of a body of older youths with whips. The boys were chastised for any misbehaviour and introduced to Spartan discipline. At no time were they left unsupervised, for any citizen had the right to discipline them if their guardian was absent. They were gradually introduced to physical skills and hardships, and Xenophon maintains that older men deliberately created disputes to encourage the boys to fight among themselves. One of the first things a boy learned was a sort of dance (the *pyrriche*) that involved carrying of arms in order to make them nimble-footed and later able to manoeuvre carrying heavy weapons. By the age of 10 they were taking part in public competitions, in the form of martial-style dances, music and singing the warlike compositions of the poet Tyrtaeus.

2 13–18: By the end of their 12th year they were ready to take on a more intensive and rigorous form of training. Xenophon says that at adolescence, 'when youths become very self-willed and are particularly liable to cockiness both of which produce very powerful cravings for pleasures', the state 'loaded them with the greatest amount of work'.[17]

- They were trained to go barefoot at all times in order to run faster, scale heights more easily and clamber down cliffs.
- The one garment issued to them – a cloak – had to last a year no matter what the weather; they exercised naked; did their own housekeeping in the barracks and plucked reeds by hand to make a bed. They were given only small amounts of food to train them to go without on a campaign. However, they were permitted to steal food to supplement their diet.
- This custom was intended, according to Xenophon, 'to make the boys more resourceful at feeding themselves',[18] while at the same time it cultivated in them warlike instincts. But if boys were caught stealing they were severely punished, not for the stealing itself, but for being 'incompetent thieves'.[19] As a part of the ritual associated with the cult of Artemis Orthia, these young teens were required to steal cheeses placed on the altar of the temple while older boys with whips tried to prevent them.
- They also developed the ability to depend on themselves, and to track, spy and scout.
- They were expected to display bravery, withstand pain, employ teamwork and show determination and physical skill.
- Many of their activities took the form of a contest (*agon*) which in many cases, such as the brutal hand-to-hand fights between groups, intended to develop the need for dominance within and between groups.
- Adolescents also accompanied the adults on hunting forays and attended *syssitia* to listen to the experiences and noble deeds of older Spartiates.
- They were trained to be modest and how to behave in public: keeping silent and gazing down at all times when walking in the street.

3 18–20: At 18 they entered the class of *eirens* and were now combatants in the army, but not front-line soldiers. For two years they were drilled in a huge 'school' modelled on the army and were captained by young adults who had passed their 20th year. They were now able to supervise the younger boys, and to desensitise them to killing, they were encouraged in violence or even murder against troublesome helots. See p. 126. To symbolise their graduation into adulthood at age 20, they played a no-holds-barred ritual ball game. They were also now permitted to join a *syssition* and marry, but still lived in the barracks and could only visit their wives by stealth.

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4 24–30: At 24 they were presented with their armour and became full-time, front-line soldiers. Although not a lot is known of this class, it appears that there was fierce competition to become part of an elite group of 300 who formed the bodyguard of the kings. This was a great honour, but it forced those who were not selected to keep a constant eye on those chosen, to note some slip in the code of honour and to compete in outdoing one another. At 30, they became full citizens and had the right to participate in the public assembly. They were now permitted to live at home with their wives and families – although expected to dine every night in their *syssitia* – and were allowed to grow their hair long. From 30, Spartiates continued their training and military service until they retired at 60.

FIGURE 3.16 Spartan military training with shields

ACTIVITY 3.5

1 What was the *agoge*? What was:
   - it based on
   - its purpose
   - it meant to teach young Spartan males?
2 How significant was the *paidonomos* in the lives of young Spartan boys?
3 Explain what a *pyrriche* was and discuss its purpose.
4 Analyse what Xenophon meant when he said 'When youths become self-willed … the state loaded them with the greatest amount of work'.
5 Draw a diagram of the training hardships faced by Spartan teenagers.
6 Clarify the military usefulness of training soldiers to be deceitful.
7 Identify the name given to a youth aged 18, and describe two disciplinary tasks he was expected to carry out.
8 Describe the symbolic ritual that marked a youth's graduation into adulthood at 20. Identify another important event that marked this milestone.
9 Describe what happened at age 24 and discuss why the next six years were marked by fierce competition.
10 Summarise the significant events that occurred when a Spartan reached the age of 30.

The *syssitia*

The *syssitia* (sing. *syssition*) were public dining groups or messes where Spartiates ate their evening meal with their army comrades. They are sometimes referred to as *pheiditia*, meaning 'to be sparing'. Membership of them was associated with being a Spartan citizen and aimed at expressing the idea of equality, fellowship and unity.

TABLE 3.3 The *syssitia*

Origin and character	Not unique to Sparta – found in other Greek areas. They were part of the early Dorian way of life and were originally military messes. Believed that for 100 years (c. 650–550) it was a unit in the army (half of a Triecas of 30).
Size	Fifteen members of different ages.

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TABLE 3.3 *(continued)*

Location	Held in an open space by the side of the Hyacinthine Way. Tents may have been used while on campaign but more permanent structures were used in Sparta.
Election of members	Decisions were determined by throwing pieces of bread into a bowl called a *kaddichos* that a servant carried on his head. Those in favour threw the bread as it was. Those against, squashed the bread in their hand. The vote had to be unanimous.
Contributions	Each member was obliged to make monthly contributions of grain, cheese, fruit and wine. It was up to the helots to grow enough produce for his master's quota. The contributions of the two kings who were in a *syssition* came from public revenue. Occasionally members contributed extra portions, especially from hunting.
Attendance	Compulsory for all Spartiates, including kings, to eat in their *syssitia* until they reached the age of 60. Young men aged 20–30 had to spend the night with their mess companions. The only excuses for non-attendance were sickness, absence on hunting expeditions and attendance at a public sacrifice.
Meals	Their food, although basic, appears to have been nutritious, even though other Greeks regarded it as plain and unappetising, particularly a black broth (*zamos*), made with pork, vinegar and blood. A visitor to Sparta, after eating a bowl of it, recorded that he now understood why the Spartans did not fear death. As well as small portions of meat, a meal would probably include barley cakes, cheese, olives or figs. No drink was offered unless asked for and it appears that the amount allocated per person each night was one-12th of a pint. They were concerned about the effects of alcohol, which 'causes both physical and mental degeneration'.[20]
Entertainment	Stories of noble deeds performed by prominent Spartans were recounted for the younger members; discussions and jokes were made at the expense of the younger men.
Advantages	The amicable environment kept insolence, foul talk and drunkenness to a minimum. The young were encouraged to emulate the great deeds of their elders and forebears. Members developed a camaraderie and loyalty which carried over into battle when they fought alongside each other.

A COMMENT ON...

Avoiding discord among Spartan citizens

- It appears that many of Sparta's social institutions were intended to avoid discord among its citizens, as it would have given the helots an opportunity to exploit any dissention between their masters.
- No matter what their backgrounds (those of wealth or power), discord was minimised by the fact that all Spartans:
  - were educated together and subjected to the same treatment
  - ate the same basic foods and wore the same simple clothing
  - dined together in groups of different generations
  - respected their elders and Spartan traditions
  - were under public scrutiny for most of their lives.

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The *krypteia*

There seems to have been a secret body referred to as *krypteia,* composed of handpicked young men from the *eiren* class who were at the disposal of the *ephors*.

> Periodically the overseers of the young men would dispatch into the countryside in different directions the ones who appeared to be particularly intelligent; they were equipped with daggers and basic rations, but nothing else. By day they would disperse to obscure spots in order to hide and rest. At night, they made their way to roads and murdered any helot whom they caught. Frequently too they made their way to fields, killing the helots who stood out for their physique and strength.

SOURCE 3.12 Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 28

Despite what Plutarch suggests, it is highly unlikely that the members of the *krypteia* murdered indiscriminately, as they depended on the helots for their livelihood. It is more likely that they removed troublesome helots, or those with leadership abilities, at various times. There is also the possibility that the helots were under a nightly curfew and that it was acceptable to kill any helot suspiciously out beyond the curfew. There is no doubt that service in the *krypteia* up to the age of 30 was part of the rigorous Spartan training and may have been part of a series of initiations that the young men had to pass through before reaching full manhood.

ACTIVITY 3.6

1. Write a description of a Spartan *syssition*.
2. Explain how *syssitia* helped avoid discord among the Spartans.
3. Discuss the particular functions the *krypteia* served in the Spartan state.
4. Why are accusations of regular wholesale helot killings unlikely?

The Spartan army

FIGURE 3.17 A vase painting of Spartan Hoplites

For close to 200 years, the Spartan hoplite army was the best in Greece. Even Sparta's enemies respected its soldiers' military prowess and legendary courage. However, during this time the army went through a number of changes which corresponded with important events in Sparta's history. In his book, *Greece and Rome at War*, Peter Connolly suggests that the continuing decline in the number of Spartiates (*homoioi*), particularly during the 5th century, was probably the reason for the successive re-organisations. By the 4th century, the size of the army was probably no more than 4000, of whom only 1000 were Spartiates, the rest made up of *perioikoi* and freed helots.

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The role of the army

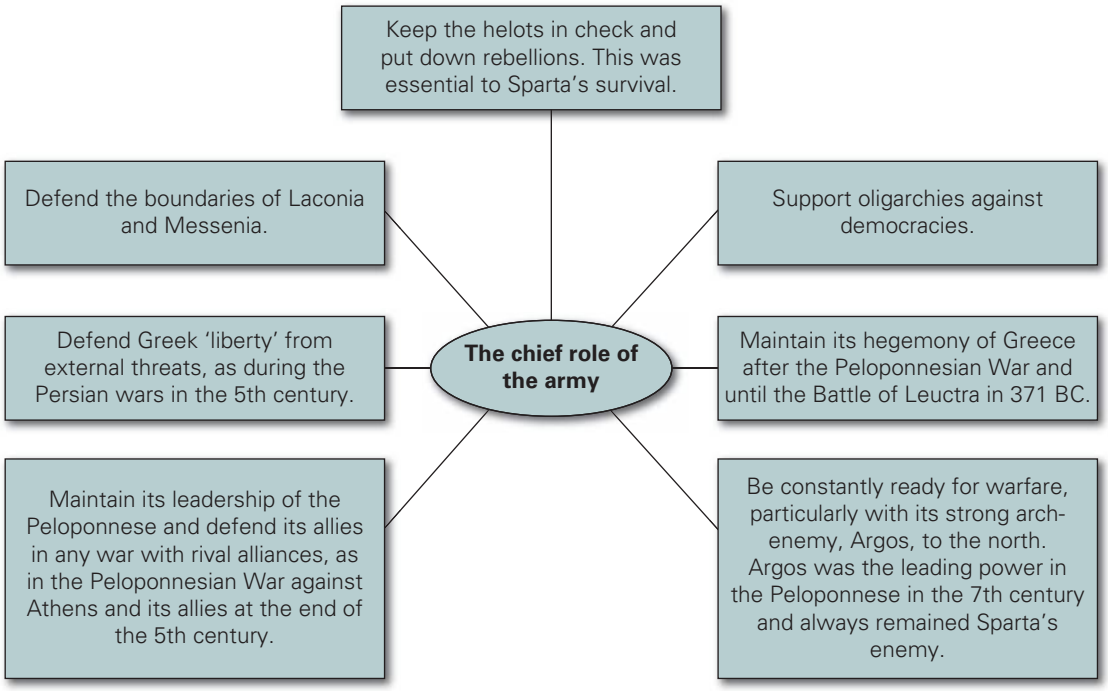

FIGURE 3.18 The role of the army

The composition and organisation of the Spartan army

The infantry numbers called out for a campaign depended on the *ephors*' assessment of the situation. They usually chose different age groups to create a mix of experience and inexperience. It was rare for all those eligible to be called up. Those liable for military service included:

1 Spartiates aged 18–60, but generally only those aged 20–50 were called up. Those who had sons to take their place were chosen for the most dangerous tasks.

2 *Perioikoi*, who selected their own men for service. Originally, they formed separate brigades but were later incorporated into the Spartan units.

3 *Scritae*, from the rough hill country on the northern edge of Laconia, formed a special corps, placed on the left wing (the most vulnerable). They were adaptable to any task and were often used as scouts and as nighttime lookouts.

4 Inferiors, who served in the army according to the same rules as the Spartans. *Neodamodeis* – helots who had distinguished themselves in battle and were set free – were generally sent on overseas campaigns.

5 Helots, who in earlier times were used as shield carriers and light skirmishers.

According to Xenophon, there was also a Spartan cavalry, although it was not large enough to protect the hoplite infantry. It was often used for reconnaissance.

The size and organisation of the Spartan army varied as conditions changed, and sources such as Thucydides, an officer in the field during the Peloponnesian War, and Xenophon, another army officer who knew the Spartan army, differ as to numbers and units. Depending on the particular time frame, there were variations in the units that made up the army and their size. The following are some of these units (from the smallest to largest) and their officers:

- *enomitia* – pl. *enomotiai* (modern equivalent of a platoon) led by an *Enomotarch*
- *pentekostis* – pl. *pentekostes* (modern equivalent of a company) led by a *Pentekonter*

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- *lochos* – pl. *lochoi* (modern equivalent of a battalion) led by a *lochagos*
- *mora* – pl. *morai* (modern equivalent of a division) led by a *polemarch*, the most senior officers under the king.

Spartan armour, weapons and tactics

Spartan hoplites:

- carried a large round bronze and leather shield (*aspis* or *hoplon*) with Spartan lambda **blazon** (see Fig 3.20)
- carried a 2–3-metre wooden spear tipped in bronze and a short iron stabbing sword for hand-to-hand combat
- wore a Corinthian-style bronze helmet that covered the ears, cheeks and nose and sported a horsehair crest
- wore moulded bronze greaves to protect the lower legs, and a stiffened corselet made from layers of material glued together and sometimes reinforced with metal scales, worn over a linen tunic; this corselet replaced an earlier bronze breastplate
- Wore on top of this the characteristic and famous Spartan red cloak (*phoinikis*) to give them a more warlike appearance; this was discarded before battle but served as a blanket when on campaign and as a shroud when a Spartiate died.

blazon an identifying decoration on a shield

FIGURE 3.19 An artistic representation of a Spartan hoplite

FIGURE 3.20 A monument to King Leonidas of Sparta opposite the hill of Kolonos at Thermopylae where it is believed that the Spartan and Thespian hoplites made their last stand.

Hoplites did not fight as individuals but in a phalanx: this was a massed formation standing as close as possible to each other with shields interlocking, and spears pointing at the enemy. A phalanx usually consisted of eight to 12 rows of soldiers and if the front rank fell, those in the second and third ranks stepped up and took their place. The tactic was to create a rolling effect that would push the enemy off balance so that its front rank staggered backwards and collapsed.

The Spartans developed a system of training that focused on what to do if the phalanx was thrown into confusion and had to wheel around in the middle of battle. Lack of mobility was one of the disadvantages of phalanx fighting, but the Spartans were masters at it due to their constant drilling and discipline.

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Suddenly there came over the whole phalanx the look of some ferocious beast, as it wheels at bay, stiffens its bristles and turns to defend itself, so that the barbarians could no longer doubt that they were faced with men who would fight to the death. The Persians therefore set up their great wicker shields like a wall in front of them and shot arrows at their opponents. But the Spartans, keeping their shields locked edge to edge as they advanced themselves upon the enemy, wrenched away their wicker shields and then thrust with their long spears at the faces and breasts of the Persians and slaughtered them in great numbers.

SOURCE 3.13 Plutarch, *Aristides*, 18

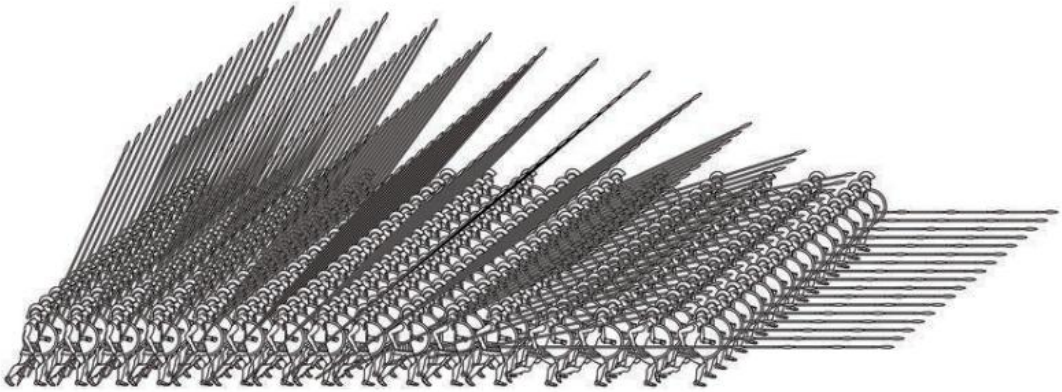

FIGURE 3.21 A phalanx formation

A COMMENT ON...

Spartan shields and the Spartan lambda blazon

- To the Spartans, their shields were the most important part of their armour, not only as a defensive weapon – because of the extent of its coverage in the phalanx – or as an effective bashing weapon, but because of its symbolic aspect. Other pieces of armour were for the protection of the individual, but the shield was 'for the common good', a basic ideal of the Spartans. It was also used for carrying home a Spartan who had died bravely in battle. For this reason, Spartans who lost their shields in battle were dishonoured and punished severely afterwards.
- To Sparta's enemies, there was no more fearful site than a phalanx of shields featuring the lambda blazon or upside-down V signifying the state symbol of Lacedaemon. Earlier, individual Spartans had decorated their shields with personal symbols – scorpion, gorgon, the club of Heracles – but the adoption of the lambda blazon provided another form of visual propaganda for the Spartans.

The red cloaks, long hair, lambda shield blazon and the singing of warlike compositions of the poet Tyrtaeus, marching to wars and into battle, are several examples of the visual propaganda, described by Anton Powell, which the Spartans used so effectively against their enemies.

When an army of the Peloponnesian league contained Spartan hoplites, it might be important to draw attention to them, to let Sparta's reputation do its work on enemy minds. The red cloaks worn by Sparta troops proved distinctive and memorable, as they were surely intended to be.

SOURCE 3.14 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek political and Social History from 478*, p. 240

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The visual images, mentioned by Powell, are found again and again in the records of the Spartans at war, such as:

1 the shock effect on the Persians of the Spartans combing their long hair on the eve of battle at Thermopylae, reported by Herodotus Bk 7.108.
2 the optimism shown by King Agesilaus' military camp at Ephesos, recorded by Xenophon in his *Life of Agesilaos* and *Constitution of the Spartans*.

> You could see the gymnasia full of men exercising, the hippodrome full of horsemen riding, the javelin-throwers and the archers at target practice ... The market-place was full of armaments and horses for sale while the bronze smiths and carpenters, ironworkers, leather workers and painters all preparing military equipment.

SOURCE 3.15 Xenophon, *Agesilaos*, 1.26

An evaluation of the Spartan army by Herodotus

The Spartans were renowned for their courage, discipline and tactical skills, revealed by Herodotus as he recorded:

1 a conversation between the ex-king of Sparta, Demaratus, and the Persian king, Xerxes
2 the last stand of King Leonidas and his 300 Spartans at Thermopylae in 480 BC against the Persians when the Greeks had been betrayed by one of their own.

> First then, they will not under any circumstances accept terms from you which would mean slavery for Greece; secondly, they will fight you even if the rest of Greece submits.
>
> Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7, 103
>
> ... fighting singly, they are as good as any, but fighting together they are the best soldiers in the world ...
>
> *Histories*, Bk 7, 107
>
> Whatever the law commands, they do; and this command never varies: it is never to retreat in battle, however great the odds, but always stand firm, and to conquer or die.
>
> *Histories*, Bk 7, 107
>
> They were men who understood war pitted against an inexperienced enemy, and amongst the feints they employed was to turn their backs on a body and pretend to be retreating in confusion ... then would wheel and face them and inflict in the new struggle numerous casualties.
>
> *Histories*, Bk 7, 213
>
> The Greeks [Spartans] knowing that death was inevitable ... put forth all their strength and fought with fury and desperation. By this time most of their spears were broken, and they were killing Persians with their swords. In the course of the fight Leonidas fell having fought most gallantly ...
>
> *Histories*, Bk 7, 220–227

SOURCE 3.16 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7

However, not every Spartan soldier lived up to the ideal and there are a few examples of cowardice, refusal to follow orders and a Spartan surrender during the Peloponnesian War in 425 BC, a great blow to Spartan pride and morale.

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In a collection of Spartan sayings, recorded by Plutarch, it appears that Spartan women were ashamed of their sons and husbands who came back from war as losers or who showed any form of cowardice. They preferred them to be carried back dead on their shields.

ACTIVITY 3.7

1. Identify what Peter Connolly in *Greece and Rome at War* says was the main reason for the changes that occurred in the army throughout this period.
2. Identify the groups that would normally comprise a Spartan army on campaign.
3. Describe a Spartan hoplite outfitted for war.
4. Outline the purpose of the:
   - famous red cloak of the Spartans
   - ritual combing of their long hair on the eve of battle
   - distinctive lambda shield blazon
   - war-like songs they sang as they marched into battle.
5. Describe a phalanx and discuss why the Spartans were masters of phalanx fighting.
6. List the metaphor that Plutarch uses to describe a Spartan phalanx in Source 3.13.
7. Recall how Xenophon describes a Spartan military camp at Ephesus in Source 3.15.
8. Summarise Herodotus' description of the Spartans' discipline, courage, tactical skill and attitude to surrender and death in their last stand, led by King Leonidas, at Thermopylae against the Persians in 480 BC.
9. Research and evaluate the defeat and surrender of Spartan soldiers at Sphacteria in 425 BC during the Peloponnesian War. Refer to Thucydides, Bk 4, 8–16.

The role and status of women

Throughout the ancient world, only men were ever citizens, so although women born of Spartan parents played an important role in Spartan society, they were never citizens.

It is difficult to assess the character and role of Spartan women because of the differences of opinions expressed in the ancient sources. These seem to have focused on the more extraordinary aspects of the life of Spartan women – such as their freedom to exercise and train in revealing clothes – and range from admiration to disgust. For example:

1. Euripides, the playwright, said, 'No Spartan girl could lead a respectable life even if she wanted to: they leave their houses in loose dresses showing naked thighs …'[21]
2. Plutarch said 'there was nothing disgraceful in the light clothing of the girls, for they were modest …'[22]
3. Aristotle accused Spartan women of 'living without restraint in every improper indulgence and luxury' and as a result 'they were unruly and undisciplined',[23] which was 'detrimental both to the attainment of the aims of the constitution and to the happiness of the state.'[24] Of course, he was writing when the Spartan system was breaking down.

FIGURE 3.22 A bronze statuette of a Spartan girl either running or dancing

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In trying to reconstruct certain aspects of their existence we have to be aware not only of ancient theorists looking for an explanation of Sparta's rapid decline but also, possibly, of our own enthusiasm over a community of women with exceptional access to information and influence ... We may perhaps think of modern ideals of sexual equality. However, the motive ascribed to the physical training of girls is far from feminist.

SOURCE 3.17 Anton Powell, *Athens and Sparta: Constructing Greek political and Social History from 478*, p. 243

There's no doubt that compared to their counterparts in the rest of Greece, Spartan women appear to have lived a more open life with fewer restraints.

However, Xenophon records that the main role of a Spartan female was to produce healthy sons who would grow up to be fine and brave soldiers. Lycurgus, according to Xenophon, showed great concern for the health and training of females, and in the interests of the state, did not want citizens produced from random partners but from 'sound stock' as in horse breeding.[25] To achieve this, apart from physical training, he is said to have devised practices such as:

FIGURE 3.23 Degas' painting (c. 1860) of Spartan girls and boys training together

- later marriage 'when they were in their prime and ripe for it'[26]
- visits to wives by stealth so that the males 'were ready for intercourse rather than being sated and pale'[27]
- permission for sharing wives for the bearing of 'fine children who would be linked to fine ancestors by blood and family'.[28]

This was a form of **eugenics**.

The training of girls

Plutarch says that the education of girls was aimed at producing healthy bodies so that 'their children in embryo would make a strong start in strong bodies and would develop better, while the women themselves would also bear their pregnancies with vigour and would meet the challenge of childbirth in a successful and relaxed way'.[29]

eugenics the practice, by selective breeding, of trying to improve the characteristics of offspring

Young girls, as well as married and even pregnant women, exercised and trained like the males. They participated in public sports: contests of speed (running) and strength (wrestling), gymnastics, throwing the discus and javelin, and ball games. One of the most strenuous exercises they performed was called *bibasis* and involved jumping up and down, each time touching their buttocks with their heels.

They were criticised elsewhere in Greece – where there was sexual segregation and modesty in dress – as 'thigh-revealers' for performing either nude or in a slit skirt to allow them to move freely, but they were also commended for their physical strength and natural beauty.

Lysistrata: Welcome Lampito my dear. How are things in Sparta? Darling you look simply beautiful. Such colour, such resilience! Why I bet you could throttle a bull.
Lampito: So could you my dear, if you were in training. Don't you know I practise rump jumps every day?
Lysistrata: And such beautiful breasts, too.

SOURCE 3.18 Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*, Lines 46–95

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Although the women did not participate in politics, they could still exert an influence behind the scenes and were more assertive outside the home than other women of that time because the men were often absent:

- living in barracks until they were 30
- eating all evening meals in their *syssitia*
- away on military campaigns.

The women had autonomy in running the *oikos* (household) and supervising domestic staff. But unlike their contemporaries elsewhere, they were not confined to the household and did not, according to Plato, involve themselves with wool work, although it is likely that they knew how to weave, as the sources record that they helped make ritual garments for statues.

They also ran the family's *kleros* and supervised the helots while their husbands were away at war. In the 4th century, women inherited and ran large estates in their own right, owning – according to Aristotle – two-fifths of the land. Their wealth was legendary. See p. 134.

They played a religious role in the Cult of Artemis Orthia, protectress of women in childbirth, and took part in public choral and dancing competitions associated with festivals.

Spartan females were brought up to be fit companions to their soldier husbands and to be physically and emotionally strong. They gained their status from child-bearing and their social standing from their association with their fathers, husbands and sons, and were the keepers of the Spartan spirit. They:

- endorsed obedience in marriage
- took pride in bearing sons and in frugal home management
- were also 'full of a fierce and unrelenting patriotism'[30] as is shown in *Sayings of Spartan Women*. It has been claimed that they spoke out against, or even killed, their own sons if they were cowards in battle. For example: 'Away to the darkness, cowardly offspring … useless pup, worthless portion, away to Hell. Away! This son unworthy of Sparta was not mine at all.'[31]

However, the sources of these *Sayings* are unknown and should be treated with caution. They are useful only in demonstrating how Sparta's admirers from the 4th century onwards liked to think of its citizens in the past.

FIGURE 3.24 An oil painting by Jean-Jacques-Frances Le Barbier of a Spartan mother sending her son off to war with the classic saying 'come back with your shield or on it' (1805)

A woman, after sending off her five sons to war, stood on the outskirts of the city to watch anxiously what the outcome of the battle might be. When someone appeared, and she questioned him, he reported that all her sons had perished. She said: 'Yet this isn't what I asked you, vile slave, but rather how our country was doing.' When he said it was winning, she remarked: 'Then I gladly accept the death of my sons too.'

SOURCE 3.19 Plutarch, 'Sayings of Women', from *Plutarch on Sparta*, p. 160

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ACTIVITY 3.8

1. Explain why it is difficult to accurately assess the character and role of women in Sparta.
2. Identify what Anton Powell in Source 3.17 warns against when trying to reconstruct the lives of women in ancient Sparta.
3. Discuss what the lines in Aristophanes' play *Lysistrata* (Source 3.18) reveal about Spartan women.
4. Assess the part played by eugenics in the lives of Spartan women.
5. Explain what is meant by 'women were the keepers of the Spartan spirit'.

3.3 The economy

Both Xenophon and Plutarch present 'a simplistic idealization of Spartan economic life',[32] which became part of the myth of equality in Sparta. Modern historians now question whether there ever was economic equality when it came to land ownership.

Land ownership

Due to the fertility of much of the land of Laconia, and particularly Messenia, the basis of Sparta's economy was intensive agriculture but as a Spartan male was a full-time soldier, the state was obliged to support him by granting a basic allotment or 'package' of land called a *kleros* (pl. *kleroi*) and state-owned helots to farm it. According to Plutarch, this so-called distribution of equal allotments – although the land could be scattered in different parts of the country – was an attempt by Lycurgus to avoid social unrest and to ensure a uniform level of wealth among citizens. State-owned *kleroi* could not be sold or given away as a gift.

The *kleros*, farmed by a family of helots, had to:

1. support the Spartan citizen and his family
2. provide for a Spartiate's continuing contribution to his *syssition* or mess
3. provide a surplus so that the state had the income to pay for armour and equipment made by the *perioikoi*
4. support the helots and their families.

Exactly when a Spartan was endowed with his *kleros* is not known. Plutarch says that the tribal leaders assigned land after satisfying themselves that the child would grow up strong and healthy. However, this raises all sorts of questions which historians cannot answer. Perhaps it was given to a young man once he had completed *agoge*. Was a *kleros* redistributed once a Spartan died or did his descendants inherit it?

Modern historians are questioning whether this land distribution into equal allotments was a later invention by Plutarch, as he is the only source who mentions it. No historian in the 5th and 4th centuries (Herodotus, Xenophon or Aristotle) claimed that *kleroi* existed in his own day.

Inequality in land ownership

Whether the so-called equal distribution of *kleroi* happened or not, there was never equality in land ownership. The amount of land owned by individual Spartans, as well as its quality and productivity, varied considerably.

- There is mention in the records of rich Spartans making increased contributions to their mess and to others who were so poor that they couldn't meet their quota and so lost their citizenship.
- Some Spartans had private property and, unlike their state-owned *kleros*, this could be passed on as an inheritance or through marriage, leading to an amalgamation of estates and concentration of land into fewer and fewer hands.
- Since Spartan women could inherit and own property, some Spartiates saw marrying an heiress as a way of adding to their property.

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- A Spartan with a small amount of land might get into financial difficulties and have to mortgage his private property.
- In the 4th century, a law was passed allowing Spartans to dispose of or sell their *kleros* any way they wanted.

Technology

Although Spartans may have been craftsmen until the 6th century, the *perioikoi* appear to have carried out most manufacturing and crafts during the classical period.

Metallurgy and pottery

Laconia was noted for its bronze work: vases, bowls, mirrors, decorative ornaments, religious figurines, votive offerings and, most importantly, armour and weapons. Every piece of a Spartan soldier's equipment was to some degree made from bronze: a bronze helmet with horsehair crest; a cuirass (breastplate) made from bronze moulded to look like chest muscles; bronze greaves to protect the lower leg; a *hoplon* (shield) made of wood covered with a sheet of bronze; a wooden spear tipped with a bronze point; and a bronze or iron short sword.

Bronze was an alloy made from 90% copper, imported from Cyprus, and 10% tin imported from the West (Elba, Gaul and Britain). In the bronze foundries, a mixture of the ores was heated in a pit or bowl furnace. The molten material was either poured into moulds (solid casting) to produce small objects or made into sheets used to cover a wooden core, then hammered to produce decorations in relief or incised with designs.

Sparta's deposits of iron ore were smelted 'in a crucible over a pit or bowl furnace fired by charcoal', and the molten ore forged: 'heated, hammered, cooled in water, heated and hammered again, reshaped and returned to the fire'[33] to make stronger swords than those made of bronze.

Both deposits of clay and Sparta's potteries were located in the area of the city itself. The potter's wheel was made from wood, stone or fired clay and the pot painted with a reddish clay 'slip' that was rich in iron. During firing in the simple up-draught wood kilns, the iron in the 'slip' turned black, making a form of glaze into which the designs and patterns were drawn.

FIGURE 3.25 A bronze helmet

Economic roles of the *perioikoi* and helots

> In the other states, everyone naturally makes as much money as possible: some are farmers, others ship-owners or traders, while crafts support yet others. But at Sparta Lykourgos banned all free men from the pursuit of wealth and prescribed that their sole concern should be with the things that make cities free.

SOURCE 3.20 Plutarch, *On Sparta: Spartan Society*, 7

In most cases, the occupations carried out by the inhabitants of Sparta over time are a matter of conjecture based on the artefacts that were made by them. However, there is no clear evidence as to which groups were specifically engaged in the various occupations: *perioikoi*, helots, skilled foreign slaves or even foreign craftsmen. It is generally believed that by the 5th century, the *perioikoi* were involved in craftwork, trade, commerce, mining, manufacturing and fishing, as these occupations, according to the so-called Lycurgan reforms, were forbidden to Spartans.

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The *perioikoi* probably:

- provided Spartans with furniture, leather goods, fine wool, patterned textiles and purple dye
- traded for resources that Sparta lacked (copper and tin)
- manufactured metal products, weapons and armour
- provided the mollusc dye, as well as seafood.

Their occupations were vital for the functioning of the Spartan state. They were also the only group that could use gold and silver currency and many of them became quite prosperous.

Although the helots were the state-owned agricultural serfs working the lands of their Spartan masters, there is virtually no detailed information about the conditions under which they worked, although the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus described them as being burdened like donkeys, and Aristotle described their lives as full of suffering.

medimni a unit of dry measurement equal to about 55 litres

They were required to pay their master and the state a large portion of their produce. According to Plutarch, the helots were expected to 'provide a rent of 70 **medimni** of barley for a man, and 12 for his wife, along with proportionate quantities of fresh produce'.[34]

The helots enabled the Spartan males to:

- contribute to their mess quota, allowing them to retain their citizenship
- provide themselves with what they needed from the *perioikoi*
- devote themselves to military training.

Helot women allowed Spartan women to live a privileged lifestyle by doing their spinning, weaving and domestic chores.

Economic exchange

In early Sparta, exchange was by means of barter (exchanging one good for another) until the 6th century BC when, like the rest of Greece, the Spartans adopted coinage.

However, according to Plutarch, the Lycurgan reforms prevented Spartans from using silver and gold coinage to discourage them from:

- trading among themselves
- hoarding money
- making ostentatious displays of wealth
- importing goods from outside Sparta.

Although the *perioikoi* were permitted to use silver and gold coins, Spartans were restricted to using iron bars (*pelanors*) as a means of transaction among themselves. These heavy iron bars could not be used elsewhere in Greece where they were considered a joke, and they were of no real market value to Spartans except as a symbolic form of exchange. Lycurgus apparently rendered them useless by having them heated red hot and then doused in vinegar to make them brittle.

> Once this [iron] was made legal tender, many types of crimes disappeared from Sparta. For who would set out to steal, or accept a bribe, or rob, or plunder something which could not be hidden, excited no envy when possessed, and could not even be profitably chopped up.

SOURCE 3.21 Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 9

However, like many other aspects of the Spartan economic myth, it is doubtful that the use of money was ever entirely forbidden in Sparta. Some foreign coins circulated throughout the society, and some Spartans had secret stocks of gold and silver in their homes. After all, members of a *syssition* were expected to contribute a certain amount of money each month to buy meat, and it is known that bribes and fines were paid in coins.

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Perhaps the hoarding was acceptable so long as an individual's wealth was not paraded in front of other Spartans: 'all useless and superfluous alien crafts'[35] were banned and foreigners were expelled from Sparta because they supposedly brought in money and corruption.

There was a decline in the Spartan economy during the 5th and 4th centuries for a number of reasons. Because there was no use of coined money and alien crafts were banned, 'luxury atrophied of its own accord, and those who had great possessions won no advantage because there was no public outlet for their wealth'.[36] There were increased disturbances among helots and a decline in the former successful relationship between Spartans and *perioikoi*.

ACTIVITY 3.9

1. Discuss the question of economic equality (part of the Spartan myth) in relation to land ownership.
2. Explain why metallurgy was a vital industry in Sparta.
3. Clarify what Source 3.20 reveals about the economy of Sparta.
4. Draw up a chart of two columns to illustrate the importance of the *perioikoi* and helot population to the economy of Sparta.
5. Define *pelanors*. Describe why Spartan *homoioi* were supposedly forced to use them rather than the coinage introduced into Greece in the 6th century BC. Use the text and Source 3.21 to explain why.
6. What evidence is there that this requirement was part of the economic myth; that in reality things were far different?
7. Discuss why Sparta's economy declined in the 5th and 4th centuries BC?

3.4 Religion, death and burial

Gods and goddesses

The Spartans took their religion very seriously and obeyed the gods strictly. They worshipped the same pantheon as other Greeks, but several deities were singled out, such as:

- Artemis Orthia, goddess of the hunt, wild animals and vegetation, whose sanctuary was outside the city on the banks of the Eurotas River
- Athena Chalkioikos (Athena of the City) or Athena of the Bronze House, whose temple with bronze doors was in the city area on the acropolis
- Apollo Karneois, whose shrine, the Amyklaion, was near Amyklai
- Zeus Lacedaemon, patron god of the Agiad royal family, and Zeus Uranios, patron god of the Eurypontids royal family
- Demeter, as the guardian of women
- Poseidon, whose temple was on the coast in southern Laconia.

Religious practices associated with the gods, apart from prayers and hymns, included making votive offerings and sacrifices as well as pouring libations of wine, oil or honey onto the ground.

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FIGURE 3.26 A carved ivory/bone of Artemis Orthia

FIGURE 3.27 A coin featuring the head of Apollo Karneios

Stater of Meetapontion with head of Apollo Karneois, Greek, Classical Period, 430-410 B.C. Mint: Luciana, Metapontion Silver Diameter: 20 mm. Weight: 7.45 gm. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Catherine Page Perkins Fund 97.427. Photograph © 2018 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Myths and legends

The Spartans also worshipped many heroes: figures from Greek mythology, who they believed still 'lived' among them and helped them when called on, as well as so-called founding fathers and ancestral figures. These included:

1 Herakles, the semi-divine hero from whom the Spartan kings claimed descent. The Spartans referred to themselves as the Herakleidai. Herakles supposedly returned to Laconia with the Dorian invaders, and is believed to have entered the underworld near Cape Taenaron on the tip of Laconia, to fulfil the last of his 12 labours: to bring back Cerberus, the black dog who guarded the Underworld.

2 The Dioskouri: Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux), the twin sons of Zeus and a human mother, and brothers of Helen, wife of Menelaos (Homeric king of Sparta). One version of the legend has it that they were both half human and half divine, while another was that they shared divinity and immortality on alternate days. They had a special following in Sparta because they were associated with the two kings. Only one king went off to battle while the other remained in Sparta and each king was protected by one of the twins. According to legend they protected those who fell into peril during war and they were associated with athletic contests.

FIGURE 3.28 A vase painting of the Spartan hero Herakles

3 Menelaos and his wife Helen, who were involved in the legend of the Trojan War. When Paris, the son of Priam (the king of Troy), kidnapped Helen, Menelaos persuaded his brother King Agamemnon of Mycenae to raise an army of Greek forces to attack Troy to avenge the abduction of Helen and get her back. Later Spartan legend preserved their memory at the shrine referred to as the Menelaion.

4 Lycurgus, the ancestral lawmaker hero who supposedly gave Sparta its political and social institutions and who came to define what it meant to be Spartan. According to Herodotus (Bk I, 66), the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi recognised Lycurgus' divinity, and when he died a temple was built in his honour. Plutarch in his *Life of Lycurgus* also added that he was venerated for his wisdom and virtue, was awarded

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the highest honours on his death and offered sacrifices every year. Although the ancients described him as a real person, modern historians tend to see him as a shadowy or possibly a mythological figure.

Festivals

There were at least nine festivals on the Spartan calendar that brought the whole community together, defined the Spartan identity and reinforced the values of Spartan society, but the three most important were the:

1 Hyakinthia
2 Gymnopaedia
3 Karneia.

The Hyakinthia

This festival was a dying vegetation cult related to youth. Its purpose was to celebrate the dead, symbolised by the accidental death of Hyakinthos, the youthful lover of Apollo. It was also a thanksgiving for life as well as for Apollo, who transformed Hyakinthos into a purple flower that would return each spring. The celebrations were held over three days in July at the Amyklaion, south of Sparta. During this festival, the whole city of Sparta travelled to the shrine of Apollo.

The festival was in two phases:

1 A period of ritual grief and sorrow during which there was a ban on festive wreaths, joyful songs and the eating of bread and cakes. There was a procession of offerings to the 'tomb' of Hyakinthos, a funeral meal and a day of ritual grief.
2 A period of communal celebration where participants wore festive wreaths and sang a **paean** to Apollo. There was a procession of young men on gaily adorned horses and girls riding in wicker baskets; a sacrifice to Apollo; a celebratory meal at which masters served slaves; choirs of boys singing songs of praise; ancient dances; and the presentation of a new tunic woven by the Spartan women from the finest wool to adorn the statue of Apollo.

paean a song of praise, joy or triumph

The Gymnopaedia (Festival of Unarmed Dancing)

This was held over a number of days – possibly five – in the height of summer (July). Young Spartan boys gathered in the 'dancing place' in the heart of Sparta's agora. The festival originated after Sparta's defeat by the neighbouring city state of Argos at the battle of Hysai in 669 BC and was intended to develop martial skills. After Sparta's victory over Argos in 550 at the battle of Thyrea, the Gymnopaedia was dedicated to those who died in battle. The festival included choral and dancing competitions. Young, naked, unarmed boys, not of military age, performed athletic dances to the flute and lyre under the fierce July sun. These dance manoeuvres required a high degree of physical skill.

The Karneia

This was celebrated over nine days during the Dorian month of Karneios (August). Apparently, a seer or prophet who could tell the future once lived in Sparta but was killed by the sons of Herakles. Because the dead prophet was regarded as a manifestation of Apollo, the festival was concerned with divination and finding out the will of Apollo.

As part of the celebrations, nine men, representing Spartan brotherhoods, lived for nine days in basic shelters near the Temple of Apollo. A ram or 'Kornos' was sacrificed and musical contests were held in honour of the god of music. The most significant part of the festival was the 'catch the runner' race. Five runners were chosen from each of the three tribes. The best runner was decorated like a sacrificial animal and the others had to try to catch him. If he was caught it was a good omen for the coming year; if not, it was regarded as a bad omen.

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Religious role of the kings

1 The kings carried out sacrifices:
   - to their respective patron gods Zeus Uranios and Zeus Lacedaemon
   - on behalf of the people of the city on the first and seventh days of the month in the temple of Apollo and the temple of Athena of the Bronze House
   - at the important annual festivals
   - at funerals
   - prior to leaving for war (Zeus)
   - before crossing the frontier (Zeus and Athena)
   - at dawn on the day of battle when a she-goat was sacrificed to seek the omens.

2 They appointed the four *pithoi*, or sacred, envoys to the Delphic oracle and were responsible for the safekeeping of all prophecies.

> Now first while still at home, he [the king] sacrifices to Zeus the Leader and the associated gods. If the sacrifice then appears favourable, the Fire-bearer takes the fire from the altar and conveys it to the frontier of the country, where the king sacrifices again to Zeus and Athena. Only after both these divinities have reacted favourably does he cross the frontier of the country; and the fire from these sacrifices is conveyed onwards without ever being extinguished ... in every instance when he is making a sacrifice the operation begins before daybreak ... once the sacrifices have been completed, the king assembles everyone and announces what needs to be done ... when the enemy can see what is happening, a she-goat is sacrificed, and the law is that all the pipers present should play and every Spartan wear a garland; an order to polish weapons is also given. Young men may enter battle with their hair groomed ... with a joyful distinguished appearance.

SOURCE 3.22 Xenophon, *Spartan Society*, 13

Funerary customs and rituals

Not much is known about private burial rituals except that soldiers were buried in their red cloaks and covered in olive leaves. According to Plutarch, Lycurgus stipulated 'only a brief period of mourning – 10 days. On the 12th day mourners were to sacrifice to Demeter and abandon their grief'.[37] Only those men who died in battle and women who either died in sacred office or in childbirth (depending on the translation) were permitted marked and inscribed graves within the city. Lycurgus is supposed to have permitted this – unlike in other parts of Greece – to accustom young men not to fear or think 'it polluted those who had touched a dead body or walked between tombs'.[38]

cenotaph a monument erected in honour of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere

A tomb and a **cenotaph** were a soldier's reward for bravery in battle. Pausanius, in the 2nd century AD, remarked that Sparta was packed with the memorials to the city's battle heroes and that every year Spartans made speeches to them, and for some, held funerary games.

> Everyone weeps for him, young and old alike, the whole city is struck by his painful loss. Thereafter his tomb and children are pointed out by people, and his children's children and his descendants as well. His fame and good name will never perish utterly for he is immortal in his grave ...

SOURCE 3.23 Tyrtaeus, *Fragment* 9

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Although there is no archaeological evidence for royal burials, there is written evidence to show the special honours given to Spartan kings, 'not as humans but as heroes',[39] as well as the elaborate burial rites for kings, including those who died on the battlefield far from Sparta.

> News of the death is carried by riders all over the country, and women go the rounds of the capital beating cauldrons. This is the signal for two people, one man and one woman from every citizen's household to put on mourning – which they are compelled to do under penalty of a heavy fine ... not only Spartans but a certain number of the country people from all over Laconia are forced to attend the funeral. A huge crowd assembles, consisting of many thousands of people – Spartan citizens, country folk, and serfs – and men and women together strike their foreheads with every sign of grief, wailing as if they could never stop and continually declaring that the king who had just died was the best they ever had ... If a king is killed in war, they make a statue of him, and carry it to burial on a richly-draped bier. After a king's funeral, there are no public meetings or elections for ten days, all of which are spent in mourning.

SOURCE 3.24 Herodotus, *The Histories*, Bk 6, 58

ACTIVITY 3.10

1. Name four of the gods that were singled out by the Spartans for special worship.
2. Explain why Herakles, Castor and Pollux, and Menelaos were of special significance to the Spartans.
3. Describe the purpose of each of the following festivals in Sparta:
   - The Hyakinthia
   - The Gymnopaedia
   - The Karneia.
4. Use Source 3.22 to describe in your own words the sacrifices carried out by the Spartan king prior to leaving for war and before crossing a frontier.
5. Summarise what is known about the burial of a Spartan soldier.
6. Use Herodotus in Source 3.24 to describe the obligations required of the inhabitants of the Spartan state when a king died.

3.5 Cultural and everyday life

Until recently there was a common misconception that Spartans lacked artistic achievement, but the material remains provide more recent evidence for a rich cultural tradition extending through the 7th and 6th centuries. During these two centuries, foreign artists, poets and musicians were attracted to Sparta, and the Spartans were renowned beyond Laconia for their art, music and dancing.

Art

Sparta produced sculpture in stone and marble, large and small bronze artefacts, carved ivories and an original and confident style of ceramics exported around the Mediterranean.

1. Sculpture in stone and marble was mostly associated with religion. Unfortunately, little remains of sculpture in stone because for centuries the site of Sparta was used as a quarry.

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2 The second half of the 6th century was a golden age in bronze work, which was of such high quality that many pieces were valued as diplomatic gifts and have been found all over Europe. Such an example was the Vix Krater, a masterpiece of Spartan skill, found in a Celtic burial in northern France. This massive bronze **krater**, the largest and most impressive vessel in the ancient world – 1.64 metres high with a diameter of 1.40 metres – was capable of holding approximately 1136 litres (300 gallons) of wine. Its handles are in the form of ferocious-looking gorgons with protruding tongues, and around the krater is a frieze of 23 groups of figures in relief, individually crafted: hoplites carrying high circular shields while others ride in small chariots.

krater a vessel for mixing wine and water

kylix a wine-drinking cup with two handles

Other smaller bronzes included:

- small figures of female goddesses and worshippers, male craftsmen, Spartan soldiers in armour, naked and running athletes
- bronze mirrors
- elaborate mixing bowls, water jars and tripods.

3 Spartan ivory carving, well established in the 7th century, reflected an Eastern influence as Syrian and Phoenician traders sourced the ivory from Africa, and both countries had a rich tradition in ivory work. Over 200 ivory carvings were found in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, and one of the largest ivory plaques, 24 centimetres in length, shows a complex scene of the arrival or departure of a warship.

4 In the last part of the 7th century, vase painting underwent a change from geometric decoration (Laconian I) to a more ornate style of friezes featuring animals, fish and birds (Laconian II). In the middle of the 6th century Laconian III pottery appeared, featuring human subjects that told a story, usually from mythology. High-quality Laconian work (both the pottery and the painting) was valued as an export. They have proved valuable to historians as sources because they record scenes of riding, hunting, fighting and banqueting.

A Laconian **kylix**, known as the Arkesilas Cup, is unique as it depicts a contemporary scene of King Arkesilas II of Cyrene in North Africa and shows him supervising the loading of cargo on a ship.

FIGURE 3.29 The Vix Krater displayed in a museum revealing its exceptional size

FIGURE 3.30 Details of the gorgon reliefs on the Vix Krater

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FIGURE 3.31 Detail of a 6th century BC hydria

FIGURE 3.32 A bronze mirror

FIGURE 3.33 The Arkesilas Cup

Architecture

No remains of Spartan houses have been excavated, and our chief sources for Spartan public buildings are a number of excavated sites, as well as Pausanius' *A Guide to Greece*, written rather late in the 2nd century AD. However, it appears that despite Thucydides' claim about Spartan monuments, the following were greatly admired in ancient times:

- Within the city of Sparta there was a 6th century assembly hall called the *skias* (canopy), constructed by an architect from the island of Samos, with a monumental stoa.
- There was also the commemorative Persian Stoa built after the Greek victory over the Persians in the 5th century.
- The original Temple of Artemis Orthia – built about 700 BC – was rebuilt in 580 after its destruction by a flood. It is believed to have had Doric columns and a gabled roof with a stone lion on top of the pediment.
- The Menelaion (shrine of Menelaos and Helen) was rebuilt in the 5th century, using blue and white limestone was 8 metres in height.
- The Amyklaion, built in the 6th century, was regarded as the most significant temple in Lacedaemon. The building, surrounded by colonnades, served as a 'throne' for a massive bronze cult statue of Apollo. Although Pausanius' description is very detailed, there is not enough evidence left to gauge what the building actually looked like.

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Poetry, music and dance

During the 7th century, Sparta attracted famous poets and musicians from all over the Greek world and people are supposed to have travelled great distances during the various festivals in Sparta, to see renowned choral dancing.

Spartan poetry, music and dance were closely linked. Poetry was generally recited by groups or sung by dancing choruses. There were songs of praise, battle songs, drinking songs, songs of politics and songs of consolation. The three men most associated with poetry and music were Alcman, Tyrtaeus and Terpander.

1 Alcman (middle of the 7th century BC) is best known for his lyric poetry, which evokes the seasons, the melodies of the birds and the towering mountains of Laconia. He wrote the *Partheneion* or Maiden Song, sung by young girls at festivals while he accompanied them on a lyre.[40]

2 Tyrtaeus has been described as 'the soldier's poet'. He wrote at least five books of propaganda addresses, and military songs urging courage, manliness and discipline. His poem, *Eunomia* ('good order'), was written to inspire the flagging spirits of the Spartan soldiers during their war against the Messenians and to soothe the passions of the people in the political upheaval after the war.

3 Terpander is believed to have been the first to establish music in Sparta. Whether true or not, he was an innovator, changing the form of music to one more suited to the elaborate drilling and dancing practised in Sparta.

Rise ye sons of heroic Sparta, ye sons of warrior soldiers
With your shield on the left protect you
And with your right your spear hurl boldly
Spare not in the least your lifeblood
For this is not like to Spartans!

SOURCE 3.25 Tyrtaeus, in J. M. Edmonds (ed.), *Elegy and Iambus*, vol. 1

ACTIVITY 3.11

1 Describe Sparta's rich cultural tradition in the 7th and 6th centuries.
2 Why is the high-quality 6th century Laconian painted pottery a valuable historical source?
3 What does the huge number of carved ivory artefacts found in and around Sparta reveal about Sparta's contact with the areas beyond Greece?
4 Why are the following objects – made by Laconian craftsmen or at least made in Sparta – unique?
   - The Vix Krater
   - The Arkesilas Cup
5 For what are each the following men best known?
   - Alcman
   - Tyrtaeus
   - Terpander
6 Research and prepare notes on either the Vix Krater or the Arkesilas Cup.

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Greek writers' views of Sparta

Most of the contemporary Greek writers (Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle) knew little about Sparta and 'what they knew was seen by way of so many distorting mirrors'.[41] The reasons for the distortions are many and varied.

- No Spartan chose to share his knowledge with the outside world.
- No Spartan written material has survived apart from the fragments of the poets Tyrtaeus, who wrote propaganda, and Alcman, who wrote lyric poetry.
- Sparta had an oral tradition of heroes, of a founder of their way of life and of a warrior society, which may not have represented a very accurate view of the past. The storytellers of Sparta had an agenda to continue the tradition.
- From the 6th century, foreigners were not welcome in Sparta, and those that were gained only a limited view.
- Herodotus (c. 480–c. 425 BC) in his *Histories* praised Sparta for its battles (Thermopylae and Plataea) during the Persian Wars but was told scandal about the kings, and a few bits and pieces about the constitution and Sparta's history.
- Thucydides (c. 460–c. 400 BC), who wrote the *History of the Peloponnesian War* and wrote from personal observation, was not a detached and objective witness when it came to Sparta. He found the Spartans slow, backward-looking, inflexible, suspicious, hostile and secretive, and did not trust them.
- After the Athenian defeat in the Peloponnesian War, those who favoured oligarchy began to look at why Sparta had won the war and believed Sparta's stability was based on its mixed constitution.
- The Athenian soldier Xenophon (c. 428–c. 400 BC) lived among the Spartans for many years and 'turned to hero-worship of the contemporary military machine and its military leaders'[42], believing that its success was the product of an unchanging system imposed by Lycurgus. Xenophon was regarded as a Laconophile.
- Plato (429–347 BC), a Greek philosopher, believed that Spartan discipline, austerity and authoritarianism would help produce the 'good life'.
- When the Thebans defeated Sparta at Leuctra in 371 BC, some contemporaries began to see Sparta the way it was, but by then writers were searching for past information in the poems of Tyrtaeus and the Great Rhetra.
- Aristotle (384–322 BC), a Greek philosopher who lived when Sparta was in decline, was extremely critical of the Spartan system. Unfortunately, most of the work done on the Spartan constitution by Aristotle in the 330s has disappeared, although some comments about its defects have survived.

The Sparta created by these writers was what Plutarch, in the 1st century AD, based his extensive writings on – a 'mass of tradition and counter-tradition'[43]– and in the 2nd century AD, Pausanius tried to make sense out of Sparta's antiquities.

The following extracts provide two different views of Sparta by their Athenian contemporaries.

> I certainly admire him [Lycurgus] and consider him in the highest degree a wise man, since it was not by copying other states, but by deciding on an opposite course to the majority that he made his country outstandingly fortunate.

SOURCE 3.26 Xenophon, *Spartan Society*, 1

> And so long as they were at war, their [Spartan] power was preserved, but when they had attained empire they fell; for of the arts of peace they knew nothing and had never engaged in any employment higher than war.

SOURCE 3.27 Aristotle, *The Politics*, II ix, 1271 a 37

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Leisure activities

Since Spartans had helots to farm their land, *perioikoi* to engage in trade and crafts, and domestic slaves to attend to their household needs, both men and women had more leisure time than other Greeks. But according to the ancient sources, Lycurgus, the lawgiver, did not want Spartans to waste their time in idleness and so instructed that they engage in 'choral dances, festivals, banquets, hunting trips, physical exercise and conversation'.[44]

The life of the males was devoted predominantly to military training and drill; conversing, telling stories and jokes with their peers in the barracks or in the *syssitia*; and once over 30, performing political duties. Other activities that filled their days included athletics, equestrian sports, hunting, cockfighting, music and dance. Women and girls also engaged in sports training, gymnastics and music.

Athletics was a favoured leisure activity with both males and females. The men engaged in the full range of sports: running, discus, javelin, jumping and wrestling. Many of the winners of the *stadion* (running) at the Olympic Games were Spartans. Girls were also known for their running and jumping. There were foot races in honour of Helen and Hera, and two groups known as 'the Daughters of Dionysus' and 'Daughters of Leucippus' held racing competitions.

Spartans appear to have had a passion for horses: breeding, horse racing and four-horse chariot racing at the Pan-Hellenic competitions in which they had great success. Even those who could not afford to own a horse were avid spectators. Women could also breed, train and enter horses in major competitions, but they did not drive their own chariots except around Sparta during the Hyakinthia. One woman whose horses won at the Olympic Games was Kyniska, daughter of King Archidamus. An inscription on a statue raised in her honour declared that she was the only woman in all of Greece to have gained this crown.

Hunting on the slopes and in the forests of Mt Taygetus was one of the most popular activities for Spartan males. It was believed to develop a man's courage and agility, and make him a better soldier. Even those who did not own hunting dogs or equipment could, according to Xenophon, share another's equipment. The quarry could be chased on horseback or stalked on foot with the aid of helot beaters carrying nets and Spartan hunting dogs – famed throughout Greece – but the killing was done up close with javelin and spear. Hunting wild boars was extremely dangerous and to have killed one was a mark of great distinction in a male warrior society.

Cockfighting was also popular in Sparta as the aggressive cocks, which fought to the death, were symbols of the hoplite soldiers with their crested helmets.

The Spartans, both males and females, enjoyed music and dancing to the flute or lyre, although most of these dances represented battles, military drill or simulated wild animal hunts. Religious dances were also common. Plutarch recorded that their songs 'offered stimulus to rouse the spirit and encouragement for energetic, effective action'.[45]

Banquets were usually associated with religious occasions, but unlike in other Greek cities, these banquets were more of a 'sober celebration' due to the Spartan 'prohibition of drunkenness'.[46]

FIGURE 3.34 A bronze of a Spartan on horseback

FIGURE 3.35 A vase painting of a chariot and horses

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FIGURE 3.36 A bronze of a Spartan reclining at a banquet

Spartan marriage customs

The Spartans took marriage very seriously, but their customs seemed strange to other Greeks. Although the main rationale behind these customs was to produce healthy babies and to increase the citizen numbers, there is evidence (from the poems of Alcman) of feelings of love.

According to Xenophon, men and women were not permitted to marry until they had reached their physical prime, probably about 18 for a girl and at least 20 for a young man (when he had reached warrior status). A custom mentioned in Plutarch was 'bride capture', which involved shaving the bride's head and dressing her like a boy before the husband sneaked in and carried her off to bed. The symbolism of this is unknown, although there are many theories.

> The custom was to capture women for marriage – not when they were slight and immature, but when they were in their prime and ripe for it. The so-called 'bridesmaid' took charge of the captured girl. She first shaved her head to the scalp, then dressed her in a man's cloak and sandals, and laid her down alone on a mattress in the dark. The bridegroom … first had dinner at the mess, then would slip in, undo her belt, lift her and carry her to the bed. After spending a short time with her, he would depart discreetly so as to sleep wherever he usually did, along with the other young men. And this continued to be his practice thereafter …

SOURCE 3.28 Plutarch, *Lycurgus*, 15

Until they were 30, men slept every night in the barracks, only visiting their wives by stealth at night. Xenophon and Plutarch suggested that this practice created self-control, increased fertility, heightened their desire at the next meeting and made their offspring stronger.

There does not appear to have been any adultery in Sparta, but there was what could be called controlled permissiveness which involved wife sharing. If a respectable man admired another man's wife for the children she produced, he was able to approach the woman's husband for permission to sleep with her. He hoped this union would result in children who would be linked to fine ancestors by blood and family.

There is nothing known about divorce in Sparta, but the lack of it could be related to the fact that a Spartan woman owned her dowry and, if divorced, it would have to be paid back.

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Those men who did not marry were supposedly excluded from the Gymnopaedia, and Aristotle says that the Spartan government gave exemptions from military service and taxation for those who produced three or four sons.

ACTIVITY 3.12

1. Explain why Sparta's contemporaries tended to have a distorted view of Spartan society.
2. Which of the contemporary writers do you think might have had a better knowledge of Spartan life? Why?
3. What kind of leisure activities was Lycurgus supposed to have instituted in Sparta to prevent idleness?
4. Analyse what Figures 3.34–3.36 reveal about some of the activities the Spartans enjoyed.
5. Why were Spartan banquets, unlike in the rest of Greece, regarded as 'sober affairs'?
6. Describe what is meant by:
   - bride capture
   - controlled permissiveness.
7. Explain the supposed purpose of each of these.
8. What evidence is there that the Spartan state valued marriage?
9. Research Xenophon's *The Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* for more information on Sparta's unusual customs and prepare an oral presentation.

CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

3.1 THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- The Spartans were Dorians who settled in Laconia in the Peloponnese, and early on subjected the original inhabitants of Laconia and neighbouring Messenia to the status of subject people called helots. Various internal and external upheavals caused a dramatic change in the way of life in Sparta.
- The *polis* of Sparta, located in the fertile Eurotas River valley, was surrounded by impressive mountain ranges forming a natural defence barrier that isolated Sparta from its neighbours.
- The mountains and valley provided Sparta with resources: timber, animals for hunting (wild boars and deer), domestic livestock (sheep, goats and pigs), wheat, barley, olives, grapes and honey, clay for pottery, and lead.
- Three significant sites: the Temple of Artemis Orthia, the shrine of Menelaeus and the sanctuary of Apollo.

3.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

- The Great Rhetra: a pronouncement that outlined Sparta's constitution, supposedly instituted by an ancient reformer known as Lycurgus. Debate over his existence and contribution.
- Sparta had two kings whose role was chiefly to command the army and carry out religious duties. Their power was limited by *ephors*, but they had a number of special honours.

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- Apart from the king the other branches of government were the: *ephorate, gerousia, ecclesia.* The five *ephors* (democratically elected annually) were chief magistrates. *Gerontes* (elders over 60 years of age, chosen for life) proposed laws, members of the *ecclesia* (all Spartan citizens over 30) voted on laws, elected *gerontes* and *ephors*, decided on questions of war and peace.
- Sparta's social structure included Spartiates (*homoioi*), whose task was to be a permanent soldier; *periokoi* ('dwellers around'), relatively independent craftsmen, traders and fishermen for Sparta; 'inferiors' (those who had lost their citizenship or were offspring of Spartans and helot women) and helots (state-owned serfs allocated to Spartiates to work their lands).
- As a military caste, Spartiates underwent military training and discipline from the age of 7 (*agoge*); lived in barracks until the age of 30; and ate every night with Spartan comrades in public messes (*syssitia*). As part of their training young Spartiates were expected to be part of the *krypteia*, a body to periodically intimidate and control helots.
- Spartan women, according to the often hostile Greek sources, lived lives with fewer restraints compared with women elsewhere: trained in public with boys and men, participated in festivals with the males, were expected to produce healthy males as future soldiers, had autonomy in running the household and *kleroi* (supervising helots) when men were away on campaigns, and could inherit and own land.

3.3 THE ECONOMY

- The basis of Sparta's economy was agriculture and each Spartiate was allotted land (a *kleros*) by the state to be run by state-owned helots also allotted to them. The *periokoi* were involved in the making of weapons, armour, pottery and in other trades for the Spartiates.
- There was no real equality in land ownership, as is often cited as part of the Spartan 'myth', and as the Spartan population declined, so more land came into the hands of women.
- Economic exchange was carried on in Sparta not by coins but by iron bars, although some Spartans accumulated wealth by hoarding coins.

3.4 RELIGION, DEATH AND BURIAL

- The Spartans took their religion very seriously and obeyed the gods strictly. They worshipped the same pantheon of Greek gods as others but several deities were singled out: Artemis Orthia, Poseidon, Apollo and Zeus Lacedaemonius. Also, they celebrated the exploits of heroes from myth and legend at annual festivals: *Hyakinthia, Gymnopaedia, Karneia*.
- The kings were expected to carry out sacrifices before and during campaigns and to send representatives (*pithoi*) to the oracle at Delphi.
- Little is known about private burials except soldiers were buried in their red cloaks. Herodotus recorded the special honours given to Kings.

3.5 CULTURAL AND EVERYDAY LIFE

- Until recently, there was a misconception that Spartans lacked artistic achievement, but material remains reveal a rich tradition in bronze work (the Vix Krater), sculpture, painted vases and bowls (Arkesilas Cup), bone and ivory carving, as well as in poetry (Alcman and Tyrtaeus), music (Terpander) and dance.

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- Greek writers' views of Sparta (Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristotle, Pausanias, Plutarch) were seen through lenses of distortion.
- Spartans were not altogether without means of leisure as they had helots and *periokoi* to do the work for them. They enjoyed hunting, horse and chariot riding, athletics, cockfighting, music, dance and banquets, although these were rather sober occasions due to the prohibition on drunkenness.
- Marriage was a serious business for Spartans but many of their customs were strange: marriage by 'bride capture'; men slept in barracks until the age of 30, visiting their wives by stealth; and engaged in wife sharing (controlled permissiveness) to produce fine children.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following words in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- eugenics
- *homoioi*
- *Hyacinthia*
- *kleros*
- Peloponnese
- *perioikoi*
- phalanx
- rhetra

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where these skills have been used throughout the chapter.

- Causation, continuity and change, perspectives, significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) Use Table 3.1 to note:
- the event that caused the beginning of great changes in Spartan society and the changes that occurred as a result
- the cause of the decline in the Spartan hegemony of Greece between 471–400.

2) List the changes that occurred in the Spartan army during this period.

3) Explain the significance of the location and landform of Laconia on the nature of Spartan society.

4) In a paragraph for each, note the significance in Spartan society of:
- *ephors*
- *syssitia*
- *agoge*
- the role of Spartan females
- helots
- *perioikoi*
- *krypteia*.

5) Discuss the modern perspectives on Lycurgus, the Great Rhetra and the so-called Spartan myth.

Historical skills

1) Discuss what Aristotle meant when he wrote: 'The kings of Sparta command an army … and may supervise religious worship; beyond that their sovereignty does not extend'.

2) Analyse what Tyrtaeus and Herodotus revealed about the military ideal of the Spartan soldier in the following:
- 'Rise ye heroic Sparta, ye sons of warrior soldiers … spare not in the least your life blood, For this is not like to Spartans'.
- 'They will not under any circumstances accept terms from you … they will fight you even if the rest of Greece submits'.

3) Explain what the written sources and archaeological remains reveal about:
- Spartan religious practices
- the everyday life of the Spartans.

4) Critique Aristotle's view that Sparta's Constitution 'was a happy balance of democracy and oligarchy'.

5) Evaluate the major contributions of Sparta to art in the 7th and 6th centuries BC.

6) Assess the comment – 'that what went on inside Sparta was a question that intrigued many Greeks in other cities' – in relation to the reliability of Greek writers about Sparta.

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CHAPTER 4
Persian society in the time of Darius and Xerxes

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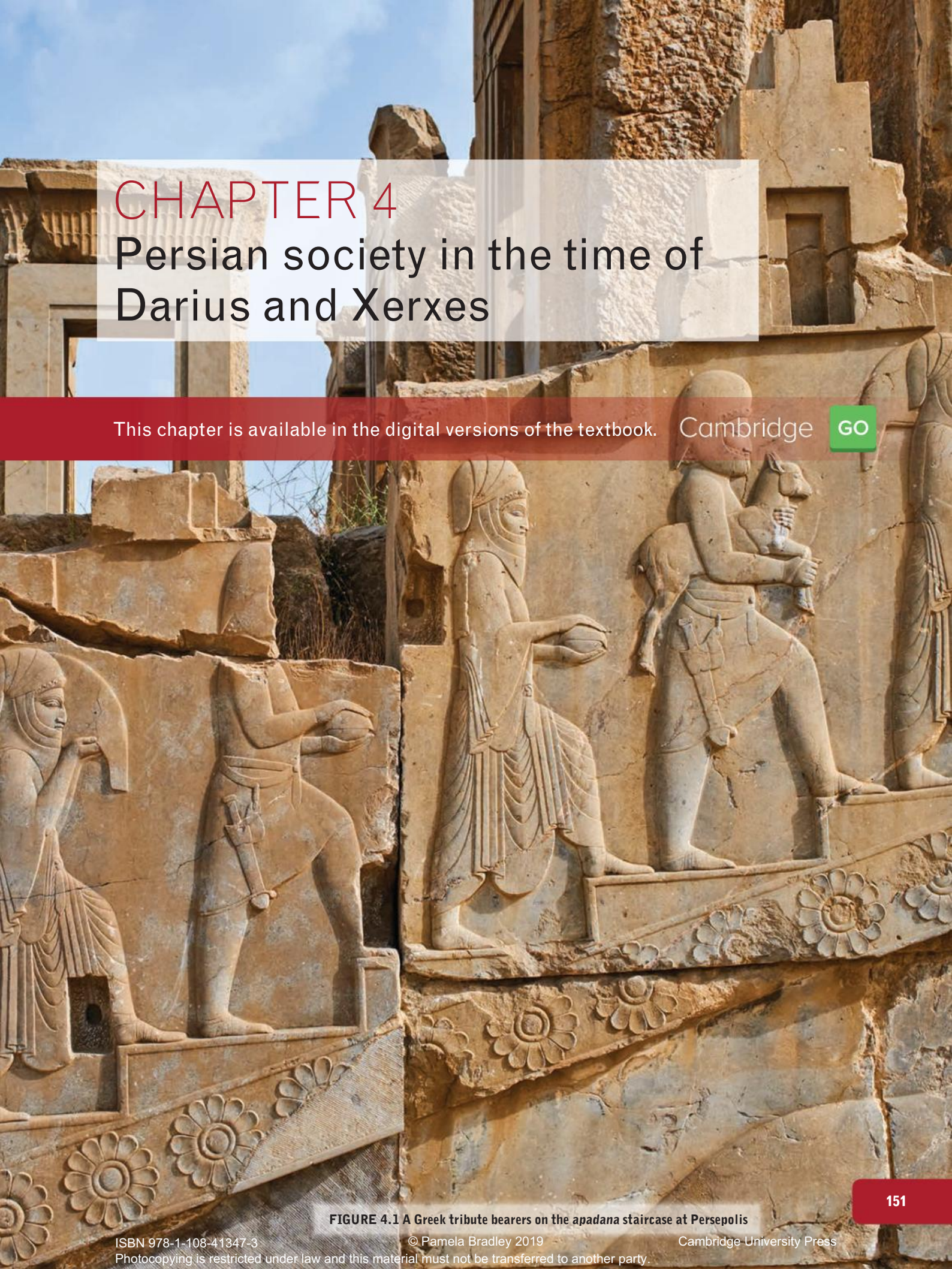

FIGURE 4.1 A Greek tribute bearers on the *apadana* staircase at Persepolis

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PART 2
Personalities in their time

CHAPTER

Chapter 5 Hatshepsut

Chapter 6 Akhenaten (digital chapter)

Chapter 7 Qin Shi Huangdi (digital chapter)

Chapter 8 Alexander the Great

Chapter 9 Julius Caesar

Chapter 10 Agrippina the Younger

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PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

The reign of Hatshepsut has always been the source of endless scholarly debates since she was first resurrected from anonymity. These arguments have ranged over the following: why and how she seized the throne; her depiction as a traditional male king; how she maintained the support of a powerful male elite for over 21 years; her obsession with Amun; the rewriting of her history to justify her reign; how she kept Thutmose III in the background for so long; and why her images, titles and statues were obliterated and destroyed after her death.

In the short space of about 17 years, the pharaoh Akhenaten attempted to overturn millennia of traditional Egyptian religious beliefs and practices. Most of these changes were directed against the dominant state god, Amun, and its priesthood. His obsession with the Aten led to the establishment of a new city isolated in middle Egypt where his new solar cult focused on himself and his family. This exclusive cult – in which he alone 'knew' the Aten, and other gods were not permitted – had serious repercussions on the traditional beliefs in the afterlife, on the economy and the lives of ordinary Egyptians. However, within a short time of his death, everything associated with him was destroyed, traditional religious practices were restored and he disappeared from history until the 19th century.

After a dynasty (Eastern Zhou) lasting over 500 years, the state of Qin conquered all its rivals in no more than a decade, unified the previously warring states into an empire, and carried out the most dramatic social and political revolution in human history. Focused on one man, Shi Huangdi, who wished to be the founder of a dynasty that would last forever, its achievements were spectacular. However, this dynasty came to an end within three years of the First Emperor's death, having lasted less than 15 years.

Alexander of Macedon, one of the most written-about and dramatic historical personalities, remains to this day controversial and something of an enigma. Dead by the age of 32, he had already conquered the mighty Persian Empire and defeated every opponent and yet we may never know the 'real' Alexander and his vision, since the writers of the past created something of a fictional heroic character, others, a picture generated by the cultural beliefs and politics of their own day. Most of today's criticisms of him are meaningless since he is judged in the light of our modern values.
There have been many Alexanders over time but one thing that can be said of him with certainty is that he was a catalyst for change in world history.

Caesar was a brilliant and controversial individual. The world in which he grew up was one of public violence, civil war, political factions and fierce competition for public office. Caesar, like all of the Roman elite had political ambitions and wished to enhance his *dignitas*. Like many others, he was prepared to bypass constitutional restrictions when his ambitions were constantly thwarted by his opponents, keen to keep all power within their own hands. Caesar's genius raised him above his peers in understanding the political trends of the day, and he arrogantly made no attempt to hide his belief that Rome's republican government was a 'form without substance' to which he, himself, had contributed. For his arrogance, he had to die, brutally cut down by those who failed to see what to him was so obvious.

The career of Agrippina the Younger, an intelligent, shrewd and ambitious woman with a distinguished lineage, must be considered within the context of the imperial household with all its intrigues and self-seeking, and of a society when women like her, who aimed at political power, had no choice but to work through the agencies of male relatives, clients and a host of other male allies. Due to her manipulative and often ruthless methods to get rid of opponents, she managed to gain power during the reign of Claudius, making some positive contributions, and she secured the principate for her son Nero. However, she suffered the same fate she had inflicted on many others and the ancient sources were uniformly hostile to her.

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CHAPTER 5
Hatshepsut

FIGURE 5.1 An early statue of Hatshepsut before adopting the full regalia of a king

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FIGURE 5.2 Map showing Egypt, Nubia and western Asia at the time of Hatshepsut

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Hatshepsut through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• Historical context • Hatshepsut's background and rise to prominence • Key features of Hatshepsut's reign • Evaluation • The value and limitations of the divine birth and coronation inscriptions

By causing herself to be depicted as a traditional pharaoh in the most regal and heroic form, Hatshepsut was making sure that this is precisely what she would become.

SOURCE 5.1 J. Tyldesley, *Hatshepsut, The Female Pharaoh*, p. 137

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

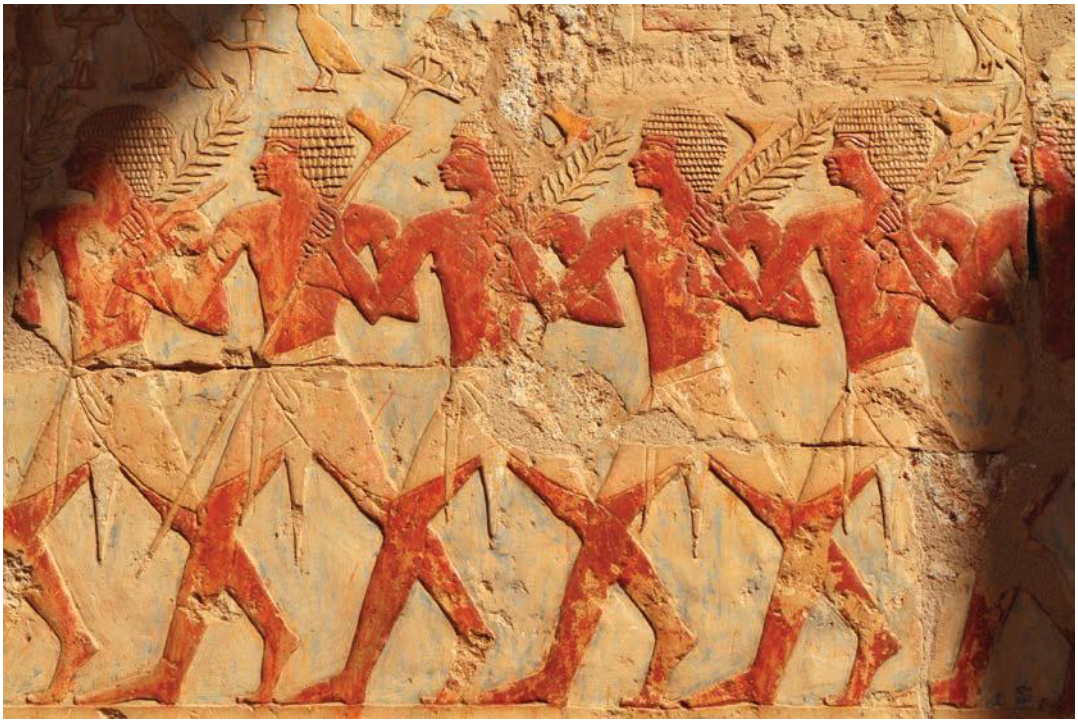

FIGURE 5.3 A relief depicting a military contingent accompanying her trading expedition to Punt

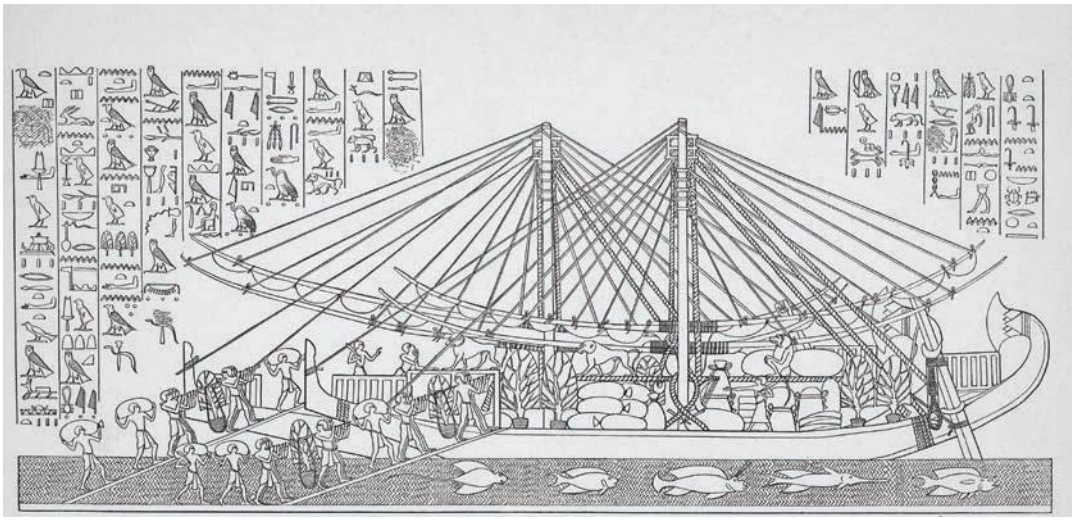

FIGURE 5.4 A drawing of a relief from Hatshepsut's trading expedition to Punt showing the loading of exotic goods including myrrh trees, to be dedicated to the god Amun

Look carefully at the images in Figures 5.3 and 5.4 and note what you see in each image. What do these images suggest about the economy and the use of the army during Hatshepsut's reign? What do they indicate about her relationship with the god Amun? Consider the symbolism of the fronds carried by the soldiers in Figure 5.3 and the significance of myrrh in Egyptian religion.

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CHAPTER 5 Overview

KEY IDEA

The reign of Hatshepsut has always been the source of endless scholarly debates since she was first resurrected from anonymity. These arguments have ranged over the following: why and how she seized the throne; her depiction as a traditional male king; how she maintained the support of a powerful male elite for over 21 years; her obsession with Amun; the rewriting of her history to justify her reign; how she kept Thutmose III in the background for so long; and why her images, titles and statues were obliterated and destroyed after her death.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

In the present day, with so much written and spoken about women's issues, it is interesting to realise that over 4000 years ago, a woman from a highly conservative society, accustomed to thinking in gender stereotypes, broke with tradition, took an opportunity to seize the power she believed she was entitled to and ran a country effectively with the continuing support of the powerful civil and religious male bureaucracy for over two decades.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- antimony
- concubine
- co-regency
- deified
- dowager queen
- dynasty
- electrum
- Heb-sed
- hierarchical
- iconography
- *ma'at*
- mortuary temple
- necropolis
- obelisk
- oracle
- regent
- theogamy
- titulary
- tribute

INQUIRY QUESTION

Why and how did Hatshepsut rewrite her history once she became pharaoh?

Painting the picture

Hatshepsut (Maat-ka-re) was the controversial fifth pharaoh of the 18th **Dynasty** (the early part of the New Kingdom [18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties]. She broke with tradition in a patriarchal society, seized the throne and ruled as the senior partner in a co-regency with her step-son, Thutmose III, for 21 years and nine months (estimated to be somewhere between 1479 and 1458 BC). She was depicted both as a woman, and in the traditional regalia (including false beard) of a king, but as there was no feminine word for a female ruler, most of the inscriptions describe her in both masculine and feminine form. In order to justify her right to the throne she rewrote her history.

dynasty a line of kings and queens from the same family

Her long and relatively peaceful reign was marked by an obsession with Egypt's past glory and the legacy left to her by her female predecessors. Her achievements included successful trading expeditions, prosperity, a magnificent and widespread building program, and a total dedication to 'her father', the god Amun whom she promoted more than all those who had gone before.

Despite her achievements, her name and images were selectively and deliberately erased from her monuments, many of her statues were smashed and she was never included in the King Lists. When she was finally resurrected from history, scholars 'were only too happy to allow their own feelings [subjective and biased views] to intervene in their interpretations of her motives'.[1]

Modern scholarship has attempted to repair her image as a successful ruler, rather than one engaged in power struggles, but 'the real Hatshepsut remains something of an enigma'.[2]

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5.1 Historical context

Geography and resources

The ancient Egyptians referred to the land of Egypt as the Black Land (*Kemet*) comprising the wide triangular delta, the Faiyum and the long fertile strip on either side of the Nile River. The Black Land – divided into the 'Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt' – referred to the dark rich silt deposited over the valley flats when the Nile broke its banks at the same time every year.

Agriculture, the basis of all Egyptian society, depended on the Nile's life-giving waters in a country that very rarely saw rain. According to Herodotus, the Nile 'was a great river that worked great changes'.[3]

The desert areas were known as the Red Land (*Deshret*) and comprised the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert and Sinai.

During the reigns of Hatshepsut's predecessors, other areas came under the control of Egypt (see Figure 5.2):

- Nubia (from the Egyptian border at the 1st Cataract to the vicinity of the 4th Cataract)
- Palestine and Syria (which included the coastal cities of Phoenicia).

Under Hatshepsut, the Land of Punt (thought to be modern Somalia) came under Egyptian influence.

FIGURE 5.5 A satellite view of the Black and Red lands of Egypt.

TABLE 5.1 The natural resources of Egypt and its 'empire'

River valley and delta	Water for irrigation; rich silt; mud (mud bricks) and clay (pottery); papyrus (paper, baskets and boats); crops (emmer, wheat, barley and flax for linen, fruit, vegetables and vines); domesticated animals (cattle, goats, sheep and geese); wild animals The river provided transport and communications.
Desert cliffs	Sandstone, limestone and granite for building temples, tombs, monuments and statues
Eastern and Western Deserts	Basalt, diorite, quartzite, alabaster, gold, copper and semi-precious stones for buildings, crafts, and decorative and ritual arts
Sinai	Copper and turquoise
Nubia	Gold, cattle, ebony, ivory, feathers and animal skins
Palestine-Syria	• Valuable metals: copper, lead and silver • Semi-precious stones: lapis lazuli and rock crystal • Timber: cedar • Grain and animals
Punt	Incense (myrrh resin and trees), fragrant woods, animals (baboons, monkeys and dogs), gold, ivory and ebony, animal skins (southern panther) and **antimony**

antimony a mineral used by Egyptians as an eye cosmetic (kohl)

Historical overview of the early 18th Dynasty

For 100 years prior to the advent of the 18th Dynasty, Lower Egypt was occupied by a group of foreigners from Palestine known as the Hyksos. There was no centralised rule in Egypt at this time: the Hyksos ruled Lower Egypt as far south as Cusae and local Egyptian princes ruled most of Upper Egypt from their capital at Thebes. This foreign occupation

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and dominance of the Hyksos in the north was regarded by the Egyptians as a great humiliation and undermined their sense of security.

It became apparent to the princes of Thebes that they could only defeat the Hyksos by becoming a more effective military power by adopting the foreign invaders' chariots and superior weaponry. The last king of the 17th Dynasty, Kamose, began the first phase in the war of freedom, but it was his half-brother Ahmose, regarded as the first ruler of the 18th Dynasty, who eventually expelled them.

> The Hyksos domination provided the Egyptians with the incentive and the means towards *world* expansion, and to a great extent determined the character of the New Kingdom ...

SOURCE 5.2 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. I, p. 80

Hatshepsut's predecessors of the 18th Dynasty (kings Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I and Thutmose II), with their 'fierce militarism, promotion of the new state god, Amun, and liberal treatment of royal women',[4] transformed the Egyptian state.

The social, political, military and economic structures of the early 18th Dynasty

The role and status of the king

At the head of Egyptian society was the god-king who was regarded as:

- the earthly form of the falcon god, Horus
- the son of Re, the sun-god
- Horus, the son of Osiris, when he ascended the throne
- Osiris when he died
- the son of the imperial god Amun-Re, during the New Kingdom.

It was the king's responsibility to uphold *ma'at* or divine order established at the time of creation. Without *ma'at* there would be chaos in both the physical and spiritual worlds. His responsibilities were to:

1. honour and show gratitude to the gods by performing sacred rituals, attending festivals and building temples
2. dispense justice
3. provide prosperity and nourishment for both the people and the land
4. protect the country and its people by supervising defences against all physical enemies, as well as chaotic and evil forces.

Egyptian bureaucracy and social groups

The king controlled every aspect of Egyptian society and government – political, religious, military and economic – but a **hierarchical** bureaucracy carried out the day-to-day running of the country.

hierarchical graded in order from highest to lowest

A small group of powerful officials controlled each division of administration. These were: the vizier, second only to the king and head of the civil administration; the Steward of the Royal Domain; the Overseer of all Priests of All the Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt; the Commander-in-Chief of the Army; and the *King's Son of Kush* (viceroy in charge of Nubia).

Responsible to each of these heads of department were deputies and officials of high status (high priests and overseers of the treasury) who in turn were supported by a vast bureaucracy of minor officials such as scribes. Each official was answerable to someone above him and responsible for someone below him. Although it was possible for a man of reasonably humble background to rise to the top of the bureaucracy and to gain a position of influence with the pharaoh, there were considerable barriers to this promotion.

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Below these minor officials were: craftsmen and tradesmen employed in temple workshops, on royal and noble estates, and on tomb construction and decoration; and peasant farmers and agricultural labourers who formed the bulk of the population; as well as slaves.

Military changes in the early 18th Dynasty

During the war of liberation against the Hyksos, the Egyptians not only adopted the superior weapons (composite bow, new types of bronze swords and daggers) and the horse-drawn chariot of the Asiatics, but also began using Nubian bowmen (Medjay) as mercenaries. The Medjay became an indispensable part of the Egyptian army.

At the head of the armed forces was the king, who frequently led the army in person. In keeping with the development of the 18th Dynasty image of the warrior pharaoh, at this time the king began to be depicted:

- wearing the blue gold-studded war crown known as the *khepresh* (often also used on ceremonial occasions)
- as the incarnation of a warrior god like Montu (an early Theban falcon-headed god).

The relationship of the king to Amun

The rulers of Thebes had worshipped the god Amun (the Hidden One) since the Middle Kingdom. As the kings of the 18th Dynasty laid the foundation of an Egyptian empire, the god believed to be responsible for their successes was Amun of Thebes. So that he could have no rival in Egypt, his priests, early on, associated him with the sun-god Re, the protector of royalty. Amun-Re became the pre-eminent god of Egypt, and later an imperial god.

FIGURE 5.6 The blue gold-studded war crown (*khepresh*)

The pharaohs regarded him as their divine 'father' and promoted the belief that the god, in the guise of the king, took the queen as his divine consort and impregnated her so that a future king would be regarded as the living son of a god (**theogamy**). 'This legend of the miraculous birth of kings had always been an aspect of Egyptian kingship.'[5]

The High Priest of Amun was a political position appointed by the king, and Amun's temple at Karnak in Thebes was enlarged and embellished as each king dedicated more and more to the god.

Thutmose I, Hatshepsut's father, ordered superb additions to the temple to glorify Amun who had helped make Egypt the superior of every land. He ordered the construction of a monumental gateway or pylon with flagstaffs sheathed in fine **electrum** and a doorway of Asiatic copper with an image of Amun inlaid with gold, an indication of the wealth that was to pour into the god's coffers in the years to come, especially during the reign of Hatshepsut.

theogamy a marriage of, or between, the gods

electrum an alloy of gold and silver

necropolis cemetery or 'city of the dead'

mortuary temple a temple where the funerary rites of the Egyptian rulers were carried out by a special group of mortuary priests

Changes in funerary practices

As Thebes – the cult centre of Amun worship – became the religious capital, queens, nobles, minor officials and royal workmen were buried in a vast **necropolis** in western Thebes.

From the 18th Dynasty, the rulers were more concerned with hiding their tombs, and one way to do this was to separate tomb and **mortuary temple**. Amenhotep I was the first king to do this. He also founded a special workforce called 'servants in the place of

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truth' who were responsible for building and decorating all royal tombs. They lived in their own town of Deir el-Medina and worshipped Amenhotep I as their founder.

Thutmose I broke a 1200-year-old tradition in tomb construction (from pyramids to rock-cut tombs), setting a pattern for future kings to follow by instructing his architect, Ineni, to locate a well-hidden site for his tomb in the isolated and rugged limestone cliffs in what became known as the Valley of the Kings.

FIGURE 5.7 An image of Amun with feather headdress

FIGURE 5.8 The necropolis in western Thebes. In the desert, just beyond the cultivated area was the location of the Mortuary Temples of the kings and tombs of the nobles; beyond the ridge was the rugged, hidden Valley of the Kings where the pharaohs were buried.

ACTIVITY 5.1

1. Consider these background facts:
   - the geographical areas under Egyptian influence at the beginning of Hatshepsut's reign
   - the so-called foreign 'invaders' who occupied Lower Egypt for approximately 100 years
   - the hierarchical nature of Egyptian society and government
   - the gods with whom each pharaoh was divinely associated
   - the power of the vizier and Viceroy of Kush
   - the changes that occurred in the army in the late 17th and early 18th Dynasties
   - the emergence of Amun from a local Theban god to the pre-eminent god of Egypt and the growth in status of its priesthood.
2. Account for J. H. Breasted's view of the long-term impact of the Hyksos on the Egyptians, expressed in Source 5.3?
3. What is *ma'at*? What divine responsibilities of a king were associated with this concept? Remember these when noting Hatshepsut's throne name.
4. What changes occurred in funerary practices prior to Hatshepsut's reign?

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5.2 Hatshepsut's background and rise to prominence

Hatshepsut's family background

Hatshepsut's family tree in the early 18th dynasty

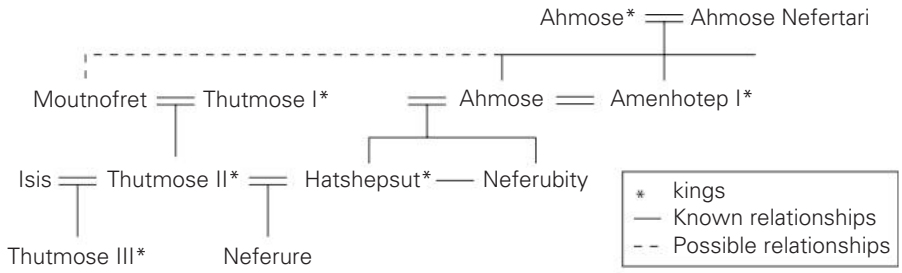

FIGURE 5.9 Diagram of Hatshepsut's family background

Male and female predecessors

Hatshepsut came from a family not only of illustrious males, but also from a number of exceptional and influential queens.

TABLE 5.2 Hatshepsut's male predecessors

Ahmose	Challenged and expelled the Asiatic invaders and unified the 'Two Lands' once more with a strong pharaoh on the throne. He increased the effectiveness of the Egyptian army, campaigned in southern Palestine, put down rebellions in Nubia and recruited sturdy mercenary troops from Nubia, known as Medjay. These developments, plus a new patriotic fervour, transformed Egypt into a military power.
Amenhotep I (Ahmose's son)	Carried out a deliberate policy of expansion by reconquering Nubia and rebuilding Middle Kingdom fortresses to ensure the uninterrupted flow of gold from Nubia and other exotic products from tropical Africa.
Thutmose I (Hatshepsut's father)	Established the precedent for 'warrior pharaohs' by extending Egypt's southern border in Nubia beyond the 3rd Cataract, and its area of influence in the north as far as the Euphrates River. He was an outstanding military commander and set an example followed by Egyptian pharaohs for centuries as they realised the benefits of an 'empire'. Hatshepsut's father was the first in a line of kings, described as ambitious, intelligent and energetic as rulers, occasionally ruthless as individuals, but consistent in their pious devotion to the god Amun.
Thutmose II (Hatshepsut's husband)	Put down a series of rebellions during his short-lived reign and married the royal princess, but his illustrious wife, Hatshepsut, and his son, the great warrior king, Thutmose III, overshadowed his achievements.

He brought the ends of the earth into his domain; he trod its extremities with his mighty sword, seeking battle; but he found no one who faced him. He penetrated valleys which his royal ancestors knew not, which the wearers of the double crown had not seen. His southern boundary is as far as the frontier of this land [Nubia], his northern, as far as the inverted river [the Euphrates] ...

SOURCE 5.3 An inscription describing the military achievements of Thutmose I on a stela erected at Tombos near the 3rd Cataract

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Late 17th and early 18th Dynasty queens

Although queens in all periods of Egyptian history were regarded very highly, the late 17th and early 18th Dynasties were notable for a number of exceptional and influential queens.

Of all the royal women, the most important was the queen consort, *Great King's Wife*. If she also happened to be the mother of the heir-apparent, her status was further enhanced. The **dowager queen** was also held in high regard, as were royal daughters.

The Theban rulers of the early 18th Dynasty accepted that their women were quite capable of playing prominent religious and political roles. It was King Ahmose who first revised the status of queens within the new ruling family by honouring:

1 his strong grandmother, Tetisheri
2 his forceful and politically active mother, Ahhotep, who provided an example of strength that was followed by future queens. She was called on to take over the reins of the government on the sudden death of her husband Seqenenre Tao II. She ruled as Ahmose's **regent** until he came of an age to rule alone. She appears to have wielded some real political power. According to a stela erected by her son, she rallied the Theban troops, eliminated rebels and pacified Upper Egypt. She had a long-lasting influence on King Ahmose.
3 his wife, Ahmose-Nefertari, who first received the prestigious religious position of *God's Wife of Amun* from her husband. Its precise function is unknown, but it was passed down to her daughter, Meritamen, then on to Hatshepsut, and her daughter.

The position entitled the holder to a large and wealthy estate and the labour to work it, as well as a 'harem' of priestesses, singers and musicians to which most high-ranking women at court belonged.

Ahmose-Nefertari was the mother of Amenhotep I and acted as his regent until he came of age. She had the highest religious status of all 18th Dynasty queens and was **deified** as the patron goddess of the Theban necropolis.

These women are likely to have inspired Hatshepsut. However, despite holding a periodic position as regent and their increased religious and political status, they were never permitted to supersede the role of the rightful heir to the throne.

dowager queen a title given to the widow of a previous king to distinguish her from the wife of the present king

regent usually a member of the royal family who ruled in the place of a child until he was old enough to take responsibility to rule alone

deified treated like a god or goddess

Hatshepsut's parents

When Amenhotep I died after 21 years on the throne, he had no surviving son, but it appears he had already chosen a successor.

With the death of Thutmose I at about 50 years of age, his son by Mutnofret became Thutmose II. Hatshepsut emerged from the harem and, at the age of somewhere between 12–15 years of age, married her half-brother who was around 20. It was a conventional New Kingdom marriage (between full or half-brother and sister).

TABLE 5.3 Hatshepsut's parents

Thutmose I	Ahmose
• Amenhotep I chose Thutmose – a middle-aged commander with a successful military career behind him – as his successor. • It is possible that he associated Thutmose in a co-regency with him for a time. • It is believed Thutmose may have come from a noble or collateral branch of the royal family and was a widower.	The lineage of Ahmose, the queen consort, has been questioned by scholars. There are a number of conflicting views. • Some historians believe she was the younger sister of Amenhotep I and therefore the daughter of Ahmose and Ahmose-Nefertari, or else, she was the daughter of Amenhotep. In this case, Thutmose could legitimately claim the throne by his marriage to a royal princess.

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TABLE 5.3 *(continued)*

Thutmose I	Ahmose
• His first wife, Mutnofret, is supposed to have produced at least four sons, three of whom did not survive their father. The younger, also called Thutmose, survived. • Thutmose I, at 35, married Ahmose, a woman of royal rank (see below). • He was the first of the line of famous and successful Thutmosid kings. • He reigned for somewhere between 10–15 years during which he became a famed warrior king (see Table 5.2).	• Others believe she was of royal blood and of exalted status, but not the daughter of either king Ahmose or Amenhotep I. • A third view is that she was the sister or half-sister of Thutmose. Joyce Tyldesley, in her book *Hatshepsut*, says that if this were the case, 'their brother-sister marriage must have occurred after Thutmose's promotion to heir apparent, as such incestuous marriages were extremely rare outside the immediate royal family.'[6] • She bore the apparently modest title of *King's Sister*, and yet she had the prestigious title of *God's Wife of Amun*.
Offspring All that we know of the offspring of Thutmose I and Ahmose is that they had two daughters: Hatshepsut and Neferubity, who died in infancy. There is no mention of any royal sons.	

A COMMENT ON...

Brother–sister marriages

Brother–sister (full or half) unions were common among the gods (e.g. Isis and Osiris; Set and Nephthys) and they were often carried out between members of the royal family because:

- it was believed that royal blood made them different from other people and such a marriage kept the royal blood pure
- it reinforced the links between the king and the gods
- a royal princess made the logical choice of wife and 'was surely the best possible mother for a future king of Egypt'.[7]

It was once thought that a future king needed to marry the royal heiress princess with the title of God's Wife of Amun, but this did not apply in many cases.

ACTIVITY 5.2

1. Who were Hatshepsut's illustrious male predecessors and how did they lay the basis for her reign?
2. What facts can you derive from Source 5.3 for the achievements of Thutmose I? What aspects of this text can be called 'royal propaganda'?
3. What was the status and influence of Hatshepsut's female predecessors? Did they ever supersede the role of the rightful heir to the throne?
4. What does Table 5.3 reveal about Hatshepsut's father: his achievements, lineage and first family before his marriage to Hatshepsut's mother, Ahmose?

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5 What information is lacking about Queen Ahmose's background? What would you like to know if the information were available?

6 What is meant by the statement that Hatshepsut's marriage to Thutmose II was 'a conventional New Kingdom marriage'?

7 Explain why brother/sister marriages were often found in Egyptian royal families.

5.3 Key features of Hatshepsut's reign

Changes in her titles and images over time

Hatshepsut as queen consort

Even though there is no doubt that Hatshepsut would have been aware of her exalted position from an early age, there is no evidence that she 'was ever dissatisfied with her role as consort during the reign of Thutmose II'. She was 'the product of a highly conservative society brought up to think in conventional gender stereotypes'.[8]

While she was queen, Hatshepsut seems to have done nothing unusual and appears to have accepted her subsidiary role. There are at least three pieces of evidence for this.

1 There was nothing unusual in her titles. Hatshepsut was given the conventional queen's titles: *King's Daughter, King's Sister* and *King's Great Wife*. She had also inherited the important religious title of *God's Wife of Amun* through her illustrious ancestor Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, and it was a title that she preferred to use.

2 She ordered the construction of a tomb suitable for a queen in a remote wadi several kilometres from that of her husband in the Valley of the Kings. An inscription on her sarcophagus reiterated her conventional queenly titles: 'The Great Princess, great in favour and grace, Mistress of all Lands, Royal Daughter and Royal Sister, Great Royal Wife. Mistress of the Two Lands, Hatshepsut.'[9]

3 She was depicted on a stela in 'approved wifely fashion' behind her husband, who is facing Re, and her mother, the Dowager Queen Ahmose, as was the norm. However, there was an unusual feature on the stela: although it was inscribed during the reign of Thutmose II, the dowager queen Ahmose is referred to as *King's Mother*.

Hatshepsut and Thutmose II produced only one daughter, Neferure, but Thutmose had produced a son, also called Thutmose (future Thutmose III), by a palace **concubine** named Isis whose origins are unknown.

concubine a woman who lives with a man and has a sexual relationship with him but is not his wife

The royal princess, Neferure, was virtually invisible while her father was alive, although her welfare and education was carefully monitored by several high-ranking officials with titles such as *Royal Nurse* or *Royal Tutor*: Ahmose-Pennekheb, later, Senenmut, Hatshepsut's most influential courtier, and finally Senimen.

There is no doubt at this time that she was being groomed as the next queen consort.

FIGURE 5.10 Neferure, the daughter of Hatshepsut and Thutmose II, with her tutor, Senenmut

Hatshepsut as regent

It appears that Thutmose II was rather sickly and died prematurely. His young son, Thutmose (third ruler with this name) 'stood in his place as king of the Two Lands, having become ruler upon the throne of the one who begat him'.[10]

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As the young Dowager Queen, Hatshepsut – probably only in her late teens – assumed the role of regent for her small stepson Thutmose III. As the daughter, sister and wife of a king she was totally qualified to take on the role as regent for her stepson, as had several of her notable female predecessors. However, this situation was unprecedented because 'Hatshepsut was being called on to act as regent for a boy who was not her son.'[11]

She would have been expected to hand over total control once Thutmose III reached his maturity, possibly at about 16 years of age. Also, he would have been expected to marry his half-sister Neferure. Neither of these things happened.

Whatever Hatshepsut thought about the regency, she took care in the beginning not to overstep her role, retained the titles she had as Thutmose II's queen and was depicted on public monuments standing behind her stepson. However, despite her low profile, she seems, according to an inscription in the tomb of Ineni, her 'architect', to have been well and truly in control of the government at this stage.

> ... the Divine consort, Hatshepsut, settled the affairs of the two lands by reason of her plans. Egypt was made to labour with bowed head for her, the excellent seed of the god – whose plans are excellent, who satisfies the Two Regions when she speaks.

SOURCE 5.4 Inscription of Ineni, trans. J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, pp. 142–3

There are several pieces of evidence, however, that seem to point to her future ambitions to be king while she was still a regent:

1 Several inscriptions on the blocks of her Red Chapel at Karnak mention an **oracle** given to her by Amun in Year 2 of her regency. In one, Hatshepsut describes how 'a very great oracle in the presence of this good god, proclaiming for me the kingship of the Two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt being under the fear of me'.[12]

2 She began using titles modelled on those of a king. In one inscription, she was described as 'lady of the Two Lands', a feminine version of the king's title 'lord of the Two Lands'. According to G. Robins, in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, she seemed to be slowly 'reinforcing her position as de facto ruler of Egypt by drawing on kingly iconography, **titulary** and actions'.[13]

3 She commissioned her first pair of **obelisks**, which was the prerogative of a king, during her regency, although by the time they were ready she had already 'usurped' the throne. See p. 175 for her building program.

oracle advice or prophecy received from a god through the mediumship of a priest or priestess

titulary a list of titles and names

obelisks a pillar of stone tapered towards the top and surmounted by a pyramid-shaped stone, usually gilded

She also seemed to be slowly consolidating her position and gaining support from a group of officials whose political careers would be linked to hers. See pp. 181–2 on her relationship with officials, nobles and Senenmut.

A COMMENT ON...

The use of oracles in gaining the approval of Amun for a particular pharaoh

The priesthood of Amun played a role in the succession of pharaohs. This was especially the case when there was a controversy, a question of legitimacy or the introduction of 'new blood' into the royal line.

The god's approval of a particular king, made known by the 'miracle' of an oracle, occurred during one of the public appearances of the god when the portable barque of Amun was taken from its sanctuary and carried on the shoulders of the priests. A slight dipping of the shrine in the direction of a particular individual indicated the god's choice of the next pharaoh.

Both Hatshepsut and Thutmose III claimed to have been divinely chosen in this way.

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ACTIVITY 5.3

1. What evidence is there that as Queen Consort, Hatshepsut accepted her subsidiary role to her husband?
2. How did Hatshepsut follow in the footsteps of her female ancestors after the early death of her husband Thutmose II? How was her situation, however, unprecedented?
3. What does Source 5.4 indicate about Hatshepsut's abilities during her time as regent?
4. Could she have managed on her own at this time? Think about who might have helped her govern.
5. What evidence is there that although Hatshepsut did not appear to overstep her role as regent, 'she was slowly reinforcing her position as de facto ruler of Egypt'?

King of Upper and Lower Egypt

Somewhere between years 2 and 7 of the young Thutmose III's reign, Hatshepsut was crowned with full pharaonic powers and took the titles of a ruling king. She did not seize power in a dramatic coup, but took a gradual approach in what J. Tyldesley calls 'a carefully controlled political manoeuvre'.[14] Although she officially ruled jointly with her stepson (in a **co-regency**), there is no doubt who was the senior pharaoh.

co-regency joint rule

Possible reasons for changing her status from queen regent to king

The following are some of the reasons suggested by scholars for her change of status.

1. She might have felt she had more right to the throne than Thutmose III. After all, she had the divine bloodline of royalty. However, if this were the case, she would have:
   - tried to get rid of him and rule alone
   - prevented him from leading an army
   - made sure she didn't share any monuments with him.

   None of these things occurred and there is no evidence that when he reached maturity he made any challenge to her authority.
2. She might have feared that the young king could die in childhood and she wanted to secure the throne for herself and her daughter.
3. She might have feared that some influential individual or group might use the young pharaoh in a power struggle.

The answer to this question will probably never be answered. However, both before and after her assumption of power, she had the total support of the male elite in the civil and religious bureaucracies.

The adoption of a kingly identity

At her coronation Hatshepsut took the titles of a ruling king. It must have seemed inappropriate to give her the Horus epithet of 'mighty bull' like Thutmose II and Thutmose III. Instead, she was given the name Maat-ka-re (Mighty-of-Kas).

> I have commanded that my [titulary] abide like the mountains; when the sun shines its rays are bright upon the titulary of my majesty; my Horus is high upon the standard ... forever.

SOURCE 5.5 Inscription from Djeser-Djeseru, trans. J. H. Breasted

Unfortunately, her hope that her titulary would 'abide like the mountains' was not to be, as her images and inscriptions were deliberately erased from her monuments.

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FIGURE 5.11 Hatshepsut's 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt' name: in a cartouche from one of her obelisks in Karnak Temple

A COMMENT ON...

Possible reasons for Hatshepsut's throne name

Hatshepsut was given the throne name of Maat-ka-re by the priests of the *House of Life* at her coronation possibly because:

1. *Ma'at* meant 'divine order' and it was the pharaoh's responsibility to avoid chaos and upheaval at all cost, to keep the country peaceful, stable and prosperous.
2. It was only several generations since the great Egyptian humiliation of the Hyksos' occupation, which according to Egyptian records had created upheaval and chaos (lack of *ma'at*).
3. There may have been some groups in society who thought her assumption of power created a crisis in kingship.

From the time Hatshepsut became king, the scribes who recorded her achievements seem to have been baffled as to how to describe her as there was no feminine word for a reigning monarch. So, in most of the inscriptions she is referred to in both the masculine and feminine form; for example: 'Her majesty, King Maat-ka-re'. The scribes often mixed 'she' and 'her' with 'he' and 'him'. However, they obviously thought that when associating her with military matters it was more appropriate to describe her in the masculine form, as in the graffito written by Tiy, one of her officials.

nemes refers to the striped, stiffened linen headdress with two lappets which fell forward over the king's shoulders

FIGURE 5.12 An early seated statue of Hatshepsut making no secret of her sex

Changes in Hatshepsut's statuary and reliefs

For a while it seems that after becoming pharaoh, she was still depicted in some of the statuary as a woman, making no secret of her sex. However, she appears to have been looking for a compromise between the image of a queen and a king.

1. One statue shows her as a slim female wearing a long sheath dress, but standing with feet wide apart in the striding pose of a king. The kingly titles have feminine endings.
2. Another seated statue shows her with a slim woman's body, including breasts. She has several of the accessories of a king: royal kilt and ***nemes*** headdress but no ceremonial beard.

It may be that the obvious combination of female characteristics and male accessories shown at the start of her reign should be interpreted as a short-lived attempt to present a new image of the pharaoh as a sexual mixture of male and female strengths.

SOURCE 5.6 Joyce Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut*, pp. 135–6

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It wasn't long, though, before she must have decided to be seen as a conventional pharaoh and from this point she was depicted in statuary and reliefs as a male with the full regalia of a traditional king like her predecessors:

- wearing the royal shendyet-kilt; a ceremonial false beard; the folded striped head cloth (*nemes*); and various royal crowns including the blue war crown or *khepresh*
- adopting the formal poses of a king: left foot forward and hands extended in adoration or kneeling before the god
- as a sphinx, the embodiment of royal power, often shown smiting the king's enemies.

FIGURE 5.13 A kneeling statue of Hatshepsut as a king in the full regalia making offerings

There are several possible reasons why Hatshepsut felt the need to be depicted as a conventional king. Consider the following:

1 She wanted to draw a sharp distinction between her role as regent and that of pharaoh.

2 Since most Egyptians could not read, they expected to see their ruler depicted in reliefs and statuary as a conventional king. It appears, from a reference in Hatshepsut's inscriptions to 'my rekhyt' (a marsh bird) translated as the 'common people', she was concerned what the people would say about her. However, she was not trying to fool the people into thinking that their pharaoh was actually a man.

3 It would allow her 'to ensure the continuance of the established traditions which were vital for the maintenace of *ma'at*'.[15]

4 Only a king could perform the religious and state rituals.

FIGURE 5.14 Hatshepsut as a sphinx

To justify her position as divine ruler in her own right, Hatshepsut:

1 made a feature of her divine conception by the god Amun. Her mother Ahmose was supposedly visited by Amun while she slept and was impregnated by the god in the guise of her father Thutmose I. Although there was nothing unusual about a pharaoh claiming a theogamous birth (fathered by a god), this 'was a violent wrenching of the traditional details … for the entire legend was fitted only to a man'.[16]

2 rewrote her history so that she was seen as the legitimate successor of her father, Thutmose I, ignoring the reign of her husband Thutmose II. She claimed that she was chosen by Amun and her father as his heir to the throne, and crowned by him to share a co-regency.

Hatshepsut had the texts and detailed reliefs of the divine conception and birth, and the fictitious coronation, inscribed on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. Listed are some of the scenes from her Divine Birth and Coronation reliefs and texts:

- Amun prophesying her birth before a council of gods
- the god in the form of Thutmose I visiting Ahmose. 'When he came before her she rejoiced at the sight of his beauty, his love passed into her limbs …'[17]

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- the god informing the queen she has conceived
- the god's instructions to the god Khum to create the baby on the potter's wheel
- Queen Ahmose being led off to give birth
- the child being given the symbols of life, power and protection
- the child being presented to the gods by Amun
- the journey with her father Thutmose I through Egypt to announce her as the future king
- her crowning by the gods
- her coronation before the court.

Refer to Section 5.5 for an evaluation of these texts.

> This is my daughter, Khnemet-Amun Hatshepsut who liveth, I have appointed her ... she is my successor upon my throne, she it assuredly is who shall sit upon this wonderful seat. She shall command the people in every place of the palace; she it is who shall lead you; ye shall proclaim her word, ye shall be united in her command. He who shall do her homage shall live, he who shall speak blasphemy of her majesty shall die.

SOURCE 5.7 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. II, p. 97

ACTIVITY 5.4

1. What is Joyce Tyldesley's opinion of Hatshepsut's 'take over' of the position of king?
2. Debate her possible reasons for doing this.
3. What is a titulary? How significant was the throne name of Maat-ka-re assumed by Hatshepsut at her coronation?
4. Why did the royal scribes have a problem in recording her achievements?
5. How does Source 5.6 explain her early representations as a king?
6. Discuss possible reasons why she soon adopted the full, conventional kingly regalia.
7. How did Hatshepsut attempt to justify her 'seizure' of the throne? Who would have helped her in this endeavour?

Foreign policy

Due to the fragmentary evidence for military campaigns during Hatshepsut's reign, compared with the abundance of information (texts and reliefs) about her trading expedition to Punt, it was once thought that she was more interested in peaceful commercial activities than in military enterprises.

Military campaigns

Early and mid 20th-century Egyptian scholars believed that there were no military activities during Hatshepsut's reign. This opinion was probably based on a belief about her gender: that, as a woman, Hatshepsut would be less aggressive than a man and physically incapable of leading an army like her warrior-king ancestors, including her father. Also, many of her texts and reliefs were damaged after her reign, some which might have contained evidence of activities of a military nature.

Despite these views, there is nothing to suggest that she carried out a deliberate policy of non-aggression, or that she would be afraid to take the military initiative if necessary. From the Speos Artemidos inscription, she appears to have kept her army in a state of readiness and according to Donald Redford in his *History*

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TABLE 5.4 Early views about Hatshepsut's lack of military activities

M. Murray 1926	'Though no wars or conquests are recorded in her reign … Her deeds, as might be expected from a woman, are more intimate and personal than those of a king. This was no conqueror, joying in the lusts of battle, but a strong-souled noble-hearted woman, ruling her country wisely and well.'[18]
H. E. Winlock 1928	'As far as we know, violence and bloodshed had no place in her make-up. Hers was a rule dominated by an architect and the Hapusenabs, Neshis and Djehutys in her following were priests and administrators, rather than soldiers.'[19]
J. A. Wilson 1951	'… her pride was in the internal development of Egypt and in commercial enterprises rather than in imperial expansion like her predecessors.'[20]
Sir Alan Gardiner 1961	'The reign of Hatshepsut had been barren of any military enterprise except an unimportant raid into Nubia.'[21]

and Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty, there are enough fragmentary inscriptions when taken together, to suggest that there were at least four campaigns during her reign:

1 A campaign in Nubia early in her reign which she may have led herself or at least at which she was present.
2 An early mopping up action in Palestine and Syria to consolidate her father's conquests. Conquered chieftains often took the opportunity of a new king on the throne to rebel.
3 A campaign, led by Thutmose III, which included the capture of Gaza in Palestine.
4 A campaign, led by Thutmose III, against Nubia shortly before Hatshepsut's death, mentioned on a stela at Tombos and dated to year 20 of her reign.

The chief source of evidence for the earliest campaign in Nubia is a graffito written by Tiy, one of Hatshepsut's chief officials, and found on the island of Sehel.

> The hereditary prince and governor, treasurer of the king of Lower Egypt, the sole friend, chief treasurer, the one concerned with the booty, Tiy. He says: 'I followed the Good God, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Maat-ka-re, given life. I saw when he overthrew the Nubian bowman, their chiefs being brought in as prisoners. I saw when he razed Nubia, I being in his majesty's following.

SOURCE 5.8 C. Woods, ed. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 16, p. 101

A second damaged text which throws more light on Hatshepsut's Nubian campaign was found on a stela erected by the scribe Djehuty, near Deir el-Bahri.

> I saw the collection of booty by this mighty ruler from the vile Kush [Nubia] who are deemed cowards. The female sovereign given life, prosperity and health forever.

SOURCE 5.9 K. Sethe, *Urkunden des Aegyptischen Itertums*, IV, 438, p. 10

Another fragmentary text was found on the lower colonnade of Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri, accompanied by a relief of Hatshepsut as a sphinx, trampling on Egypt's enemies, which refers to a campaign in Kush (Nubia). This text seems to indicate that Hatshepsut emulated the deeds of her father.

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I will cause to sail south … the chief of Kush whom they brought as a living captive … in his moment who seizes without anything being seized from him – these fortress towns of his majesty – the garrisons of the sovereign raged … as was done by her victorious father … a slaughter was made among them. The number of dead being unknown: Their hands were cut off … she overthrew …

SOURCE 5.10 D. Redford, *History and Chronology of the 18th Dynasty*, p. 58

Finally, on a broken block at Karnak is a reference to the land of Nubia being in submission to Hatshepsut.

FIGURE 5.15 A military contingent that accompanied Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt

ACTIVITY 5.5

1. What do the early 20th-century views of Hatshepsut's military activities reveal:
   - about the individual beliefs of each of those male scholars
   - the nature of the material remains?
2. What evidence is there that suggests she might have carried out – and even accompanied – a number of military campaigns?
3. Discuss the statement that Hatshepsut's military policy can be best described 'as active defence rather than deliberate offense'[22].
4. Consider the following statement: Battles were often borrowed from other pharaohs as a way of illustrating that they had maintained *ma'at* by defeating Egypt's enemies.

Trading expedition to Punt

Hatshepsut regarded her trading expedition to Punt – believed to be somewhere in the vicinity of present-day Somalia – as one of her greatest achievements. So significant did she consider this expedition that she had it recorded in detail near the birth and coronation reliefs on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri.

In year 9 of her reign, Hatshepsut sent an expedition of five ships, each about 20 metres long and with 30 rowers, with a military contingent under the command of Nehesy – Chancellor and King's Messenger

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to the Land of Punt. The ships – departing from a Red Sea port – were laden with wine, beer, bales of cloth and other gifts for barter such as daggers, axes and jewellery.

Even though kings of the 5th, 11th and 12th Dynasties had dispatched expeditions to Punt, it had remained a land of mystery. Only Hatshepsut left any details of this incense land. Perhaps that is why she claimed: 'No one trod the Myrrh-terraces which the people knew not: it was heard of from mouth to mouth by hearsay of the ancestors.'[23] The inscriptions on her temple walls maintained that in sending the expedition she was responding to a command from the god Amun himself, who told her to seek out the way to Punt, penetrate the myrrh-terraces and 'establish for him a Punt in his house'.[24]

It is quite possible that Hapusoneb, High Priest of Amun, or Senenmut, Steward of Amun, suggested the expedition to bring back live myrrh trees to plant in the temples of Karnak and Deir el-Bahri.

FIGURE 5.16 The possible location of Punt

As well as honouring her divine 'father' and maintaining the support of his priesthood, Hatshepsut was anxious to open up peaceful trade so that the Egyptians would also have a continuing supply of:

- fragrant woods such as cinnamon wood, Khesyt and balsam; ebony which was the most valued of woods used principally for ritual items
- ivory used in amulets and as inlays for furniture
- gold and antimony, a metallic element used in alloys, cosmetics and medicine
- live animals, particularly the baboon (cynocephali) that was sacred to the god Thoth, monkeys and other exotic animals kept as pets by the nobility, and African dogs used for hunting
- animal skins such as panther skins worn by the sem priests and other skins used for covering stools and chairs.

A COMMENT ON...

The importance of incense resin to the Egyptians

Myrrh is a natural gum or resin extracted from a number of small, thorny tree species of the genus *Commiphora*. This incense resin was used:

- in great quantities in religious rituals such as in bathing and purification in cult temples
- as an offering to the dead in mortuary temples
- in the mummification process
- as a medicinal aid
- for fumigation
- for the manufacture of perfumed oils.

The Punt reliefs

The Punt reliefs show:

1 the expedition's arrival in a tropical land where the people live in conical houses built on piles as protection from wild animals. There are several images of the military contingent: with shields, and waving palm fronds as a sign of peace.

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2 the cautious Puntite king, Paruhu, his large queen and his family meet the Egyptians who set up tables on the beach displaying their trade wares. The Puntites are shown piling up loose myrrh resin, cutting ebony and leading monkeys and panthers. The trade appears brisk, but it seems rather one-sided.

3 the loading of the ships, with fully grown incense trees in baskets being carried aboard a fully laden ship. One inscription says there were 31 trees taken to Egypt. Another damaged scene shows Egyptians cutting down ebony trees.

4 the arrival in Thebes, showing three ships under full sail on the Nile.

5 the presentation before Hatshepsut of native chieftains driving cattle, a live panther and the 31 myrrh trees.

6 the weighing and measuring of heaps of myrrh by treasurer Thutiy while Thoth records it for Amun-Re.

7 the dedication to Amun, with Hatshepsut presenting the goods to Amun, who promises success in future expeditions.

8 Hatshepsut in her audience hall declaring that she has done everything commanded of her by the god and made a Punt for him in Egypt.

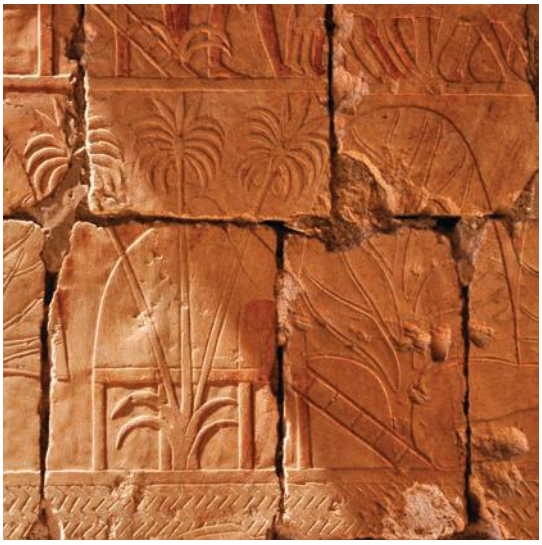

FIGURE 5.17 A Punt relief showing the tropical environment and the Puntite houses on stilts

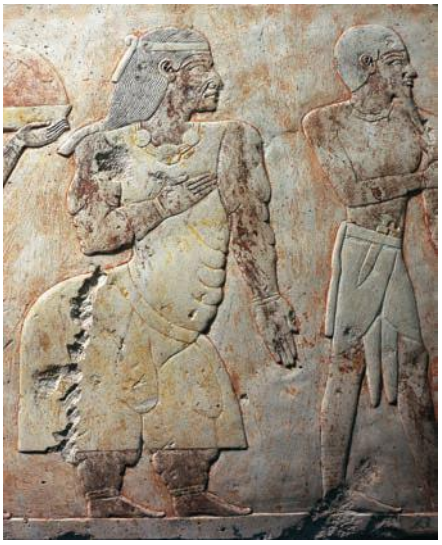

FIGURE 5.18 The obese Puntite Queen

FIGURE 5.19 Preparing myrrh trees to be loaded onto Egyptian ships

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The coming of the chiefs of Punt, doing obeisance, with bowed heads, to receive this army of the king: they give praise to the lord of gods, Amun-Re … reception of the tribute of the chief of Punt by the king's messenger.

SOURCE 5.11 Punt inscription, trans. J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 107

Other areas of trade

There is evidence that Hatshepsut promoted trade in other areas as well as Punt:

1 The façade of the small rock-cut temple at Beni Hasan, known as Speos Artemidos, alludes to other places: 'Roshawet (Sinai) and Iuu (unknown) have not remained hidden from my august person …'[25]

2 The tomb inscription of Thutiy, Hatshepsut's treasurer, mentions the vast range of raw materials brought to Egypt from the south and northeast.

ACTIVITY 5.6

1 Find the following facts:
- the location of Punt
- the Egyptian who led the expedition
- the number of ships sent
- the chief product sought in Punt and its significance to Egyptians
- other exotic products in demand from Punt.

2 What were Hatshepsut's aims in sending this expedition?

3 Write an account in your own words of the expedition to Punt.

4 List the statements in Source 5.11 that indicate that this peaceful trading expedition is depicted as if it were a military campaign. Suggest why it might have been written this way.

Hatshepsut's building program

Donald Redford, in *The History and Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty*, says that Hatshepsut's top priority appears to have been her building program, judging by her repeated references to it and its extent: from the delta to Kush (Nubia), although most of her efforts were concentrated on both sides of the Nile in ancient Waset (Thebes), centre of the worship of Amun.

Her building program:

- expressed her devotion to all gods, but most particularly to Amun – 'I have done this with a loving heart for my father Amun.'[26]
- promoted her relationship with her earthly father, Thutmose I, and continually emphasised the propaganda that she was chosen by him to rule. H. E. Winlock remarked that her buildings were an 'everlasting propaganda in stone'.[27]
- reflected her obsession with restoring Egypt's past glory.
- reminded the people that there was a powerful pharaoh on the throne.
- provided work for numerous tradesmen and skilled craftsmen.
- reflected the general prosperity of her reign.

Her three-part program involved:

1 repairing and restoring temples, chapels and sanctuaries destroyed or neglected during the domination of the Hyksos kings

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2 constructing new monuments – the bulk of her work was at Thebes

3 completing construction of some of the buildings that had begun during the reign of her husband.

On the façade of a small rock-cut temple she built with doors of acacia wood and bronze at Beni Hassan in Middle Egypt (referred to by the Greeks as Speos Artemidos) and dedicated to the lion-headed goddess, Pakhet, she left an inscription of one aspect of her building policy.

> I have done these things by the device of my heart. I have never slumbered, but have made strong which was decayed. I have raised up what was dismembered, even from the first time when the Asiatics were in Avaris of the North Land with roving hordes in the midst of them overthrowing what had been made; they ruled without Re ... I have banished the abominations of the gods, and the earth has removed their footprints.

SOURCE 5.12 Sir Alan Gardiner, 'The Great Speos Artemidos Inscription', *Archaeology*, 32: 47–48

FIGURE 5.20 The façade of the rock-cut temple of Pakhet built by Hatshepsut

She also mentioned some specific temples that she restored: the temple of Hathor at Cusae, a temple for Min and the temple of Thoth at Hermopolis, and re-established regular worship at these cult centres.

> The temple of the Lady of Cusae (the goddess Hathor), which had begun to fall to ruin, the ground had swallowed up its august sanctuary, so that the children played upon its roof, ... I adorned it, having been built anew, I overlaid with images of gold ...

SOURCE 5.13 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 124

A COMMENT ON...

Hatshepsut's attitude to the past humiliation of the Hyksos' occupation of Egypt:

- Hatshepsut expressed hatred for the Hyksos, who had supposedly' humiliated Egypt' even though they had introduced many beneficial innovations to Egyptian society.
- Her view of the detested foreign heathens set a tradition that other kings followed.
- Her inscriptions are full of boastings that she – who ruled centuries after their time – had rid Egypt of them, using the achievements of her ancestors as her own.
- This, however, was regarded as a legitimate and time-honoured tradition for kings.

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New buildings

Apart from the building of the temple to Pakhet, the Lion Goddess, in Beni Hassan, most of her new buildings were constructed on the east and west bank of the Nile at Thebes.

Djeser-djeseru – Hatshepsut's mortuary temple

Her mortuary temple, one of the most beautiful buildings ever constructed in Egypt, was known as *Djeser-djeseru* or 'holy-of-holies', a shortened version of 'Mansion of Maat-ka-re-Amun is the Holy of Holies'.

It was built into the semi-circular wall of rosy-yellow limestone cliffs at Deir el-Bahri, and although the early Egyptologist Mariette believed that the temple was 'an accident in the architectural life of Egypt',[28] the design is believed to have been inspired by the adjacent temple of the 11th Dynasty king, Mentuhotep.

The temple was built as a:

1 sanctuary for carrying out the daily offerings and prayers to Hatshepsut after her death (cult of the dead)
2 dedication to Amun, 'holiest of the holy'
3 focus of worship for other gods such as Hathor, Anubis, Osiris and Re-Horakhte
4 mortuary chapel to her father Thutmose I.

The inclusion of her father in her mortuary chapel, as well as the inscriptions of the birth and coronation scenes, the Punt expedition and the quarrying and transportation of two of her obelisks, served a political purpose: that a strong, successful and legitimate king was on the throne, and that she had restored confidence and stability to the country.

FIGURE 5.21 An aerial view of Deir el-Bahri showing temple of Hatshepsut (left) before its reconstruction

FIGURE 5.22 A view of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple showing its stunning setting and its three terraces

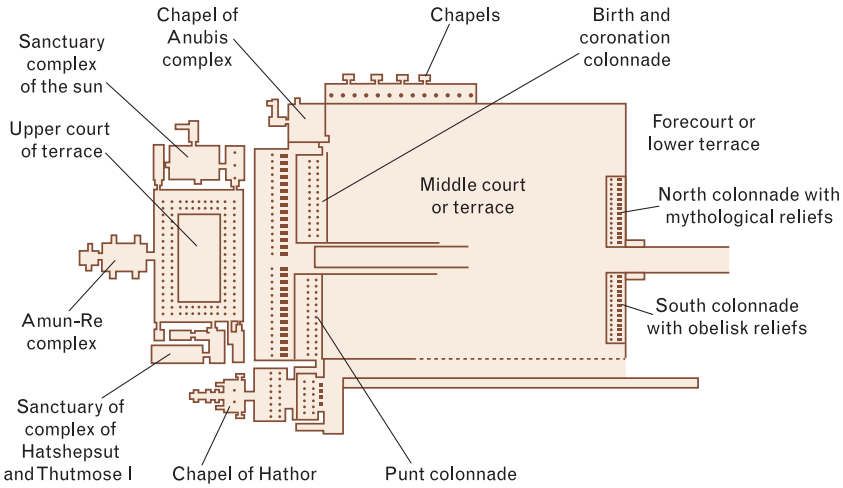

FIGURE 5.23 A diagrammatic representation of Hatshepsut's temple

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TABLE 5.5 The main architectural features of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple

- A long processional avenue leading from her valley temple and aligned with the main entrance of the Temple of Amun at Karnak on the opposite side of the river.
- A deep walled forecourt. This would have been filled with shade trees, pools and the myrrh trees from Punt.
- A ramp leading to the first terrace lined with colossal red granite sphinxes and with a colonnade decorated with birth, coronation and Punt reliefs and a pair of colossal statues of Hatshepsut.
- A second ramp led to an upper colonnaded-court and also huge limestone statues of Hatshepsut as Osiris (god of the Underworld), some 8 metres in height, and colossal kneeling statues of Hatshepsut as a king making offerings.
- Chapels to the gods: Hathor (cow-headed statues of the goddess of fertility and motherhood and Mistress of Punt), Anubis and Re-Horakhte.
- A sanctuary complex to Hatshepsut and her father Thutmose I.
- An inner sanctuary to Amun-Re cut into the cliffs.

FIGURE 5.24 Rows of Osiris figures

FIGURE 5.25 Hathor-headed columns

> 'Most Splendid' the temple of myriad of years; its great doors fashioned of black copper. The inlaid figures of electrum … the great seat of Amun, his horizon in the west; all its doors of real cedar, wrought with bronze. The house of Amun, his enduring horizon of eternity; its floors wrought with gold and silver; its beauty was like the horizon of heaven. A great shrine of ebony of Nubia, the stairs beneath it high and wide of pure alabaster of Hatnub. A palace of the god, wrought with gold and silver; it illuminated the faces with its brightness.

SOURCE 5.14 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 156

Hatshepsut's tomb in the Valley of the Kings

As queen, Hatshepsut had a tomb built in a wadi some kilometres from the Valley of the Kings, but when she became king, she had Hapusoneb (Vizier, High Priest of Amun, Overseer of Temples) build her a larger and more elaborate one in the Valley of the Kings.

Her original intention was to build its passageways through the Theban cliffs to a burial chamber directly under the sanctuary of Amun in her mortuary temple. However, faults in the rock made this impossible.

Her tomb passages and stairways were cut 213 metres into the mountain, curving downwards to her burial chamber 97 metres below ground level. When the tomb was excavated, two magnificent yellow quartzite sarcophagi were found in the burial chamber, one for herself and one for her father. However, neither body was found there.

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Buildings at Karnak

Throughout her reign, Hatshepsut embellished the Temple of Karnak ('the most select of places').

The Red Chapel (Chapelle Rouge)

Hatshepsut built this red granite sanctuary to house the barque of Amun, a small-scale gilded boat that held a shrine protecting the statue of the god Amun from the sight of the public when it was taken outside during official ceremonies. The inscribed chapel blocks depicted important aspects of Hatshepsut's reign, such as one of the two pairs of obelisks Hatshepsut erected at Karnak and scenes of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III worshipping together. See p. 185.

Unfortunately, the chapel was dismantled sometime towards the end of Thutmose III's sole reign, and the blocks were later used as filling for other buildings. Three hundred of the inscribed blocks were discovered inside the walls of other structures in the 1950s and displayed in an open-air museum at Karnak. In 1997, restoration experts from France and Egypt constructed a replica of the chapel in Karnak.

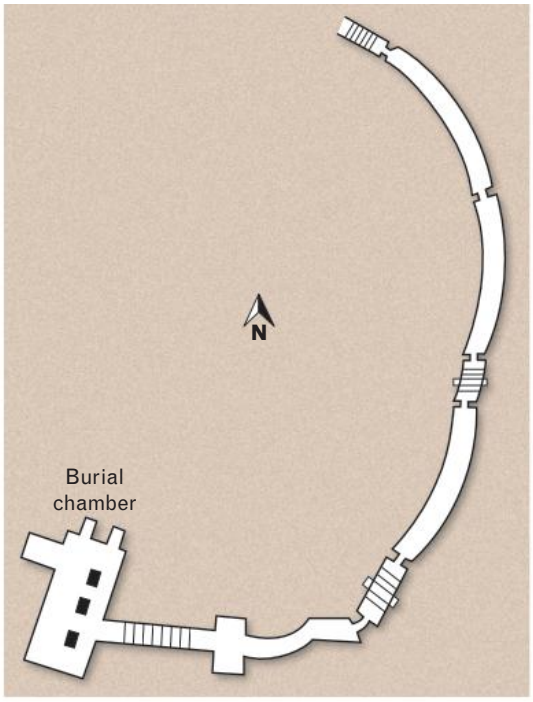

FIGURE 5.26 Plan of Hatshepsut's tomb

Hatshepsut's obelisks

Obelisks were usually erected in pairs in front of temple pylons or gateways. Hatshepsut commissioned four obelisks of pink granite during her reign. The first two have completely disappeared; of the surviving pair, one is still standing (almost 30 metres tall) and the other is lying on its side nearby.

The first of Hatshepsut's two red granite obelisks were authorised just before her assumption of kingly power, and it was Senenmut (see p. 183) who supervised the quarrying and transporting of these massive monuments. There is a record (text and relief) of the transportation of these great obelisks downstream to Thebes, on the wall of her mortuary temple.

The other pair were dedicated at the time of her **Heb-sed**, which was celebrated in year 15 of her reign. Normally this would occur after 30 years on the throne, although there were a number of kings who ignored this tradition, including her own father.

Heb-sed the king's jubilee, generally held every 30 years to rejuvenate the king's powers and reinforce his authority to rule

FIGURE 5.27 A replica of the Red Chapel (Chapelle Rouge)

FIGURE 5.28 An inscribed relief from the Red Chapel showing two of Hatshepsut's obelisks

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Joyce Tyldesley has suggested a number of possible theories as to why Hatshepsut celebrated her Heb-sed 15 years early. Perhaps:

- it was a political move to boost national morale
- she saw year 15 as an important 30th year such as:
  - her own 30th year as she is thought to have come to the throne at 15
  - 30 years since a fictitious co-regency with her father.[29]

> My Majesty began work on them in year 15, second month of winter, day I, ending in year 16, fourth month of summer, last day, totally seven months of quarry work. I did it for him [Amun] out of affection as a king for a god. It was my wish to make them for him gilded with electrum.

SOURCE 5.15 An inscription by Hatshepsut on the base of the standing obelisk of her Heb-sed pair, in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II. p. 28

pyramidion the uppermost piece or capstone of an Egyptian pyramid or obelisk, associated with the sun-god

The height and weight – some 450 tonnes – of the surviving obelisks, and the size of an unfinished obelisk at Aswan, reveal the manpower and skill required to cut a block without fault from the bedrock; lever it out of position, drag it to a canal or to the river over a base of lime or mud to prevent friction; load it on a specially built boat made of sycamore; and tow it – according to an inscription in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple – by three rows of nine barges, each row headed by a pilot boat to the temple site. Once there, the **pyramidion** had to be covered in the finest electrum so that when the sun shone on them they could be seen on both sides of the river. They were then inscribed, erected – a massive task in itself – and dedicated to Amun.

FIGURE 5.29 Hatshepsut's obelisk still standing

Hatshepsut also:

- added a great pylon or monumental gateway (the 8th pylon) at Karnak which was originally decorated with her images; these were replaced by those of later pharaohs such as Thutmose III and Seti I (19th Dynasty)
- made improvements to the processional way that linked the Temple of Karnak and the Temple of Luxor along which the barque containing the statue of Amun travelled during the Opet Festival.

ACTIVITY 5.7

1. Draw a diagram illustrating what motivated Hatshepsut's building program.
2. Find the words used in Sources 5.12 and 5.13 that reveal her obsession with restoring *ma'at* through her building program.
3. How did Hatshepsut use her mortuary temple to serve a political purpose?
4. Use Figures 5.21–5.25, Table 5.5 and Source 5.14 to write an extended description of Djeser-djeseru.
5. List the architectural features that Hatshepsut constructed to embellish Amun's temple at Karnak.
6. How significant was the discovery of the dismantled blocks from Hatshepsut's Red Chapel at Karnak?
7. Describe the massive effort involved in the process of erecting an obelisk.

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Religious policy

Although Hatshepsut revered all the gods, she raised the status of Amun higher than any previous pharaoh had done before.

- Her association with the god began when she was very young. She held the prestigious position of *God's Wife of Amun* or *Divine Consort of Amun*, which symbolised marriage to the god, but once she became king, she passed the title to her daughter, Neferure.
- During her reign as Queen Consort she appointed Senenmut, the Chief Steward of Amun, as her daughter's steward and tutor.
- She gave the High Priest of Amun, held at the time by Hapusoneb, the title of *Chief of all the Prophets of South and North*, which meant he was the head of all the priests of all the gods throughout the land.
- She claimed that Amun commanded the trading expedition to Punt; made her Mistress of Punt; received the 'tribute' from Punt; and promised her success for future expeditions.
- She gave the lion's share of the wealth that came into Egypt to the Amun's Temple at Karnak.
- She dedicated all her buildings at Karnak as enduring monuments to Amun.
- She made a feature of her divine conception by the god Amun on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri.
- She claimed to have been chosen by Amun, via an oracle, to rule Egypt and is shown being crowned by the gods on the walls of her mortuary temple.
- Her own mortuary temple became a cult temple to Amun and her original intention was to lie for eternity in a burial chamber directly under Amun's sanctuary in her mortuary temple.
- She also attributed one of her military successes in Nubia to Amun and recorded it on her temple walls at Deir el-Bahri.
- By glorifying Amun at every opportunity, Hatshepsut contributed to the priesthood's great prestige and influence, which reached a peak under Thutmose III.

FIGURE 5.30 Hatshepsut being blessed by Amun

> I have done this with a loving heart for my father Amun ... I acted under his command. It was he who led me. I did not plan a work without his doing. It was he who gave directions. I did not sleep because of his temple.

SOURCE 5.16 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 273

However, despite her association with Amun, Hatshepsut did not ignore the other gods. She:

- recorded visits to the sanctuaries of gods such as Hathor, Khnum, Montu and Tum
- built and repaired the temples of Hathor (Lady of Cusae), Pakhet (lion-goddess) and Thoth
- claimed to have re-established regular worship at these cult centres: 'All the altars are opened and every one [god] is in possession of the dwelling he has loved, his *ka* rests upon his throne'[30]
- honoured some of the gods by doubling the offerings and restoring long-forgotten festivals
- established shrines to Hathor, Anubis and Re Horakhte at Deir el-Bahri, as well as mention of Sokar and Nekhbet
- is shown being blessed by the lion-headed goddess Sekhmet, and Amun

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- had a close association with the goddess Hathor who was often depicted as a cow or as a woman wearing a horned headdress. She featured Hathor:
  - as the goddess of fertility and motherhood in her birth scenes (as divine wet nurse)
  - as *Mistress of Punt* in her Punt reliefs; the reliefs of Punt say that before the expedition's departure from the Red Sea, its members sacrificed to Hathor, so that she might send the wind
  - by a special chapel to the goddess as the patron of the Theban necropolis constructed on the upper terrace of her mortuary temple, which featured many Hathor-headed columns.

> Pakhet, the great who traverses the valleys in the midst of the eastlands. Whose ways are storm-beaten … I made for her temple with that which was due her ennead of gods [group of nine gods]. The doors were of acacia wood, fitted with bronze – the offering table was wrought with silver and gold, chests of linen and every kind of furniture being established in its place.

SOURCE 5.17 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 124

FIGURE 5.31 Hatshepsut being blessed by Amun-Re and Hathor

ACTIVITY 5.8

Describe the main features of Hatshepsut's religious policy. Make sure you include:

- her promotion of the cult of Amun
- her piety to the other gods.

Hatshepsut's relationship with the official elite

At first Hatshepsut relied on those elite officials, like Ineni, who had served her father and husband, but as these men died, she built up a political support system of officials whose careers were linked to hers. Despite the gender bias in Sir Alan Gardner's comment – 'It is not to be imagined … that even a woman of the most virile character could not have attained such a pinnacle of power without masculine support'– there is truth in what he says.[31]

Hatshepsut's most influential support came from Hapusoneb, the High Priest or First Prophet of Amun, and Chief of all the Prophets of South and North.

> The formation of a priesthood of the whole land into a coherent organization with a single individual at its head appears for the first time. This new and great organization, was thus through Hapusoneb, enlisted on the side of Hatshepsut.

SOURCE 5.18 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 161

At some point during her reign, it is believed that she appointed Hapusoneb as vizier as well, which gave him control over the civil as well as the religious bureaucracy. The evidence suggests that, among other duties, he was responsible for the construction of her mortuary temple and tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

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Other officials who played a significant part in her career as pharaoh included:

- Thutiy, Treasurer and *Overseer of the double house of gold and silver*, and who contributed to her building activities at both Deir el-Bahri and Karnak
- Nehsy, Chancellor who led her Punt expedition
- Inebni, Viceroy of Kush
- Tiy, Treasurer
- Puemre, *Second Prophet of Amun* and *Foreman of the foremen* at Deir el-Bahri

However, of all those who served Hatshepsut, it was Senenmut who was her closest adviser and his rise to power seems to have paralleled hers. Some of his most lucrative posts were granted during her regency and early kingship.

Senenmut

Senenmut was a controversial figure, who 'enjoyed privileges and prerogatives never before extended to a mere official'.[32] For a long time there was 'a cloud of supposition'[33] that surrounded his relationship with Hatshepsut. He was her closest confidante and, it appears from his inscriptions, that he was on intimate terms with the royal family, leading some writers to suggest he was Hatshepsut's lover, which explained his spectacular rise in influence. He described himself as 'one who entered in love and came forth in favour, making glad the heart of the king every day'; 'the one whose steps were known in the palace' and 'one who heard the hearing alone in the privy council'. Others believed his influence was due to his manipulative ability, that he encouraged her to seize the throne and Hatshepsut, 'possibly due to her femininity, was incapable of controlling her own destiny'.[34]

Recent scholarship has revealed that these opinions were not based on an objective assessment of his life and career. Nor did they take into account that due to her unique position and the huge gulf between a divine ruler – a status Hatshepsut continually stressed – and a commoner, the type of permanent alliance suggested by some would have damaged her divine status, as well as led to organised opposition to her.

FIGURE 5.32 A sketch of Senenmut on an ostracon

Not much is known of Senenmut's early life and career, except that he:

- came from an upper-middle class, literate provincial family
- possibly spent some time in the army before using his scribal and organisational skills to join the royal bureaucracy or temple of Amun
- appeared among Hatshepsut's officials during the reign of Thutmose II and became the *Steward of the God's Wife* [Hatshepsut], *Steward of the God's Daughter* [Neferure] and for a while the tutor of Neferure.

Evidence for his later status can be found in the inscriptions on:

- a black diorite statue dedicated to Mut (the divine consort of Amun) and presented to him by Hatshepsut and Thutmose III as a token of honour

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- the walls, funerary stelae and name stones in his two tombs
- the rocks at Aswan
- fragments of his smashed quartzite sarcophagus.

Although, he held more than 80 titles, only 20 are believed to have been official; the others were honorary.

His two main titles, *Chief Steward of Amun* and *Chief Steward of the King*, indicate that he was probably a highly competent administrator and financial manager. By means of these two positions, he controlled the estate of Amun (fields, gardens, cattle and peasants), the royal household and the king's estate, which together comprised a large part of Egypt's resources.

In his position as *Overseer of the Storehouse of Amun*, he was closely associated with the expedition to Punt and involved in the collection and storage of the products brought back and dedicated to Amun.

Another title he claimed to have held was *Controller of Works* (he never claimed to be an architect) and in this position, he organised and supervised the construction of many of Hatshepsut's monuments 'in Karnak, in Hermonthis, in Deir el-Bahri, of Amun, in the temple of Mut, in Isheru, in southern Opet of Amun'.[35] Also, he was commissioned to supervise the cutting of two of Hatshepsut's giant obelisks at Aswan.

Although he was never a vizier, his claim that 'I was the one to whom the affairs of the Two Lands were reported, that which South and North contributed was on my seal'[36], indicates that he controlled many of the functions of a vizier.

Other examples of the honours Hatshepsut appears to have bestowed on him include permission to:

- erect statues to himself
- engrave his name and image in out-of-the way places in her mortuary temple; over 60 of these show Senenmut worshipping Amun and Hatshepsut
- excavate a long, sloping corridor-tomb, approximately 100 metres under the quarry being used to construct her mortuary temple causeway; this was his second tomb, as he already had one among the tombs of the nobles
- prepare a quartzite sarcophagus for himself similar to those used by royalty.

Senenmut disappeared from the records sometime after year 16 of Hatshepsut's reign. Although he would have been an old man by then and may have died a natural death, some scholars suggest he had a falling out with Hatshepsut over the images inscribed in her mortuary temple and that she was responsible for the damage to some of his buildings. However, P. F. Dorman in *The Monuments of Senenmut: Problems in Historical Methodology* says these suggestions are patently absurd as:

- there is evidence that Hatshepsut actually gave him permission to inscribe his name in various places
- the amount of damage to his buildings is very small and seems to have been done by different people for different reasons over an extended period of time.

All the same, the cause of his death and the reasons why his body was not found in either of his tombs remains a mystery.

> Maat-ka-re, may he live forever, by the Hereditary Prince and Count, the Steward of Amun with a favour of the King's bounty which was extended to this servant in letting his name be established on every wall in the following of the King in Djeser-Djeseru, and likewise in the temples of the Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. Thus spoke the King.

SOURCE 5.19 A badly damaged text found at Deir el-Bahri, in W. C. Hayes, 'Varia from the Time of Hatchepsut', *Announcements from the Office of the German Institute in Cairo*, 15:84

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ACTIVITY 5.9

1. Discuss the statement by Sir Alan Gardiner, 'It is not to be imagined … that even a woman of the most virile character could not have attained such a pinnacle of power without masculine support'. Remember we are talking about an ancient bureaucratic society.
2. Explain the significance of Hapusoneb in Hatshepsut's reign.
3. What role did Nehsy play in her administration?
4. Make a list of all the examples of Senenmut's favoured position and status during her reign.
5. What particular hostile view of him has been somewhat remedied in modern times? Explain why.
6. How does Source 5.19 refute the charge that Senenmut had a falling out with Hatshepsut over his presumption in inscribing his name in her mortuary temple?

Hatshepsut's relationship with Thutmose III

Although Hatshepsut ruled jointly with her young stepson, there is no doubt she was the senior partner until at least the 20th year of her reign.

Her predominance can be understood while he was a child. However, the issue that has confounded scholars is how she managed to keep Thutmose III – the man who went on to become one of the greatest kings who ever ruled Egypt – in her shadow for so long. He was over 30 years of age when she died and he began his sole rule.

This has led some historians such as Steindorff and Seele in *When Egypt Ruled the East* to conclude that 'it must have been much against his will that the energetic young Thutmose III watched from the side lines the high-handed rule of the pharaoh Hatshepsut and the chancellorship of the upstart Senenmut'.[37]

Scholars have puzzled over the following questions:

- Was Thutmose III frustrated and resentful towards Hatshepsut for usurping the double crown which should have been his alone?
- Did he accept the situation without too much opposition to her?
- What was he doing while his stepmother was administering the land?
- What support did he have at the time from among the members of the bureaucracy and priesthood?
- Was he prepared to bide his time until Hatshepsut died or until an opportunity presented itself for him to overthrow her?

A COMMENT ON…

Evidence for the relationship between Hatshepsut and Thutmose III

Thutmose III's private thoughts and the answers to some of these questions may never be known.

- Surviving inscriptions point to the respect that Hatshepsut showed him as he was growing up. They shared monuments and stelae, although while he was still a teen, it seems that her image and name were always in front of his.
- He was given greater prominence in his twenties as depicted on a stela in Wadi Maghera in Sinai where he was depicted side by side with her worshipping the local gods together.
- He had leadership of the army and the evidence shows that he led campaigns into Nubia and possibly Gaza.

Had he posed any threat to Hatshepsut's security, it is unlikely he would have been in command of the army.

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Two views of their relationship	
View 1	View 2
Thutmose did not like the situation but was incapable of doing anything about it. By the time he was old enough to resent his loss of authority, Hatshepsut controlled the treasury and had full support of the civil service and the high priest of Amun-Re. In other words, the reins of power were well and truly in Hatshepsut's hands.	Thutmose did not feel he had grounds for complaint against Hatshepsut. He may have welcomed Hatshepsut's guidance when he was young and preferred to show his gratitude by waiting for her death rather than demoting her when he came of age. He would have expected to outlive his stepmother and then enjoy a solo reign.

FIGURE 5.33 Hatshepsut and Thutmose III as co-rulers, Hatshepsut in front of her stepson in the garb of a senior co-regent

FIGURE 5.34 Hatshepsut and Thutmose III as equal co-regents

FIGURE 5.35 A relief from Hatshepsut's mortuary temple of Thutmose III worshipping

FIGURE 5.36 The royal cartouches of Thutmose III in Hatshepsut's mortuary temple

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Hatshepsut's death

It was long thought by scholars that Hatshepsut may have been murdered by Thutmose III out of revenge for seizing the throne, but she did not die an unnatural death.

A COMMENT ON...

Health problems and cause of death of Hatshepsut

Recently, her identified mummy was passed through a CT scanner which revealed that she:

- was obese when she died somewhere between 45–60 years of age
- had signs of arthritis and diabetes
- had suffered dental root inflammation and possibly an abscess
- appears to have had a skin problem, possibly genetic
- had metastasised bone cancer – evidence found in her pelvic region and spine.

According to German researchers, Hatshepsut may have contributed to the onset of cancer by using an ancient cosmetic or remedy for skin problems that included palm and nutmeg oils and fatty acids. Researchers found a carcinogenic residue in a cosmetic vial of dried ingredients among her possessions.

It appears that she may have died from advanced bone cancer, or that weakened by the cancer, she died when she suffered severe dental inflammation.

The fate of Hatshepsut's monuments

After her death, Hatshepsut's names, titles and images were erased from the walls of her temples and replaced with those of her father, husband and stepson, and her name was absent from later King Lists. Dozens of her statues were smashed and dumped in a pit at Deir el-Bahri and her giant obelisks at Karnak were enclosed behind a wall to hide them from sight.

Many scholars believe that Thutmose III embarked on a ferocious and wholesale campaign immediately after her death to completely efface her memory. They maintain that this was due to vengeance.

FIGURE 5.37 The mummy of Hatshepsut

However, C. F. Nims, in *The Date of the Dishonouring of Hatshepsut,* has proven that the destruction of her monuments and erasure of her name occurred after year 42 of Thutmose's reign, 20 years after Hatshepsut's death, and that this was far too long a period to hold a grudge. He also points out that the destruction was selective. For example, many of her inscriptions have been left wholly or partially intact, and some, in very visible places, have been left untouched. D. Redford thinks it is likely that Thutmose III had no wish to totally obliterate her name and image, knowing that if he did she would be condemned to what the Egyptians called the second death.

It was quite common for Egyptian pharaohs to erase the names of their predecessors and replace them with their own, and to dismantle their predecessors' buildings and reuse the materials. Hatshepsut did both of these things herself. For example, she dismantled a sanctuary of Amenhotep I and reused blocks from one of her husband's buildings. She also replaced her husband's name with that of her own on blocks at Deir el-Bahri.

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If vengeance did not motivate Thutmose against his stepmother, why were her monuments destroyed?

Perhaps Thutmose III's actions should be ascribed to political expediency rather than an emotional response.

The following quotes outline the motives suggested by G. Robins, D. Redford and J. Tyldesley.

FIGURE 5.38 Erasure of Hatshepsut's image at Deir el-Bahri

> Thutmose's actions could be explained by assuming that Hatshepsut had died naturally and that Thutmose felt no resentment against her. He might then have been reluctant to mutilate her monuments; but as time went by political expediency might have won over sentiment, and he might finally have agreed that all traces of the unnatural female king should be erased since it did not conform with *ma'at*, the natural order of the world.

SOURCE 5.20 G. Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p. 52

> Thutmose was not so much motivated by genuine hatred as by political necessity. His own legitimacy stood in need of demonstration, and his own links with his illustrious grandfather Thutmose I had to be emphasized ... He had to assure himself at the outset that his stepmother's claims and successes, mutually exclusive as he saw them to his own, would survive in the memory of no one.

SOURCE 5.21 D. Redford, *History and Chronology of the Eighteenth Dynasty*, p. 87

> By establishing a lengthy and successful reign in the middle of a flourishing dynasty she had managed to demonstrate that a woman could indeed become a successful king, and therefore she posed more than a temporary threat to both established custom and to the conservative interpretation of *ma'at* ... and with the end of his life approaching Thutmose may have felt it necessary to reinforce the tradition of male succession before he died.

SOURCE 5.22 J. Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut, The Female Pharaoh*, p. 226

ACTIVITY 5.10

1. Discuss the following: How did Hatshepsut manage to keep Thutmose III – the man who went on after the age of 30 to become possibly the greatest pharaoh to rule Egypt – in her shadow for so long?
2. What part has modern science played in refuting some claims that Thutmose III may have murdered his stepmother?
3. Consult the *National Geographic* magazine's article and image gallery on the fascinating discovery of Hatshepsut's body and possible causes of death.
4. Assess the views of C. F. Nims, as well as Gai Robins, Donald Redford and Joyce Tyldesley (Sources 5.20–5.22), about the erasure of the images and titles of Hatshepsut and the destruction of many of her statues by Thutmose III after her death.

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5.4 Evaluation

Impact on her time

Despite breaking with tradition and assuming the kingship, Hatshepsut would have been judged in the context of her time – like all her predecessors – by the ancient expectations regarding the role of the pharaoh: her ability to maintain *ma'at*. She confirmed her intention to carry out her divine responsibilities by the name she assumed when she ascended the throne: Maat-ka-re.

Like any conventional king, she:

- glorified the gods. She repaired the temples destroyed by the Hyksos, and restored rites, festivals and cult possessions that had been neglected. She built new monuments for the gods, dedicating particularly to Amun her mortuary temple and her buildings at Karnak. She also ensured that the cult of Amun would continue to prosper. As a religious leader she gave the lion's share of new buildings and offerings to this cult and advanced its priesthood by giving them influential posts.
- increased the prosperity of the country and the people. Her building program provided employment, and her trading expeditions to Punt and Sinai opened up trade routes, provided great wealth and delivered exotic products.
- defended the borders of Egypt (Nubia and Palestine) and protected her people by maintaining a well-trained and equipped army which she confidently gave to Thutmose III to command.
- provided stability and law and order by governing the country well, choosing officials carefully, maintaining the support of a male elite and working amicably with Thutmose III so that it appears there were no internal rebellions or challenge to her authority for 21 years.

By maintaining *ma'at*, Hatshepsut instilled confidence in the people who could see that the gods were happy with her prosperous and peaceful reign.

An assessment of her reign

- Hatshepsut's great political skill allowed her to steer her country through 21 prosperous and peaceful years. She was capable of making things work and she proved that a woman could rule effectively and be a successful king.
- It took great shrewdness to overcome the obstacle of the belief that the role of the king could only be carried out by a man.
- She sensibly took a gradual approach to assuming the role of king, and although she never denied her sex, she knew that to follow tradition she must ultimately assume the guise of a male.
- Her strength of personality allowed her to gain and maintain the loyalty of an elite group of officials. These included those who served under her father and husband such as Ineni, and those who she was canny enough to link with her own career, especially those involved in the cult of Amun; for example, Hapusoneb and Senenmut.
- She managed to rule amicably with her co-ruler – her stepson Thutmose III – so much so that she entrusted him with the command of the military as he grew older, and prepared him well for his sole kingship.
- She was one of the greatest builders in a dynasty of great builders. Her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri was one of the most glorious buildings that have survived from Egyptian history. The quarrying, transporting and erecting of her obelisks was a major undertaking.
- She permanently opened the trade routes to Punt.
- One of her greatest achievements was her stable government.
- She certainly broke with the status quo by seizing power rather than being content to give up the regency when Thutmose III reached manhood. Although her motives are unknown, she went on to become a great king without having to resort to violence against others or by inciting violence against herself.

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- She used effective propaganda to support her reign, but all kings since the beginning of Egyptian history used their monuments to glorify their achievements and virtues, and to honour the gods.
- Although her monuments and many of her inscriptions were destroyed after her death on the orders of Thutmose III, it now appears that this was not due to hatred or vengeance on the part of her stepson. It was quite common for Egyptian pharaohs to erase the names of their predecessors and replace them with their own, and to dismantle their predecessors' buildings.
- Also, this mutilation was carried out over 20 years after her death. Perhaps, as suggested by D. Redford, Hatshepsut was too successful as a pharaoh, leading Thutmose III to fear that 'if he left the glories of her reign open to view', it might have invited 'an invidious comparison with his own accomplishments'.[38]

Legacy

Hatshepsut not only maintained control of Egypt for over 21 years, but also left a great legacy for the future.

- By providing prosperity, stability and security, Hatshepsut ensured Egypt was in good hands following her death. Her achievements allowed Thutmose III to campaign beyond Egypt for 17 years, to build and organise an empire and to increase Egypt's wealth and power. There is no surprise that Thutmose III became one of the greatest pharaohs of the New Kingdom, given the guidance and opportunities afforded to him during his co-regency with Hatshepsut.
- From the time of Hatshepsut, the status of Amun was raised above all other gods and his priesthood acquired great religious, economic and political influence. Under Hatshepsut, the high priest of Amun claimed the right to supervise the cults of other gods, such as Ptah of Memphis and Re of Heliopolis, frequently holding the title of Overseer of the Prophets of all the Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt. Because the high priest or prophet of Amun was a political appointment, a number of them from the time of Hatshepsut also held the position of vizier, such as Hapusoneb. Hatshepsut dedicated the lion's share of wealth in the form of booty, tribute and trade to Amun's treasury so that the powerful priesthood controlled one of the largest and richest establishments in Egypt.
- Hatshepsut restored Egypt's former glory and instilled a confidence in the people that continued in the reigns of her successors.

Interpretations of Hatshepsut

Hatshepsut – removed from the ancient Egyptian King Lists – remained unknown to scholars until 1822 when they were able to decode and read the hieroglyphics on the walls of Deir el-Bahri. From the early 19th century until the present, Hatshepsut has presented something of a dilemma and her 'usurpation' of the throne as well as her achievements have been variously interpreted. It is interesting to ponder on one of Hatshepsut's inscriptions where she admits to worrying about what her people will say about her and how those who see her monuments in the future will speak of what she has done.

The various interpretations over the last 100 years or so have tended to be based on the personal feelings of Egyptologists with regard to her gender, her motives, her character, the power struggles and her personal relationships rather than her policies; feelings that coincide with the beliefs common to a generation.

Only with modern research have many of the extreme views and popular images of Hatshepsut, as a scheming and power-hungry woman who thwarted the ambitions of her co-ruler, been discredited.

At the turn of the 20th century, the interpretations of Hatshepsut appear to have been relatively favourable. These early scholars, used to the idea of a successful female monarch in the form of Queen Victoria, and unclear on the Thutmosid succession, believed her propaganda and saw her as a legitimate and successful ruler.

1 Edouard Naville, the French archaeologist who worked on the excavations of Hatshepsut's temple at Deir el-Bahri, described her as a woman who 'did not fall below the standard of the rest of the

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18th dynasty … [having given] early evidence of her capacity to reign'.[39] He also refers to her government as enlightened.

2 E. A. Wallis Budge, Egyptologist at the British Museum, said that she deserves to be regarded as among the greatest kings of Egypt, and that the interests of the country did not suffer under her control.

By 1938, attitudes were changing. Etienne Drioton and Jacques Vandier, two French Egyptologists, claimed that Hatshepsut's military policy was the result of her gender (the weaker sex) and was a disaster as she halted the policy of conquests of her male predecessors and was too concerned with the internal difficulties of Egypt.

It was during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when the climate of opinion really began to change at the hands of J. A. Wilson, G. Steindorff and K. Seele, W. C. Hayes and A. H. Gardiner. These men have tended to paint Hatshepsut as an evil, power-hungry queen who posed as a man to support her claim to the throne, relied on male officials such as Senenmut to rule, failed to concentrate on creating an empire and fostered resentment in Thutmose III.

> Hatshepsut was a pacifist whose pride was in the internal development of Egypt rather than imperial expansion. Her achievements did not really measure up to the great conqueror, Thutmose III.

SOURCE 5.23 J. A. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, p. 174

> Hatshepsut was a high-handed woman who kept her co-ruler on the sidelines and thwarted his ambitions. She also gave too much influence and power to the upstart Senenmut.

SOURCE 5.24 G. Steindorff and K. Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, p. 46

> Hatshepsut was a bad-tempered, vain, shrewd, ambitious and unscrupulous woman (who soon) showed her true colours. After the death of her husband, she bided her time, waiting for the right moment to strike.

SOURCE 5.25 W. C. Hayes, *The Scepter of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 82

> Hatshepsut was an unnatural and scheming woman with a virile character who posed and dressed as a man, supported by cringing deferential officials. She deliberately abused a position of trust by stealing the throne from a defenceless child. Her reign was also barren of military activities.

SOURCE 5.26 A. H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 184

These scholarly interpretations of the mid 20th century have influenced popular writers such as B. Mertz in *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs*, who says Hatshepsut was 'someone who could not wage war and could not deny her heart', the lover of Senenmut who fathered her daughter, and 'a woman who probably felt no emotion stronger than contempt for the helpless young king'.[40] Many of these popular writers continue to uphold the tradition of the great feud between Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.

Fortunately, the modern research by historians such as J. Tyldesley, G. Robins, D. Redford, C. F. Nims and P. F. Dorman – much of which is mentioned in this option – have allowed many of the extreme views of Hatshepsut to be abandoned.

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Her reign, a carefully balanced period of internal peace, foreign exploration and monumental building, was in all respects – except one obvious one – a conventional New Kingdom regime: Egypt prospered under her rule. Such success seems to have confirmed her competence and mental stability.

SOURCE 5.27 J. Tyldesley, *Hatchepsut, The Female Pharaoh*, p. 112

ACTIVITY 5.11

1. List the negative qualities ascribed to Hatshepsut by mid 20th-century historians
2. How does Source 5.27 reflect a more objective view of her?

5.5 The value and limitations of the divine birth and coronation inscriptions

Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir-el Bahri and its inscriptions are regarded as the greatest sources of evidence for her reign. However, much of her temple, its statues and inscriptions were deliberately damaged during subsequent reigns, making the archaeological and textual evidence for her life and career incomplete. Much of what we know about her is **conjecture**, and there is a variety of interpretations of some of the issues and events of her reign. Some things about which there is no lack of evidence, however, is her dedication to the god Amun-Re, her need to stress her divine birth and to justify her 'seizure' of the throne.

conjecture the expression of an opinion without sufficient evidence for proof

The elaborate and complex texts associated with the divine birth and coronation reliefs – probably composed by the priests of Amun-Re – are difficult to follow, especially with their obscure historical references, their over-the-top glorification of Amun and Hatshepsut, and their endless repetitions. However, these inscriptions, which start in heaven and end with her supposed earthly coronation, are regarded as a masterpiece of Egyptian political/religious writings and contain everything that Hatshepsut could possibly have needed to justify her assumption of power.

Before evaluating these texts, it is necessary to point out that our modern way of thinking is far removed from that of the ancient Egyptians and it is almost impossible to understand that:

- they believed 'a metaphysical world poured into the physical, saturating it with meaning'[41]
- there was little difference to them between myth and reality
- the myth of the divine birth – the fusion of a god with a royal woman – 'guaranteed the continuity of proper rule that was so important an element in the Egyptians' thinking' and 'could absorb the petty vagaries of history.'[42]

Also, it should be understood that throughout Egyptian history, the purpose of the records carved onto the walls of temples and on free-standing stelae was to:

- maintain the divine status of the king by reiterating the ideology that each king was the son of either Re, or in the case of the New Kingdom, the son of Amun
- commemorate his reign and particular deeds in the most favourable light, ignoring anything negative
- honour the gods
- depict what was traditional rather than what actually happened
- replicate the glories of the past
- exploit the concept of *ma'at,* as a way to reinforce their right to rule and to justify any action that might be deemed as questionable.

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These texts are often regarded by historians as a form of propaganda as they were seen as being 'slanted away from reality,'[43] but they were never meant to be seen by anyone other than a few priests or elite officials.

Confirmation of her divine birth and her propaganda that she was the legitimate successor of her father was found inscribed on all her other monuments:

- On the southern pylon at the Temple of Karnak, her father is shown calling on the Theban triad (Amun, Mut and Khonshu) to bless his daughter upon her reign.
- The blocks from the Red Chapel describe an oracle in which she was declared the heir to her father; reliefs showing her Heb-sed festival related to her father's reign, and an indication of a coronation, but with a fictional date.
- The importance of Amun as her divine 'father' is seen in the *Holiest of holies* sanctuary devoted to him in her mortuary temple.

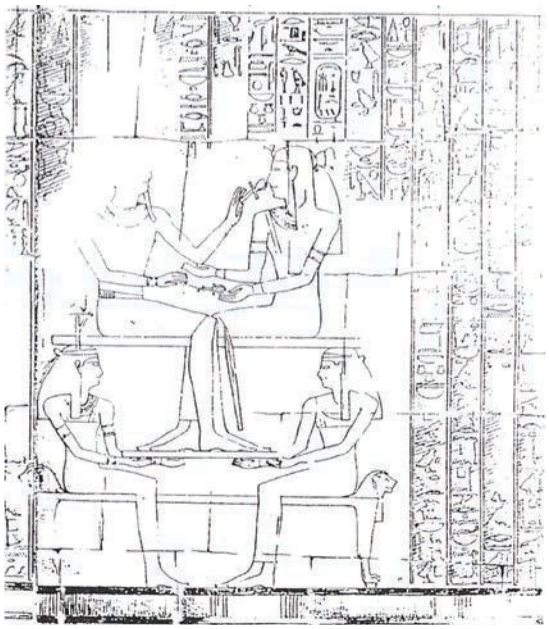

FIGURE 5.39 Copy of a relief from Deir el-Bahri showing Amun appearing before Queen Ahmose in the guise of Thutmose I

TABLE 5.6 The value and limitations of the birth and coronation reliefs

The divine birth and coronation reliefs and texts	
Value	**Limitations**
• These texts reveal Hatshepsut's concern to follow tradition in terms of legitimising her right to rule by stressing her divine birth, as had all kings in the past. However, she gave greater emphasis to it, due to the atypical nature of her assumption of power and her gender. • The reliefs show for the first time, in great detail, a visual and textual example of the concept of theogamy. • They 'reveal her genius at adapting old styles to new requirements'.[44] • The coronation reliefs refer to the specific divine responsibilities of a king to maintain 'proper rule' (*ma'at*), e.g. the defeat of Egypt's enemies, and the need to restore order after chaos. • They reveal the extraordinary prominence and influence of the cult and priesthood of Amun during her reign and her attempts to make sure the cult would continue to prosper. These texts promote Amun's help in her kingship and point to the influence of those associated with the cult with whom she associated in her administration. • They reveal her obsession with her bloodline via her father, Thutmose I.	These texts reveal nothing about: • Hatshepsut as a real person and her early upbringing • her decision to, motivations for and date of seizing the throne • her real coronation and the year when it was carried out, or if there was a joint coronation with her and Thutmose III. They present a 'fiction' by: • ignoring the well-documented reign of her husband Thutmose II • ignoring the evidence of her reign as Queen consort when she was only referred to as *King's Great Wife* and was shown standing behind her husband in a relief • suggesting that a journey she possibly took with her father as a child was his way of showing that she had been selected by Amun as her father's heir. The fact is that it was not likely that Thutmose would have bypassed his son (Thutmose II) and grandson (Thutmose III) in favour of his daughter.

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- The depiction in her mortuary temple of her trading expedition to Punt and the transport of her obelisks emphasise the prominence of the cult of Amun.
- The importance of her physical father, Thutmose II, from whom she insisted she inherited the throne, is seen in the sanctuary to him in her mortuary temple, and the fact that she arranged for him to share in the mortuary services conducted on her behalf. She also reburied him in her own tomb.

The over-abundance of repetitive inscriptions for her divine birth, and the fictional accounts to justify her 'seizure' of the throne, have made it difficult to discover the enigma that was Hatshepsut, and have led to much conjecture about her reign.

ACTIVITY 5.12

Assess the value and limitations of the birth and coronation texts as a source of understanding Hatshepsut's reign.

FIGURE 5.40 Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir-el Bahri

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

5.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Under Hatshepsut's predecessors, Egypt was re-united after a period of divided rule during the occupation of Lower Egypt by Hyksos (foreigners from Canaan); the country's borders were secured and expanded; the country became prosperous and stable; and lands outside Egypt (Nubia, Palestine and Syria) played a greater role than before.
- The kings, who controlled every aspect of society, were responsible for maintaining *ma'at* (divine order). They depended on a small and powerful elite who ran the bureaucracy.
- Changes in the army: adoption of the superior weapons of the Hyksos e.g. chariotry.
- The god Amun rose in status to that of a state god. Each pharaoh became known as the 'son of Amun'. Its high priest held an important position and much of the buildings were dedicated to Amun's Temple at Karnak.

5.2 HATSHEPSUT'S BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE

- Hatshepsut came from a family of illustrious kings (Ahmose, Amenhotep I, Thutmose I) and exceptional queens (Tetisheri, Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari).
- Her father, Thutmose I (fathered a son by a previous wife – the future Thutmose II) married Ahmose (possibly his half-sister). Hatshepsut was the sole remaining child of Thutmose and Ahmose.
- Hatshepsut married her half-brother, Thutmose II, who had a son by a concubine (future Thutmose III). Together Thutmose II and Hatshepsut had a daughter, Neferure.

5.3 KEY FEATURES OF HATSHEPSUT'S REIGN

- As queen consort: appears to have done nothing unusual, no special titles and accepted her subsidiary role to her husband. Began building a tomb suitable for a queen in an isolated wadi.
- After early death of her husband, became regent for her small stepson Thutmose III to whom she would hand over power when he reached adulthood (about 16). She took care not to overstep her power but may have been preparing for a take-over.
- Sometime between years 2–7 of Thutmose's reign, she assumed the dominant position in a co-regency with him. Her reasons for this may never be known – controversy over motivations.
- Adopted a kingly identity, assumed the throne as Maat-ka-re, began appearing in statuary and reliefs with kingly regalia, then adopted the appearance of a traditional king (beard, *nemes* [headdress], royal kilt) and even as a sphinx.
- To justify her seizure of power, she rewrote her history via the divine birth and coronation reliefs and texts on the walls of her mortuary temple, in which she claimed a theogamous birth (fathered by a god) and her father's choice of her as his successor bypassing the reign of her husband.
- Fragmentary evidence indicates several military campaigns into Nubia and Palestine but her greatest achievement was her trading expedition to Punt (tropical products, the collection of incense trees and to honour her 'father' Amun).

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- Her building program (most notably her mortuary temple at Deir-el Bahri and Red Chapel and obelisks at Karnak) expressed devotion to Amun, reflected her obsession with restoring Egypt's past glory and advertised that there was a powerful pharaoh on the throne.
- Her religious policy glorified Amun at every opportunity, increased the status of the high priest, gifted great wealth and power on the god's priesthood and promoted other cults' relationships with the Amun priesthood.
- She was supported by a powerful male elite including Hapusoneb (Vizier and High Priest of Amun) and Senenmut (chief steward of Amun and chief steward of the king).
- She remained the senior partner in the co-regency with Thutmose III. Debate over how she kept the future greatest pharaoh in Egyptian history in her shadow for 21 years and about the erasure of her images and titles as well as the destruction of her statuary after her death. Her name never appeared on the King Lists and she disappeared from history until 1882.

5.4 EVALUATION

- Must be judged in the context of her day.
- Like any traditional king, she carried out her divine responsibilities. She showed great political skill, was one of the greatest builders, kept the peace, increased prosperity and maintained the support of the leading officials of her time.
- She left Egypt in good hands following her death. Her achievements allowed Thutmose III to campaign beyond Egypt for 17 years and build and organise an empire.
- The interpretations of Hatshepsut in the last 100 years have tended to be based on the personal feelings of Egyptologists with regard to her gender, character, motives, power struggles and personal relationships, rather than her policies. Modern research has allowed the extreme views of Hatshepsut to be revised.

5.5 THE VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DIVINE BIRTH AND CORONATION INSCRIPTIONS

- The value of the divine birth and coronation texts and reliefs as a source for understanding Hatshepsut are limited. They were inscribed as an attempt to legitimise her illegal seizure of power and to rewrite her history and include many fictions. They reveal nothing about Hatshepsut as a person, her reasons for seizing the throne or about her coronation and its date. However, they do provide the first detailed visual example of the concept of theogamy, and her devotion or obsession with Amun and Thutmose I.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- co-regency
- Heb-sed
- *ma'at*
- obelisk
- oracle
- titulary
- theogamy

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills and identify where they have been used throughout this study:

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

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Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What changes were brought about by Hatshepsut's male predecessors:
- Ahmose
- Amenhotep I
- Thutmose I?

2) What changes occurred over time in:
- Hatshepsut's royal status
- her image and titles
- the interpretation of her reign?

3) What significant role did Hatshepsut's female predecessors play in their time?

4) What was the significance of:
- Hatshepsut's throne name, Maat-ka-re
- her Punt expedition
- Senenmut's role in her reign?

5) Outline the perspectives of early 20th-century historians on Hatshepsut's military policy.

6) What perspectives do the following historians provide to refute the motive of vindictiveness on the part of Thutmose III in his destruction of Hatshepsut monuments?
- C. F. Nimes
- G. Robins
- D. Redford
- J. Tyldesley

Historical skills

1) Analyse the sources:
- What does the source below suggest about Hatshepsut's ability?

> Hatshepsut settled the affairs of the Two Lands by reason of her plans. Egypt was made to labour with bowed head for her ... whose plans are excellent, who satisfies the Two Regions when she speaks.

- Note what the source below reveals about royal propaganda and explain why Hatshepsut would have felt the need to describe her Punt trading expedition this way.

> The coming of the chiefs of Punt, doing obeisance, with bowed heads, to receive the army of the king: they give praise to the lord of gods, Amun-Re ... reception of the tribute of the Chief of Punt by the king's messenger.

2) Evaluate the usefulness of the following as sources for Hatshepsut's reign.
- Djeser-Djeseru at Deir el-Bahri
- The Red Chapel at Karnak
- The birth and coronation reliefs.

3) Comment on the statement by Sir Alan Gardiner: '... even a woman of the most virile character could not have attained such a pinnacle of power without masculine support'.

4) Assess Hatshepsut's success as a pharaoh.

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CHAPTER 6
Akhenaten

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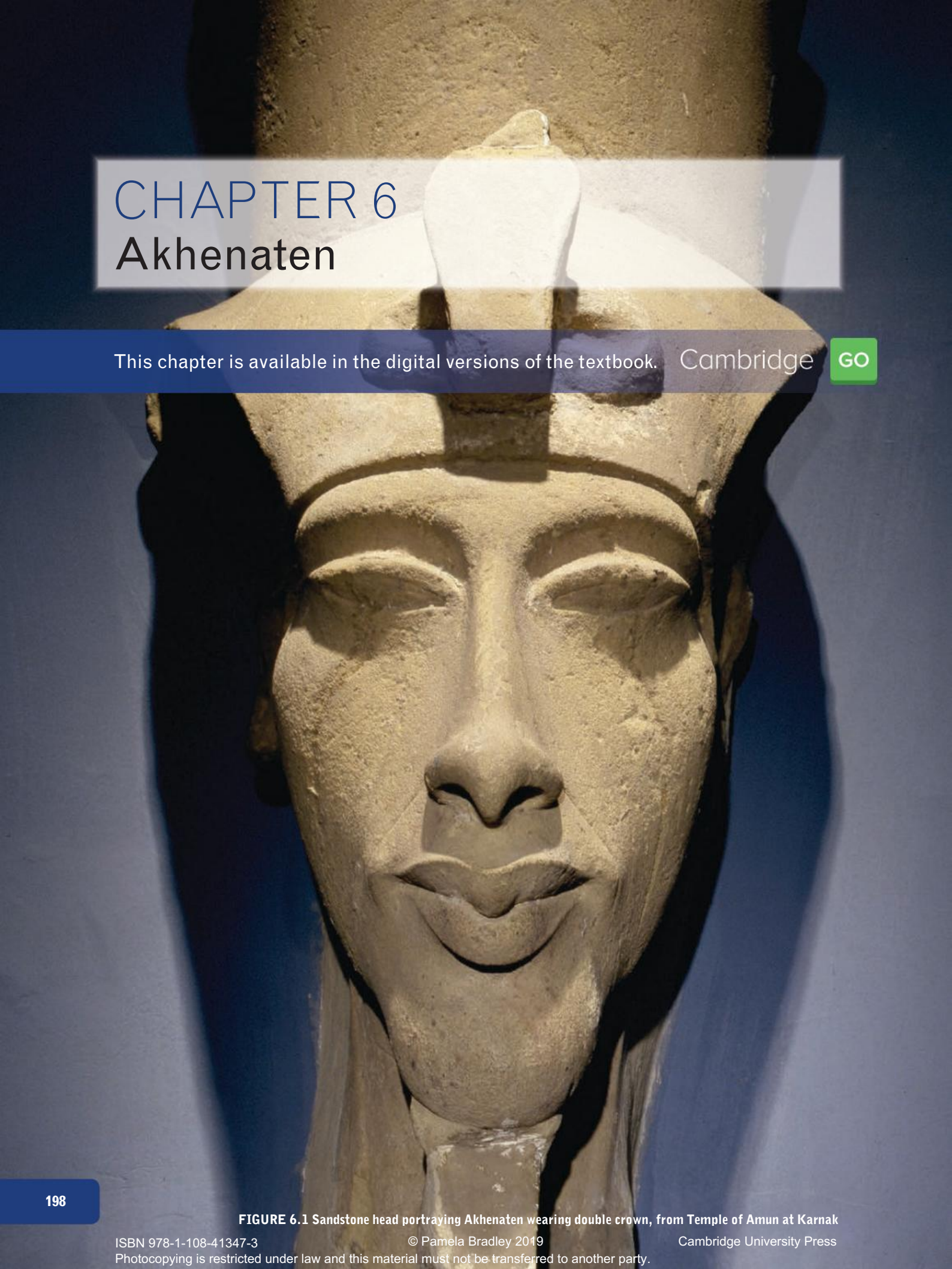

FIGURE 6.1 Sandstone head portraying Akhenaten wearing double crown, from Temple of Amun at Karnak

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CHAPTER 7
Qin Shi Huangdi

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FIGURE 7.1 Qin Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty

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CHAPTER 8
Alexander the Great

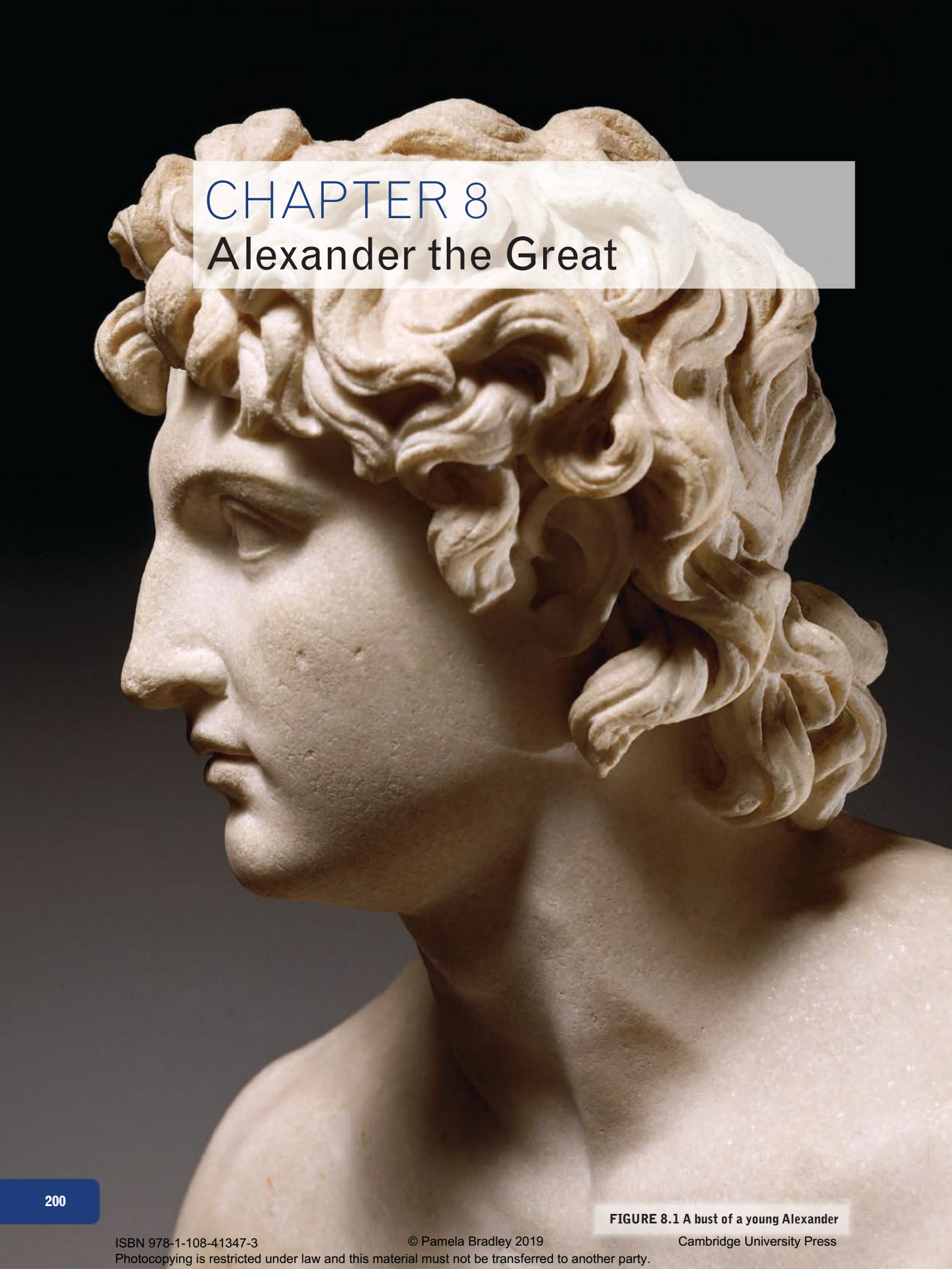

FIGURE 8.1 A bust of a young Alexander

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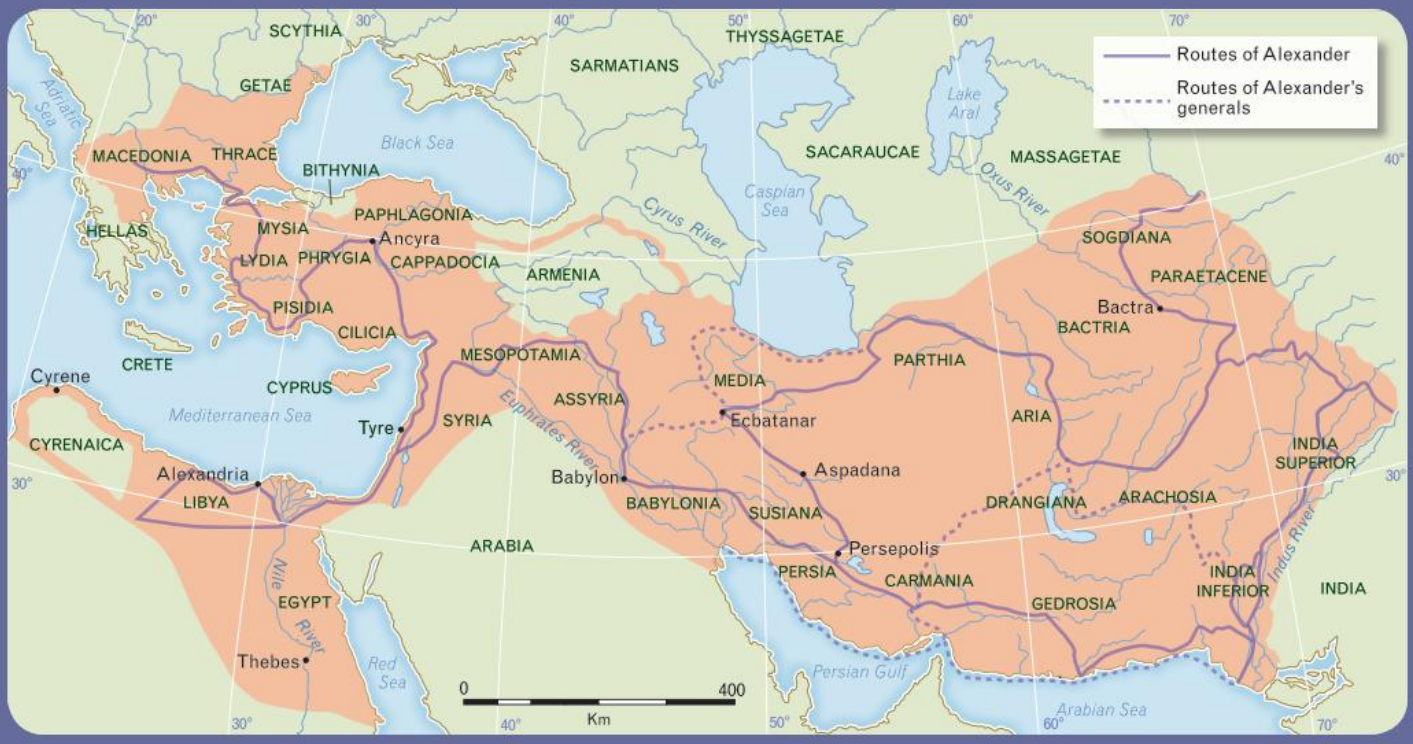
FIGURE 8.2 The routes and extent of Alexander's conquests



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Alexander the Great through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• historical context • background and rise to prominence of Alexander • key features and developments in the career of Alexander • evaluation • the value and limitations of Arrian's *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Book IV (please note, for ease sake, from here on we use simple numbers rather than roman numerals to refer to the different books and sections of Arrian's works).

Alexander may have been one of the greatest catalysts in history. Out of his conquests came the Hellenistic Age … as a result of his conquests a whole new pattern of political, cultural, social and religious developments took place.

SOURCE 8.1 E. M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 182

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

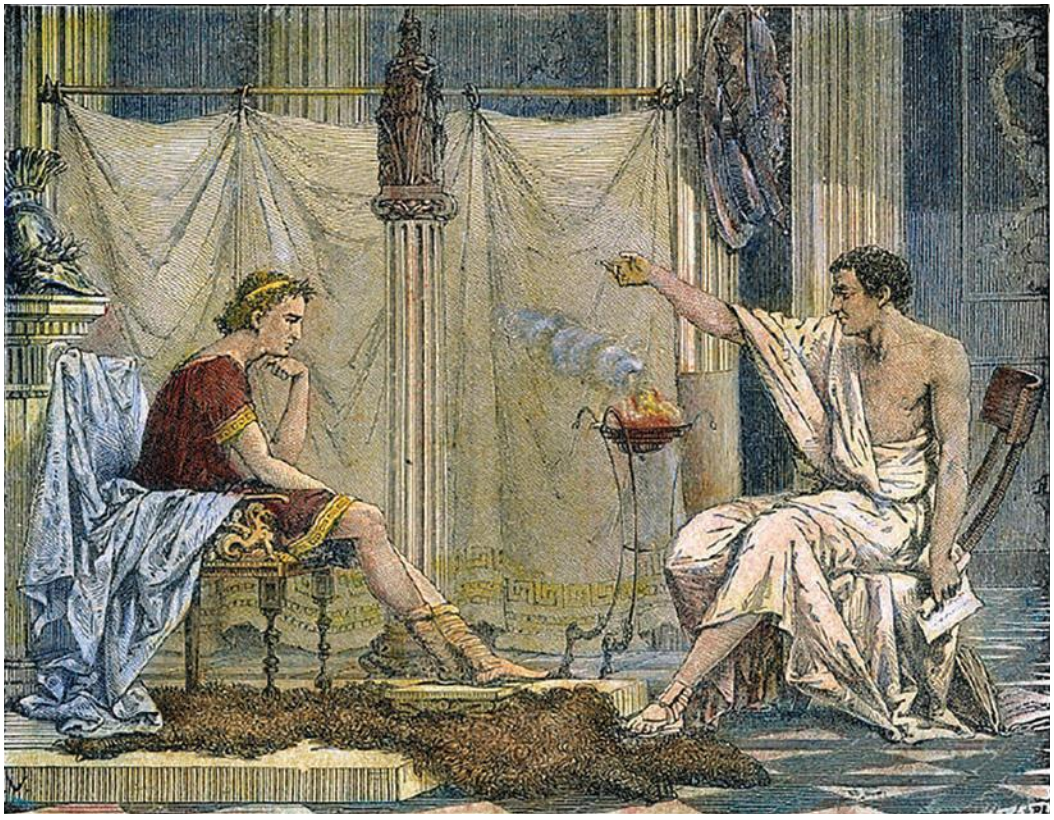

FIGURE 8.3 Alexander being instructed by Aristotle (philosopher, scientist and political theorist)

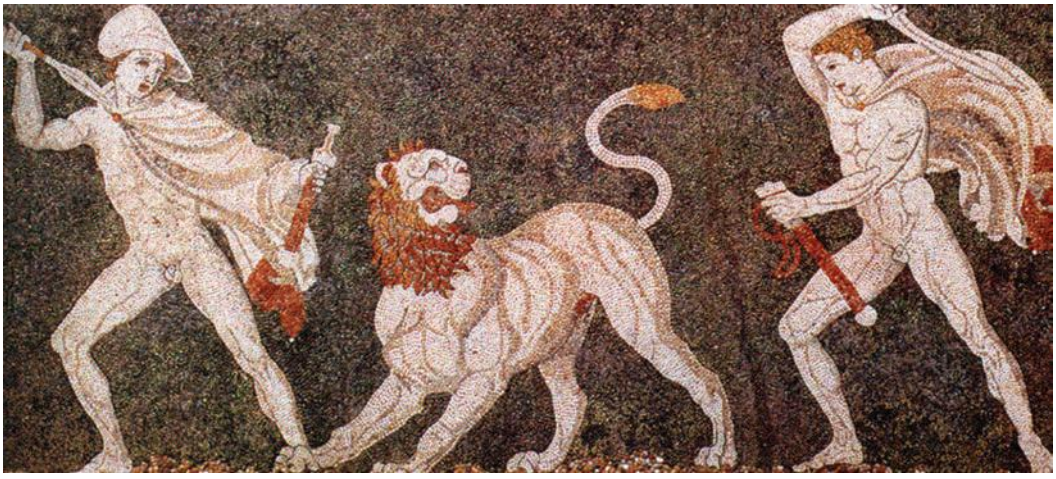

FIGURE 8.4 A mosaic of Alexander and one of his Companions hunting lions

Study Figures 8.3 and 8.4 carefully. What do they tell you about the upbringing and education of Alexander? What might these images suggest about their long-term influence on Alexander's personality and behaviour?

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CHAPTER 8 Overview

KEY IDEA

Alexander of Macedon, one of the most written-about and dramatic historical personalities, remains to this day controversial and something of an enigma. Dead by the age of 32, he had already conquered the mighty Persian Empire and defeated every opponent, and yet we may never know the 'real' Alexander and his vision, since the writers of the past created something of a fictional heroic character; from others, a picture generated by the cultural beliefs and politics of their own day. Most of today's criticisms of him are meaningless since he is judged in the light of our modern values. There have been many Alexanders over time but one thing that can be said of him with certainty is that he was a catalyst for change in world history.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

In today's world we could do no better than to follow some of the more positive qualities inherent in Alexander and others that were part of the 'Great Soul Man' he sought to emulate: his insatiable curiosity about the world, his desire to explore the unknown; to 'go beyond' all others in excellence; to aim for practical thoughtfulness in everything he did; to respect loyalty, to seek honour through competition and to never be afraid to admit when he made mistakes.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- barbarian
- deification
- hegemony
- Hellenistic
- mole
- oligarchy
- panhellenic
- patricide
- peltast
- phalanx
- polygamy
- prostration
- sarissa
- trireme

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did Alexander's relationship with his Macedonian army change during his time in Asia?

Painting the picture

Alexander III of Macedonia, later referred to as 'The Great', came to the throne in 336 BC at the age of 20. By the time of his death in 323 in Babylon, he had led an army more than 16 000 kilometres from western Asia and Egypt to India, 'across mountains, broad plains and deserts, and into lands waterlogged by the monsoon'.[1] He was driven, not only by an insatiable curiosity and desire to explore the world, but by a need to go beyond everyone else in excellence. He overthrew the great Persian Empire, defeated every opponent he faced either in set battles, sieges or guerilla-style warfare (not always easily won), almost always leading his men from the front and suffering many serious wounds in the process. He founded cities ('Alexandrias') that spread Greek culture and language throughout the east, which eventually created the civilisation known as Hellenistic. Despite the general loyalty of his Macedonian troops, there were times when they questioned his motives and actions, and were unhappy with his adoption of Persian ways and his incorporation of Persians into his army. The criticisms of some of the Companions and generals seemed to lead to a form of paranoia about their loyalty and to the executions of some and the murder of one in a drunken brawl.

Hellenistic the merging of Greek (Hellenic) and eastern cultural elements after the time of Alexander the Great

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There is no doubt that Alexander was one of the most dramatic and controversial personalities in world history. Opinions about him have always been divided due to the fact that:

- much of what was written about him during his life – and now lost – was what he wanted known about himself (propaganda)
- the major ancient sources such as Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius and Diodorus Siculus lived at the time of the Roman Empire, three to five centuries after his death, and the Alexander they created is a character 'generated by the cultural politics of the Roman world'.[2]
- modern historians have evaluated him in the light of the values of their own day, 'standards that Alexander and his contemporaries would not have recognized'.[3]

TABLE 8.1 Timeline of Alexander's life

356 BC	Alexander is born to Olympias and Philip II.
338	Philip and Alexander defeat the Greek alliance at the Battle of Chaeronea.
336	Philip is assassinated and Alexander becomes king.
335	Alexander destroys Thebes for rebelling against him.
334	Alexander begins his campaign to conquer the Persians with the Battle of Granicus.
333	Alexander defeats the Persian king, Darius III, at the Battle of Issus.
332	Alexander captures the impregnable fortress city of Tyre.
331	Alexander is crowned pharaoh in Egypt, once again defeats Darius at the Battle of Gaugamela, and is welcomed into the ancient city of Babylon.
330	Alexander enters Susa, the administrative capital of the Persian Empire, and burns Persepolis, the empire's ceremonial centre. The execution of Philotas and Parmenio.
329	Alexander reaches Bactria (Afghanistan).
328	Alexander kills Cleitus, his Companion cavalry commander, in a drunken brawl.
327	Alexander marries Roxanne, daughter of a Sogdian ruler, moves into India and crosses the Hydaspes River (Punjab of modern-day Pakistan).
326	Alexander faces King Porus in his fourth and last great pitched battle. It was the closest he came to defeat. His men refuse to go any further east.
325	Alexander returns to Persia with part of his force by marching through the Gedrosian Desert.
324	Alexander and many of his commanders take Persian wives.
323	Alexander dies in Babylon aged 32.

8.1 Historical context

Geography and resources of Macedonia

Ancient Macedonia – in the northern part of the Greek peninsula – was surrounded by Thessaly to the south, Epirus to the west, Illyria and Pannonia to the north, Thrace to the east and the Chalcidic area – once part of the Athenian Empire – to the south-east.

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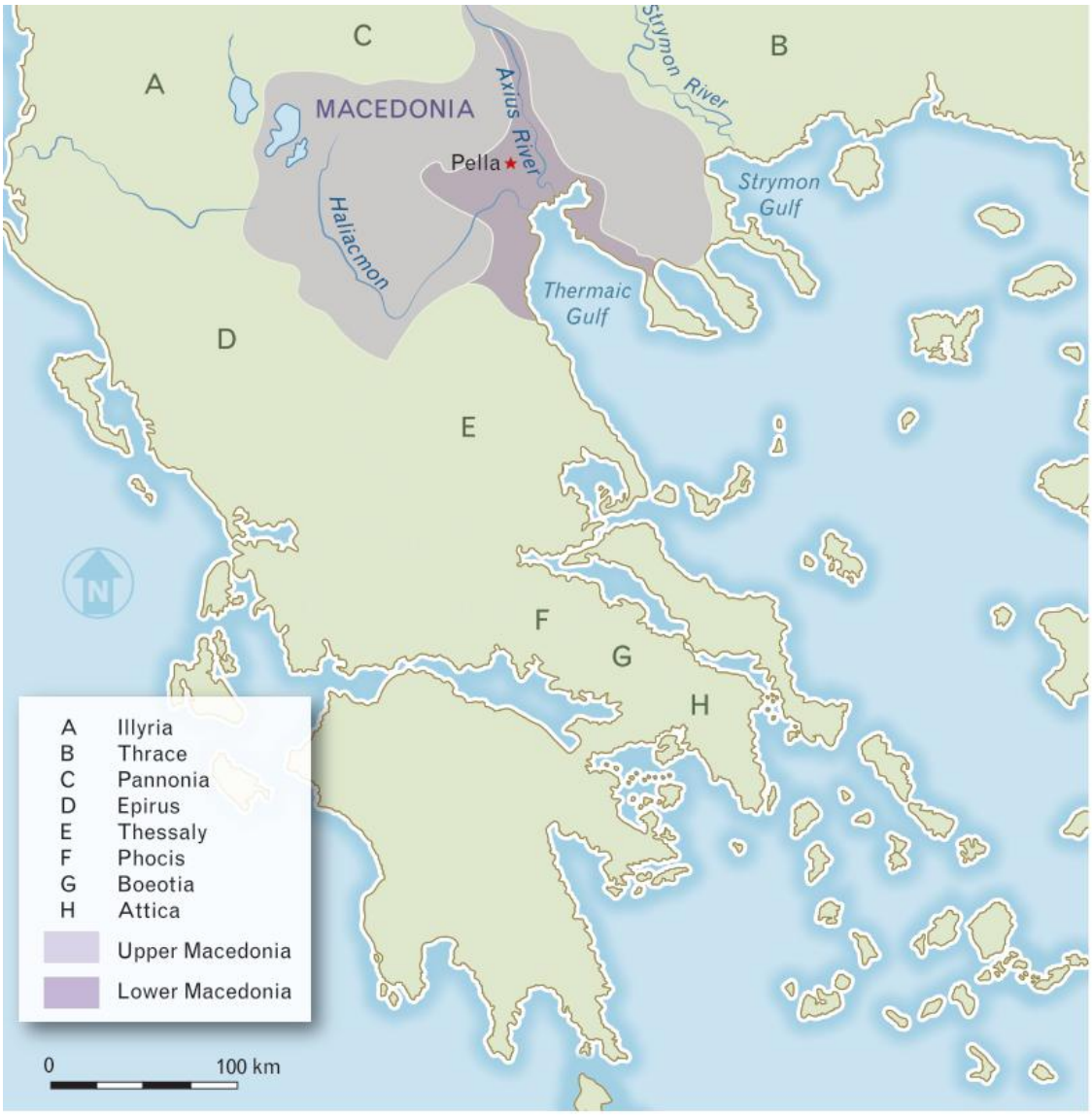

FIGURE 8.5 The location and extent of Upper and Lower Macedonia at the time of Phillip II

According to Herodotus and Thucydides, Macedonia in the 5th century BC consisted of:

1 a fertile plain between the Axius and Haliacmon rivers known as Lower Macedonia, ruled by kings from their capital of Aegae and then later from Pella. This area was fertilised by long rivers and dotted with lakes and produced:
   - grain, vegetables, fruit trees, vineyards (wine) and olives
   - cattle and horses
   - fish
   - salt for goods ranging from medicine to glassmaking and an important trade item.

2 a wilder mountainous zone known as Upper Macedonia where the people were predominantly herders and subsistence farmers owing allegiance to clan chieftains. The mountains provided:
   - the valuable timber used for shipbuilding and traded to Greek maritime states
   - gold and silver from the mines of Mt Pangaeus (Mt Pangeo), from the time of Philip II, Alexander's father, in the mid-4th century BC.

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Herodotus mentioned that 'the Pangeo mountain, which is large and high, has gold and silver ore within it' while Strabo mentioned that 'there is much gold in Krines, where the city of Philippi was founded, close to the Pangeo mountain. And in Pangeo there are gold and silver mines, as well as in both the area up to river Strymon and the area beyond the river which expands to the borders of Paeonia ... Euripides, in his tragedy *Rhesus* names the Pangeo as 'the mountain with the blocks of gold, the soil of which hides silver'.

SOURCE 8.2 Mining Greece, *Gold Mines of Macedonia* (online)

The resources of the land belonged to the state, were managed by the king and their income was deposited in the royal treasury. In many cases the king rented out the right to exploit sources of royal revenue, such as timber, mines and harbours. ... Royal lands could also be donated to the king's friends.

SOURCE 8.3 S. Kremydi, 'The Resources of Macedonia' in *Ancient Macedon: Studies in the Archaeology and History of Macedon 650 BC – 300 AD*, p. 160–1

FIGURE 8.6 The mountains of Macedonia

Overview of Macedonian political structure

Macedonia was an autocracy, ruled by a king who, according to the Athenian Demosthenes, was 'responsible to nobody: the absolute autocrat, commander and master of everyone and everything'.[4]

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There appears to be no evidence of any formalised group that oversaw or disciplined the king, although he had to rally support from the fiercely proud aristocrats who thought of themselves as social equals of the royal family. A strong and charismatic king had almost boundless power, but a weak one soon lost his throne and his life. It appears that the king commanded the armies; declared war and made peace; directed foreign policy; and served as the intermediary between the gods and the people.

The king did not depend on a vast bureaucracy to govern, but rather ruled through the nobles and ***hetairoi***, or Companions, who were mostly selected from the prominent Macedonian landed aristocracy. Their relationship with the king was personal, not part of an institution. Ties of personal loyalty were the foundations of Macedonian political power, and the social bonding between the king and his Companions took place at frequent gatherings that involved hours of heavy drinking, conversing and arguing that often led to violent, drunken clashes.

hetairoi royal Companions

The Companions also trained, hunted, sacrificed and fought with the king. They were his personal advisers, cavalry commanders, religious representatives and ambassadors.

There was no such thing as a court of the Persian model, 'no harem [although Philip was polygamous], no eunuchs, no severely limited access to the king'[5] and no prostration before their king. Macedonians were able to address their king by name and were free to express their opinions openly. Any Macedonian could appeal to the king for a judgement.

Sons often followed their father onto the throne, but due to the royal practice of **polygamy**, there were often disputes over the royal title. Each of the king's wives – Philip II had seven – represented a political alliance with an important family, inside or outside the kingdom, and king's wives competed to promote their child in his father's eyes. Macedonian royal politics was a 'violently dangerous world'.[6] When a new king was a boy, it usually fell to an adult relative to take on the role of the boy's guardian, as in the case of Philip who became the guardian king to Amyntas, the son of his deceased brother King Perdiccas. However, once a guardian had children of his own, he passed on the title to his own son.

polygamy the practice of having many or several wives at one time

> To be born into a royal family among the Macedonians was to begin a lifelong struggle, no Macedonian could opt out. The reward was kingship, a cost of failure was death ... The heir to the throne would not survive, much less keep his position, unless he could assume control of the army, defend the country, and eliminate rivals.

SOURCE 8.4 E. M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, pp. 12–13

A COMMENT ON...

Royal successions

Throughout most of Macedonian history, kings were chosen from among the leaders of the extended Argead clan in which there were factions and divisions. Any charismatic leading member of the clan could be the next king so that there were usually quite a number of pretenders to the throne, often leading to succession crises.

Most Macedonian monarchs died not from armed conflicts over the succession, but from palace 'conspiracies of a highly personal nature'.[7] The predecessors of Alexander III ('the Great') were assassinated in such palace conspiracies: Archelaus, Amyntas II, Alexander II and Philip II.

The practice of polygamy added to these royal intrigues.

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Macedonia's relationship to the Greek world

After Athens lost its pre-eminence in the Greek world in 404 BC, first Sparta, then Thebes held military leadership for a short time during the first half of the 4th century, but neither was capable of holding together the disunited Greek cities nor leading them peacefully.

To most of the inhabitants of the Greek city-states, Macedonia was marginal to what went on in Greece. It was regarded predominantly of interest as a region to exploit for its resources: minerals and the timber needed for shipbuilding and the growth of the navies of city-states like Athens and Corinth.

Even though Philip and his ancestors spoke a dialect of Greek and had a similar ethnic heritage to the Greeks, many Greeks, like Aristotle, regarded them as culturally inferior and some included them among the 'barbarians', a term originally applied to non-Greeks. That Macedonians were not permitted to participate in many **panhellenic** games and activities held in Greece indicates that they were not regarded as 'true' Greeks, although kings were permitted to take part in the Olympic Games.

panhellenic means 'all Greek'

peltasts lightly armed missile troops

However, things began to change when the 24-year-old Philip II came to the throne in 359 BC and began developing a powerful national army.

The impact of Philip's military reforms

A Macedonian king was expected, above all, to command an army and Philip began experimenting with developing new weaponry and tactics. He:

1 re-organised the army by forming battalions more on a local (territorial) basis than a clan one
2 increased the royal cavalry (originally 600 upper-class Companion horsemen) to 4000
3 invented the title 'Foot Companions' for the six battalions of 9000 heavy infantry
4 created the 'Shield Bearers', 3000 crack foot guards who on the battlefield were the link between the cavalry and infantry
5 formed an elite corps of 100, called the Royal Guard
6 introduced the institution of the Royal Pages (youths aged 14–18), to train future military commanders. The pages were the sons of prominent aristocratic Macedonians whose duties were 'to guard the king while he slept, mount the king on his horse, attend him in the hunt, guard him while dining, and during their final year as pages, serve with the king in combat'.[8]

Then there were the ancillary units of light cavalry, **peltasts**, slingers and engineers (who developed siege engines and catapults).

> ... and, having improved the organization of his forces and equipped the men suitably with weapons of war, he held constant maneuvers of the men under arms and competitive drills. Indeed, he devised the compact order and the equipment of the phalanx, imitating the close order fighting with overlapping shields of the warriors at Troy, and was the first to organize the Macedonian phalanx.

SOURCE 8.5 Diodorus Siculus

phalanx a massed body of heavily armed infantry

sarissa spears or pikes about 5 metres long

The Macedonian phalanx and a national army

Philip developed a much-improved **phalanx** in which each infantryman (pike-man) carried a 5.5-metre-long **sarissa** – much longer than those formerly carried by Greek heavy infantry. Since sarissas could only be held in two hands, the shields became smaller, slung on the left shoulder and arm. The flanks of the phalanx were protected by

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other troops. Discipline was vital to maintain formation and this required constant and rigorous training, drills and manoeuvres.

With his powerful national army, Philip II was able to:

- check the disruptive tendencies in his own kingdom
- protect his frontiers from his northern enemies, the Illyrians and Thracians
- gain control of the Thermaic Gulf, outlets to the sea along the Thracian coast and control of the silver and gold mines of Mt Pangaeus, which yielded 1000 talents a year
- march into Greece and at the Battle of Chaeronea, just outside Thebes, in 338 decisively defeat an army of Greek states including Athens and Thebes.

FIGURE 8.7 An artistic depiction of a Macedonian phalanx

Eventually he was able to do for the Greeks what they were never able to do for themselves. He united them under his leadership at a Congress of Corinth in 338 and 337 BC, and to maintain his **hegemony** he stationed garrisons in some cities and relied on pro-Macedonian oligarchies in others.

hegemony political or military leadership or dominance of one state over another

He then announced a panhellenic war of revenge against Persia and sent his commander Parmenion ahead with 10 000 troops into Asia.

Philip has been described as a political and military genius who turned Macedonia into the greatest power in the western world.

ACTIVITY 8.1

1. Describe the main geographical features of Macedonia.
2. Identify the capital of Macedonia at the time of Alexander.
3. Summarise what Sources 8.2 and 8.3 reveal about some of the most valuable resources of Macedonia and their ownership.
4. Describe the power of a Macedonian king and the role played by the nobles and *hetairoi*.
5. What does Source 8.4 and the comment on Macedonian succession say about the rigors of being a royal in Macedonia?
6. Describe the attitude of the Greeks towards Macedonians prior to the rise of Philp II.
7. Construct a diagram illustrating the new national army introduced by King Philip.
8. Identify the particular aspect of the army that Diodorus Siculus refers to in Source 8.5.
9. How was the new army used in Macedonia and Greece under Philip?

8.2 Background and rise to prominence of Alexander

Family background and birth

Alexander was born in 356 BC while his warrior father was away at one of his wars. His mother, Olympias, the daughter of the King of Epirus, was Philip's fourth wife. Both parents claimed decent from semi-divine Greek heroes: his father claimed descent from Herakles, the son of Zeus, and Olympias' family's lineage came from that of Achilles, 'the best of the Greeks'.

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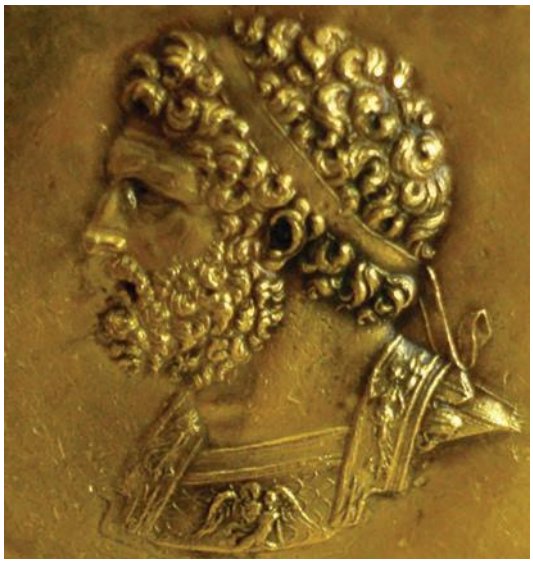

FIGURE 8.8 Plaque depicting Philip II of Macedonia

FIGURE 8.9 Image of Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great

TABLE 8.2 Alexander's parents

Philip II	Olympias
• Philip's ancestors from the Aegid clan claimed descent from Herakles, the semi-divine hero and son of Zeus. • He had two older brothers who each ruled for short periods. • As a youth, he was taken as a hostage to the Greek city of Thebes, where he acquired a military and diplomatic education under Epaminondas, the greatest tactician and general of the time. • In 359, he came to the throne unexpectedly at the age of 21 on the death of his brother Perdiccas. Initially, he was appointed as regent for his young nephew, but managed to take the kingdom for himself that same year. • Faced with threats to his kingdom on all fronts, he took action: organised a powerful national army, united his kingdom, made Macedonia financially secure and attempted to seek a partnership with the Greeks to the south. • Philip was an astute diplomat: a tough military leader able to operate on several fronts at once; ruthless when opposed; an impressive and effective orator; by nature, convivial and hospitable, attracting to his court at Pella men of letters and others of note, but like many Macedonians, he drank too much and was often drunk.	• Olympias was the daughter of the King of Epirus, a country to the south-west of Macedonia. • Her family traced its lineage back to that of Achilles, hero of the Trojan War and the 'best of the Greeks'. • She became the fourth wife of Philip II as a result of a political alliance between Macedonia and Epirus. • She was originally named Myrtale but received the name Olympias when Philip's horse won a race at the Olympic Games. • According to the sources she appears to have had great strength of character and had a fiery temperament. She was also headstrong, meddlesome, manipulative, jealous and vindictive. • According to Plutarch, she was a passionate devotee of the ecstatic Dionysiac cult and was believed to have kept tame snakes about her. • She appears to have never been popular at court and her marriage to Philip became increasingly 'stormy'.

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The birth of Alexander

Olympias fulfilled her duty to Philip by producing an heir. Alexander was born on 20 July 356 BC, but like everything about Alexander's future life, his birth was regarded as legendary.

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander's 'auspicious' birth

Ancient Greeks believed that the birth of a great man was accompanied by portents, and according to Plutarch, the following were some of those portents.

1. On the night before Philip and Olympias consummated their marriage, Olympias 'dreamed that there was a crash of thunder, that her womb was struck by a thunderbolt' followed by 'a blinding flash from which a great sheet of flame blazed up'.[9] She believed that the thunderbolt was from Zeus and that the god had impregnated her.
2. Sometime after their marriage, Philip 'saw himself in a dream in the act of sealing up his wife's womb' and on the seal, he saw 'the figure of a lion',[10] a sign that his son would have the nature of a lion.
3. On the day of Alexander's birth:
   - Philip won a victory over the city of Potidaea and his horses won a victory at the Olympic Games.
   - the *magi* (priests of Persia), visiting the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor, ran into the street when the Temple of Artemis burned down, shouting that the kingdoms of Asia were destined to fall.

Alexander's education, early career and ambitions

His education

In his early years, the most influential person in Alexander's life was his mother, from whom he inherited a vivid, romantic imagination, a passionate and fiery nature, a strong will for power and a belief that he was set apart from other men with a special relationship with the gods.

> It was natural that a great number of nurses, pedagogues, and teachers were appointed to take part in his upbringing but the man who supervised them all was Leonidas, a severe disciplinarian who was also a relative of Olympias.

SOURCE 8.6 Plutarch, *Alexander*, 5

1. Alexander was born into a court at Pella that featured great ethnic and linguistic diversity, and from a small child he came in contact with foreign diplomats, traders, soldiers, courtiers, exiles, Greek philosophers, artists and poets. He is supposed to have once impressed a group of visiting Persian ambassadors with his maturity and curiosity about their country and king.
2. From the age of seven or eight he entered a life of dangerous competition. As war was a normal part of life, Alexander's daily exercises as a boy were geared to train him as a superb warrior, particularly as a skilled horseman.
3. By the age of 12, Alexander had developed the skills of perception and deduction, and was full of unshakable confidence. This was borne out in the story of the black stallion, Bucephalus, which he later rode into the greatest battles of his career. The story goes that a horse trader brought a magnificent and extremely expensive horse to Philip for inspection, but it appeared to be completely wild and unable to be trained. When Philip prepared to send the horse away, Alexander remarked, 'What a horse they are losing, and all because they don't know how to handle him, or dare not to try!'[11]

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... Alexander went up to Bucephalus, took hold of his bridle, and turned him towards the sun, for he had noticed that the horse was shying at the sight of his own shadow, as it fell in front of him and constantly moved whenever he did. He ran alongside the animal for a little way, calming him down by stroking him, and then when he saw he was a light spring vaulted safely on to his back ... when Alexander dismounted he [Philip] kissed him and said, 'My boy, you must find a kingdom big enough for your ambitions. Macedonia is too small for you.'

SOURCE 8.7 Plutarch, *Alexander* 6

4 Early on, Alexander found inspiration in the feats of mythical heroes and gods. To the ancient Greeks – and to Alexander – the myths of the past were real stories of interactions between gods and humans that taught guiding principles of life, some harsh and violent, but always competitive. The most important story for Alexander was Homer's epic *The Iliad*, which focused on the exploits of Achilles, Alexander's supposed ancestor.

5 Philip decided that at 14 his strong-willed son needed guidance and control. He persuaded Aristotle, the great Athenian philosopher, scientist and political theorist, to come to Pella to instruct his son. Alexander, with a group of teenage 'companions', was sent to a secret location to be schooled by Aristotle. The great man taught a huge range of subjects including botany, zoology, geography, biology, mathematics, political history and rhetoric, as well as philosophy as a guide for living a life of excellence. However, his major focus was on the concept of the 'Man of Great Soul', a man who sought honour through competition throughout his life.

Under Aristotle's tutelage Alexander developed:

- an insatiable curiosity and a desire to explore the world
- a determination to go beyond everyone else in excellence
- a desire to become a 'Man of Great Soul'.

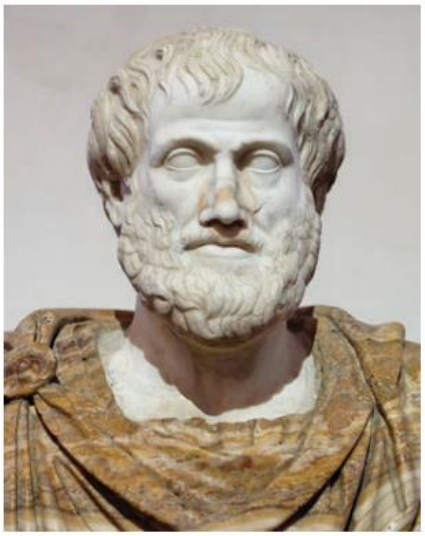

FIGURE 8.10 A bust of Aristotle

A COMMENT ON...

The features of a 'Man of Great Soul'

A 'Man of Great Soul':

- recognises his supreme standing among others
- has no tolerance for insults
- becomes angry at ungrateful and disloyal people
- craves knowledge
- employs practical thoughtfulness in everything he does
- endures misfortunes
- is a great benefactor
- deserves – and expects to receive – the greatest honour in return
- believes friendship is as important as honour
- hopes his accomplishments raise him to the level of the gods.[12]

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In this society where the king of the Macedonians was required to prove his superiority at every moment, the son of a king was under unimaginable pressure to be the best at everything, every time ... The Macedonians did not shy away from putting their future leaders to the sternest tests over and over.

SOURCE 8.8 T. R. Martin and C. W. Blackwell, *Alexander the Great: The Story of An Ancient Life*, p. 16

Alexander's adolescent military successes

Alexander was addicted to winning renown and glory for himself, and when he heard that his father had captured a city or won a great victory, he would, according to Plutarch, complain to his friends 'my father will forestall me in everything. There will be nothing great or spectacular for you and me to show the world'.[13]

FIGURE 8.11 A statue of a young Alexander taming Bucephalus

At the age of 16, he was left in charge of Macedonia while Philip was away fighting in Thrace and had been given the royal seal that empowered him to make political, economic and military decisions. When a tribe on the north-east of the country rebelled, Alexander seized his opportunity to act as a king. He marched into Maedi territory at the head of his troops, defeated the rebels and captured their main settlement. He re-founded it, named it Alexandropolis, the 'city of Alexander' and, like his father, populated it with new settlers: former soldiers and people from other nationalities.

By the time he was 18, Alexander had marched with his father into Greece to face an alliance of Greek states led by Thebes. At the Battle of Chaeronea, Philip placed his son and heir on the left wing opposite the famous and undefeated Theban force called the Sacred Band. Alexander charged at the elite Theban force and, according to the ancient sources, played a major role in the Macedonian victory.

Problems with the succession

In the last years of Philip's reign, there was considerable strain in the relationship between father and son, and it appears that they saw each other as rivals. However, this strain turned into a complete upheaval in the royal family when the king decided to take a seventh wife, Cleopatra, the young niece of Attalus, a prominent Macedonian and one of Philip's leading generals. This would be the king's first true Macedonian wife.

It not only angered Olympias, Alexander's mother, but also caused a potentially dangerous rift between father and son. During the drunken celebrations of the marriage, Attalus toasted the couple with the wish that they produce a legitimate successor to the kingdom. Humiliated, Alexander threw a cup of wine at him and Philip, drunk and furious at his son's actions, drew his sword and approached Alexander.

When he tripped and fell to the floor, Alexander taunted him with: 'Here is the man who was making ready to cross from Europe to Asia and who cannot even cross from one table to another without losing his balance.'[14]

Alexander, his companions and his mother left the court. He took Olympias to Epirus and he went into voluntary exile in Illyria. This caused Philip a great deal of concern: his son had proved himself already a great commander and Illyria had always been his greatest threat. Would his son march on Macedonia, threaten all he had achieved and disrupt his plans to invade Asia?

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FIGURE 8.12 A bust of young Alexander the Great

> The young man had never remained idle and had been trained since childhood to act aggressively to shape his own world. The boy who would risk his life on a wager over an ill-tempered horse would hardly fail to seek revenge so horrible it drove him and his mother from their home. The insult denied Alexander's right to rule. ... The toxic combination of jealousy, ambition, anger and alcohol, stirred up in the superheated crucible of Macedonian royal politics, was on the verge of destroying everything Philip had worked for.

SOURCE 8.9 T. R. Martin & C. W. Blackwell, *Alexander the Great: The Story of an Ancient Life*, p. 33

Due to the intervention of Demaratus, a Corinthian Greek at the court of Pella, father and son were reconciled within months and the question of the succession did not become an issue as Philip's latest child by his new wife was a daughter.

ACTIVITY 8.2

1. How did the following influence Alexander's character and upbringing:
   - the lineage of his mother and father
   - his mother's character and religious beliefs
   - his contact with those who visited the court at Pella
   - the Greek heroic myths
   - Aristotle's teachings
   - his father's achievements?
2. What does Source 8.7 reveal about Alexander's character?
3. What military abilities did Alexander reveal while still a teenager?
4. Assess the impact on Alexander of Philip's marriage to his seventh wife.

8.3 Key features and developments in the career of Alexander

The impact of the assassination of Philip

Despite his many battle injuries, Philip died eventually at the hands of an assassin in 336, stabbed to death at his daughter's wedding. Pausanius, the assassin, is believed to have had a grievance against Attalus (a sexual assault) that Philip failed to address. Some claim it was a conspiracy that involved Olympias, but no ancient source ever accused Alexander of patricide, although he benefited from his father's death. As Philip's heir, he inherited:

- a strong and powerful state
- a trained and experienced professional army with excellent generals
- overlordship of the Greek states (members of the Corinthian League, a federation of Greek states created by Philip in 338–7)
- an expedition against the Persian Empire already set in motion.

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Although the designated successor to Philip, 20-year-old Alexander knew his life was in danger; as Macedonian heirs had always done, he took decisive and violent action, eliminating possible threats to his life: 'Such precautionary ferocity became the hallmark of his reign.'[15] The first to die was Attalus, Philip's general, already in Asia with Parmenion (another of Philip's old guard).

Although Attalus' earlier actions had led to the assassination of Philip by Pausanius, in Alexander's eyes his greater crime was impugning Alexander's legitimacy as Philip's heir at his father's wedding. Attalus could not be trusted. When Alexander's men killed him in Asia, those stationed with him did nothing; they knew the dangers of a royal succession.

1 Alexander's supporters then killed his cousin, Amyntas, the nephew Philip had protected for 20 years.
2 Olympias is believed to have murdered her deceased husband's latest child and caused his seventh wife, Cleopatra, the niece of Attalus, to take her own life.
3 Alexander then arranged for the deaths of all Cleopatra's male relatives.

No amount of killings, however, could ensure Alexander's succession without the total support of the army. The Macedonian soldiers knew of his formidable talents, and when he appeared before them promising to continue his father's policies and added that they no longer had to pay taxes to the king, they approved his succession.

Consolidation of Macedonian control of the Greek mainland

Philip's death led to ferment in the cities of Greece. Alexander, at only 20 years of age, was faced with 'external dangers on every side.'[16]

Alexander made a lightning march through central Greece, forcing them to:

1 acknowledge his succession to his father's position as supreme leader of Greece
2 agree to go ahead with the Macedonian/Greek invasion of Asia.

Threats from the north

Feeling secure in the loyalty of the Greeks, Alexander returned north to deal with the Thracians and Illyrians, who saw the young king on the throne as an opportunity to cause trouble.

In 335, Alexander headed for the Danube River to deal with the Triballians of Thrace in a swift offensive war, since 'these people bordered upon Macedon and since his expedition [Persian] would take him so far from home he did not think it wise to leave them in his rear, unless they were thoroughly crushed.'[17] In this march of 480 kilometres over mountains and among hostile tribes, the young king revealed his ability to command and motivate his men, deal with logistical challenges, and devise and implement innovative offensive tactics and flexible plans to outwit a cunning enemy.

Although he routed the Triballians and captured rich booty, Alexander was determined to cross the Danube – 'the greatest of rivers' – and face the tribes on its northern side. Arrian suggests that it was more than just a matter of defeating the tribes; he describes Alexander's motivation as one of *pothos*, which in Greek meant 'a longing or yearning for something you don't have', a need to 'go beyond'.

At great risk, he ferried 5000 of his men across the swiftly flowing river on a makeshift flotilla of local dugout canoes and inflatable pontoons made from his men's tents. At dawn his men were ready for combat. The tribesmen holding the north side fled in terror and the Thracian tribes sued for peace. 'Alexander's brilliance remained so vivid in the memory that for half a century no Thracian ever again attacked his homeland.'[18]

Alexander then turned his attention to a coalition of forces in Illyria. Although his men were caught in a narrow valley and appeared to have no hope of escape, Alexander once again proved victorious without the loss of life. He based his plan on his knowledge of the psychology of the Illyrians. By using his 120-deep phalanx in an aggressive way with massed and swishing sarissas and clashing shields, he routed the Illyrians by fear. He utilised his catapults as covering fire, and had his archers take up a position at his army's back.

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His men escaped the valley and a few days later, when the Illyrians thought the Macedonians had run away, he led his army at night through the valley and destroyed them.

The destruction of Thebes – a significant point in Alexander's career

While in Illyria, Alexander received news that the Thebans had rebelled and declared their independence. According to Arrian, 'certain people with a view to overthrowing the government had invited a number of political exiles to return.'[19] These people slipped into the city, killed those guarding the **Cadmeia** and seized control. They then appeared before the city's assembly and incited the Thebans to revolt by insisting that Alexander had been killed in Illyria.

Cadmeia the ancient Theban citadel, or fortified core of the city

Alexander, fearing that their disaffection might spread to the rest of Greece, marched south. In only two weeks, his army covered nearly 800 kilometres, marching over four mountain ranges and arriving unannounced before the walls of Thebes.

Arrian says – confirmed by Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus – that Alexander made no move against the city initially because he was hoping to remain on terms with the Thebans and avoid action against them.

Although some Thebans, who had their city's interest at heart, wanted to seek a pardon from Alexander, those who had instigated the revolt insisted on holding out. 'But still Alexander waited and did not attack.'[20] What happened next is where the accounts of Arrian and Plutarch differ.

TABLE 8.3 Two views of the destruction of Thebes

Plutarch (*The Life of Alexander*)	Arrian (*The Campaigns of Alexander*)
• Plutarch also says that when Alexander reached Thebes he wanted to give the Thebans a chance to repent. • He offered an amnesty (forgiveness without punishment) to all except the leaders, who were to be handed over. • In response, the Thebans demanded that two of Alexander's chief officers be handed over, and at the same time, did something that was an unforgiveable insult to the Macedonian king: they called from the towers that all freedom-loving Greeks should join them in destroying 'the tyrant of Greece' (The Loeb version of Plutarch). • At this Alexander ordered his troops to attack. The greater part of the army was slaughtered, 'and the city was stormed, plundered and razed to the ground.'[21] • Alexander's chief aim, says Plutarch, was 'to frighten the rest of Greece into submission by making a terrible example, and 'to redress the wrongs done to his allies.'[22] • He spared the priests, those who were friendly to Macedonia and the poet Pindar. 'All the rest were publically sold into slavery to the number of 20 000'.[23]	Arrian – quoting from one of Alexander's contemporaries, Ptolemy – records the following: • A Macedonian officer, Perdiccus, on his own initiative and without any word from Alexander, began an assault. • Alexander, seeing the likelihood of Perdiccus' men being cut off by Theban troops, 'ordered a general advance'[24] and eventually the Theban troops were surrounded on all sides. • In what happened next, Arrian does not so much blame the Macedonians as the Phocians and Plataeans and men of other **Boeotian** towns who 'in the lust for battle indiscriminately slaughtered the Thebans'[25] in their houses and sheltering in temples. • Alexander permitted the allied troops who took part in the fighting to decide the fate of the city and its inhabitants. They chose to garrison the citadel, but raze the city itself to the ground and to sell into slavery all the women, children and men who had survived. The exceptions were priests and priestesses, those who had any ties with Macedonia and the poet Pindar (a favourite of Alexander) and his family.

Boeotia the state of which Thebes was the predominant city

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The violence of the action, the size and importance of the fallen city, above all the unexpectedness of the event both to victors and vanquished, all made the horror of this disaster to men of Grecian blood hardly less shattering for the rest of Greece, than for those that were actually involved. ... the complete enslavement of a city pre-eminent in Greece for power and military prestige, were, not unnaturally, all put down to the wrath of God. People felt that Thebes, at last, had been punished for her treachery – she had paid the penalty for her betrayal of Greece in the Persian war ...

SOURCE 8.10 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, 8–9

Alexander oversaw the physical destruction and the enslavement of the population. Even though the destruction of the Hellenic city technically was ordered by his Greek allies, it is clear that Alexander could have prevented its destruction, if he had so wished

SOURCE 8.11 Edward M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 910

The once-great city of Thebes no longer existed. Alexander showed that 'he would not shrink from direct, complete and savage retribution'.[26] Although modern historians have criticised his actions, 'slaughtering one's enemies, sacking cities and enslaving populations were viewed as standards at the time'.[27]

Alexander was persuaded to be more lenient with Athens as the cultural capital of Greece, but took 20 of its triremes and the League of Corinth rubber-stamped his position as leader of the Greeks.

ACTIVITY 8.3

1. Describe what Alexander inherited from his father, apart from the throne.
2. What is meant by Alexander did what all heirs before him had done by utilising 'precautionary ferocity'?
3. Identify the one vital necessity for any Macedonian wanting to secure the throne.
4. Summarise Alexander's reactions to the external troubles that erupted after the death of his father.
5. Clarify Alexander's military abilities and attitudes to disloyalty that were evident before he had even crossed to Asia.
6. Discuss the opinions in Sources 8.10 and 8.11 (one an ancient source, the other a modern source) about the destruction of Thebes.

Into Asia

What was Alexander's goal when he launched his campaign against the Persian Empire two years after his father's death?

1. Was it revenge for past Persian interference in Greece, and the liberation of Greeks under Persian control?
2. Was it 'a piece of propaganda, borrowed from his father, destined to encourage the Greeks to support him'?[28]
3. Was Alexander aiming for personal glory above all else by means of conquest for its own sake?
4. Did he, as a true pupil of Aristotle, envisage a campaign of conquest combined with an expedition for exploration, scientific research, expansion of Hellenic culture and the performance of noble deeds beyond mere military actions? Is there a clue in the personnel he took with him: poets, historians, scientists, philosophers, surveyors, mapmakers and geographers?

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Alexander's forces, which were large by Greek standards, comprised approximately 40% Macedonians, 40% Greeks from the Corinthian League and 20% from other nations such as Thrace and Crete. Including the 10 000 troops already sent ahead, he crossed into Asia with about 33 000 heavily armed infantry and light skirmishers, as well as a cavalry force of 5000 to 6000. Pride of place in the cavalry were the approximately 1800 members of the 'Royal Companions' and of these, around 300 comprised Alexander's own bodyguard.

trireme Greek-style ships with three banks of oars

hubris excessive pride

Among his troops were the 1000 Agrianians (a tribe from the upper Strymon River who made up the elite light infantry). These troops were ferried across on a fleet of 160 **triremes**. However, the main weakness of the Macedonians was lack of provisions and funds.

Alexander had left Antipater in Macedonia with a force of 12 000 infantry and 1500 cavalry and garrison troops in various Greek cities as security.

FIGURE 8.13 A sketch map of the Hellespont

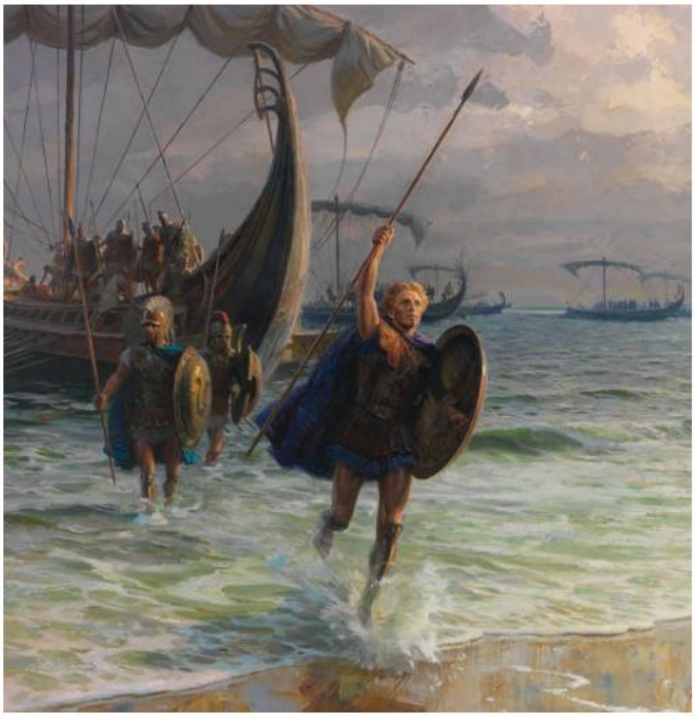

FIGURE 8.14 An artistic depiction of Alexander landing in Asia

Crossing the Hellespont

Alexander knew from Herodotus that taking an army across the divide between Europe to Asia was – according to the gods – verging on **hubris** or 'excessive pride'. Ever mindful of the lessons from literature and the need to be respectful of the gods, Alexander made every effort to act properly. He:

- built a shrine to Zeus, Athena and Herakles on the European side
- crossed the Hellespont alone, ahead of his army
- sacrificed a bull and poured libations to Poseidon midway across
- cast a spear onto the shore as a symbol of claiming the empire by conquest before setting foot on Asia
- built another altar to the gods on the other side.

Philip had already sent an advance force to Asia to secure a beachhead and to act as security as the vulnerable army disembarked from the ships.

Alexander went immediately to Troy, where he sacrificed to Priam, its legendary king, and to his 'ancestor' Achilles.

It is likely that few in Alexander's army were aware of the vastness of the Persian Empire and its geographic challenges. The Great King, Darius III, ruled an empire from Egypt and the Mediterranean coast in the west, as far as Bactria (Afghanistan) and the Indus Valley of India in the east, and Sogdiana (Uzbekistan) in the north. The vast empire – its heartland in Persia and Media (modern Iran) – comprised 30 different nationalities and was divided into satrapies (large provinces) and ruled by satraps (provincial governors) who had considerable powers. The empire had a population estimated to have been 25 times that of Greece and Macedonia

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combined, massive infantry and cavalry resources, including Greek mercenaries, and a treasury full of gold and silver.

This was the empire through which Alexander led his army for 12 arduous years.

ACTIVITY 8.4

1 Describe how Alexander's piety to the gods was expressed as he crossed into Asia.
2 Describe the challenges ahead for Alexander and his army.

Alexander's generalship and military campaigns

Arrian (Flavius Arrianus Xenophon), a Greek who became a Roman citizen at birth, is the most authoritative source on Alexander's military conquests in Asia. He wrote his *Campaigns of Alexander* (the *Anabasis* – 'The march up-country') in the 2nd century AD, approximately four centuries after Alexander's death. 'However, Arrian's experience as a military commander makes him the only surviving ancient source on Alexander with direct knowledge of how an army operated',[29] and his main source was the history of Ptolemy, a contemporary of Alexander who focused predominantly on military matters.

FIGURE 8.15 The route of Alexander's military conquests and location of major battles

ACTIVITY 8.5

As you follow Alexander's conquests, use the text, sources and figures to build up a dossier of examples of Alexander's generalship during his major battles in Asia, under the following headings:

- flexibility in response to changing physical conditions
- adaptation of tactics and disposition of troops to suit each opponent
- audacious cavalry tactics
- ingenuity in overcoming obstacles
- siegecraft
- leadership of his men.

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The Battle of Granicus and the conquest of Asia Minor, 334 BC

Plutarch says that 'Alexander was obliged to fight at the very gates of Asia, if he was to enter and conquer it'.[30]

The Persians, led by the Greek mercenary general Memnon, took up a defensive position on the eastern side of the Granicus River. Although the Persians held the high ground, Alexander gave orders to prepare to engage, but Parmenion was opposed to this and suggested that, for the moment, they should remain where they were.

> 'Yes, Parmenion,' he said, 'but I should be ashamed of myself if a little trickle of water like this ... were too much for us to cross without further preparation ... Such hesitancy would be unworthy of the fighting fame of our people and my own promptitude in the face of danger.'

SOURCE 8.12 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.13

> Then Alexander, while the Persians still waited for the crossing to begin, that they might fall upon his men as they were struggling up the further bank, leapt upon his horse and called upon his bodyguard to follow and play the man. ... then he himself at the head of the right wing of the army, with trumpets blaring and the shout going up to the Gods of Battle, moved forward into the river. He kept his line oblique to the pull of the current as the troops went over, to prevent a flank attack as they emerged from the water ...

SOURCE 8.13 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.13

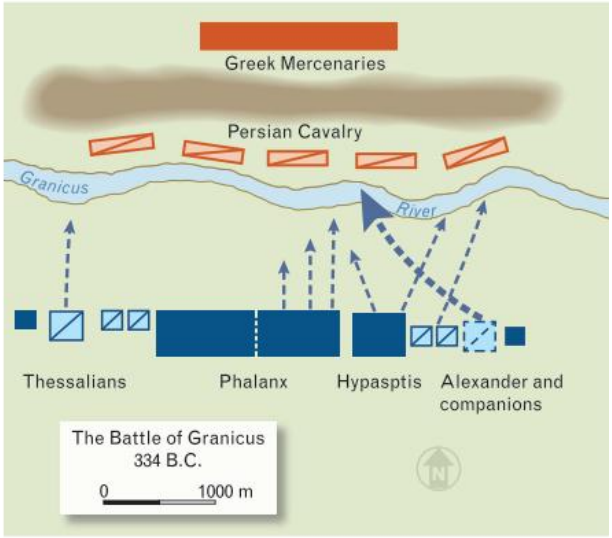

FIGURE 8.16 Diagram of the deployment of Persian and Macedonian forces and first action

FIGURE 8.17 A bronze plaque of Alexander leading the charge of his men across the Granicus River

Alexander's fearless action in crossing the deep and swiftly flowing river forced the Persians to make radical adjustments. Plutarch records how Alexander – his leadership appearing rash – advanced through a hail of spears, and climbed the steep, wet and treacherous slope on the other side. He was forced to fight 'horse upon horse, man against man, locked together ...'[31] before his supporting troops could get into position. He was an easy target and in the heat of battle came close to death when first his helmet was slashed in two and then, bare-headed, he was saved by Cleitus, one of his cavalry companions, from having his skull smashed.

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It was predominantly 'a cavalry battle with, as it were, infantry tactics'.[32] Once the Persian centre failed to hold, owing to the swift Macedonian cavalry attack, the Persian wings folded. The experience of the Macedonians, the weight of their attack and the superiority of their arms won the day.

Aftermath

- Most of the Greek cities along the coast went over to Alexander.
- The local provincial capital of Sardis surrendered.
- Miletus and Halicarnassus resisted, but were taken by siege.
- Alexander disbanded his fleet.

> Alexander now decided to disband his fleet. He had not, at the moment, the money for maintaining it; he knew it was no match for the Persian navy, and he had no wish to subject any part of his strength, in ships or men, to the risk of disaster. ... he was well aware that a fleet was no longer of any use to him; by seizing the coastal towns he could reduce the Persian navy to impotence, for they would then have no port on the Asian coast.

SOURCE 8.14 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 1.20

The Battle of Issus and the conquest of Syria, 333–332 BC

Darius III led the army himself in his next encounter with Alexander.

He had amassed a huge army of approximately 150 000, although most had little experience. Plutarch maintains that 'fortune certainly presented Alexander with the ideal terrain for the next battle'[33] because Darius, with his enormous army, had left his camp on the plain to seek out Alexander and was caught in a defile between the mountains and the sea, which favoured Alexander's smaller numbers. The armies faced each other across the swollen Pinarus stream that ran through the defile.

The Macedonian cavalry surged forward across the stream and broke through the Persian line. Then Alexander 'wheeled his horsemen obliquely in toward the centre rolling up the Persian riders on their flanks in a brilliant manoeuvre'.[34]

The Macedonian centre was having trouble with the hard-fighting Greek mercenaries in the Persian centre, but Alexander outflanked the enemy and cut them to pieces. The other Macedonian wing fought desperately until Darius fled in his chariot. At Issus, tens of thousands of Persians died and the Greek mercenaries deserted, never to return to Persian service.

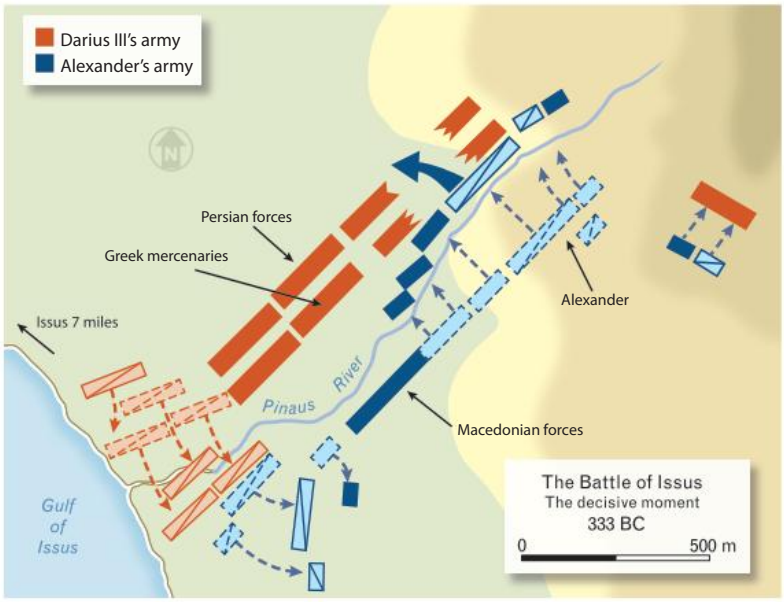

FIGURE 8.18 A diagram of the decisive moment in the Battle of Issus

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FIGURE 8.19 The Alexander Mosaic found at Pompeii depicting the battle of Issus

> Keeping to his chariot as long as there was smooth ground to travel on, he was forced to abandon it when ravines and other obstructions barred his way; then dropping his shield and stripping off his mantle – and even leaving his bow in the war-chariot – he leapt on his horse and rode for his life.

SOURCE 8.15 The flight of Darius III, cited in Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 2.11

Aftermath

FIGURE 8.20 *The Family of Darius in Front of Alexander*, by Charles Le Brun, 1661

- After Darius' flight, Alexander captured the Persian camp with its treasure and abandoned royal women. He treated them with respect and promised to protect them. Darius' mother, Sisygambis, never forgave her son, disowned him and thereafter referred to Alexander as her son.
- Alexander founded a city on the site of the battle.
- He delayed pursuing Darius as he needed to secure the Syrian coast and Egypt before he moved inland. For this he has been criticised by some modern scholars.
- Byblos and Sidon yielded to him but the impregnable fortress city of Tyre held out.

The siege of Tyre, 332 BC

Arrian and Curtius maintain that the fortress city of Tyre originally submitted to Alexander, but when he asked to sacrifice in its main temple, they considered it sacrilegious and stood firm against him.

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Was his subsequent siege of the city due to this affront to his ego, a strategic move, or both?

Tyre was one of the strongest fortresses in the ancient world, believed to be impregnable. It was a walled island, about 800 metres off the mainland, and its thick walls on the landward side were 45 metres high and 4.8 kilometres in diameter.

With Tyre's powerful navy, and Persia still in command of the sea, the fortress had to be captured before Alexander could move on. He besieged it by:

1 'constructing **moles**
2 using siege artillery on the landward side. Alexander's siege machines, the tallest yet seen (20 metres high), had battering rams and catapults on their upper decks.
3 blockading it with 200 triremes by sea'.[35] These triremes were supplied by the allied Phoenician states.

FIGURE 8.21 Tyre causeway today

moles massive structures, usually of stone, set up in the water to act as a causeway or breakwater

A COMMENT ON...

New light thrown on Alexander's construction of his causeway

- Archaeologists have often wondered how Alexander's engineers built a causeway capable of supporting an army and catapults across the water between the island bastion of Tyre and the mainland.
- Recent geological work – cores drilled into the modern isthmus – carried out by the French Geoscience Research Institute has revealed that there was in fact a natural sandspit joining the island and mainland that changed over time.
- It appears that in the centuries before Alexander's arrival at Tyre the spit of sand went through a substantial growth period which would 'have been the perfect platform for Alexander's engineers'.

Adapted from H. Whipps, 'Mystery Solved: How Alexander the Great Defeated Tyre', in *Live Science*, 2007

The siege lasted seven long and exhausting months. Read Arrian's detailed account in Bk 2, 18–24.

Finally, when the people of Tyre were starving and without allies, Alexander began an all-out attack by ships at sea, and siege towers on the mole. The city's defences collapsed and of the inhabitants of Tyre, 8000 people were killed and 30 000 sold into slavery.

While the siege was still underway, Alexander received envoys from Darius III offering him the following:

1 10 000 talents for the return of his mother, wife and children
2 all the territory between the Euphrates and the Aegean
3 his daughter in marriage to seal the bond of friendship.

Alexander's general, Parmenion, 'declared that if he were Alexander, he would be happy to end the war on such terms'.[36] Alexander agreed that he would do the same if he were Parmenion.

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'... but since I am Alexander, I shall send Darius a different answer'. ... He had no need he wrote, of Darius' money, nor was there any call upon him to accept a part of the continent in place of the whole ... and if he wished to marry Darius' daughter he would do so whether Darius liked it or not ... and if Darius wanted kindliness and consideration at his hands, he must come to ask for it in person. Darius abandoned all thought of coming to terms and began once more to prepare for war.

SOURCE 8.16 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 2.26

Aftermath

- 'After the victory, Alexander offered sacrifices to Herakles and held a ceremonial parade of his troops in full battle equipment'[37] as well as a parade of the fleet.
- Tyre was re-colonised.
- Gaza, further along the coast, also stood against Alexander and once again he was forced to carry out a siege.
- Alexander was welcomed into Egypt, and he:
  - made sacrifices to their gods
  - was crowned pharaoh
  - founded what was to become his most famous city, Alexandria on the coast (see p. 229)
  - organised the country's administration
  - made a long and difficult journey across the desert to the oasis of Siwah to consult the oracle of Zeus-Ammon, as his heroic ancestor Herakles and Perseus had supposedly done. There were rumours that he received confirmation from the priests that he was the son of Zeus.
- He then returned to Syria to pursue Darius.

The Battle of Gaugamela and the conquest of Persia, 331 BC

By 331, Darius had gathered together a larger and better-organised army than at Issus, including 200 scythe-bearing chariots and 15 elephants. He chose the plain of Gaugamela on the left bank of the Tigris River for his next encounter against Alexander because it was level and open, and more suitable for his enormous numbers, chariots and elephants.

Arrian tells how 'all places where a broken surface might obstruct the movement of cavalry having been worked on for some time previously by the Persian troops, so that all of it was now good going for both chariots and cavalry'.[38] Darius also ordered stakes to be placed in the ground to protect his flanks from attack.

Once he saw the placement of the enemy, Alexander prepared at leisure and kept the Persians waiting for two days. Because of his smaller numbers, he slanted his army and stationed his cavalry and lightly armed troops outside of both ends of his main line of battle to prevent flanking attacks by the Persians. To support these troops Alexander organised a reserve formation of infantry behind the main phalanx, with orders to face about in case of an encircling movement, a manoeuvre requiring perfect discipline.

As usual, Alexander began the battle by leading his wing to the right while holding back Parmenion's troops. This drew the Persian left flank out, away from their elephants and defences.[39] The Persians attacked the centre of Alexander's phalanx with a hundred scythed chariots, but the Macedonian heavy infantry were trained to part their ranks, creating lanes for the chariots to pass through to the rear where they were destroyed. Alexander, treating the battle like a game of chess, allowed the Persian left to outflank his right, creating a gap into which he sent his cavalry. His pre-positioned flank guard now came into action and those Persians who thought to take his army in the rear were caught in a trap.

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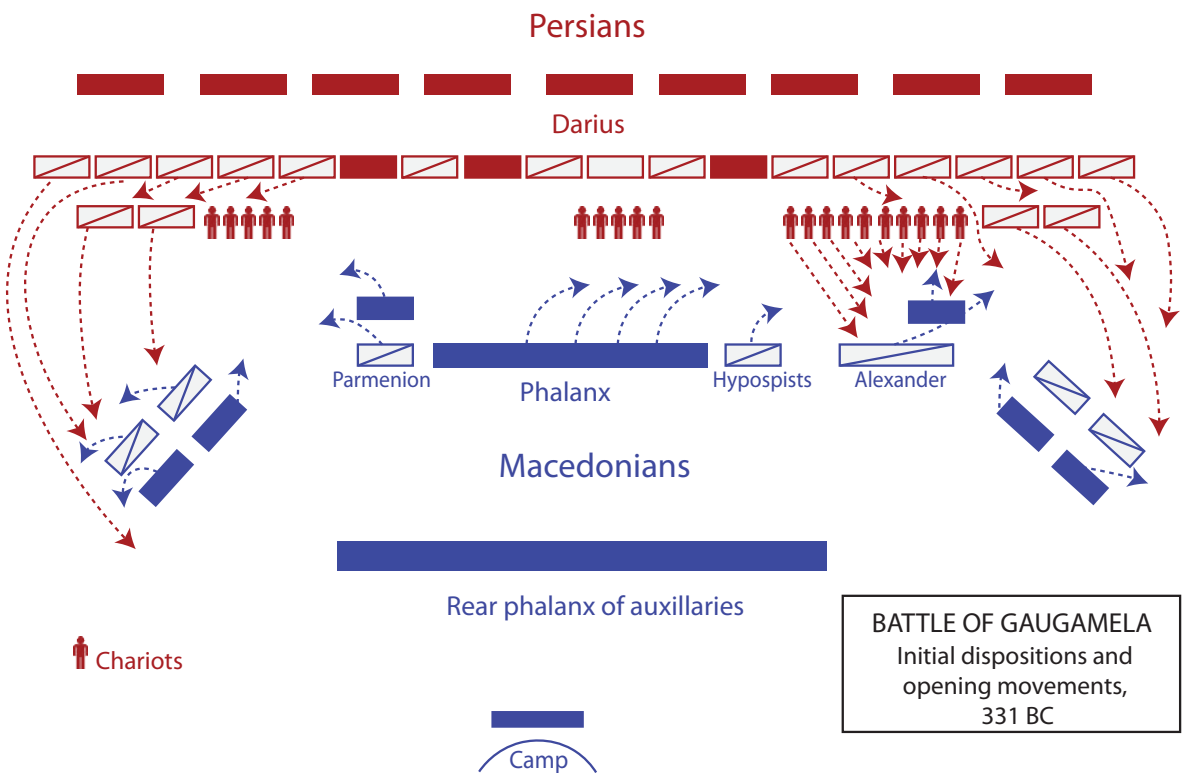

FIGURE 8.22 Initial deployment of troops and opening moves

Darius fled once again, the news demoralising his army. 'The battle had been won by just 3000 cavalry Companions supported by 8000 Shield Bearers under Alexander's visionary leadership.'[40]

Aftermath

- Darius fled to Ecbatana in Media.
- The great cities of Babylon and Susa (the capital of the empire) welcomed Alexander.
- He then moved on to the ceremonial capital of Persepolis, sat on the throne as king and gained incalculable treasure. Unfortunately, in a night of drunken celebration, Alexander and his Macedonians set fire to the ceremonial complex. The destruction caused Alexander much shame.
- He went in search of Darius, who had been kidnapped and murdered by his relative, Bessus, the satrap of Bactria. Alexander buried Darius with all royal honours.
- Between 330 and 327, Alexander carried out protracted and tough guerrilla campaigns against local tribes and the rebellious satraps Bessus and Spitamenes. His years in central Asia – Parthia, Ara, Arachosia, Bactria and Sogdiana, and Scythia – tested Alexander's initiative. He crossed the mighty Hindu Kush in winter and the Oxus and Jaxartes rivers.
- He captured and executed Bessus, defeated the Scythians beyond the Jaxartes River and set the northernmost limit of his empire by establishing a city called Alexandria Eschate.
- He married Roxanne, the daughter of a local Sogdian noble, as part of an alliance.
- The prospect of conquering India was a challenge he could not ignore and so, with his army, half of which was now composed of Asian troops, he arrived at the Indus where his friend and commander, Hephaestion, had already bridged the river. Arrian admits he does not know how this was done, but suggests it was by a bridge of boats.

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FIGURE 8.23 An artist's impression of the burning of Persepolis

FIGURE 8.24 The Hindu Kush

The Battle of the Hydaspes River and the invasion of India, 326 BC

When Alexander crossed the Indus, many of the princes, such as Taxiles, who lived between the Indus and Hydaspes rivers, welcomed him and became allies; but on the far bank of the Hydaspes, King Porus, at the head of a formidable army – including a large squadron of elephants – stood waiting to confront him.

Alexander knew that a direct assault across the river was out of the question as the elephants would have terrorised the horses, but Porus had sent troops to guard various points along the river where a crossing might have been possible.

Alexander had already sent for the boats that had been used at the crossing of the Indus to be brought in sections to the Hydaspes and then reassembled.

Arrian describes Alexander's brilliant plan to confront Porus in Source 8.17.

Alexander had noticed a projecting spit some 25 kilometres upstream from his base that he decided would make an ideal place from which to cross the river. Under cover of darkness, he led a select force on boats and hay-filled floats across the river in a surprise dawn landing. He had given orders to his commanders not to lead the main part of the army across the river until they saw Porus move from his position to attack Alexander.

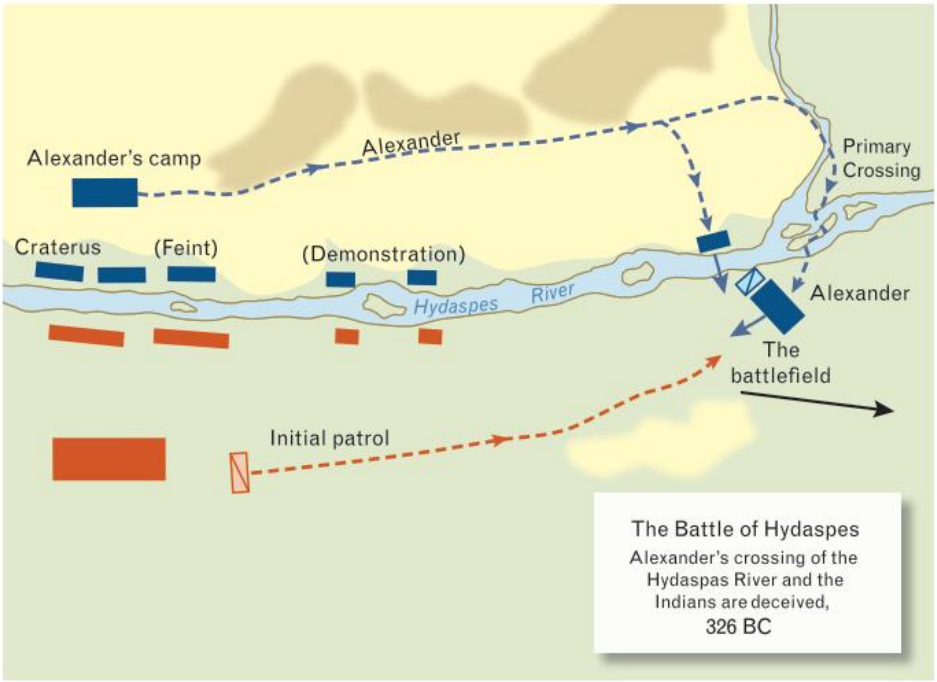

FIGURE 8.25 Diagram of Alexander's deceptive ploy

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The river had to be crossed so, as it could not be done openly, Alexander determined to attain his object by cunning. Every night he kept moving the greater part of his mounted troops up and down the bank of the river, making as much noise as possible – shouts, war cries, and every sort of clatter and shindy which might be supposed to precede an attempted crossing. Porus, bringing up his elephants, followed these movements … and Alexander gradually led him to make these marches parallel to his own, a regular thing. This went on for some time, until Porus gave up. Clearly it was a false alarm; so he ceased to follow the movement of the enemy cavalry and stayed where he was … no longer expecting a sudden attempt under cover of darkness, was lulled into a sense of security – and this was Alexander's opportunity.

SOURCE 8.17 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 5.11

The Indian king, taken by surprise, made the decision to advance to meet Alexander rather than await the crossing of the rest of his army. In the ensuing battle, Alexander deployed his normal oblique attack to devastating effect and once again revealed his bold originality and brilliance.

His light infantry dispersed the elephants and the rest of Alexander's army attacked Porus from the rear. The Indian losses were enormous: according to Arrian, Porus lost two sons, 20 000 infantry, 3000 cavalry, all his war chariots and most of his commanders of high rank.

FIGURE 8.26 An engraving of King Porus' army

Aftermath

- Alexander treated the defeated Porus with respect, restored his sovereignty, increased his territory and accepted him as an ally.
- He established two cities on either side of the Hydaspes: Bucephala and Nicaea.
- He easily conquered the rest of the area, but when he wanted to go beyond the Hyphasis River, his men refused and he reluctantly capitulated (see p. 234).
- Marching and sailing with 800 vessels, the army moved down the Indus to its mouth where Alexander faced one last strenuous campaign against an Indian tribe known as the Malli, during which he was critically injured when a spear pierced his lung. He was not expected to live and the Malli were slaughtered, neither women nor children were spared. Read Arrian Bk 8, 9–11.
- He founded another 'Alexandria' at the mouth of the Indus as a port with an eye to India's potential for trade.
- He sent his elephant corps and 10 000 veterans the easy way back to the head of the Persian Gulf and directed his admiral, Nearchus, to sail with the fleet around the coast to the Euphrates.
- Alexander, at the head of 30 000 men, began a terrible 60-day march through the waterless Gedrosian Desert, an unprecedented venture. He and his men suffered overpowering heat, thirst and hunger, and were forced to slaughter their pack animals. Only a quarter of the men with him survived (perhaps an exaggeration). Read Arrian Bk 8, 24–26.
- He linked up with his navy and returned to Susa and then Babylon.

FIGURE 8.27 An aerial view of the Gedrosian Desert

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ACTIVITY 8.6

1. Check that you have classified the information gathered on Alexander's generalship under the headings specified in Activity 8.5.
2. Describe how Alexander treated Darius III's abandoned wife and family when Darius fled the battle field after his defeat at Issus.
3. Assess the significance for Alexander, and for the future of the Mediterranean world, of his entry into Egypt.
4. Describe how the great cities of Babylon and Susa reacted to Alexander's victory at Gaugamela.
5. What disaster was Alexander responsible for in the heartland of Persia that caused him great shame?
6. Describe how Alexander treated the Indian king, Porus.
7. What effect did the refusal of his troops to go any further east after the battle of Hydaspes have on Alexander?
8. Describe Alexander's return to Babylon through the dreaded Gedrosian Desert.

Organisation and administration of the empire

Early in his campaign, Alexander learnt that he could not merely win battles to conquer the Persian Empire; he had to make an attempt to secure each area before he moved on. He realised he would have to:

1. avoid any rigid system of government that applied to the entire empire, but 'to find a localized solution to particular problems'[41] and where possible use the already-established forms of administration.
2. win over the local people by showing religious tolerance and respect for local customs, and incorporate local elites in his administration and entourage.

A mixed form of administration

> The evidence, sparse as it is, suggests that Alexander did not form one or even a couple of uniform patterns to deal with his conquests, but rather dealt with each new situation in whatever way appeared to him to be appropriate at the time and in the given situation. In most cases, he adhered fairly closely to Persian practice ...

SOURCE 8.18 E. M. Anson, *Alexander the Great: Themes and Issues*, p. 141

- Alexander tended to follow the Persian administrative practices and continued to call the provinces 'satrapies' and the governors 'satraps'. In some cases, he even kept the original officials.
- There is a general belief that he separated civil, military and financial functions, but this did not apply everywhere. It seems that wherever he appointed a non-Macedonian as satrap, like the Persian Mazaeus in Babylon, military and financial duties were in the hands of Macedonians.
- However, in other satrapies, such as Phrygia, there was only one administrator.
- In some cases, a Macedonian was given financial authority over a number of provinces.
- In Egypt, Alexander created 'a very complicated and cumbersome power structure'[42] due to its significant resources and revenues:
  - He retained the two native administrators (nomarchs) of Upper and Lower Egypt.
  - Finances were in the hands of Cleomenes whose duty it was to assess and collect taxes from the two Egyptian monarchs.
  - Two Macedonians shared military authority and another controlled the fleet, while various cities had their own garrison commanders and there was an official in charge of mercenaries.

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- However, in some areas in the far east of the empire Alexander simply chose to make military demonstrations against tribal groups without subjecting them to his authority, and in India, Porus, the defeated monarch, was confirmed as king in his dominions without any Macedonian presence at all.

City building

Alexander followed the example of his father in creating cities. He is believed to have founded 20 cities, 17 of which were given the pre-name of 'Alexandria'. Most were east of the Tigris River in central Asia, and were:

- 'designed to hold captured territory against neighbouring tribal, nomadic peoples and to secure the regions from internal revolutions by the conquered'.[43]
- strategically located near frontiers and at critical communication sites.
- expected also to become 'large and prosper' so they needed to be well placed for commercial activity.

FIGURE 8.28 Map of some of the 'Alexandrias' in the far east of Alexander's empire

These cities, generally populated with local inhabitants, retired Greek mercenaries and soldiers unfit for service, appear to have been Greek and Macedonian in form with markets and temples. It is possible that they had assemblies, local magistrates and laws based on the Greek model, and that these applied to Greek and non-Greek alike.

1 Alexandria in Areia (modern Herat) was on the ancient trade routes connecting the Middle East with central and southern Asia.
2 Alexandria in Arachosia (modern Kandahar) was on the trade routes of southern central and western Asia.
3 Alexandria at Caucasus (modern Charikar) controlled the road leading to India.
4 Alexandria Eschate (the 'furthest' or 'ultimate') on the Jaxartes River fixed the limit of the empire at the gate between China and southwest Asia at the Tian Shan Mountains, bordering today's Chinese Turkestan (Xinjiang).

Alexander's greatest city, Alexandria Rhacotis, on the coast of Egypt

> When he (Alexander) saw what wonderful natural advantages the place possessed – for it was a strip of land resembling a broad isthmus, which stretched between the sea and a great lagoon, with a spacious harbour at the end of it … he ordered the plan of the city to be designed so that it would conform to this site.

SOURCE 8.19 Plutarch, *The Life of Alexander*, 26

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Alexander intended his new city to:

1 include a mixed population of Macedonians and Greeks (veterans, captives, Greeks from different parts) as well as incorporating a mix of other ethnic groups and native Egyptians.
2 be easily defensible. Pharos Island would act as a screen, and situated as the city was between Lake Mareotis and the Mediterranean Sea, approached by only two narrow roads, it would be very difficult to attack. Also, it was protected from the east by the Nile delta and from the west by the vast Libyan desert.
3 be well placed for commercial activity. The site, removed from the silt thrown up from the westernmost mouth of the Nile, would be accessible to large ships, and to grain and other products transported down the Nile.

Needless to say, that the site looked outward towards Greece would have appealed to Alexander.

FIGURE 8.29 An artist's impression of Ptolemaic Alexandria in the 3rd century BC

Alexander was enthusiastic to begin the layout of the city himself and had input into its initial design and boundaries, and employed an architect and hydraulic engineer to carry out his plan. He remained in Egypt only a few months before heading east to confront Darius III, and unfortunately, he never lived to see his city.

Attempts to win over the local people

Throughout the empire, Alexander practised religious and cultural tolerance.

TABLE 8.4 Examples of Alexander's religious and cultural tolerance

Sardis	When the provincial capital of Sardis yielded to him, he permitted the people 'to observe the old customs of their country and gave them their freedom'.[44]
Egypt	On his entry into Egypt, he offered a special sacrifice to Apis at Memphis, promised to restore the Egyptian temples desecrated by the Persians and then accepted the position of pharaoh.
Babylon	In Babylon, he instructed that the temples destroyed by Xerxes be rebuilt, in particular the temple of Ba'al (Bel-Marduk), the patron god of Babylon. He received the standard titles of king and took advice from the priests of Marduk in the way to sacrifice to Bel.

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TABLE 8.4 *(continued)*

In Persia and further east	He: • established close bonds with local elites and included them in his entourage as advisers, courtiers and officials. • adopted a form of Persian dress, perhaps, as Plutarch suggests, in the belief that if he shared the local habits and customs, it would be 'a great step towards softening men's hearts.'[45] • incorporated oriental units into his ever-growing army in the belief that a policy of assimilation would contribute to the security of the empire while he was far away, because it would be based on goodwill rather than on force. • encouraged the intermarriage of Persians and Macedonians to provide a dominant group to administer and safeguard his empire in the future. In 324 at Susa, he held a Persian-style wedding where he and 90 of his Macedonians took women from the noblest Persian families. He also registered and rewarded those 10 000 Macedonian soldiers who had previously taken Asiatic wives.

ACTIVITY 8.7

1. Explain what Source 8.18 reveals about Alexander's various administrative arrangements.
2. Demonstrate five examples of Alexander's approach to the problem of administering his conquests.
3. Identify where most of Alexander's cities were located and outline their strategic advantages.
4. Discuss what Source 8.19 reveals about Alexander's choice for the site of his new city of Alexandria Rhacotis.
5. What was the demographic of most of his 'Alexandrias'?
6. Alexander, like his Persian predecessors, practised religious and cultural tolerance. List examples of this policy.

Alexander's relationship with his Macedonians

The relationship of the Macedonian commanders and soldiers with Alexander varied from total loyalty and devotion on the one hand, to resentment and open opposition on the other. When he crossed the Hellespont at the age of 22 he was supported by a group of powerful commanders whose loyalty he had no reason to doubt. They had already enthusiastically embraced the Persian campaign. However, towards the end of his career, he held a banquet at Opis in 324 as a reconciliation between himself and his Macedonians.

What had occurred in Asia to increase the tension between Alexander and his men?

ACTIVITY 8.8

1. Summarise what you have learnt so far about Alexander's personality.
2. Analyse the impact that this might have had on his relationships with the Macedonians.

Discontent with Alexander's Persian policy

Alexander knew that the best guarantees for the security and permanence of his Asiatic empire was to build a bridge between the Macedonians and the Persians, but many of his Macedonians reacted to his attempts with hostility. They saw themselves as the victors and looked with contempt on the defeated barbarians, although many of them had no objection to marrying Persian women.

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- Alexander's adoption of Persian dress displeased many of his Macedonians, especially the family of the elderly general Parmenion, who believed Alexander had acquired a taste for oriental luxury.

  Plutarch records that, despite the Macedonians' displeasure, 'they admired his other virtues so much that they considered they ought to make concessions to him in some matters which either gave him pleasure or increased his prestige'.[46]

  Arrian says it was regrettable that the descendent of Herakles assumed 'Median dress in place of what Macedonians have worn from time immemorial'.[47]
- His policy of selecting 30 000 young Persians to learn Greek and train in Macedonian military tactics to supply him with adequate military leaders for the future upset many of his men. Although his best friend Hephaestion supported this policy, others, like Craterus, his ablest young officer, disapproved. So, Alexander used Hephaestion in his dealings with the Persians, while Craterus liaised with the Macedonian and Greek troops.
- His attempts to introduce prostration (***proskynesis***) at his court in Bactria in 327 caused great offense to his Macedonians. Alexander saw it as a political move to introduce a common court ceremonial practice to show the equal position of the Persians with the Macedonians, and to the Persians it was a mark of their deepest reverence for their king. However, for the Macedonians and Greeks, prostration was only performed before a god. Alexander tried it out with his close associates at a dinner, and while most offered no actual opposition, their displeasure and anger were obvious, especially among older officers who disliked all aspects of Alexander's oriental policy.

proskynesis a Greek term that refers to the traditional Persian act of kissing, bowing, kneeling or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank

Callisthenes, the court historian, was 'the only man to express in public the resentment which all the oldest and best of the Macedonians felt in private'.[48] His speech against the practice angered Alexander, who told his Macedonians they would not be called upon to prostrate themselves in the future. However, this led to a break in the once close relationship between Alexander and Callisthenes, and the king now regarded him as the head of an opposition. See 249 on evaluation of Arrian's Bk 4.

The execution of Philotas and Parmenion

Plutarch says that Alexander became suspicious of Philotas – the commander of the famous Companion cavalry – when he heard that he had boasted while drunk that all the successes in the campaigns were due to his father, Parmenion, and himself, and that Alexander was a mere boy who owed his position to them.

Alexander said nothing about Philotas' drunken outbursts. However, when two men with knowledge of a conspiracy against Alexander approached Philotas and asked for an interview with the king, Philotas did nothing. When Alexander heard that Philotas had failed to warn him, despite visiting him in his tent every day, he had him arrested, tried and executed.

Parmenion, Philotas' father and Alexander's chief of staff, was also put to death, as well as a number of other relatives in high commands, including Alexander of Lyncestis who was of royal blood and a possible pretender to the throne. Although Parmenion had given long and loyal service to Alexander, Macedonian law dictated that the relatives of a man convicted of treason must also be put to death.

Alexander could have persuaded the army to take a different action, but it was too much of a risk to leave Parmenion alive. These events left a legacy of bitterness and fear among Alexander's friends.

ACTIVITY 8.9

1. Define *proskynesis.*
2. Explain how it resulted in Macedonian hostility towards Alexander.
3. Discuss whether or not Alexander was justified in executing Philotas and Parmenion.
4. Discuss whether Alexander was becoming paranoid.

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The manslaughter of Cleitus

In 328, during a drunken brawl, Alexander killed Cleitus, the leader of one of the Companion divisions and the man who had saved his life at the Battle of Granicus. See p. 249 for evaluation of Arrian's Bk 4.

For some time, Cleitus had been resentful of Alexander's adoption of eastern manners and of the excessive flattery of his courtiers. The various accounts are contradictory but all agree that the whole company was drunk.

Whatever the cause, Cleitus, hot-tempered by nature and fired up with alcohol, began to insult Alexander, reminding him that he had saved his life and that Alexander alone did not achieve their successes against the Persians. It was Macedonian blood that had made Alexander so great.

When Alexander accused him of stirring up trouble with the Macedonians, Cleitus suggested that Alexander should spend all his time with the barbarians, who would prostrate themselves before his white Persian tunic, and not to bother with free men who spoke their minds.

Alexander, hurt, furious and drunk, ran him through with a spear, despite all attempts to stop the argument. According to Plutarch, the whole affair 'was a misfortune rather than a deliberate act',[49] but it did reveal the bitterness towards Alexander and the continuing tension felt by some of his closest associates. Horrified at what he had done, Alexander supposedly took to his bed for three days without food or drink, but he made no attempt to justify his crime.

FIGURE 8.30 A painting by Andre Castaigne (1898) of the killing of Cleitus

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander's drunkenness

There was no doubt that the Macedonian generals and Companions drank heavily at times and most of the sources relate instances of Alexander's inebriation.

Arrian says he felt pity for Alexander, for he allowed himself to become 'the slave of anger and drunkenness'.[50]

Plutarch says that:

- Alexander was 'more moderate in his drinking than generally supposed'. In fact, he liked to 'linger over each cup' and was in fact 'talking rather than drinking' but only when he had 'plenty of leisure'.[51]
- It was never really Alexanders fault, that others 'used his intoxication and anger to destroy him'.[52]

The Conspiracy of the Pages

This conspiracy is supposed to have originated during a hunting expedition, when one of Alexander's pages (personal attendants), Hermolaus, killed a boar before Alexander could strike it himself. The king whipped him in front of the others, and Hermolaus, with the help of five other pages, planned to exact revenge for this humiliation by murdering Alexander while he slept. It is possible that the conspiracy had something to do with Alexander's attempt to enforce prostration, as it occurred soon after.

The plot was foiled and Alexander informed. Even though the boys, under torture, confessed that the plot was entirely their own, Callisthenes was implicated due to his influence with the young men. The pages were stoned to death, but the fate of Callisthenes – imprisonment or death – is not really known.

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ACTIVITY 8.10

1 Describe what caused the fatal argument between Cleitus and Alexander.
2 In your opinion, was Alexander's treatment of the pages justified?
3 Discuss the attitude of Arrian and Plutarch to Alexander's drunkenness.

The mutiny of the troops at the Hyphasis River

After weeks of innumerable hardships, monsoon rains and the most difficult battle they had yet fought (against King Porus), the Macedonians refused to follow Alexander beyond the Hyphasis River further into India. Arrian says that the sight of Alexander undertaking 'an endless succession of dangerous and exhausting enterprises was beginning to depress them'.[53] They had lost their enthusiasm and grumbled among themselves until Alexander addressed them and invited comment. Coenus spoke for them all, explaining how the men were yearning for home where they could live in peace and enjoy the treasures that Alexander had enabled them to win. He emphasised that a successful man should know when to stop.

Alexander reacted angrily, declaring that he would continue with or without them and then retired to his tent, hoping they would change their minds. His men resented his outburst and refused to be manipulated. When Alexander took the omens for crossing the river, they proved unfavourable and he decided to go no further east.

Purges of inefficient and corrupt officials

Prior to his march into India, Alexander had put to death several top officials, such as Menander (one of the Companions) because he had refused to stay at his garrison post. Plutarch says that by this time Alexander 'was already feared by his men for his relentless severity in punishing any dereliction of duty'.[54]

When he returned to Susa, Alexander carried out a purge of top government officials and army officers guilty of maladministration, plunder of temples, acts of violence and incitement to revolt. He executed two of his Macedonian generals stationed in Media for crimes against the populace and 600 common soldiers for participating in these crimes.

Cleander was one of the first officers to be executed and the purge went on for months. During this time, Harpalus, the royal treasurer, fled to the west with embezzled funds from the treasury. See p. 235.

The parade of the 'Inheritors'

The 30 000 Persians who had been trained on Macedonian lines were paraded before Alexander when he returned to Susa and incorporated as a separate unit into the army. Arrian writes, 'It is said that their coming caused much bad feeling among the Macedonians who felt it was an indication of his many efforts to lessen his dependence for the future on his countrymen'.[55]

They also resented foreigners being recruited into the regiments of the Companions. The belief that Alexander no longer cared for his own people gained strength. To placate them he offered to pay off all the debts they had incurred throughout their time in Asia.

The mutiny and reconciliation at Opus

In 324, at Opus on the Tigris River, Alexander, hoping to gratify his men, announced that all the sick and disabled and those unfit for military service because of age were to be discharged with very generous payments and sent home.

Despite having claimed their desire to return home during their mutiny at the Hyphasis River, the Macedonians felt Alexander was deliberately humiliating them, and in their resentment called on him to send all his Macedonians home as useless while he went on to conquer the world with 'his corps of young ballet soldiers'.[56] Hurt by their reaction, Alexander called their bluff and began recruiting Persians for a new royal squadron and appointing Persian officers to high commands.

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The Macedonians eventually came to their senses and begged to be forgiven for their jealousy, anger and ingratitude. Alexander responded to their claims of repentance and pardoned them. In order to regain their loyalty for any future campaign, he called them all *syngensis* (kinsmen), making even the common soldier equal to the noblest Persian.

He held a great banquet of reconciliation at which 9000 were present. Alexander prayed for *homonoia* or concord between Macedonians, Greeks and Persians. Once he had courted the Macedonians, he did as he had always planned and dismissed those no longer fit to serve.

ACTIVITY 8.11

1. Explain why the Macedonians refused to go beyond the Hyphasis River.
2. Recount how Harpalus and Cleomenes betrayed Alexander.
3. Explain why it was necessary for Alexander to hold a banquet of reconciliation at Opus in 324.
4. Construct a detailed mind map to illustrate Alexander's changing relationship with his Macedonians.

Alexander's relationship with the Greeks

Alexander's relationship with the Greeks of the mainland was determined by his position as hegemon of the League of Corinth.

- Anxious to give the Greeks who remained at home a share in his victory at Granicus in 334, he sent spoils back to Greece engraved with the following inscription: 'Alexander, the son of Philip, and the Greeks (except the Lacedaemonians) dedicate these spoils taken from the Persians who dwell in Asia.'[57]
- Although the Macedonian hegemony over Greece was not universally popular, and Alexander never discounted the possibility of a Persian-instigated Greek uprising, the Greeks avoided provocative actions while Alexander was alive and winning victories in Asia.
- The large number of exiles (and retired mercenaries) in Asia in the 4th century BC was symptomatic of the violent political strife in Greek states. Alexander issued a decree allowing them to return to their former cities.
- The Greek city-states of Asia Minor were brought over to the side of Alexander, either voluntarily or by force, and in most cases he overthrew the ruling cliques and established democracies. They were treated as Alexander's free allies.

The Spartan revolt

The Spartans had refused to join the League of Corinth and were therefore not bound by its resolutions. Prior to the Battle of Issus, the Spartan king Agis IV communicated with Persia to form an anti-Macedonian coalition and began raising money and ships in the Aegean to be sent to the Peloponnese. Although the defeat of the Persians at Issus was a setback for him, King Agis continued to build up a mercenary force. He had some initial success, defeating a Macedonian force in the Peloponnese, but Antipater, with Greek League forces to augment his own Macedonians, marched into the Peloponnese and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Spartan-led Greeks. With the death of Agis in battle, the opposition to Macedonia collapsed.

The Harpalus affair

Relations between Athens and Alexander were strained over Athens' failure to hand over his treasurer, Harpalus, who had embezzled 5000 talents from the royal treasury in Babylon and fled to Athens in 424 with 6000 mercenaries. Rather than hand him over, the Athenians put him in prison and deposited

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the stolen funds in the Parthenon in trust for Alexander. When it was discovered that some of the money was missing, it was believed that Harpalus had bribed a number of leading Athenians to adopt an anti-Macedonian stance. Several were found guilty and exiled. Harpalus, however, escaped from Athens and sought safety in Crete, but was assassinated by one of his own men.

The decree to restore exiles

The many Greek exiles in Asia Minor and disbanded Greek mercenaries anxious to return home had become a source of discontent. Alexander asked that they be allowed to return to their cities and to have their former property returned to them. This was not only fraught with difficulties, but Alexander's decree also violated the terms of the League of Corinth not to interfere in the internal affairs of the city-states. Nevertheless, he announced that he was going to enforce the order.

> King Alexander, to the banditties [exiles] of the Grecian cities: We are not the cause of your banishment, but we will be the cause of the return of you all into your own country, excepting such as are banished for outrageous crimes; of which things we have written to Antipater, requiring him to proceed by force against all such as shall oppose your restoration.

SOURCE 8.20 Diodorus Siculus, *Universal History*, 18.8

Alexander's deification

In 324, Alexander, in a controversial move, is supposed to have requested his **deification**. If there was such a request from Susa that he should be recognised as a god, it was directed solely to the Greeks of the Corinthian League. The Greeks were always ready to grant divine honours to notable mortals. In their eyes there was no sharp distinction between gods and men. Aristotle, in his *Politics*, said that if there was a man who was incomparably superior to other men in his ability, then he was as a god among men. If any man was to be so honoured, then Alexander's achievements certainly entitled him to be. However, while the Greeks might recognise deification after death, they did not while a person was still alive.

deification the act of regarding someone as a god

Despite the failure of Arrian and Plutarch to mention the issue, Curtius maintained that the Greeks were debating it, and Polybius says there was widespread resistance to it. Balsdon, in his *Divinity of Alexander the Great*, suggests that the request for deification did not come from Alexander, but from supporters in the Greek cities who, now that he was on his way west again, would do anything to ingratiate themselves with him and compromise their opponents.

ACTIVITY 8.12

1. Outline how Alexander treated the:
   - Greeks of the mainland
   - Greeks of Asia Minor
   - Greeks who fought as mercenaries for the Persians.
2. Recount the difficulties that Alexander faced from King Agis of Sparta.
3. Explain why the Greeks were hostile to Alexander's Decree of the Exiles.
4. Account for the Greek attitude to Alexander's deification.

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Nearing the end, Alexander's death and its impact

In 323, Alexander was in Ecbatana when he suffered the greatest blow of his life. His dearest friend Hephaestion – who he had recently made second in command – died. Alexander collapsed in grief and was inconsolable. Hephaestion had been with Alexander since he was a boy, 'by far the dearest of all his friends' and with whom he 'shared all his secrets'.[58] Some people compared them to Achilles and Patroclus.

> The accounts of Alexander's grief at his loss are many and various. All writers have agreed that it was great, but personal prejudice, for or against both Hephaestion and Alexander himself, has coloured the accounts of how he expressed it.

SOURCE 8.21 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 7.14

He apparently withdrew for two days and took no food; ordered a funeral pyre and monument be prepared in Babylon at a cost of 10 000 talents; and that sacrifice 'be always offered to Hephaestion, as a demi-god'.[59] He 'made no fresh appointment to the command of the Companion cavalry', wishing Hephaestion's name to be always associated with it, and held Funeral Games in which 3000 men competed.

To ease his pain, he campaigned against the Cossaeans, a warlike mountain tribe although it was winter. However, Alexander never let bad weather or bad country deter him, and he defeated them in 40 days. He then began planning to send an expedition to explore the Caspian (Hyrcanian) Sea.

According to Arrian, near the Tigris River on his return to Babylon, he was met by some priests of Bel who warned him to go no further but turn eastward with his army, that if he entered Babylon, he would die. Alexander, who suspected their motives, apparently ignored their prophecy. Arrian records that 'fate was leading him to the spot where it was already written that he would die'.[60]

When he arrived in Babylon, his plans for a future expedition to Arabia were already underway: his fleet under Nearchus was already there, a new flotilla was being built and dredging had begun for a new harbour that would take a thousand warships.

> The fact is Alexander had ideas of settling the seaboard of the Persian Gulf and the off-shore islands; for he fancied it might become as prosperous a county as Phoenicia. The naval expedition was directed against the Arabs of the coast, ostensibly because they were the only people in that part of the country who had sent no delegation to wait upon him … actually the reason for the preparations was, in my opinion, Alexander's insatiable thirst for extending his possessions.

SOURCE 8.22 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 7.20

Unfortunately, when he was ready to depart for Arabia he fell ill.

For 11 days, he lay close to death with a fever. Some historians have argued that he was poisoned, while others believe it was a recurrence of the malaria that he had suffered from previously. Considering his years of over-drinking, suffering appalling wounds and the pace at which he worked, his health could have fallen to dangerous levels. What is certain is that he died of a fever at age 32.

While he lay dying, his men could not keep away from him, and as they filed past 'he struggled to raise his head, and in his eyes, there was a look of recognition for each individual as he passed'.[61] They were filled with grief and

FIGURE 8.31 'The sick Alexander', a 19th-century oil painting by Domenico Induno

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bewilderment at the thought of losing the one person who through the strength of his will had guided them for more than 12 years. To them he was Alexandros Aniketos – 'invincible Alexander'.

When his friends gathered around him in his last moments and asked to whom he was leaving his empire, he supposedly answered: to the one who is *kratistos* (the best and most powerful). To Alexander, 'the *kratistos* had to be the most effective fighter, the most insightful thinker, the best planner, and the most persuasive speaker'.[62]

As future events showed, no one ever measured up to Alexander's ideal.

> Who knows? Perhaps it was better for him to make his end while his fame was unimpaired and the world most grieved for his loss, and before he was overtaken by the ill fortune which, at one time or another, is the lot of all men.

SOURCE 8.23 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 7.17

FIGURE 8.32 An engraving of Alexander's funeral procession

Unfortunately, Alexander did not have a designated heir (see comment box below) and there was not one among his surviving generals who had the charisma, excellence and vision to hold his empire together and prevent the chaos that followed his death.

Within a year everything began falling apart.

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander's offspring and the succession

- Alexander was married three times to Roxanne, daughter of the Sogdian nobleman Oxyartes of Bactria, and to two Persian princesses: Stateira II and Parysatis. However, he had only two sons, both born after his death: Alexander, the son of Roxanne, and Heracles from his mistress Barsine.
- Roxanne was pregnant when Alexander died, but there was another possible heir to the throne, an elder half-brother of Alexander, named Arrhidaeus, who is believed to have been feeble-minded (later called Philip III Arrhidaeus).
- This situation caused a problem because the infantry supported Arrhidaeus, but Perdiccas, a Companion cavalry commander, asked them to wait to see if Roxanne's baby was a boy.

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- In a compromise, the various factions agreed that Perdiccas would rule as regent for Philip III Arrhidaeus, who would be only a figurehead with no power.
- Roxanne gave birth to a son not long after Alexander's death and he became Alexander IV. However, due to civil war for control, the young king (only 14 at the time) and his mother Roxanne were killed in 309, around the same time as Heracles, his half-brother, 14 years after the death of Alexander the Great.

For two decades, his warring commanders (Diadochi) fractured the empire and ruled for themselves; by the end of the 4th century BC the victorious generals declared themselves kings: Ptolemy ruled Egypt and Cyrenaica, Seleucus ruled Asia and Antigonid ruled Greece and Macedonia.

ACTIVITY 8.13

1. Recount how Alexander reacted to the death of his lifelong friend Hephaestion.
2. Summarise Alexander's plans for the near future.
3. Describe later accounts of Alexander's death.
4. Describe Alexander's reaction when asked on his deathbed to whom he was leaving his empire.
5. Discuss: Could anyone ever measure up to Alexander's ideal leader?
6. Explain whether or not you agree with Arrian's view in Source 8.23 of Alexander's death.
7. Identify any problems that arose after Alexander's death.

8.4 Evaluation

Impact and influence on his time

Despite his short life, Alexander the Great had an enormous impact on his own time. He:

1. reduced his rebellious neighbours within a year of taking the throne and crossed the Danube, inspiring such terror into the tribes that for over half a century they never again attacked Macedonia.
2. regained the hegemony of Greece by serving notice that he would not tolerate rebellion and disloyalty, and was prepared to make a terrible example (Thebes) of those who did, showing 'the Greeks that he was even more dangerous than Philip'.[63]
3. liberated Asia Minor, Phoenicia, Egypt and Babylon from Persian control; won three of the most important battles in history – Granicus, Issus and Gaugamela – against the forces of the mighty Persian Empire; and carried out one of the longest sieges in history to take what was considered the impregnable fortress city of Tyre.
4. was crowned Pharaoh of Egypt, accepted as King of the World in Babylon and saw himself as King of Asia.
5. showed the diverse peoples of the Persian Empire that submission to Alexander did not mean slavery and that in fact he would respect their gods, religious cults and customs.
6. 'enhanced his honour among Macedonians, Greeks and Persians alike'[64] by his respectful treatment of Darius' family, left behind when Darius fled the battlefield at Issus.
7. secured his conquests by using existing administrative forms where possible, and aimed to unite the Persian and Macedonian nobility to create a new ruling class that would speak Greek. He rewarded excellence in others, whether they were Macedonian, Greek or barbarian.

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8 led his troops eastward into areas unknown to the Greeks and Macedonians – the remote mountainous satrapies of Bactria (Afghanistan), Sogdiana (Uzbekistan) and into India – engaging in guerrilla-type warfare and sieges against rebellious satraps and tribes.

9 founded cities based on Greek models – most bearing his name.

10 incurred, in his later career, the hostility of some of his Macedonian commanders and troops for his oriental policy and his desperate ambition to continue conquering, and was faced with conspiracy, disloyalty and occasional mutinous behaviour by many of those closest to him.

11 tested the loyalty of his troops; suffered alongside them for 12 years, sharing their labours and dangers; married as they married; gave them noble burials; paid their debts; and rewarded them with the bulk of the treasures he captured.

An assessment of his life and reign

Due to the nature of the sources, it is highly unlikely that scholars will ever know the 'real' Alexander. In any assessment of his life and reign it is essential to take into account:

- his Macedonian heritage
- his upbringing
- the mores of the time, rather than, as many modern historians do, judge him solely by the values of our own day.

He needs to be assessed as a man, a king, a general and statesman.

Alexander as a man

- Alexander was a complex and contradictory character with a Greek intellect, a Macedonian temperament and a religious faith that was both Greek and Macedonian.
- Alexander's identity and ambitions derived from his personal family heritage as a descendent of Herakles and Achilles and, like all those of his day, such a heritage was believed to be literally true.
- Added to this was his obsession with Greek literature and the deeds of the mythical heroes whom he tried to emulate and surpass, as well as his inner drive to 'go beyond'. It has been suggested that Alexander, in everything he did, was simply trying to outdo his father.
- On a personal level, Alexander aimed to achieve what Aristotle had taught him about the traits of the 'Man of Great Soul', for example: his generosity as a benefactor of others: 'Alexander by nature was exceptionally generous and became more so as his wealth increased. His gifts were always bestowed with grace and courtesy …'[65]
- Also associated with his desire to become a 'Man of Great Soul' was his deep affection and concern for his intimate friends; consideration for women; his intolerance of, and ruthlessness in dealing with, personal insults as well as ungrateful and disloyal people; and a belief that his accomplishments would be rewarded with the greatest of honours, raising him to the level of the gods.
- Alexander was a loyal and pious man, strict in the observance of his religious duties. He took dreams, omens and oracles seriously, and was tolerant of the gods and religious rituals of those he conquered.
- He was still a young man when he died and there is no doubt he made mistakes. Arrian admits that 'in the passion of the moment he sometimes erred'.[66]
- Many of his detractors have called him a chronic alcoholic and it was certainly true that many of his mistakes, such as the burning of Persepolis and the death of Cleitus, occurred due to a toxic combination of anger and alcohol. However, heavy drinking was a Macedonian tradition and these drinking parties, used as a social bonding of Companions and king, invariably ended in brawls.
- All the same, Arrian admits to having an 'ungrudging admiration for the man himself', despite the number of times he erred. He was certain that Alexander, 'of all the monarchs of old, was the only one who had the nobility of heart to be sorry for his mistakes'.[67]

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Alexander as a king

- In Macedonian culture, a king had to win an ongoing competition for status among the Macedonian social elite who saw themselves as the social equals of the royal family.
- As a king, Alexander's life was always in danger and he was expected to remove serious rival claimants to the throne, as well as those who conspired against him. Although he expected to be guarded by the loyalty of his friends, Alexander slept with a knife under his pillow for most of his life.
  - He has often been accused of being paranoid, and it is not hard to believe after what he saw as the treachery of Philotas and the Conspiracy of the Pages in the latter part of his career.
  - His responses to treachery were ruthless in the case of Philotas and the Pages. Their punishment was what was expected in Macedonian society. Alexander's authority to condemn Philotas and the Pages was never questioned.
  - As an absolute ruler, he could tolerate no opposition to his politics or person. It had to be crushed before it destroyed him. He was consistent in his policy towards disloyalty and treachery throughout his career.
- It has been suggested that Alexander changed his concept of what it was to be a king once he moved from Persepolis into Asia, transforming himself from a Macedonian warrior-king into the King of Asia, 'something akin to a sultan'.[68] It appears that he had abandoned his homeland and planned an empire centred on Babylon and not Pella.
- His adoption of some aspects of Persian dress and court etiquette such as *proskynesis* may have been to impress his new subjects and create a protocol common to Macedonians, Greeks and Persians, but it caused hostility with his Macedonians, who believed he no longer saw himself as a first among near equals according to Macedonian tradition.
- Professor Ian Worthington believes that Alexander had become a megalomaniac 'who thought of himself as divine and *proskynesis* was a logical means of recognizing his divine status in public by all men'.[69] However, Alexander abandoned the practice of *proskynesis* for Macedonians and made efforts to reconcile with his troops.

Alexander as an administrator and statesman

- In organising his empire, he tended to be impatient as he was always anxious to move on to more conquests. He therefore chose the easiest ways to deal with his conquered territory by adopting what was most expedient in certain areas and with particular people. In so doing, he often revealed a degree of political astuteness. For example, he:
  - kept the democracies of mainland Greece in check by promoting pro-Macedonian oligarchs
  - made allies of the Greeks of Asia Minor by introducing democracies where they had been previously ruled by Persian-supported oligarchs
  - gained the support of local people by his tolerance of their religion and customs
  - accommodated the previous elites by maintaining their economic and political status by retaining the already-established system of satraps and satrapies
  - separated civil, financial and military powers between Macedonians and Persians to keep more control over the provinces of the west
  - founded cities in the east to secure the regions, and made military demonstrations to keep tribal peoples in check
  - contributed to trade and economic prosperity by reform of the coinage and involved Athens as a trading partner by introducing a form of silver currency based on the Athenian standard
  - made and promoted marriage alliances.

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- However, he was often mistaken in his judgement of the men he relied on to administer his empire.
  - Cleomenes, the financial superintendent and later governor of Egypt, extorted large amounts of treasure from the priests and temples, as well as holding the monopoly of the export of corn and causing a grain famine in Greece.
  - Harpalus, the royal treasurer in Babylon, embezzled funds.
  - Of the Persian satraps Alexander appointed as part of his policy of joint rule, 10 were removed for incompetence or executed for treason or murder. Some had even raised their own armies. Perhaps Alexander should have overhauled the satrap system – a massive task but, instead, he simply punished offenders and appointed new governors.
- It is difficult to judge Alexander as a statesman, since his work was just beginning when he died and his views had been changing and developing. Although Plutarch and modern historians like Tarn and Hammond developed a romantic view that Alexander aimed at creating a brotherhood of man, Alexander did not believe in equality. Whether Alexander saw the idea of a 'mixing' or amalgamation of populations as the way to create 'an empire that would surpass anything ever seen before',[70] it is more likely to have served his self-interest as the King of Asia.
- Although he inadvertently spread Hellenic culture through his 'Alexandrias', he was following his father's example of disassociating people from their respective homelands to avoid uprisings and maintain security.

Alexander as a general

As a general, Alexander has to be seen within the context of the world in which he lived, a world where war and slavery were normal. In Alexander's world, Macedonian kings were trained to be warriors who saw war as a way of wreaking revenge, pursuing glory and gaining recognition for their superiority.

Alexander has been accused by modern historians of 'exceeding these common values in his brutality',[71] but the following quote may perhaps put a different light on this.

> The Greek law of war did not encompass humanitarian ideals. Instead, it focused on protecting sacred objects and observances. The great irony here is that despite the central role played by religion and honour in the Greek laws of war, these laws were indifferent to considerations of mercy and the protection of non-combatants.

SOURCE 8.24 A. Lanni, 'The Laws of War in Ancient Greece', *In Law and History Review*, 8 April 2011, p. 470

There is no denying the influence of his father, Philip, in his successes as he started with the advantages of Philip's powerful national army, a group of experienced commanders and a Persian campaign already in train. However, no one who followed or came in contact with Alexander could deny his military genius and leadership skills. Despite the fact that some of the accounts might have been embellished in Alexander's favour, most modern scholars seem to agree with the views of Arrian.

- 'In military dispositions, he was always masterly
- His ability to seize the moment for a swift blow was beyond praise.
- He took risks with the utmost boldness.
- He had an uncanny instinct for the right course in a difficult situation.
- He was brave and adventurous.
- He had invincible powers of endurance.
- Noble was his power of inspiring men and filling them with confidence.'[72]

His genius was apparent in every aspect of warfare and in every military undertaking between that of Granicus and Hydaspes.

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TABLE 8.5 Aspects of his brilliance

Tactical insight and strategic planning	Leadership of men
Alexander was able to modify his tactics to suit each opponent by varying the disposition of his troops; for example: • Granicus was a cavalry contest • at Gaugamela, he overcame the danger of encirclement by a larger army • against Porus he used infantry because the cavalry could not face the elephants • he made his phalanx mobile: it could open its ranks to allow chariots to pass through and it could charge at the double • he was able to devise means to overcome every obstacle, be it a raging swollen river or a fortress • his siege operations against Tyre and Aornus, a rock fortress 1500 metres above the Indus, were totally different • he was able to find the right guerrilla tactics to dispose of his opponents in central Asia. He won by: • making rapid marches • taking the enemy by surprise and forcing them to change their plans • applying overwhelming force at the crucial point • using deception • never putting anything off • fighting in all seasons • keeping his lines of communications carefully guarded, so any reinforcements were always able to reach the main army. However, Alexander did suffer some setbacks, such as the defeat of his commander Pharnuches and a force of 2000 against Spitamenes at Samarkand. Alexander had to race quickly with his cavalry to save Samarkand.	His ability to lead his men was due to his: • personal magnetism • his courage, sometimes battling on, even with horrendous injuries • endurance and willingness to share the miseries of his men, such as the dreadful journey across the Gedrosian Desert when he refused water for himself as there was not enough for everyone • understanding the use of the psychology of victory as well as knowing when to relax and when to discipline • provision of amusements for his men (athletic and musical contests) at their halting places so he kept up his men's morale and gave rewards of money • domination of 'his often fractious and ambitious general staff who, after his death kept the eastern Mediterranean in turmoil for more than 40 years, is testimony to his personality and power as a leader'.[73] Unfortunately, Alexander's incredible resolve to keep moving and accepting challenges often pushed his men beyond their limits, causing unnecessary loss of morale and suffering. Also, his lack of understanding of the impact on his Macedonians of his treatment of favours given to the Persians led to a near mutiny.

Professor Worthington has questioned some aspects of Alexander's generalship. He believes that:

- although the crossing of the river at Granicus against a much larger force was commendable, Alexander was lucky because the Persian army was levied hastily and was not led by the Persian king.
- at Issus, Darius, a mediocre leader at best, threw away the battle by fleeing and that once again Alexander was lucky. He criticises Alexander for not immediately pursuing Darius after Issus and leaving him at large to regroup and recruit, while he pressed on into Phoenicia and Egypt.
- the siege of Tyre was lengthy, costly and questionable.

Although Alexander made mistakes and the numbers of deaths over 12 years were huge, Burn maintains that 'no soldier in history is more indisputably greater than Alexander'.[74]

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Just how 'great' was Alexander?

Alexander was not referred to as 'the Great' in his own times; it is believed that the Roman poet Plautus coined the epithet. In his own days, and those of the Romans, the fact that he conquered the Persian Empire was enough to deserve the epithet 'Great'.

If we decide to judge this 'greatness' by today's standards of behaviour and humanitarian ideals, we could admire him as a tactical genius and someone tolerant of different races, religions and customs, but we would have to deplore his obsession with fame and glory, in the quest for which hundreds of thousands of people were killed, while others were deliberately resettled far from their homeland.

Alexander's legacy

Because of Alexander's existence, the world was never quite the same again. He was a catalyst for change.

His empire and the Hellenistic Age

On his death, Alexander left one of the greatest territorial empires of all times, stretching from Egypt and the Mediterranean to Afghanistan and India; an empire administered by a mix of Macedonian, Greek and Persian elites and dotted with numerous cities named after him.

By the early 3rd century BC, after decades of warring among his former generals, his empire consolidated into three major kingdoms and areas of influence: the Antigonid dynasty centred on Greece, the Seleucid empire in Asia and the Ptolemaic rule over Egypt and Cyrenaica. These new Hellenistic kingdoms remained in some form or another for the next 200 years until the Romans conquered and absorbed most of them in the 1st century BC. Cleopatra VII, queen of Egypt, was the last of Alexander's successors.

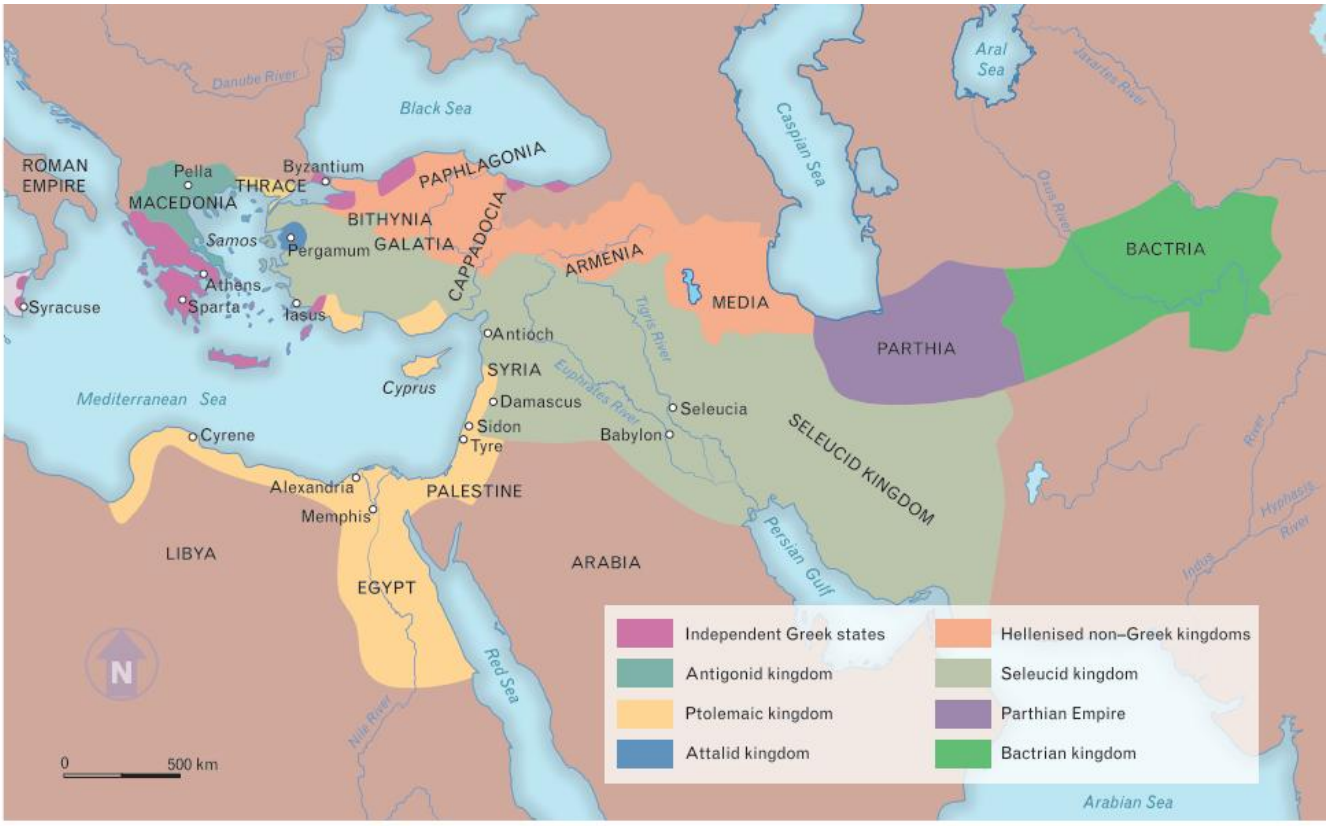

FIGURE 8.33 Map of the Hellenistic kingdoms after the death of Alexander

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Cultural and economic legacy

Alexander's conquests:

1 opened up the Near East and central Asia to Greek settlement, culture and language. This 'explosion eastwards, produced a cultural diffusion with significant consequences'.[75] The first Buddhist emperor of India, who was part Greek by birth, had *Buddha's Decrees* inscribed in Greek on pillars in Kandahar, one of Alexander's cities, and his conquests contributed to a Graeco-Buddhist style of art – based on Greek ideals of the human form – in the Indian subcontinent and even as far as China and Java

2 led increasingly to Greek as the medium of education, which included the teaching of Aristotle's ethics and virtue

3 altered the patterns by which the people of the Mediterranean and the Near East lived their lives by uniting a great many people with shared customs and beliefs, and laying the foundations for the Roman Empire

4 provided unimaginable wealth and resources for his successors, and facilitated trade and communication

5 created Alexandria in Egypt, which became the greatest economic and intellectual centre in the Hellenistic world. By 200 BC its population was half a million, with a library-cum-museum containing 500 000 scrolls. Ptolemy and his son had followed Alexander's example in promoting knowledge, particularly science, and encouraged scholars to take up residence there.

FIGURE 8.34 A bust of Ptolemy I, king of the Hellenistic kingdom of Egypt and Cyrenaica

FIGURE 8.35 An example of Graeco-Buddhist art

FIGURE 8.36 Modern Alexandria

Fame and the legend of Alexander

It is fame – the thing Alexander desired most passionately – that has remained as his greatest legacy.

Soon after his death, Alexander's Hellenistic successors took advantage of his fame to symbolically link themselves with his victories and divine spirit by minting coins bearing his portraits. The most famous of these from Ptolemaic Egypt bears the image of the conqueror wearing an elephant skull with the horns characteristic of Zeus-Ammon. Also, he was shown on a 1st-century BC medallion as the omnipotent sun-god, the archetypal god-king. Later, Roman emperors followed suit and this tradition continued for 800 years. Even as late as the 13th century AD, Sultan Alauddin Jhali, who created the vast empire of medieval India, inscribed on his coins the title 'The second Alexander'.

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In the first century after his death, accounts of his legendary exploits were gathered together into a text known as the *Alexander Romance*. Although this text included some historical facts, it was predominantly imaginative tales of marvels and adventures associated with Alexander, and a mix of narratives that taught moral lessons. It was translated into Latin by the Romans and then into every major language in Europe and the Near East. Apart from several religious texts, it was the most widely read book in pre-modern times.

The myth of the undefeated hero inspired later Romans:

FIGURE 8.37 A coin of Alexander with the horns of Zeus-Ammon minted by one of his successors

- Julius Caesar wept when he saw a statue of the young Alexander, realising how few memorable things he had achieved himself at the age when the Macedonian king died.
- Pompey, Caesar's main rival, emulated Alexander by adopting the title 'Magnus' or 'Great'.
- Augustus, after defeating Cleopatra VII, laid a wreath at the hero's tomb in Alexandria.
- The Emperor Caracalla, in the 2nd century AD, is supposed to have opened that same tomb and taken Alexander's armour for his own imminent attack on the east.
- The Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne, 500 years later, consciously copied Alexander.
- Napoleon, a further 1000 years into the future, always travelled with a portrait of Alexander, just as Alexander travelled with a copy of the *Iliad* that contained the achievements of his own hero, Achilles.

Ancient and modern interpretations and images

Alexander was, and still is, one of the most controversial personalities in history, with more written about him than almost anybody else. Most of the debates around him concern the dilemma: is he to be admired or deplored?

Contemporary images and interpretations

During his own day, the two men who presented images of Alexander which he himself approved of were Lysippus, one of the greatest sculptors of the 4th century, and Callisthenes, the court historian who accompanied Alexander on his campaigns.

1 Lysippus was the personal sculptor of Alexander and the only artist thought fit to represent him. The sculptor's famous bronze portrait of him was described as having the look of fire in its eyes that made one understand why cattle (Persians) fled before a lion (Alexander). Lysippus represented Alexander as an inspired, god-like character looking upwards.

2 Callisthenes of Olynthus, nephew of Aristotle, was employed by Alexander to write *Alexandrou praxeis* or *Deeds of Alexander*, an account of his conquests. Callisthenes originally wrote a flattering account of Alexander's campaign, showering praises on the young king. He knew how to pander to Alexander's desire to emulate Achilles and included many allusions to Homer's *Iliad*. Callisthenes compared Alexander's manly behaviour with the effeminate weakness of the Persians. He treated Alexander's journey across the desert to Siwah as an epic, and seemed to have no objections to Alexander's claim to be the son of Zeus-Ammon. He included a story about the receding sea off the Lycian coast obeying the new Achilles to let his army past. The book of *Deeds of Alexander* is now lost, but underlies much of what was later written.

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After Alexander's death, a number of other accounts of his achievements were published. Although these are now lost, they formed the basis of the works on Alexander by Arrian, Plutarch, Curtius and Diodorus Siculus during the Roman Empire. For example:

- Cleitarchus (*History of Alexander*) presented a psychological portrait of an Alexander corrupted by his good fortune and successes, who became an alcoholic, a tyrant and a murderer. His account contains many errors.
- Ptolemy, a friend of Alexander, with him during his campaigns and later king of Egypt, inserted his own propaganda in his memoir of Alexander. He saw Alexander as a rational expansionist.
- Aristobulus, another of Alexander's friends, presents a very favourable image of the king, preferring always to see the positive side of things. It was he who introduced the idea of *pothos*, or 'longing', to describe Alexander's inner drive.

FIGURE 8.38 One of Lysippus' busts of Alexander

Interpretations from Roman Empire period

These were all written, not only three to five centuries after Alexander, but also 'against the background of Roman imperialism' and are bound to have seen the story through a Roman filter, and have been interpreted in the light of the conquests and the expansion of their own political age.

- Diodorus Siculus (*Universal History*) praised Alexander's courage and intelligence and called his conquests 'achievements that surpassed those of all kings from the beginning of time'.[76]
- Plutarch (*The Life of Alexander*), writing in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, says of Alexander: 'He cared nothing for pleasure or wealth but only for deeds of valour and glory'[77] and 'such was Alexander's desire to pay tribute to any manifestation of courage, and to prove himself the friend and guardian of noble actions'.[78]
- Curtius (*The History of Alexander the Great of Macedonia*) follows the view of Cleitarchus that he was a monarch corrupted by his good fortune, but excuses his faults as the result of fortune and youth.
- Arrian (*The Campaigns [Anabasis] of Alexander*), who lived under the rule of the Emperor Hadrian and was a Roman governor and military commander himself, is generally an admirer of Alexander although not uncritically so. (See Evaluation of Bk 4 of Arrian, on p. 249) He sums up his account of the campaigns of Alexander by recording:

> It is my belief that there was in those days no nation, no city, no single individual beyond the reach of Alexander's name: never in the world was there another like him and therefore I cannot but feel that some power more than human was concerned in his birth.

SOURCE 8.25 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, Bk 7.29

Modern scholarship on Alexander 19th–21st century

The interpretations of Alexander by historians over the last 150 years have ranged from one extreme to the other: from a romantic view of a chivalrous super hero, to a tyrant and mass murderer in the mould of a Hitler or Stalin.

- In the 19th century, it was the historian Johaan Gustav Droysen who dominated the controversy over Alexander. Droysen's *History of Alexander the Great*, written in 1833, reflected a new school of German historical thought, idealising power and success. He praised Alexander for his achievements, particularly as an agent for a positive transformation among the former inhabitants of the Persian Empire. He maintained that Alexander's main objective was to found a solid and flourishing empire.

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- William Woodthorpe Tarn in the early years of the 20th century formed an idealistic interpretation of Alexander, crediting him with the creation of a humanitarian doctrine of the Unity of Mankind. Tarn saw Alexander as a chivalrous young king who 'was one of the supreme fertilizing forces in history, lifting the civilized world out of one groove and setting it in another'.[79]
- Ernst Badian in 1958 challenged the traditional view of Alexander and created an Alexander on the model of a 20th-century tyrant. To him, Alexander was an irrational and ruthless killer of rivals and those who disagreed with him, and a mass murderer in his conquests. He describes him as degenerating into paranoia as his reign progressed, eventually finding himself alone surrounded only by flatterers.
- Brian Bosworth, in his 1999 publication *Alexander and the East: The Tragedy of Triumph*, wrote, 'The price of Alexander's sovereignty was killing on a gigantic scale, and killing is unfortunately the perpetual backcloth of his regime'.[80]
- Ian Worthington in 1999 wrote that Alexander was 'an alcoholic, paranoid and megalomaniac, responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of his own men and wholesale slaughter of native peoples'.[81]

A COMMENT ON...

Alexander in film

- Two films made in India in 1941 (*Sikander*) and 1965 (*Sikander-e-Azam)* were intended to promote nationalist fervour by showing Porus as a courageous leader who defended Indian freedom against Alexander.
- Of two films made in the US, in 1955 (*Alexander the Great*) and 2004 (*Alexander*), the first focused on Alexander's relationship with his father, and the second showed Alexander as a dreamy, sexually troubled visionary.
- A Japanese/Korean video in 13 episodes produced in 1999 (*Reign: The Conqueror*) is a mix of history and fantasy, in which Alexander follows a personal quest laid out in the theme song: 'Seek out a kingdom worthy of your soul'.

ACTIVITY 8. 14

1. Assess Alexander's impact on his own time.
2. Evaluate Alexander as a man and king.
3. What was Alexander's cultural and economic legacy?
4. How have the images of Alexander changed from the 19th century to the present?
5. If you were asked to write a script for a film on Alexander, how would you present him?

FIGURE 8.39 Alexander in the 2004 Oliver Stone film *Alexander*

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8.5 The value and limitations of Arrian's Book 4

Arrian's very readable *Anabasis* (*The Campaigns of Alexander*), written four centuries after Alexander's death, is generally regarded as being the most authoritative source on Alexander's career once he became king, particularly with regard to his military exploits. Arrian's attention to detail, his use of technical terms and names of commanders and governors is exceptional. He knew about fighting a war and governing a province. This, of course, does not mean that we can regard everything Arrian records as reliable. Because his method was to focus only on Alexander's military activities and movements, his treatment is rather narrow. All the same, it is a tribute to him that many modern scholars follow the *Anabasi*s in regard to his military information.

However, while Arrian is strong on Alexander's generalship, his weakness is in his treatment of Alexander's personality, motivations and vision. This weakness is clearly revealed in Book 4.

Book 4 covers military successes and the increasing number of difficulties faced by Alexander in the East, such as terrain (the rock fortresses of Sogdiana and his crossing of the Hindu Kush on his way to the Indus), weather (winters in the mountains of central Asia), rebellions (in Sogdiana and Bactria in 329) and tough opponents (the Scythians and the Sogdian warlord, Spitamenes). We also hear of his plans for cities and his marriage to Roxanne, but it is Arrian's treatment of the following events that reveals his particular biases:

- the capture and punishment of Bessus (who killed King Darius III)
- Alexander's emulation of Eastern dress
- the murder of Cleitus and its effect on Alexander (out of sequence)
- the question of prostration and the opposition of Callisthenes
- the Conspiracy of the Pages (out of sequence).

Arrian's biases

- Arrian was steeped in Greek Stoic philosophy with its high moral standards. Stoic philosophy was predominantly about personal ethics, the fair and just treatment of others, and repentance after wrongdoing, and he always praised Alexander's remorse after behaving badly.
- Like most Greeks (although Arrian was a Roman citizen), he was prejudiced against 'barbarians' and this caused him to misunderstand Alexander's actions with regard to Persian culture. He had no real understanding of Alexander's vision of a partnership between the Macedonian/Greek and Persian people, as reflected in the prayer at Opus which he passes over without comment.
- Arrian's hostility to the Roman imperial cult of his own day prevented him believing that Alexander might have really considered himself to be the son of Zeus-Ammon. Like a lot of things Arrian was sceptical about, he put this down to a device used by Alexander to impress his subjects.
- Arrian was obsessed with Alexander, who he saw as a hero like no other. His reverence for Alexander is described as hagiography. He admitted that 'This book of mine has been from my youth, more precious than country and kin and public advancement – indeed it *is* these things'[82] and that 'there has never been another man in the world, of Greek or any other blood who by his own hand succeeded in so many enterprises'.[83]
- Arrian naively believed that his two main sources, the eyewitnesses Ptolemy and Aristobulus, had no reason to lie about Alexander because they wrote after his death, which he thought applied particularly to Ptolemy because he went on to become a king. This reason alone makes one question Arrian's reliability. Both of these sources – although reasonably reliable for Alexander's conquests and the details of battlefield tactics, topography and geography – fell short in the more subjective area of Alexander's personality and motivation. They each had their own particular weaknesses. Ptolemy passed over 'the more controversial and discreditable episodes in Alexander's life',[84] while Aristobulus was known in antiquity as the 'flatterer'.

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Arrian records that in creating his accounts of Alexander's achievements, there were some things which he felt compelled to censure; but he wasn't ashamed to admire Alexander himself. Despite his admiration of him, he tried to be objective in his assessment of him and did not fail to criticise him where he believed he fell short of the standards that he felt a king should exhibit. Arrian's greatest weakness is 'a tendency which he derives from his sources, to gloss over the less attractive side of the king's character and a failure to appreciate Alexander's intentions, especially with regard to the Persians'.[85]

Arrian's personal views expressed in Book 4

Read Bk 4, 8.15:

1 The punishment of Bessus and Alexander's adoption of Persian dress:
Bessus was accused of treachery (murder of Darius III). Alexander gave orders that his nose and part of his ears should be cut off, and in this mutilated state he was taken to Ecbatana to be publicly executed in front of the Medes and Persians. According to Arrian, this was an example of a deterioration in Alexander's character. He did not consider that Bessus' punishment was a Persian form of punishment, inflicted by the 'Great King'.

> I do not myself approve of excessive severity of this punishment; for mutilation of that sort, is I think a barbarous custom. I admit, moreover, that Alexander came to allow himself to emulate … the fashion of barbaric kings of treating their subjects as inferiors; regrettable, too, was the assumption by a descendant of Heracles of Median dress … I have no praise for such conduct; but in my opinion, at least, the splendid achievements of Alexander are the clearest possible proof that … none of these things can make a man happy, unless he can win … victory over himself.

SOURCE 8.26 Arrian, *Anabasis,* 4.7–8

2 The murder of Cleitus and its effect on Alexander (Refer back to p. 233):

> Personally, I strongly deprecate Cleitus' unseemly behavior to his sovereign; and for Alexander I feel pity in that he showed himself on that occasion the slave of anger and drunkenness, two vices to neither of which a self-respecting man should ever yield. But when the deed was done, Alexander immediately felt its horror; and for that, I admire him … Here again, I have nothing but admiration for him: he made no attempt to justify his crime; he ever added guilt by becoming champion and advocate in his own defence; he quite simply admitted that, being no more than human, he had done wrong.

SOURCE 8.27 Arrian, *Anabasis*, 4.9

3 Prostration and Callisthenes objection (refer back to p. 232):
Arrian gives a number of stories on Callisthenes' opposition to the Persian custom of prostration but then adds that 'all these stories are deplorable in so far as they reflect upon Alexander's growing arrogance and Callisthenes' bad manners'.[86]

> It is enough, I think, once a man has consented to enter a king's service, that he should exalt his master as much as he can, while at the same time preserving a decent modesty in his own behaviour; and for that reason I feel that Alexander was not unjustified in being angry with Callisthenes both for his absurd conceit and for letting his tongue run away with him.

SOURCE 8.28 Arrian, Anabasis, 4.13

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4 The Conspiracy of the Pages (refer back to p. 233):

Arrian believed that it was Callisthenes' opposition to Alexander over the prostration issue that led Alexander to so readily believe that Callisthenes either had a hand in the pages' plot to kill him, or was actually the 'prime mover of it'.[87]

Arrian admits that the stories of this conspiracy and the fate of Callisthenes – even those told by Aristobulus and Ptolemy – are so contradictory and confusing that all he can do is to leave the stories as he has told them.

Other extant sources on Alexander

1 Diodorus Siculus (late 1st century BC) and Curtius Rufus (early 1st century AD) both used Cleitarchus' *History of Alexander* as their main source. In fact, much of their works often retell stories in almost identical words. Their accounts reveal details that would never be known otherwise and they are useful additions to Arrian, although they, like their source, are full of errors.

2 Plutarch (who wrote early in the 2nd century AD) treats the life of Alexander rather like a number of short stories that include virtues and vices, as well as moral lessons. He obviously read widely on Alexander, taking elements from each source to write his own moral story with its overarching theme 'that Alexander brought civilisation to the barbarians'.

> The histories of Diodorus and Curtius and the biography of Plutarch throw light (and sometimes darkness) on the character of Alexander and occasionally even on his military exploits, but Arrian's book is the basis of our knowledge.

SOURCE 8.29 J. R. Hamilton, introduction to Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, p. 33

ACTIVITY 8.15

1 Evaluate the reliability of Book 4 as a source on the character, behaviour and vision of Alexander.

2 Discuss the usefulness of Diodorus, Curtius and Plutarch in confirming Arrian's reliability as a source on Alexander.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

8.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The Kingdom of Alexander was composed of a fertile plain (Lower Macedonia) from which the kings ruled from Aegae and Pella, and a wilder mountain zone (Upper Macedonia) from which the Macedonians gained valuable timber resources, as well as gold and silver from Mt Pangaeus.
- Macedonia was an autocracy ruled by a king, supported by a group of noble Companions (*hetairoi*) linked by ties of loyalty. Although sons often followed fathers onto the throne, there were numerous dynastic disputes due to the practice of polygamy, and to be born into the royal family involved a struggle to survive and often the need to eliminate rivals.
- To most inhabitants of the Greek city-states to the south, Macedonian was regarded as culturally inferior and some even referred to them as 'barbarians' (non-Greek) even though they spoke a dialect of Greek.
- Things changed when Philip II, Alexander's father, came to the throne. Since a Macedonian king had to be, above all, a military commander, he transformed the military into a national army with rigorous training, discipline, new weaponry and tactics (phalanx warfare), with which he was able to protect his borders, gain control of more territory and eventually defeat the Greek city-states.

8.2 BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE OF ALEXANDER

- Alexander's father was a tough military commander, who traced his lineage back to the semi-divine Herakles, and his mother, Olympias, the daughter of the king of Epirus, traced her lineage back to Achilles. She was fiery, headstrong and meddlesome, and a passionate devotee of the Dionysiac cult.
- Alexander, as a young boy, was influenced by his mother and from an early age came in contact with a wide range of foreigners who visited the court at Pella. His training involved him in military and other forms of dangerous competition and horsemanship, and by 14 he was being tutored by Aristotle from who he developed an insatiable curiosity and a determination to go beyond all others in excellence. All his life he was inspired by the exploits of the mythical heroes of old. He showed himself a great military leader by the age of 16.
- In the last years of Philip's life there was considerable strain on the relationship between father and son: they saw each other as rivals and there was the divisive event of Philip's marriage to his seventh wife.

8.3 KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CAREER OF ALEXANDER

- Philip's assassination when Alexander was 20 led to precautionary violence to remove rivals and possible claimants to the throne. He inherited a powerful state, a professional army, overlordship of the Greek states and a planned expedition against the Persian Empire.
- Philip's death led to threats from those outside Macedonia. Alexander proved again he was a great general in bringing the people of the north and west back under control and then marched south to punish Thebes for betrayal. The city was destroyed as punishment.
- Once Greece and Macedonia were under control, he crossed to Asia and in a series of devastating battles – Granicus, Issus, Gaugamela (during which he revealed a fearless and innovative generalship) – he defeated the great King of Kings, Darius III, and took control of the Persian Empire. He continued

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eastward, defeating tribal kings, often in guerrilla warfare, until his final battle against the Indian king, Porus at the Hydaspes River in 326. During this time, most of those under Persian control went over to Alexander; he visited Egypt, where he was declared the son of Zeus-Ammon and established the city that was to became the great Alexandria; he was welcomed into the ancient cities of Babylon and Susa, and took (and fired) Persepolis.

- In the administration of his empire he avoided any rigid system of government; attempted to win over the local people by showing religious and cultural tolerance, and incorporating local elites into his administration; and built cities (his 'Alexandrias') at strategic locations populated with a mixed population of locals, Greeks and Macedonians.
- Alexander's relationship with his Macedonian generals and troops changed as the army moved further east, following Alexander's obsession to explore 'beyond'. Also, his attempts to build a bridge with the Persians created hostility (by his adoption of Persian dress, his selection of 30 000 young Persians to train in Macedonian warfare to provide future military leaders and his attempts to introduce the practice of *proskynesis*). He became more suspicious of disloyalty and, together with his and his Companion's excessive drinking, hostility over his oriental policy led to the deaths of Philotas, Parmenion and Cleitus. He was faced with the Conspiracy of the Pages (a plan to murder him) and a mutiny. Finally, in 324, at a great banquet of 9000 at Opus, Alexander and his Macedonians celebrated a reconciliation.
- He also faced a number of events that alienated the Greeks of the mainland, especially the supposed controversial request for his deification.
- Alexander grieved the death of his boyhood friend Hephaestion, and later sickened in Babylon, lying close to death for 11 days. When he died of fever in 323, at the age of 32, he had no designated heir and for two decades his warring commanders fractured his empire.

8.4 EVALUATION

- Alexander's impact included the following: regaining the hegemony of Greece; defeating Darius III; securing control of the Persian Empire; being crowned Pharaoh of Egypt and accepted as King of the World in Babylon; reaching as far east as India; showing the diverse people of the empire that submission to Alexander did not mean slavery; founding cities; and testing the loyalty of his troops.
- Alexander, as a man, was a complex and contradictory character with a Greek intellect, a Macedonian temperament and a religious faith that was both Greek and Macedonian; as a king, his life was always in danger and he was expected to remove those who conspired against him; as an administrator he was always impatient to move on to more conquests so chose the easiest ways to deal with his conquered territories by adopting what was most expedient in certain areas and with particular people; as a general, Alexander has to be seen in the context of the world in which he lived, a world where Macedonian kings were trained to see war as a way of pursuing glory, gaining recognition for their superiority and wreaking revenge. None could deny his military genius, which was apparent in every aspect of warfare and in every military undertaking from Granicus to the Hydaspes River.
- Because of Alexander's existence the world was never quite the same again. He was a catalyst for change.
- Alexander was, and still is, one of the most controversial personalities in history, with more written about him than almost anybody else. Most of the debates around him concern the dilemma: is he to be admired or deplored? Over time he has been interpreted in endless ways, from a hero to a ruthless killer.

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8.5 THE VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF ARRIAN'S BOOK 4

- Arrian is the most authoritative and reliable source on Alexander's military campaigns and generalship, but his chief weakness is in his treatment of Alexander's personality and motivations, which he viewed through the lens of his own biases.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- deification
- Hellenistic
- *hetairoi*
- patricide
- phalanx
- polygamy
- prostration
- sarissa

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) List the changes that occurred in the Macedonian army under Philip II.

2) Describe the changes that occurred:
- in the relationship between Alexander and his Macedonian generals and troops in the decade between 334–324
- in the interpretations of Alexander over time.

3) Identify the causes of:
- the fire of Persepolis
- the death of Cleitus?

4) Explain what caused the hostility of the mainland Greeks towards Alexander.

5) Analyse the significance in Alexander's life of:
- Olympias
- Aristotle
- his obsession with the mythological heroes
- his visit to Siweh in Egypt?

6) What are the perspectives of Arrian and Plutarch on Alexander's character?

Historical skills

1) Evaluate Alexander's tactical insight and strategic planning in each of the following battles:
- Granicus
- Issus
- Gaugamela
- Hydaspes River.

2) Assess Alexander's methods in administering his empire.

3) Analyse the three views below:
- 'Alexander was one of the supreme fertilizing forces in history, lifting the civilized world out of one groove and setting it in another'. (Tarn)
- 'Although Alexander made mistakes and the number of deaths over 12 years were huge, no soldier in history is more indisputedly greater than Alexander'. (Burn)
- 'The price of Alexander's sovereignty was killing on a gigantic scale, and killing is unfortunately the perpetual backcloth of his regime'. (Bosworth)

4) To what extent is it correct to say that because of Alexander's existence, the world was never quite the same again? That he was a catalyst for change?

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FIGURE 8.40 Alexander the Great depicted on horseback in full armour in the 'Alexander Mosaic' from the House of the Faun, Pompeii

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CHAPTER 9
Julius Caesar

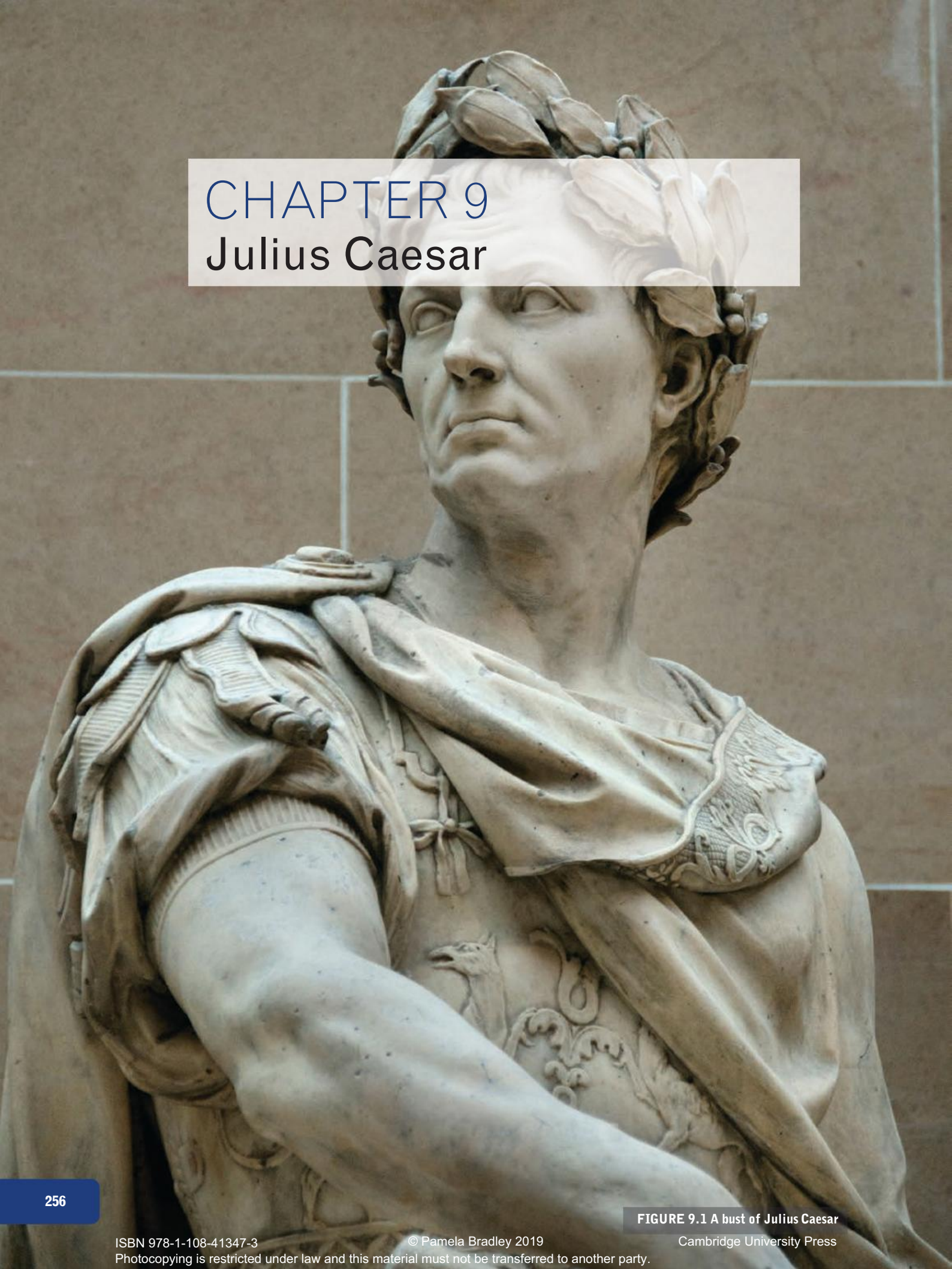

FIGURE 9.1 A bust of Julius Caesar

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FIGURE 9.2 The Roman Empire at the time of Caesar's birth (100 BC)

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Julius Caesar through a range of archaeological and written source.
KEY ISSUES	• Background and rise to prominence • Key features and developments in the career of Caesar • Evaluation • The value and limitation of Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* as a source

Caesar was born to do great things and to seek constantly for distinction. His many successes … served to kindle in him fresh confidence for the future, filling his mind with projects of still greater actions and with a passion for new glory.

SOURCE 9.1 Plutarch, *The Fall of The Roman Republic: Caesar*, 58

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 9.3 A painting of the assassination of Julius Caesar in the Roman Senate house, by Vincenzo Camuccini, c. 1804

Examine Figure 9.3 carefully. List all the things you can see in this image. Suggest reasons why a group of senators might have decided to assassinate Caesar. What repercussions do you think would have been likely as a result of this event in the Senate House?

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CHAPTER 9 Overview

KEY IDEA

Caesar was a brilliant and controversial individual. The world in which he grew up was one of public violence, civil war, political factions and fierce competition for public office. Caesar, like all of the Roman elite, had political ambitions and wished to enhance his ***dignitas.*** Like many others, he was prepared to bypass constitutional restrictions when his ambitions were constantly thwarted by his opponents, keen to keep all power within their own hands. Caesar's genius raised him above his peers in understanding the political trends of the day, and he arrogantly made no attempt to hide his belief that Rome's republican government was a 'form without substance' to which he, himself, had contributed. For his arrogance, he had to die, brutally cut down by those who failed to see what to him was so obvious.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

In today's world there are many ambitious men who, like Caesar, enter politics for their own advancement, and there is the same fierce competition for office as in ancient Rome. Sometimes, one above their peers in intelligence, and with the perception to see political trends, will appear on the political stage and invariably be faced with a virulent opposition who agree they must be disposed of because they are a danger to the status quo. Sometimes such a man or woman is metaphorically assassinated by being stabbed in the back. We can learn much about power, ambition and modern politics by a study of the life of Julius Caesar.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- consuls
- deified
- franchise
- *imperator*
- *imperium*
- lictors
- *nobiles*
- oligarchy
- *optimates*
- *populares*
- *potestas*
- principate
- proscriptions
- rhetoric
- sacrosanct
- triumph

Painting the picture

Gaius Julius Caesar, one of the most famous and controversial of all Romans, was born (100 BC) at a time when the Roman republic was facing what historian Sir Ronald Syme referred to as the Roman revolution, a time of public violence, personal armies and civil war. Bribery, corruption and a series of military crises in the growing empire had put pressure on the aristocracy of senators who governed the Roman state, and powerful individuals commanding large armies threatened the existing political order.

Caesar played a significant part in undermining the republic. In his later career, he arrogantly bypassed traditional political practices and gained exceptional powers, such as dictatorship for life. He was ahead of his time in realising that the days of the republic were over. To him it was 'a mere name without body or form'[1] and he could not understand that others did not see it the same way he did. He either failed to realise, or did not care, that his autocratic powers and behaviour gave offence and that most Romans were not yet ready to accept one-man rule. He was assassinated in 44 BC.

Despite many of his positive personal qualities, his addition of Gaul to the empire and the beneficial social reforms he achieved, the contemporary sources tend to be hostile in their opinions of him and modern historians are divided in their evaluation of his life and achievements.

INQUIRY QUESTION

What part did Julius Caesar play in the downfall of the Roman Republic?

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9.1 Historical context

Geography, provinces and resources

By the time Caesar came to power, Rome controlled the Italian peninsula, the area as far as the Alps and, as a result of its defeat of Carthage in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, had acquired the provinces of Sicily, Sardinia/Corsica, Narbonese Gaul, Spain and Africa. By 148–146 BC, it had added the provinces of Macedonia and Illyricum and had annexed Greece. In 129, Rome added the province of Asia (the former Kingdom of Pergamum bequeathed to them by King Attalus III in 133). See the map in Figure 9.2.

All of these provinces provided untold wealth and luxury for Rome, which was the centre of a vast trading network. These provinces also provided slaves and auxiliary troops for their legions.

TABLE 9.1 Resources from the Roman provinces at the time of Caesar

Spain	Gold, silver, iron, copper, tin, lead, fruit, wine, horses, marble and pottery
Gaul	Gold, iron, wine, oil, marble and pottery
Illyricum	Gold, silver, metal, hides, iron and timber
Macedonia and Greece	Gold, silver, timber, iron, fish, horses, honey, purple dye, pottery and marble
Sardinia and Sicily	Grain, fruit, wool and sulphur
North Africa	Marble, wool, grain, oil, pottery, purple dye, ivory and wild animals
Asia	Wool, linen, wine, oil, marble, pottery, timber, horses, emeralds, gold, silver and iron

Overview of Roman social and political structures

By the time of Caesar, there were three socio-political groups of significance in Rome.

1 The senatorial class: this included both wealthy patricians (those of noble birth who could trace their ancestry back to the original clans of Rome) and wealthy plebeians (the rest of the Roman citizens). Within this elite group there was an even more elite sub-group known as ***nobiles***. These were the families who could count among their members those who had been elected as **consuls** (see Table 9.2). The same families tended to dominate the consulships over and over and wield great political power.

2 The equestrian class (*equites*): originally these were men who could afford a horse in the army, but by the 1st century BC, they were Rome's businessmen, bankers and tax agents in the provinces. They generated the wealth but had no say in political decisions that affected their livelihood. There was a growing tension between these two top classes.

3 Plebs, or plebeians (both urban and rural): many were poor or unemployed due to the increase of use of slaves in Roman society. The 'urban mob' who lived in overcrowded Rome had to be kept fed, entertained and bribed by those men wishing to seek higher office. By Caesar's time, the urban plebs were more than ready to support any aspiring politician in the assemblies who promised them benefits and relief.

nobiles those senators who have had a consul in their family

consul chief magistrate elected annually with the power and authority to command an army

Features of Roman political life

Important aspects of Roman political life included:

- patron–client relationships whereby the rich and powerful acted as patrons of the less rich and powerful. Clients could include individuals, families, soldiers and provincials
- *amicitia* (friendship). During the complicated politics of Caesar's day, when powerful men were competing for prestige and position, the concept of 'friendship' drew certain individuals together for

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social and political purposes. This could involve seeing 'eye to eye' on something, and the need for financial support or a family link via a marriage alliance. These 'friendships' were not always enduring and realignments often occurred because of personal ambition and opportunism.

Roman government

The government of the Roman republic was referred to as SPQR (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*) or the Senate and the People of Rome.

The government during Caesar's life comprised:

- the Senate
- the assemblies of the people
- magistrates of the **cursus honorum**
- tribunes of the plebeians.

cursus honorum the sequential order of public offices held by aspiring politicians; a type of ladder of office

The Senate

Although the Senate was originally intended as an advisory body comprised of wealthy men who had held a magistracy, it virtually ran the state from the 3rd century BC. The minimum position for membership of the Senate was the quaestorship (see Table 9.2) and membership was for life. It originally had 300 members, was later increased to 600 under Sulla and then to 900 under Caesar.

The people's assemblies

There were three assemblies in which the citizen body (patricians and plebeians) sat and voted as groups: *Comitia centuriata* (voted in military centuries), *Comitia curiata* (voted in local areas) and *Comitia tributa* (voted in tribes). There was a fourth assembly, the *Concilium plebis* (restricted to plebeians only). These assemblies voted for magistrates and made laws, but due to the practice of block voting, the senatorial aristocracy and their clients could influence voting.

imperium the power to command, including an army, held by consuls, praetors, dictators, pro-consuls and pro-praetors

lictors attendants of magistrates who held *imperium*

Magistrates of the cursus honorum

Table 9.2 describes the *cursus honorum* at the time of Caesar's rise to power.

The symbol of **imperium** was the fasces (a double-headed axe enclosed in a bundle of rods) carried by attendants called **lictors**. The fasces symbolised the power to flog. Those magistrates with *imperium* wore the toga praetexta, bordered with a purple band.

TABLE 9.2 The *cursus honorum* at Caesar's rise to power

Magistrates	Number	Min. age	Authority	Responsibilities
Consul Voted by the people in the Assembly of Centuries	2	42	*imperium*	Supreme civil and military magistrate: presided over Senate meetings, carried out Senate decisions, carried out major elections and commanded the army. They were assigned as pro-consul or governor of a province after their year of office.
Praetor Voted by the people in the Assembly of Centuries	8	40	*imperium*	A city praetor was the supreme judge in civil cases; the foreign praetor looked after legal issues relating to foreigners. Could command an army, summon the Assembly of Centuries, introduce new laws and head courts, and could become governors after their term of office.

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TABLE 9.2 *(continued)*

Magistrates	Number	Min. age	Authority	Responsibilities
Aedile Voted by the people in the Assembly of Tribes	4	38	**Potestas**	Responsible for maintenance of roads, traffic, public buildings, water supply and the corn dole, and provided festivals and games.
Quaestor Voted by the people in the Assembly of Tribes	20	30	*Potestas*	Administrative and financial officers for Rome and their provinces. Looked after treasury and public records, accompanied the army acting as paymaster and distributors of booty, and assisted governors in provinces. Automatically enrolled in the Senate after their term of office.

potestas the power associated with a particular magistracy

sacrosanct free from violence

Tribunes of the plebs

To balance the power of the Senate and magistrates and to protect the lives and property of the plebeians, 10 tribunes were elected for one year by the *Concilium plebis*. The tribunes had the right of veto against the election and actions of magistrates and against the laws and decrees of the Senate. They could also veto the actions of any one of their nine colleagues. Their homes had to be open for asylum and their person was **sacrosanct**.

FIGURE 9.4 An inscription denoting the Roman republic

Pro-magistrates

Once a man had served as a praetor or consul, he could be appointed as a pro-magistrate with *imperium* to serve in a province as a governor commanding an army.

Dictatorships

Occasionally a Dictator with *imperium* was appointed on a proposal of the Senate to deal with a crisis in the state. His power was originally limited to six months. However, when Caesar was 20, Sulla was appointed Dictator for as long as it took to restore the constitution after a devastating civil war (two years), and Caesar himself held the dictatorship for 11 days in 49 BC, for one year in 48, for 10 years in 46 and for life in 44.

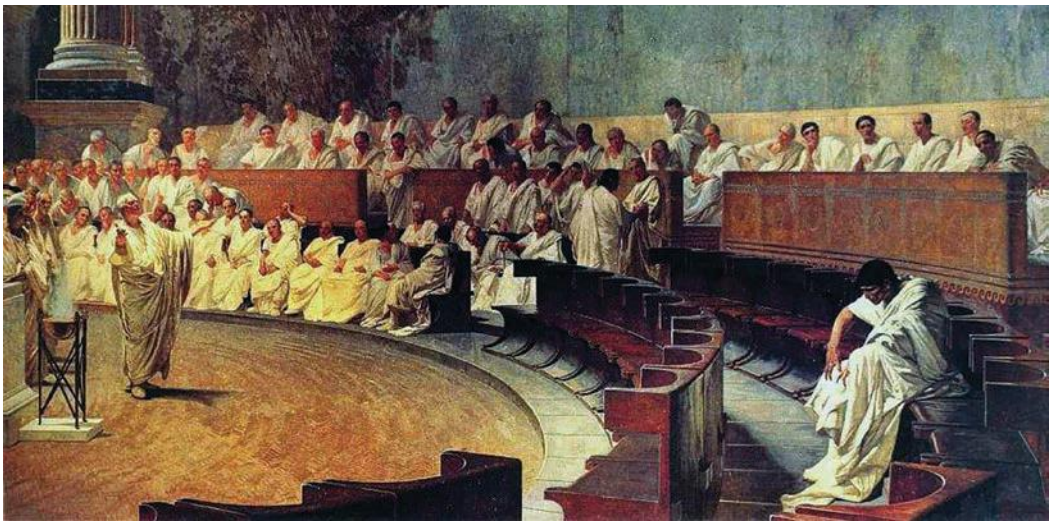

FIGURE 9.5 A representation of the Roman Senate

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ACTIVITY 9.1

1. What was the extent of the Roman Empire when Caesar was born?
2. Describe how this contributed to the wealth of Rome.
3. Define 'patricians' and '*nobiles*'.
4. Explain what is meant by the *cursus honorum*.
5. Name the particular officials in the state who were bearers of *imperium* and name the power it gave them.
6. State the purpose of the tribunate and the protection it provided its bearer.
7. Describe the significance of the client–patron relationship and *amicitia* in Roman politics.

Overview of significant political and military developments in the 1st century BC

- During Rome's wars of conquest in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the Senate (legally only an advisory body) became the dominant arm of the Roman government due to its experience, authority and ability to calmly make decisions. Once the precedent was set, it was easy for the Senate to maintain its supremacy, but the tremendous changes in Roman society and its economy – brought about by these conquests – were not addressed by the senatorial **oligarchy**. Instead, they put their own interests before those of the republic. While they focused on increasing their large estates, in acquiring wealth and maintaining a luxurious lifestyle, the dispossessed farmers and unemployed labourers drifted to Rome where their living conditions were poor and employment opportunities restricted.
- In 133 and 123–122, Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus (Tribunes of the People) challenged the supremacy of the Senate in an attempt to introduce social reform on behalf of the people. They took their bills directly to the assemblies without consulting the Senate. The *nobiles*, who saw the government of Rome as their prerogative, responded to this apparent attack on their authority with extreme violence. Both Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus died in the civil unrest that followed, but according to Cicero, they 'shattered the stability of the state'.[2]
- After this period, the senatorial class was divided into two factions (not parties) referred to as **optimates** and **populares**:

oligarchy rule by the few

optimates a faction in the Senate who wanted to maintain the *status quo* and who opposed anything that would adversely affect their authority

populares a faction in the Senate who were men of reform when it suited them

1. The *optimates* comprised the majority of senators who wished to maintain the situation that existed before the Gracchan upheaval. They opposed any changes that would adversely affect their authority, prestige and economic interests. The *optimates* were a powerful, determined and cohesive group who could be utterly ruthless in protecting their interests.
2. The *populares*, also senators, were men of reform, although many were interested in their own political advancement. They believed the people's assembly had the right to decide issues put before it without prior senatorial approval. Unlike the *optimates*, the *populares* did not present a united front and some of them became *optimates* when it suited their careers.

FIGURE 9.6 *Popularis*, Marius

FIGURE 9.7 *Optimate*, Sulla

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- Following the deaths of the Gracchi, the *optimates* reasserted their control over the state and retained it until the emergence of a new kind of political leader, Gaius Marius (Caesar's uncle by marriage). His re-organisation of the army – whereby he recruited legions from volunteers who relied on their general to reward them at the end of their term of service, replacing loyalty to Rome with loyalty to the general – probably did more than anything else to make possible the civil wars that threatened the very existence of the state. For example, Marius (a *popularis*) and Sulla (an *optimate*), who were ruthless opponents, involved the Romans in a civil war, after which the victorious Sulla marched on Rome and made himself dictator to restore the powers of the Senate and reduce the powers of the *populares* (Marians) and the tribunes of the people.

It was against this political and military backdrop that Caesar grew up.

ACTIVITY 9.2

Explain:

- how the Senate – a purely advisory institution – became the ruling body in Rome
- why and how the Gracchi challenged the Senate
- why the Senate reacted with violence
- the difference between the two political factions: *optimates* and *populares*
- the effect of Marius, Caesar's uncle (by marriage), on the Roman state
- why Sulla was appointed dictator in 81 BC.

TABLE 9.3 Timeline of Caesar's life and career

100 BC	Born in Rome
84	Married to Cornelia, daughter of Cinna
82	Threatened by Sulla and goes to the East
78	Returned to Rome
75	Captured by pirates
73	Gained a seat in the College of Pontiffs
69	Death of Cornelia
68	Served as *quaestor* in Spain
67	Married Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sulla
65	Elected *Aedile*
63	Elected *Pontifex Maximus*
62	Elected *Praetor* and divorces Pompeia
61	Became governor of Further Spain
60	Formed the Triumvirate with Pompey and Crassus
59	Elected Consul; marries Calpurnia, daughter of Piso; Pompey marries his daughter, Julia
58	Appointed Pro-consul of Gaul; defeats Helvetii and Germans
55	Crossed the Rhine; invaded Britain
54	Death of his daughter Julia; link with Pompey broken
53	Crassus killed

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TABLE 9.3 *(continued)*

52	Clodius murdered; Caesar defeated Vercingetorix
49	Crossed the Rubicon – Civil War between Pompey-led senatorial forces and Caesar's forces
48	Campaigned in Greece and Egypt; Pompey murdered in Egypt; entered into a relationship with Cleopatra, produced a son, Caesarion
46	Made Dictator for 10 years
45	Appointed Sole Consul and Dictator for life
44	Assassinated on the Ides of March

9.2 Background and rise to prominence

Family background, education and early life

Caesar's family belonged to the patrician Julian clan (Julii) which traced its ancestry back to the original founders of Rome. They claimed descent from Aeneas (the son of the goddess, Venus) and his son Julus, and of the Trojan royal family who settled in Latium (the plain on which Rome was founded). Aeneas and Julus became associated with the founding of Rome by their descendants Romulus and Remus.

However, although patrician, with consuls among their ancestors, 'the Julii had declined and lost contact with the main centres of power, as they lacked the huge funds necessary for grand careers'.[3] However, things changed for the family when Caesar's aunt Julia (sister of his father) married Gaius Marius in 111 BC, a man obsessed with a desire to gain the consulship. With difficulty, Marius made his way up the political ladder and proved to be an outstanding military commander. By using the support of his soldiers, the *equites* and the people, Marius was elected to his first consulship in 107, and by the time Caesar was born, he was serving his fifth exceptional consecutive consulship.

A COMMENT ON...

Marius, Caesar's uncle by marriage, and his unusual career

- The pattern of Marius' career was one of the most extraordinary in Roman history, the more particularly since he was what was referred to as a *novus homo* ('new man' or the first in a family to reach the consulship). He was born a plebeian.
- Some historians see him as a *popularis* who was in opposition to the senatorial oligarchy. Others believe he was a military adventurer, aiming at a dictatorship but lacking the political skill. The most common view is that he was an unusual but not unique politician, who sought glory and reputation for himself and the prestige normally conferred on a noble.
- During his career he was granted seven consulships (many illegally), made significant reforms to the army and became the people's hero by means of his many conquests.
- More than anyone else, he weakened the hold of the senatorial oligarchy on Roman politics by introducing a system whereby the legions became dependent on and loyal to their commanding officers rather than to the state.

When Caesar was still an infant, Marius lost much of his earlier popularity, but the Marii and Julii were still influential. In 92, Caesar's father reached the position of *praetor* and the following year, was appointed governor of the province of Asia.

Caesar's mother, Aurelia, the daughter of Lucius Aurelius Cotta, was a member of one of the richest and most influential families in Rome, with many members of consular rank on both sides of the family.

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The historian, Tacitus, considered her an ideal Roman matron and she was highly regarded throughout Rome for her intelligence, common sense and beauty.

- The sources suggest that in his early childhood, Caesar's mother Aurelia was a consistent influence on him and he would have received the traditional education of an upper-class Roman boy: Latin, Greek, grammar and mathematics as well as studying Homer and Virgil. Later, he was educated by one of Rome's most important teachers of rhetoric, Marcus Antonius Gnipho.
- At the age of 13, Caesar's parents decided that he should follow one of the traditions of the Julian clan and become a priest of Jupiter, the supreme god of the Romans. This position possessed great social status, but it would have precluded Caesar's later entry into public life. His inauguration had to wait until he was older, and in the meantime circumstances changed.

FIGURE 9.8 Aurelia, Caesar's mother

- His teenage years coincided with the bloody and ruthless collision in the careers of Marius and Sulla, which led to both men marching on Rome with their armies. In 87, while Sulla took up a command in the East, Marius entered Rome and took revenge on all those who had offended him, and in 86 he and Lucius Cornelius Cinna became consuls (Marius for the seventh time). Although Marius died several months later, Cinna continued as the leader of the *populares*.
- In 85, when Caesar was 15, his father died and it was now important for him to begin building a network of supporters.

Paths to power

Alignment with the *populares* (Marians)

Cornelius Cinna (a *popularis* and four times consul) retained his link with the Julian house even after the death of Marius, and Caesar broke off his engagement – organised when he was a boy – to Cossutia, whose family was wealthy but of no political or social consequence, to marry Cornelia, the daughter of Cinna.

> Cinna's motive was evidently to forge a friendship with the house of Caesar's mother, Aurelia, whose three male cousins, the Aurelius Cottas were liberal nobles of unusual calibre who could be relied upon to oppose Cinna's arch enemy, Sulla.

SOURCE 9.2 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 24

FIGURE 9.9 Cornelia, Caesar's first wife

Caesar was now aligned with Cinna, the leading man in Rome who was preparing to face Sulla's return from the East, but it put the young man in a dangerous position from Sulla, especially after Cinna was assassinated. According to Plutarch, Sulla 'now devoted himself entirely to the work of butchery',[4] and became Dictator for two years.

Perhaps as a sign of goodwill to the young Caesar, Sulla demanded that he divorce Cornelia, because it linked him with the populares, but Caesar rejected the Dictator's overture because of his relationship with Marius. This was a huge risk on Caesar's part. Sulla deprived him of his wife's dowry and any of her future legacies, and debarred him from the priesthood of Jupiter for which he had nominated.

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Caesar, believing his life was in danger, went into hiding, until his mother's family and the priestly college of the Vestal Virgins appealed to Sulla on the young man's behalf. Sulla eventually gave way, but not before making a prophetic statement.

> Very well then, you win! Take him! But never forget that the man whom you want me to spare will one day prove the ruin of the party which you and I have so long defended. There are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar.

SOURCE 9.3 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 1

Caesar in the East

He went out to the East to join a governor's staff in Asia and Cilicia and, according to Plutarch, was captured by pirates who demanded a huge ransom for his release. He compelled the locals to raise the money and, later, once he was freed, he raised a fleet on his own initiative, captured a large number of the pirates and had them crucified.

rhetoric the art of influencing the thought of one's audience

He became 'friendly' with Nicomedes, the King of Bithynia; won a civic crown of oak leaves for bravery in a military operation in Mytilene; and then joined an official in Cilicia who was attempting to deal with the pirate menace in the eastern Mediterranean.

After returning briefly to Rome, he returned to the East to study at Rhodes under Apollonius Molo, the best living exponent of the art of **rhetoric**. Plutarch says that 'Caesar's natural ability as a public speaker was of the highest order, and that he took the greatest pains to cultivate it …'[5]

A COMMENT ON…

The importance of public speaking in Caesar's time

- Rhetoric (oration) was a powerful political tool in political life whereby a speaker could inform, persuade or motivate different audiences (senators, people in the assemblies, jurists and magistrates in the law courts, and even whip up the urban mob).
- During the time of Caesar, exponents of rhetoric used their skills to speak against scandalous behaviour, conspiracies, corruption in the provinces, and depending which factions they supported they spoke for or against various reforms, and for or against candidates for office.
- Young men (and even some women) from the upper class were required to study the art of persuasive speech as part of their regular education and many aspiring politicians like Caesar did a form of 'apprenticeship' in the law courts.
- Unfortunately for Caesar, the most renowned proponent of rhetoric and oratory was Cicero, who often spoke out against his actions.

Growing popularity

Caesar returned to Rome when he heard of Sulla's death, thinking that the situation in the capital might offer him prospects for advancement. However, he 'found the political atmosphere less promising than he had been led to believe'.[6]

In Rome, he spoke against a number of prominent Sullan supporters in the courts for their maladministration while serving in the provinces. Although he did not succeed in prosecuting them, he made a brilliant reputation for himself by his eloquence at these trials. This was a favourite way for young men to make themselves known and advance their careers. It was also useful for his future, because he was prosecuting on behalf of the mistreated provincials.

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He published his speeches, which enhanced his reputation, and he surprisingly managed to obtain a coveted seat in the College of Pontiffs (priests) in 73 BC.

> 'Do you know any man who, even if he has concentrated on the art of oratory to the exclusion of all else, can speak better than Caesar? Or anyone who makes so many witty remarks? Or whose vocabulary is so varied and yet so exact?'

SOURCE 9.4 Cicero, the great Roman orator, cited in Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 55

> These priests (pontifices) were all nobles, mostly men of considerable grandeur, and since official acts had to be accompanied by religious observances, membership of the board was a political advantage.

SOURCE 9.5 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 29

Caesar took further action to align himself with the *populares* (Marians).

- He enhanced his reputation with the people by supporting a move to revive some of the rights lost by the tribunes (representatives of the people) under Sulla.
- He also spoke before the assembly in favour of granting amnesty to anti-Sullans living in exile.
- At the death of his aunt Julia – the widow of Marius – in 69, he revealed his anti-conservative attitude. He used her public funeral to give an oration eulogising the ancestry of the Julii and the Caesars and, in opposition to an earlier ruling by Sulla, he had images of Marius and his son carried in the procession.
- When his wife Cornelia died in childbirth – she had already given Caesar a daughter, Julia – Caesar honoured her with a public funerary speech (not usual for a young woman) during which he took the opportunity to praise her father Cinna, the associate of Marius.

Although he gained great support from the people with these actions, he was accused by Catulus, one of the most respected men in Rome, of no longer working underground, but of coming into the open about his allegiances.

ACTIVITY 9.3

1. How had the Julii (Caesar's family) become aligned with the *populares*?
2. What political influence did his relatives on his mother's side have?
3. In what ways might his mother have been influential in his upbringing?
4. State his relationship with Cinna and how it put him in danger from the *optimate*, Sulla.
5. Describe the early strength he exhibited in his dealings with Sulla along with its repercussions.
6. Deduce what Sulla might have meant by the statement in Source 9.3 'there are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar'.
7. Describe the experiences Caesar had in the East and what they indicate about his character.
8. State the immediate significance his time spent in Rhodes with Apollonius Molo had on his career.
9. Explain how Caesar now 'showed his hand' at the funerals of his aunt Julia and his wife Cornelia.
10. Draw a diagram summarising all the influences on Caesar's early life.
11. Consider why the *optimates* would have been rather nervous of Caesar as he approached the next stage of his political career.

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Political career to 60 BC

Caesar was now of an age when he could stand for the quaestorship, the lowest rung on the ladder of office and the stepping-stone to entry into the Senate.

While he was beginning the official stage of his political career, Pompey (Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus) and Marcus Licinius Crassus (the wealthiest man in Rome) had been making a name for themselves in politics and as military commanders. They shared the consulship in 70, and although both had been Sulla's lieutenants, once they were elected to the consulship they proceeded to destroy many of the Dictator's reforms.

During this time Caesar was making himself popular 'because of his easy manners and the friendly way in which he mixed with people'.[7] However, according to Cicero, there was a powerful character 'hidden behind Caesar's agreeable, good-humoured manners'.[8]

For the next 10 years his career followed the standard pattern of the *cursus honorum*, but despite this, the *optimates* were nervous about him because he had refused to break with the tradition of Marius.

According to Gelzer, in *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, he was a born enemy of the *optimates*.

FIGURE 9.10 A bust of Julius Caesar

Quaestor: 69 BC

After a stint as military tribune, Caesar was elected as *quaestor* to go to the province of Further Spain, which gave him many opportunities to create for himself debts of gratitude that would be useful for the future.

On his return to Rome, he stopped in the province of Cisalpine Gaul where he exploited the unrest felt by the people on the far side of the Po River because of their lack of full Roman citizenship. In him they believed they had a champion for their cause.

When he was back in Rome he married Pompeia, the granddaughter of Sulla. According to Grant, 'although supporting Marian causes, Caesar still found it convenient to have a foot in both camps'.[9] He also began many liaisons with the wives of prominent Romans. These women provided him with information and helped advance his political career.

FIGURE 9.11 Pompeia, Caesar's second wife

Caesar believed that Pompey, consul for 70 BC and already a successful general – whose rise to power had been rapid – might be the man to help his career in the future, so he supported two bills to grant him extraordinary commands in the East, even though most senators spoke violently against them.

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Aedile: 65 BC

In 65, Caesar was appointed as *curule* (patrician) *aedile* with the help of Crassus' wealth. Political advancement was an expensive business and *aediles* were expected to spend extravagantly on games, banquets and buildings. Despite his wealth, Crassus needed Caesar to help him build up a power base both at home and abroad. Caesar's popularity increased during his aedileship, but he was left with an overwhelming debt.

> During his aedileship Caesar ... exhibited wild-beast hunts and stage lays; some at his own expense, some in co-operation with his colleague, Marcus Bibulus ... Caesar also put on a gladiatorial show, but had collected so immense a troop of combatants that his terrified political opponents rushed a bill through the House limiting the number of gladiators that any one might keep in Rome.

SOURCE 9.6 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 10

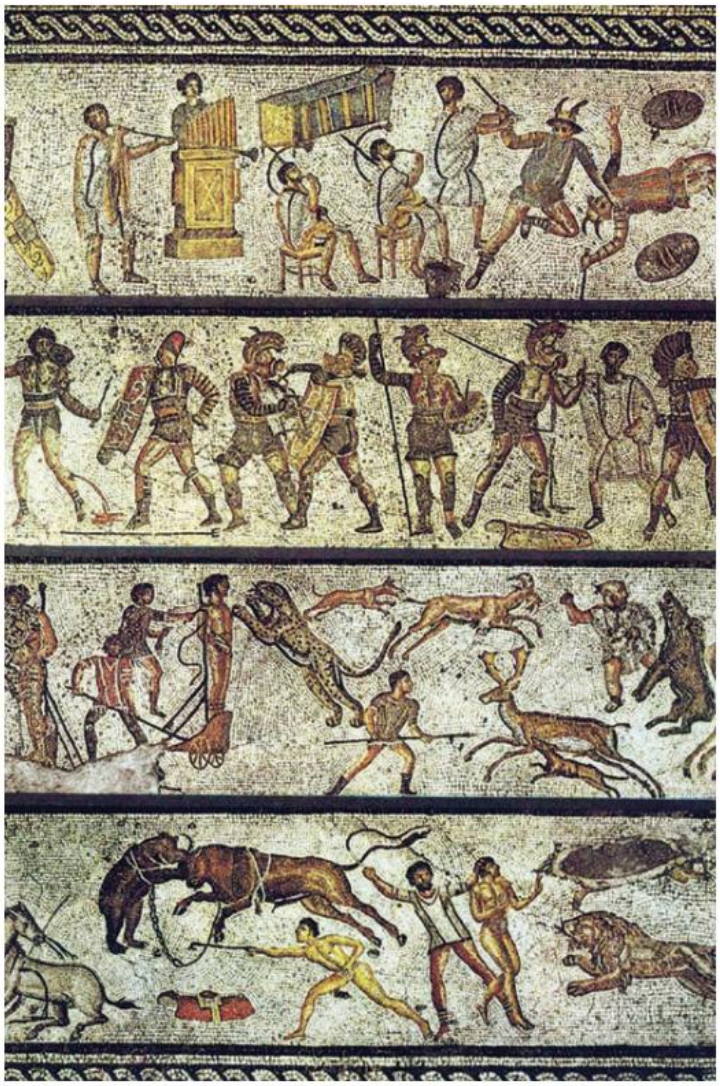

FIGURE 9.12 A mosaic depicting activities organised by Caesar as *aedile*

> He spent money recklessly, and many people thought that he was purchasing a moment's brief fame at an enormous price, whereas in reality, he was buying the greatest place in the world at inconsiderable expense. ... The result was to make the people so favourably disposed towards him that every man among them was trying to find new offices and new honours to bestow on him in return for what he had done.

SOURCE 9.7 Plutarch, *Fall of the Roman Republic: Caesar*, 5

Pontifex maximus: 63 BC

In 63, Caesar became a candidate for *pontifex maximus* (chief priest), a powerful and sacred position very much sought after by distinguished senators. Two men 'with the greatest influence in the senate, Isauricus and Catulus, were candidates for the office' but 'Caesar turned to the people and put himself forward as a rival candidate'.[10] Catulus tried to bribe Caesar to step down, but he borrowed money from Crassus to fight the election, which he eventually won by a narrow margin. Suetonius maintains that 'he used the most flagrant bribery to secure it',[11] and according to Plutarch 'this made the senate and the nobles afraid that he would go on to lead the people forward on a course of violent extremism'.[12]

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A COMMENT ON...

The importance of the position of *Pontifex Maximus*

- The *pontifex maximus* was the head ('greatest' of the priests) of the College of Pontiffs who were responsible for the state religious cult. This appointment, decided by an election of the people in their assembly, was not regarded as a magistracy, but was highly coveted by the prominent families because of the prestige it brought with it, dating as it did back to the beginning of the republic.
- Unlike political positions, it was not for a limited tenure (one year), but was held for life.
- It was not a full-time job and the holder of this office could also be a secular magistrate as well as a military leader.
- It included both religious and political responsibilities: the *pontifex maximus* and his priests gave advice to the magistrates; were responsible for state archives including collections of omens and records of the chief events of the year; kept the official minutes of the magistrates; controlled the calendar and decided when intercalary months needed to be added, and oversaw funerals.

The position enabled its holder to manipulate the calendar by lengthening the year in favour of a political ally who held office, or could shorten it if they wanted a quicker end to an opponent's tenure.

Praetor: 62 BC

In 63, Rome was in turmoil over a conspiracy to overthrow the government led by Cataline, an unsuccessful candidate for the consulship; and the following year, when Caesar was elected as *praetor*, he supported the return of Pompey from the East to restore order, and also attacked the Senate leader Catullus (*optimate*) for corruption.

At the same time, he faced a scandal involving his wife, Pompeia, and a degenerate aristocrat, Clodius Pulcher, with whom she was believed to be having an affair. Clodius dressed up as a woman and attended the all-female Bona Dea (Good Goddess) ceremonies being held at Caesar's house, but was discovered and prosecuted for sacrilege. Caesar divorced Pompeia, believing his family had to be above suspicion of any kind.

FIGURE 9.13 The garb of a *Pontifex Maximus* (Augustus, Caesar's nephew)

Pro-praetor (governor) of Further Spain: 61 BC

Caesar was appointed to Further Spain as pro-praetor for 61, but his creditors tried to prevent him leaving Rome to take up his governorship. He once again turned to Crassus for help as his creditors were becoming difficult. Crassus guaranteed Caesar for 830 talents so that he was able to set out for his province.

As soon as Caesar reached Spain with his army, he raised more troops and immediately marched against the Callaici and Lusitani. After defeating them, he attacked those tribes who had been independent of Rome and followed these successes with 'equally good work in civilian administration'.[12]

As a result, he acquired a great reputation as a military commander and was hailed ***imperator*** by his troops, which entitled him to be granted a triumph from the Senate. He made his soldiers rich as a result of his campaigns and became rich himself, which enabled him to repay his debts to Crassus.

At the end of his governorship of Further Spain, Caesar was entitled to nominate in 60 BC for the consulship of 59. However, he was hoping for a **triumph** for his military achievements in Spain.

imperator an honorific title proclaimed by the troops of a commander after a great victory

triumph a civil and religious ceremony granted by the Senate for an army commander who had won a great military success to publicly celebrate his military achievement

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The law was that those who desired the honour of a triumph had to wait outside the city, while candidates for the consulship had to be present in person; Caesar, who arrived in Rome just at the time of the consular elections, was therefore in a dilemma and sent to the senate asking permission for his name to be put forward for the consulship by his friends, while he himself waited outside the city.

SOURCE 9.8 Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic: Caesar*, 13

Hoping to prevent Caesar standing for the supreme magistracy, the *optimate*, Cato, 'first opposed Caesar's request as illegal'[13] but, after much delay, the senators made him choose between the triumph and consulship, suspecting that he would never give up a triumph.

However, they were surprised when he disbanded his army and returned to Rome to present himself for election.

FIGURE 9.14 Statue of Caesar as *imperator*

ACTIVITY 9.4

1. Identify the personality trait Caesar had that helped him gain popularity with various groups in society. How did the Senator Cicero describe this trait?
2. Describe how Caesar revealed his opportunistic tendencies between 69–65.
3. Describe how Sources 9.6 and 9.7 reveal the advantages and disadvantages for Caesar in holding the necessary aedileship in 65.
4. Explain the benefits to Caesar of being elected – over two leading *optimates* – to the position of *Pontifex Maximus*.
5. Identify how Caesar alienated the *optimates* during his praetorship in 62, and how they attempted to stop him taking up his governorship of Further Spain in 61. Who came to his aid?
6. Describe what his time as governor in Spain revealed about Caesar.
7. Describe the methods used by the *optimates* to block Caesar's election to the consulship for 59.
8. Summarise Caesar's political career so far in a diagrammatic form under the following headings: opportunism on the part of Caesar; support base; abilities and strengths revealed; and attempts to frustrate him.
9. Debate the statement: The *optimates* were deliberating thwarting Caesar's legitimate entitlement to advancement according to the *cursus honorum*.

9.3 Key features and developments in the career of Caesar

The following years formed a significant turning point, not only for Caesar, but for the state.

The First Triumvirate and Caesar's role in it

Between 61–60 BC, the *optimates* were deeply concerned about:

1. Pompey's return to Rome after having completed his extraordinary commands in the East
2. Crassus' attempts to build up support for his own political career (Caesar and *equites*)
3. Caesar's ambitions for the future.

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Knowing that the *optimates* were suspicious and openly hostile to them, these three men made a political arrangement to work together for their own ends (the First Triumvirate).

> Pompey, Caesar and Crassus now formed a triple pact, jointly swearing to oppose all legislation by which any of them might disapprove.

SOURCE 9.9 Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 19

> He [Caesar] entered the city [after his time in Spain] and then immediately adopted a policy which deceived everyone except Cato. This was to effect a reconciliation between Pompey and Crassus the two most powerful people in Rome. Caesar brought these men together, making them friends instead of enemies, and used their united power for the strengthening of himself.

SOURCE 9.10 Plutarch, *The Fall of The Roman Republic: Caesar*, 13

A coalition of this kind was not unusual in Roman politics, however, the difference in this one was the combined power of the three men who between them had prestige, wealth, popularity with the people, the support of the *equites* and armed force if necessary (veterans).

TABLE 9.4 The needs and frustrations of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar in 60 BC

Pompey's needs	Crassus' needs	Caesar's needs
• Land on which to settle his veteran troops who had served him in the East. • His arrangements for his provincial settlement in the East to be ratified 'en bloc'. • Continued prestige.	• A rebate for the equestrian tax paid by farmers in the province of Asia. • A place of pre-eminence in the state.	• The consulship for 59. • A province for 58 to give him scope for military glory and financial reimbursement.
All three men were frustrated by the *optimates*		
• Cato, the leader of the *optimates*, rejected Pompey's proposal to marry into his family and blocked his attempts to get land for his veterans. • Lucullus persuaded the Senate to discuss every aspect of his Eastern settlement separately.	• Cato and the *optimates* considered his request outrageous and refused to consider any concessions.	• The *optimates* tried to force Caesar to abandon his bid for the consulship. • When it appeared he would win, they used bribery to get one of their own, Bibulus (son-in-law of Cato), elected as his consular colleague. • When Caesar won the consulship for 59, they limited his future advancement and ambitions by deciding that his pro-consular province in 58 would be the administration of the forests and cattle tracks of Italy (*silvae callesque*).

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Caesar's consulship of 59

Caesar knew that to get what he wanted for Crassus, Pompey and himself during his consulship, he would be faced with the opposition and hostility of:

- the majority of the Senate
- his consular colleague Bibulus (an *optimate*)
- Cato, one of the leaders of the Senate and father-in-law to Bibulus
- some of the tribunes in the 'pay' of the *optimates*.

Despite Caesar's initial conciliatory attitude to the Senate and an offer of compromise over a land bill for Pompey's veterans, the *optimates* spurned his offer and obstructed the passage of the bill. Instead, Caesar presented his bill to the assembly (*Concilium plebis*) and never consulted the Senate again.

He 'vigorously protested that it was against his will that he was being driven to put matters before the assembly of the people, but that the Senate's high-handed and stubborn behaviour left him no other course …'[14] When Caesar's consular colleague, Bibulus, vetoed the bill in the assembly, Caesar knew he could only carry the bill by using the threat of force.

He used a detachment of Pompey's veterans in the Forum to deal with the opposition and in the subsequent rioting, Bibulus, Cato and Lucullus were threatened and two tribunes injured.

Bibulus then declared that the remainder of the year was 'a sacred period', meaning that it was legally impossible for the people to meet in their assembly, making all the subsequent legislation of Caesar illegal.

Caesar ignored all opposition and declared the bill passed. He then proceeded to use a tribune to get the rest of Pompey's needs met and Crassus' demand that the Asiatic farmers receive a rebate of one-third of their tax contract accepted.

For himself, he achieved a pro-consular command to Cisalpine Gaul, Illyricum and Transalpine Gaul (Narbonese Gaul) for five years, which gave him the opportunity to gain military glory.

However, in fulfilling his obligations to his partners in the Triumvirate, and gaining a lengthy command for himself, he had used illegal methods. While he was protected by the *imperium* of his consular and future pro-consular command, Caesar could not be prosecuted. However, he knew that sometime in the future, his opponents would attempt to prosecute him for his illegal actions.

As he would be away from Rome in Gaul for five years, he had to put safeguards in place to prevent trouble erupting.

As well as conducting marriage alliances for his daughter and himself, and ensuring that two of his supporters were elected for the consulship of 58, Caesar used his power as *Pontifex Maximus* to transfer one of the people's favourites – P. Clodius Pulcher – from the ranks of the patricians to that of the plebeians so that he had an ally in the people's assembly.

FIGURE 9.15 Julia, Caesar's daughter

FIGURE 9.16 Caesar's third wife, Calpurnia

> … he gave his daughter [Julia] in marriage to Pompey, although she was betrothed to Caepio, because he feared that even a friend might become envious of his great success. He promoted the boldest of his partisans to the principal offices [consulship] for the ensuing year [58]. He designated his friend Aulus Gabinius as consul, with Lucius Calpurnius Piso as his colleague whose daughter, Calpurnia, Caesar married …

SOURCE 9.11 Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2, 14

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Finally, before leaving for Gaul, he removed his two most outspoken opponents from Rome: Cicero was sent into exile and Cato given a governorship in Cyprus. Plutarch says, 'So much for the account of Caesar's career before his Gallic campaigns. After this it seems, as it were, to have made a new start and to have entered upon a different way of achievement'.[15]

While Caesar was enhancing his reputation in Gaul between 58 and 56 (see p. 276), the Triumvirate was put under increasing pressure. In Caesar's absence, the enmity between Crassus and Pompey was no longer held in check. Clodius, with the backing of Crassus, carried out a vicious campaign against Pompey with a gang of ruffians, and Pompey retaliated with a rival gang led by Milo.

Reports of Caesar's successes in Gaul and the booty sent home created alarm among the *optimates* and made Pompey jealous. The *optimates* wanted Caesar's early recall from Gaul, and Pompey supported a proposal for the return of Cicero from exile. Once back in Rome, Cicero tried to wean Pompey away from Caesar and began attacking some of Caesar's legislation.

However, despite the cracks appearing in the Triumvirate, the three men were not yet ready to end it as they each had their own agendas to pursue. In 56, they met at Luca, a town in Caesar's province nearest Rome to renew their political arrangement.

The following diagram summarises the agenda of the three triumvirs at Luca, the eventual breakdown of the Triumvirate and Pompey's move towards the *optimates*.

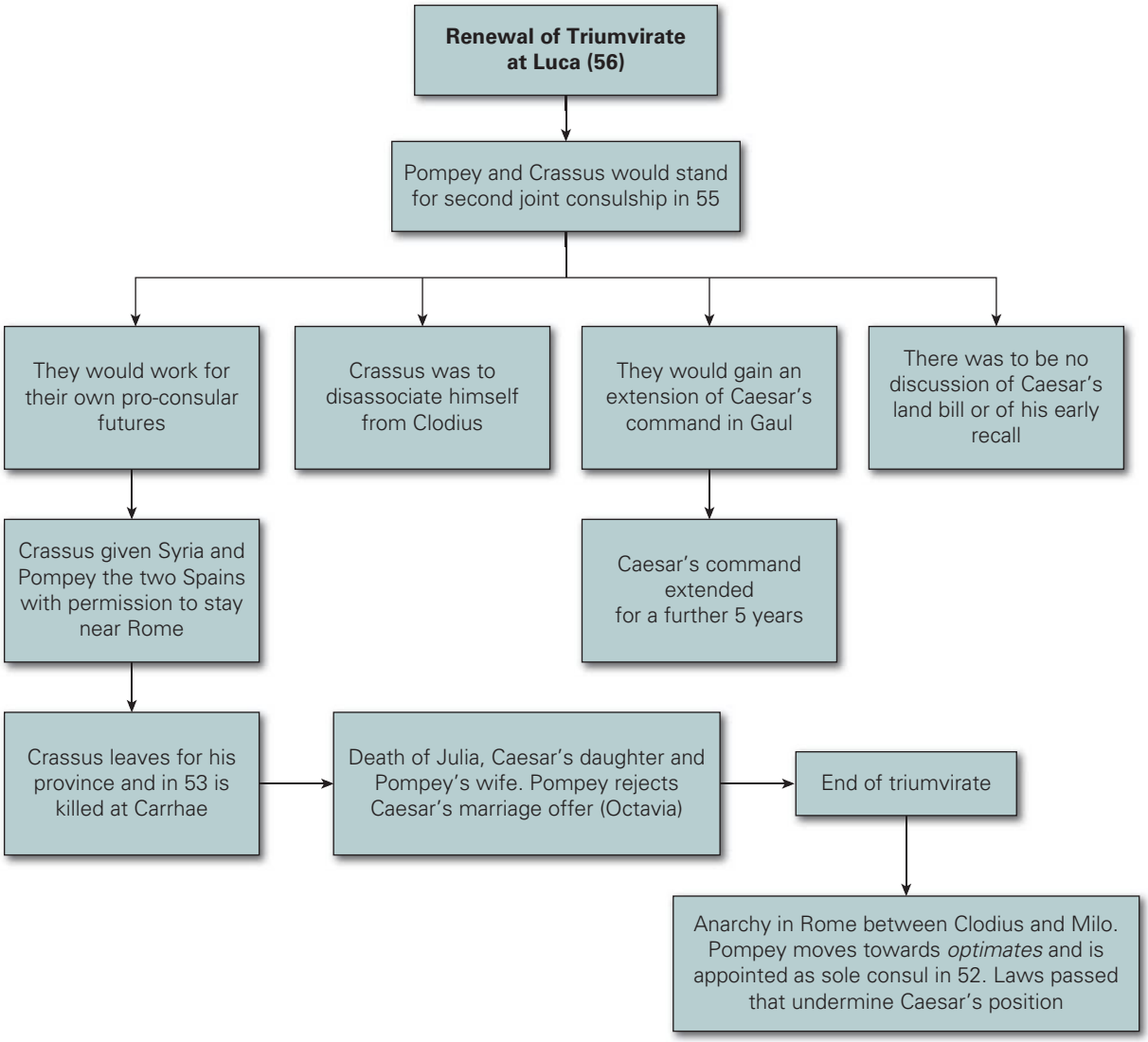

FIGURE 9.17 Diagram of the Triumvirate from its renewal at Luca in 56 BC

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ACTIVITY 9.5

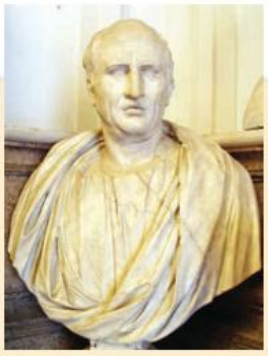

FIGURE 9.18 Bust of the statesman, philosopher and orator, Cicero

1 Explain:
   - why Pompey and Crassus were regarded as the two most powerful men in Rome at this time
   - the result of the *optimates*' hostility and suspicion of Caesar, Pompey and Crassus.
2 How powerful was what Suetonius called the unofficial 'triple pact' formed by these three men, and what do he and Plutarch (in Sources 9.9 and 9.10) infer about this triumvirate?
3 Use Table 9.4 to describe the following:
   - the needs of the three men
   - the methods used by the *optimates* to continue to frustrate them
   - the leading *optimate* in this attack
   - the actions taken by the *optimates* to thwart Caesar's future ambition and advancement.
4 Describe how Caesar was forced into illegal acts in order to meet his obligations to his fellow triumvirs.
5 Identify why this did not bode well for the future.
6 Make a list for each of the following:
   - The actions Caesar took to secure his position in Rome while he was in Gaul.
   - The cracks that began to occur while he was away in his province.
7 Use Figure 9.17 to identify:
   - attempts to renew the Triumvirate at the meeting of Luca in 56 BC
   - the two events that eventually broke the Triumvirate apart
   - the reasons for Pompey's move to the side of the *optimates*.

Caesar's Gallic Wars 58–50 BC

Caesar was absent from Rome for a long period during his pro-consular appointment to Gaul, which gave his enemies the opportunity to scheme against him. However, his command provided him with many advantages.

1 Cisalpine Gaul:
   - The area was a good recruiting ground for troops.
   - Caesar had clients there who would be a source of strength for the future.

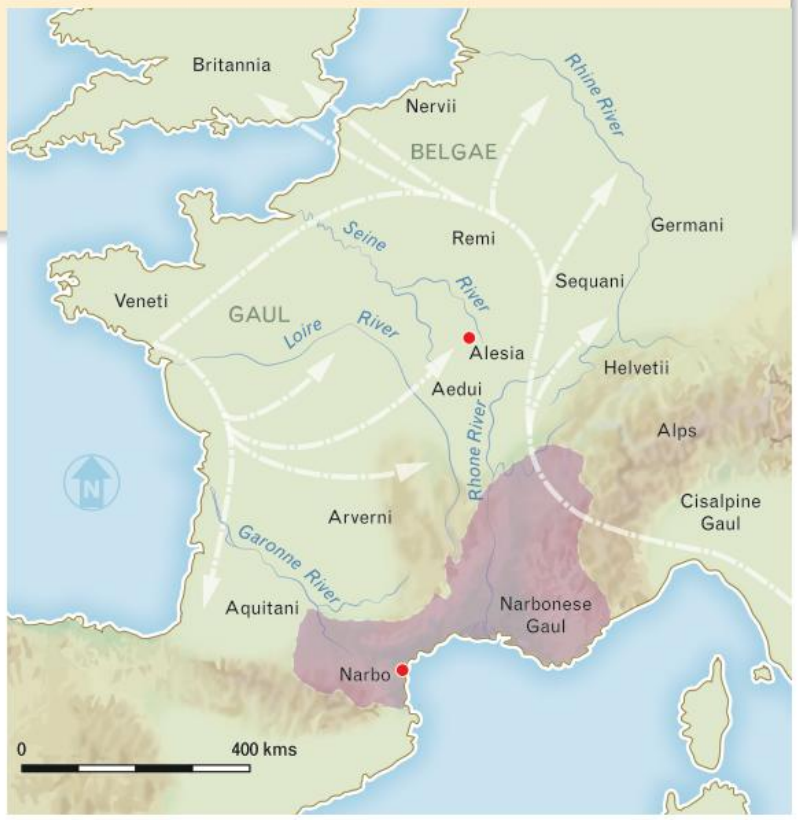

FIGURE 9.19 Map of Caesar's campaigns in Gaul between 58 and 52 BC

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- The province's proximity to Rome would allow Caesar to keep an eye on what was happening in the capital.

2 Narbonese Gaul:
- This province would give Caesar a chance to acquire great wealth.
- The rivalry and disturbances of Gallic tribes outside the Roman province in Gallia Comata ('long-haired' Gaul) would give him opportunities to win military glory for himself and extend Rome's influence.
- He could build up a huge clientele for future political campaigns.

TABLE 9.5 Caesar's Gallic campaigns

58–56 BC	55–54 BC	54–51 BC
Caesar: • forced 400 000 Helvetii from Switzerland – trying to pass through the Roman province to make a new home in Gaul – to return to their homeland. • drove the German Suebi back beyond the Rhine. • prevented the Belgian Gauls from attempting to expel the Romans. Most tribes gave way as he approached. • defeated the rebellious Veneti when they attacked the Roman garrisons. • defeated the Aquitani.	Caesar: • exterminated two German tribes who crossed the Rhine into Gaul. • built a 230-metre bridge across the Rhine to demonstrate Roman strength, then destroyed it. • carried out a reconnaissance of Britain in 55, followed by an invasion. (Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, Bk. IV. 20–38) • defeated King Cassivellaunus of the Britons, crossed the Thames and took his capital. Received the submission of the tribes to the south-east, took hostages and returned to Gaul. (Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, Bk. IV. 8–23)	Caesar: • suffered a setback when the Eburones attacked a Roman garrison at Aduatucas, annihilating one and a half legions. • faced the most serious revolt led by Vercingetorix, a young noble of the Arverni tribe who united the discontented Gauls. At one point the capital of Narbonese Gaul was threatened. • besieged Vercingetorix and his troops in the fortress on the plateau of Alesia and eventually starved them into submission. Spent 51–50 subduing the remnants of the revolt.

... Caesar made preparations for an expedition to Britain, because he knew that in almost all Gallic campaigns the Gauls had received reinforcements from the Britons. Even if there was not time for a campaign that season [winter was approaching], he thought it would be of great advantage to him to merely visit the island, to see what its inhabitants were like, and to make himself acquainted with the lie of the land, the harbours and landing places.

SOURCE 9.12 Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, Bk IV. 20

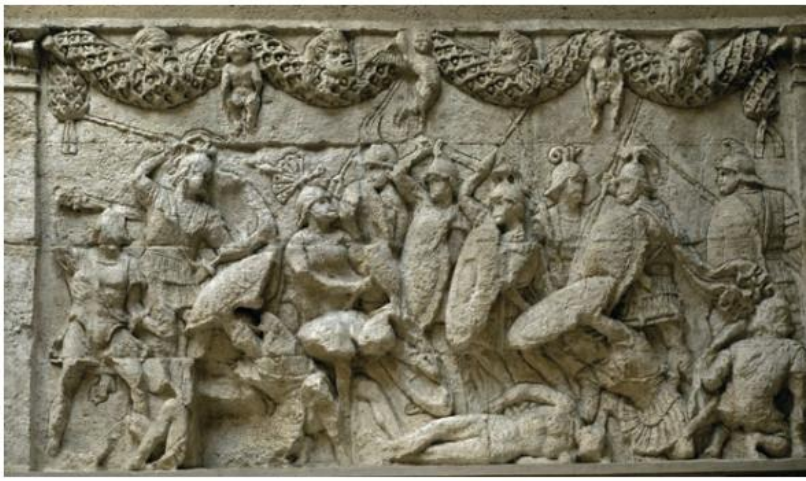

FIGURE 9.20 A relief of Romans fighting the Gauls

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The revolt of Vercingetorix and the siege of Alesia

This vital episode in Caesar's Gallic wars is described in his *Commentaries on the Conquest of Gaul*, Bk VII.

> Vercingetorix, a very powerful young Arvernian, whose father, Celtillus, had held suzerainty over all Gaul ... had no difficulty in exciting their [his father's retainers] passions, and the news of what was afoot soon brought others out in arms . . . He was proclaimed king by his adherents, and sent embassies in every direction adjuring the tribes to keep faith ... Himself a man of boundless energy, he terrorized waverers with the rigours of an iron discipline. Serious cases of disaffection were punished with torture and death at the stake, ...

SOURCE 9.13 Caesar, *Commentaries on the Conquest of Gaul*, VII, 4

The revolt incited by Vercingetorix spread, and Caesar was forced to divide his forces. The situation became critical as the Aedui (long-time allies of Rome) joined the revolt and Caesar had to use a cavalry of Germans from across the Rhine.

After a series of Roman victories, Vercingetorix and his troops were blockaded in the impregnable stronghold at Alesia, 'situated on top of a hill washed by streams on the north and south, and closely surrounded by other hills as high as itself on every side except the west'.[16] It was defended by 170 000 Gauls.

FIGURE 9.21 Vercingetorix, who united the Gauls against the Romans

Caesar built a 17-kilometre ring of elaborate fortifications within sight of the city. These comprised:

1 a massive trench 6 metres wide to protect the men building the siege complex
2 two trenches each 4.4 metres wide and 2.4 metres deep. The ditch nearer Alesia was filled with water by diverting the river
3 behind the ditches, a 3.6-metre-high rampart and palisade from which forked branches projected
4 wooden towers built at intervals around the circuit
5 five rows of interlaced stakes fixed in channels 1.5 metres deep beyond the main trench
6 beyond them, 1-metre deep pits concealing sharp fire-hardened stakes
7 still further forward, long blocks of wood with iron barbs embedded in them
8 seven fortresses.

When Vercingetorix summoned his Gallic allies to attack, and Caesar had completed the original defences, he built a similar circuit of 21 kilometres, facing outwards. Caesar's forces camped between the two walls.

> ... its purpose was to hold off attacks from outside, so that, even if Vercingetorix's cavalry assembled a very large force, the troops defending the siege works could not be surrounded. To avoid the danger of having to send out foraging parties when the relieving force was near, every man was ordered to provide himself with a month's supply of corn and fodder.

SOURCE 9.14 Caesar, *Commentaries on the Conquest of Gaul*, Bk VII. 74

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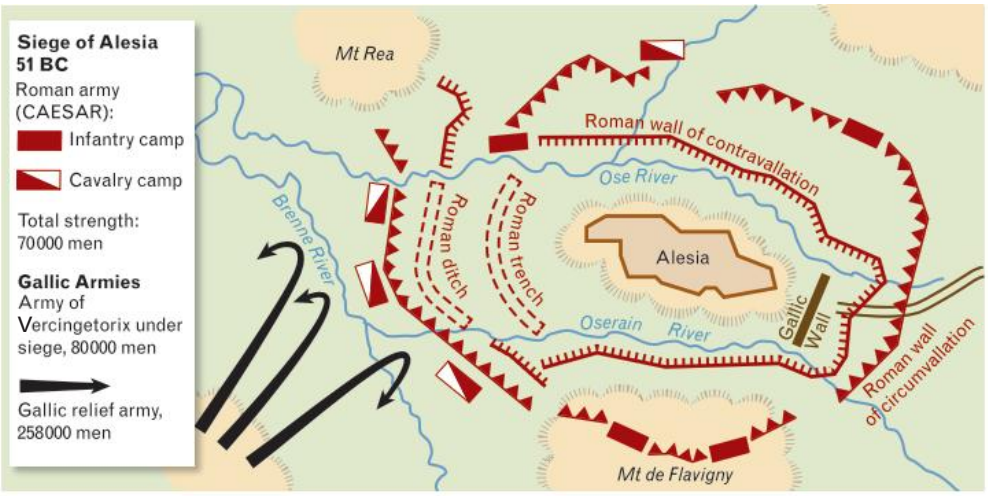

FIGURE 9.22 A diagram of the siege of Alesia

The end of the siege

Caesar resisted the enormous Gallic relief army and they disbanded. Vercingetorix addressed an assembly.

> 'I did not undertake this war', he said, 'for private ends, but in the cause of national liberty. And since I must now accept my fate, I place myself at your disposal. Make amends to the Romans by killing me or surrender me alive as you think best.'

SOURCE 9.15 Caesar, *Commentaries on the Conquest of Gaul*, VII, 89

FIGURE 9.23 A model of Caesar's siegeworks at Alesia

A deputation was sent to Caesar who demanded that all arms be laid down and the tribal chiefs and Vercingetorix surrendered. Caesar kept Vercingetorix captive until he could be displayed at his triumph in Rome.

FIGURE 9.24 A 19th-century painting by Lionel Royer showing Vercingetorix surrendering to Caesar

Caesar's leadership during his Gallic campaigns

1 Caesar took the offensive and responded to revolts and opposition quickly and with decision, never allowing his enemies to gain an advantage over him. He pressed his battlefield successes to finality. Speed was one of his most noteworthy military attributes.

2 He was not afraid to take risks when a situation called for it. He launched a risky amphibious operation across the English Channel against an unknown enemy, and he risked everything on the siege of Alesia.

3 He showed a healthy respect for the fighting skills of the Gauls and Germans.

4 He did the unexpected, such as his construction of a 230-metre bridge across the Rhine to punish the Germans, then destroyed the bridge once he returned to Gaul.

5 After victory, he took hostages to make sure any agreements were maintained.

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6 In 30 pitched battles, Caesar is believed to have captured a million men, killed 1 192 000 and captured 800 towns. However, his appalling treatment of those who held out against him has been described as 'repeated acts of nauseous and treacherous brutality' that 'often exceeded and defeated its intimidatory purpose.'[17]

7 He followed up this with a conciliatory policy, realising that he might need supportive Gauls in the future.

> ... the campaigns by which he subjugated Gaul proved him to be as good a soldier and a commander as any of those who have been most admired for their leadership and shown themselves to be the greatest generals ... we shall find that Caesar's achievements surpass then all.

SOURCE 9.16 Plutarch, *The Fall of The Roman Republic: Caesar*, 15

The significance of Caesar's Gallic campaigns

FIGURE 9.25 Coin minted to celebrate Caesar's victory in Gaul

- The conquered territory was organised with the minimum of supervision from the Roman governor of Narbonese Gaul. The tribes retained their own organisation and collected 'an annual tribute of 40 000 gold pieces'.[18]
- The large amount of booty sent back to Rome created great excitement, as did Caesar's spectacular excursion into unexplored Britain.
- For the Gauls, the conquest promised future peace and protection from the Germanic tribes beyond the Rhine and opened Gaul up to Romanisation.
- For the Romans, it added an area twice the size of Italy with a greater population than Spain and offered vast resources. 'Caesar had changed the whole idea and nature of the Roman dominion.'[19]
- For Caesar, the conquest enhanced his military reputation; gave him the support of a devoted army willing to follow him anywhere; created a client base equalling that of Pompey; and provided him with the wealth needed to buy political support in Rome on a comparable scale to that of Crassus.

ACTIVITY 9.6

1. What did the long command in Gaul provide for Caesar that would help him in any future conflict with the *optimates*?
2. Use Source 9.12 to explain why Caesar made a side excursion from Gaul to Britain.
3. The most significant event in his Gallic campaign was the rebellion by Vercingetorix. Describe how Caesar, in Source 9.13, describes this Gallic chieftain, and suggest why the revolt was so critical.
4. Use the text, Figures 9.22 and 9.23, plus Source 9.14 to describe the fortifications built by Caesar to blockade Vercingetorix and his troops within the stronghold of Alesia and to prevent help from outside reaching them.
5. Research the siege of Alesia in Caesar's *Commentaries*, Bk VII, 5. 68–90 and list the problems faced by both sides during this siege.
6. Assess Caesar's leadership in Gaul and the significance of his campaign for himself, the Gauls and Rome.

Caesar's relationship with his army

The following is based on evidence from Caesar's war against the Gauls and from the later Civil War he fought against the *optimates* in 49–45 BC.

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TABLE 9.6 Caesar's behaviour and what the sources say

• Caesar had the remarkable ability to secure and retain the affection and devotion of his men and to get the best from them (except for one occasion during the Civil War when he was faced with a mutiny). For his sake, they took pride in doing the best they could and often against enormously superior forces.	'At the outbreak of the Civil War, every centurion in every legion volunteered to equip a cavalryman from his savings; and the private soldiers unanimously offered to serve under him without pay or rations, pooling their money so that nobody should go short.'[20] 'Those soldiers who in other campaigns had not shown themselves to be any better than average became irresistible and invincible and ready to confront any danger, once it was a question of fighting for Caesar's honour and glory.'[21] 'Shortly before the defeat at Dyhrrachium, a single company of the 6th Legion held a redoubt against four Pompeian legions, though almost every man had been wounded by arrow-shot.'[22] '… when taken prisoners [during the Civil War], his men preferred death to the alternative of serving with the Pompeians'.[23]
• He inspired and cultivated a passion for distinction by generously distributing rewards and honours.	'… he made it clear … he was not amassing a great fortune from his wars in order to spend it on his personal pleasures, or on a life of self-indulgence; instead he was keeping it, as it were, in trust, a fund open to all for the reward of valour …'[24]
• He set an example for his troops, taking risks, leading his men into battle and undergoing the same hardships as them. He trained them hard and insisted on strict discipline.	'He never gave forewarning of a march or battle, but kept his troops always on the alert for sudden orders to go wherever he directed. Often, he made them turn out, when there was no need at all, especially in wet weather or in public.'[25]
• If his men suffered reverses or gave ground, after having previously proved their courage – although they expected him to punish them – he would rally them in person. However, he would not suffer cowardly actions, especially from his officers, and treated all with equal severity.	'He felt called upon to console them rather than upbraid them.'[26] 'He would rally them in person, catching individual fugitives by the throat and forcing them round to face the enemy again if panic-stricken.'[27] 'Caesar saw that his officers were afraid of the Germans … So, he called a meeting and told them to go back to Rome; they must not run any undue risks, he suggested in their present cowardly and soft state of mind.'[28]
• To increase their morale, he often relaxed discipline after a good victory to put them into a good humour.	'… he relieved the troops of all military duties and let them carry on as wildly as they pleased … he always addressed them not with 'My men', but with 'Comrades …' which put them into a better humour.'[29]

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TABLE 9.6 *(continued)*

• Caesar's men did not mutiny during the campaigns in Gaul, although they were less dependable throughout the later Civil War against Pompey and the *optimates*. If his men made unreasonable demands, Caesar faced them and always won them around.	'Whenever they made insubordinate demands, he faced them boldly, and always brought them to heel again – not by appeasement but by sheer exercise of personal authority'.[30]

ACTIVITY 9.7

To what extent was Caesar a successful general?

Caesar, the Senate and the countdown to civil war

Caesar had never really made an attempt to hide the fact that he was a member of the *populares* faction, but 'until 59, his successes, though striking, in no way strained the normal framework of Roman life'.[31] He followed the standard military and political requirements and it was obvious he had considerable support within the Senate and was popular with the people. However, it was also obvious that the *optimates*, especially Cato, feared and distrusted him and did everything in their power to thwart his ambitions. Also, despite the pact and marriage alliance he had with Pompey, his military success and reputation in Gaul created envy in Pompey, who wanted to be the first man in the state and to make sure Caesar did not become his equal. According to Caesar, 'the trouble with Pompey was that he didn't want anyone to equal him in dignity'.[32] Although, initially, Pompey did not want to break with Caesar, political anarchy in Rome forced the Senate to make Pompey sole consul to restore order, even though they didn't trust him. Pompey used his consulship to put himself in a very strong position in regard to Caesar.

Countdown to civil war

The hard-liners in the Senate were determined to destroy Caesar's career by forcing his early return from Gaul so that they could prosecute him as a private citizen for his previous illegal acts. Caesar wanted to protect his career by avoiding prosecution, so needed his command in Gaul extended until he could stand in absentia for the consulship of 48. He would then be able to leave Rome again in 47 as a pro-consul, thus avoiding prosecution.

The *optimates* began a political struggle with Caesar while he was still in Gaul, although he was not without his supporters in Rome.

- The consul for 51 (Marcellus) agitated for Caesar's early return and also humiliated him by flogging a number of Cisalpine Gauls who Caesar had treated as citizens.
- Curio, a young tribune, struck a bargain with Caesar. In return for paying off his debts, he would veto any attempt to replace Caesar and suggested that both Pompey and Caesar give up their extraordinary commands to preserve the balance in the state. Pompey refused.
- Threat of war in Syria led the Senate to decree that both Pompey and Caesar should contribute a legion each. However, Pompey gave as his legion one he had previously loaned Caesar who now lost two legions. As it turned out, neither of these two legions were sent out to the East, but were kept in Italy.

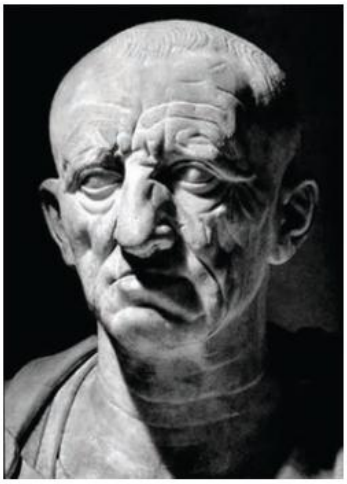

FIGURE 9.26 A bust of Cato, one of the leaders of the *optimates*

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- Curio suggested again that both Pompey and Caesar resign their commands, and although 370 senators voted for the proposal with only 22 against, the consul for 50 BC spread rumours that Caesar was marching on Rome and called on Pompey to defend the state. He openly committed himself to the *optimates*.
- Curio left Rome and joined Caesar, but the tribunes, Mark Antony and Cassius, continued to work on Caesar's behalf. Caesar, waiting at Ravenna in his province of Cisalpine Gaul, sent a conciliatory letter to the Senate, 'hoping that some human sense of justice might make a peaceful settlement possible'.[33] When the tribunes tried to read the letter, Lentulus (consul for 49) said he would override the Senate if they adopted a conciliation policy.
- Scipio Metellus, Pompey's father-in-law, proposed that Caesar give up his command by a certain date or be declared an outlaw. The tribunes vetoed it.
- Cato, Lentulus and Scipio Metellus, the hard-line reactionaries, declared the emergency decree or SCU (**senatus consultum ultimum**) and threatened the tribunes, who fled to join Caesar.

senatus consultum ultimum an emergency decree of the Senate, usually interpreted as authorising the consuls to use every means to save the state

Most of the senators were not eager for war. It was the small group of *optimates*, long-time enemies of Caesar, who were not interested in appeasement or compromise and wanted to destroy him. This could only be done by war, so they forced the issue to prevent any wavering by the rest of the Senate and to prevent Pompey from making a compromise with Caesar. Pompey assumed command of the senatorial forces in Italy.

> It is a sad commentary on the rundown of the Republican government that so nearly unanimous an opinion remained ineffective.

SOURCE 9.17 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 134

> Caesar decided to take the initiative ... when he reached the Rubicon, the boundary between Gaul [Cisalpine Gaul] and Italy, and looked across the stream, he was deep in thought, considering all the trouble which would follow if he and his army went across the river. Then he came to himself, and said to his friends, 'If I don't cross this river, it will be the start of much distress for me; if I cross it there will be much distress for everyone.' These words put an end to his doubts and he crossed over, crying out as he did so 'Alea iacta est' ('The die is cast').

SOURCE 9.18 Appian, *Civil Wars*, 2, 34

On 10 January 49 BC Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the small stream that was the boundary between Italy and Cisalpine Gaul, with only one legion, thus committing Rome to civil war. Although he is believed to have used the pretext of protecting the sacrosanctity of the tribunes, he did not hide his real reason for entering Italy. He knew that the *optimates* would condemn him, regardless of all his victories, and send him into exile, and so his real reason for entering Italy under arms was concerned with his *dignitas*: the fact that he was being forbidden to return home with some honour.

FIGURE 9.27 The location of the Rubicon

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> Prestige had always been of prime importance to me, even outweighing life itself; it pained me to see the privilege conferred on me by the Roman people being insultingly wrested from me by my enemies.

SOURCE 9.19 Caesar, *The Civil War*, I. 9

A COMMENT ON...

The importance of *dignitas* to a Roman politician

- '*Dignitas*' is a Latin word that does not have a direct translation in English. It was a unique concept in ancient Rome that has often been interpreted as 'dignity' or 'prestige'. This intangible concept has also been interpreted as 'merit', 'worth' or 'esteem'.
- In ancient Rome at the time of Julius Caesar, it referred particularly to an upper-class male's personal influence acquired throughout his lifetime, and was judged on his reputation (good name), achievements and ethical worth, which entitled him to respect and proper treatment.
- A Roman nobleman would go to any lengths to protect his *dignitas.* It was worth fighting, killing, dying, committing suicide and going into exile for.
- *Dignitas* has to be considered when assessing the motives and behaviour of Caesar and the other players in his career.

ACTIVITY 9.8

1. Explain why the hardline senators like Cato, Lucullus and Scipio Metellus, who wanted to destroy Caesar, issued the emergency decree, the *senatus consultum ultimum*.
2. Use Source 9.18 to show why and how Caesar took the initiative.
3. Identify the significance of the Rubicon and Caesar's crossing of it.
4. Using Source 9.19, identify Caesar's real reason for taking the action that he did.
5. Explain the importance of *dignitas* for all Roman politicians.
6. Discuss who was responsible for the outbreak of Civil War.

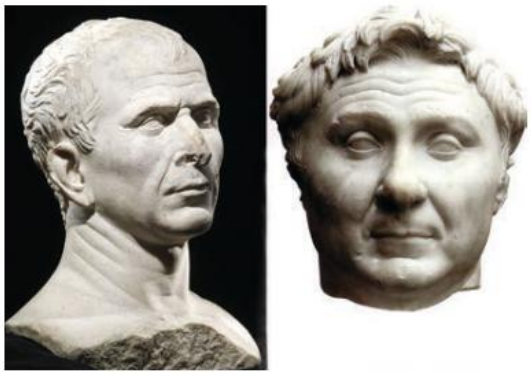

FIGURE 9.28 Caesar and Pompey

The Civil War 49–44 BC and Caesar's role in it

The Civil War between the Caesarians and the *optimates* in the Senate, led by Pompey, was fought over the entire Mediterranean and was noteworthy for the decisive nature of Caesar's victories. It proved his legions to be one of the greatest infantries of ancient times and himself to be one of the world's greatest generals.

For details of the various campaigns in Greece, Africa and Spain, read:

- Plutarch, *Pompey*, 59–80, *Caesar*, 32–56 and *Cicero*, 37–9
- Suetonius, *Julius Caesar*, 34–9, 52 and 75
- Caesar, *Civil War*, III: 82–3, 96 and 107–8.

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FIGURE 9.29 The sites of the various campaigns and battles during the Civil War

TABLE 9.7 Major events in the Civil War 49–44 BC and Caesar's part in it

Date	Events
49 BC	• Caesar crosses the Rubicon. • Pompey and *optimates* are taken by surprise and evacuate Rome as Pompey's army is not yet ready to meet Caesar. • *Optimate* commander surrenders to Caesar with three legions. • Pompey makes the decision to evacuate Italy for Greece but, before he leaves for Greece with his army and the majority of senators, Caesar makes several attempts to arrange a personal interview with him. Pompey refuses. • Within two months Caesar is master of Italy, and Pompey and senators set up headquarters in Thessalonica with another at Dyrrachium in Illyria. • Caesar does not follow Pompey immediately. He returns to Rome, pardons those of his enemies that remain and breaks into the treasury to secure funds. • He decides to attack Spain, where there are seven senatorial legions. He drives out Pompey's commanders, Afranius and Varro, shows clemency, disbands the legions and sends his own commanders to secure the grain supply of Sardinia and Corsica. • Caesar is appointed dictator for 11 days and then elected as consul for 48 BC. • Pompey raises an army of nine legions and a fleet of 300 to attack Italy, but Caesar, aware of Pompey's intention, assembles 11 legions at Brundisium to cross the Adriatic.
48	• Mark Antony arrives in support of Caesar with four extra legions and both armies converge on Dyrrachium (close to Pompey's naval base) where they build large fortresses facing each other. Caesar fails to break the enemy lines and loses many men in the attempt, but Pompey fails to follow up his success. • Caesar heads for Thessaly where he has other detachments and Pompey follows. The two armies face each other on the plain at Pharsalus. • Caesar defeats Pompey at the Battle of Pharsalus; 6000 of Pompey's soldiers are killed and 24 000 captured. • Pompey flees to Egypt where he is murdered by the soldiers of King Ptolemy XIII, who hopes to get Caesar's support in his dynastic quarrel with his sister Cleopatra. • Caesar arrives in Alexandria to prevent Pompey from raising more troops, and is told of his murder. He becomes involved in the dynastic intrigues of the Egyptian court.

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TABLE 9.7 *(continued)*

Date	Events
47	• Caesar is appointed dictator for one year. • Caesar meets Cleopatra and takes her side in the dynastic struggles, defeating Ptolemy XIII in the Alexandrine War and settling Cleopatra and her younger brother on the throne. During his interlude in Alexandria, Cleopatra gives birth to a son named Ptolemy Caesar (nick-named Caesarion). • Caesar returns to Rome via Syria and reorganises the provincial administration as well as dealing with Pharnaces, the son of Mithridates who uses the confusion of the Civil War to gain successes at Rome's expense. Caesar defeats him at the Battle of Zela. • While Caesar is in Egypt and Syria, the remnants of Pompey's army gathers in Africa under Metellus Scipio, Afranius, Labienus, Cato and Pompey's two sons. Their legions are augmented by four legions from King Juba of Numidia. • At the end of the year, Caesar crosses to Africa.
46	• Caesar becomes consul for 3rd time and dictator for 10 years. • Caesar faces the *optimates* (Pompeians) at Thapsus. The death toll is higher than at Pharsalus. All the *optimate* leaders – except Labienus and Pompey's sons who escape to Spain – lose their lives. Cato, Caesar's arch-enemy, commits suicide at Utica. • Believing the war is over, Caesar returns to Rome and celebrates four triumphs with a few days' interval between: Gallic – the most magnificent; the Alexandrine; the Pontic; and the African. • Caesar heads for Spain to suppress a revolt by the sons of Pompey.
45	• Caesar becomes consul for the 4th time. • In his hardest-fought battle, Caesar defeats the sons of Pompey at Munda, although Sextus Pompeius escapes to cause further trouble for Rome. This is Caesar's last war. • He is made dictator for life and celebrates another triumph for Spain.

FIGURE 9.30 The plain of Pharsalus

Caesar returned to Rome to be acclaimed and honoured as no other Roman had ever been, and as dictator he carried out a huge amount of administrative reform and initiated vast building programs.

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ACTIVITY 9.9

1 List the three main battles fought between Caesar and the Pompeians in the Civil War.
2 Identify the impact of Caesar's interlude in Egypt.
3 Describe what happened to Caesar's status every time he returned to Rome.

Political enemies and supporters

The following groups, apart from the *optimates* – the implacable enemies of Caesar – were generally supporters of Caesar:

1 The *equites* were often a disruptive element in their opposition to the Senate and both sides – *optimates* and *populares* – courted their support at various times. However, Caesar's financial association with Crassus, and the bills passed on behalf of the *equites*, meant they can be regarded as supporters of Caesar.
2 The 'people' supported Caesar for much of his career as he was their champion and addressed many of their problems in his reforms.
3 Caesar's legionaries and veterans were at all times loyal.

TABLE 9.8 Caesar's opponents and supporters

Caesar's individual opponents	
Cato	Cato was the leader of the hard-line senators. He opposed Caesar in 61 and frustrated Pompey's Eastern settlement. He wanted Caesar brought to trial for his illegal acts in 59 and attempted to replace him in Gaul. He followed Pompey to Greece during the Civil War and after Pharsalus he went to Africa. After Caesar's victory at Thapsus, Cato committed suicide at Utica rather than be pardoned by Caesar.
Bibulus	Bibulus was Cato's son-in-law and Caesar's consular colleague in 59. He attempted to use his consular powers to block Caesar's legislation and was threatened by Caesar's supporters. He fought on Pompey's side in the Civil War as his commander of the fleet in the Adriatic.
Metellus Scipio	Metellus Scipio proposed in the Senate that Caesar should disband his army or be declared a public enemy. During the Civil War, he commanded the Pompeian centre at Pharsalus. He crossed to Africa, was defeated by Caesar at Thapsus and, like Cato, committed suicide.
Brutus	Brutus was the son of Servilia (Caesar's long-time mistress and half-sister to Cato). He was brought up by Cato and joined the *optimates* on the outbreak of Civil War. After Pharsalus he was pardoned by Caesar and given many marks of favour, and yet he was one of the main conspirators in his assassination.
Cassius	Cassius was a leading general, and at the outbreak of the Civil War joined the *optimates* and accompanied Pompey to Greece. After Pharsalus, he was pardoned by Caesar who helped him gain the praetorship, but Cassius harboured a secret hostility to Caesar and was the leading figure in his assassination.
Caesar's individual supporters	
Crassus	Crassus provided Caesar with financial support for his political advancement – *aedile, pontifex maximus* and pro-praetor – and supported him in gaining the consulship and command as pro-consul to Gaul.

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TABLE 9.8 *(continued)*

Clodius and Curio	Clodius became tribune in 58 and helped Caesar get rid of Cicero before he went to Gaul. Curio, as a tribune for 50, vetoed any discussion by the *optimates* of Caesar's replacement in Gaul. During the Civil War, Caesar sent Curio as pro-praetor to Sicily where he drove Cato off the island and followed him to Africa. He was killed by King Juba of Numidia
Mark Antony	Mark Antony's mother was a Julian and so he was a relative, dear friend, trusted officer and political supporter. Antony joined Caesar in Gaul in 54, was elected *quaestor* through Caesar's influence and became one of his most trusted officers and devoted friends. As a tribune in 49 he vetoed the Senate's attempt to deprive Caesar of his command and then fled to Gaul. He commanded the left wing at Pharsalus and in 44 he was consul with Caesar and handed him the crown at the festival of Lupercalia. He celebrated his funeral and read his will. **FIGURE 9.31** A bust of Mark Antony

The ambiguous positions of Pompey and Cicero

The positions of Pompey and Cicero were somewhat ambiguous at times with regard to Caesar.

Pompey veered from support of the *optimates* (although they never trusted him) to alienation from them and support of Caesar (the First Triumvirate). Around 56 he was somewhere between the *optimates* and Caesar, with whom he was not yet ready to make a break. With the death of his wife Julia (Caesar's daughter), his alliance with Caesar came to an end. When the *optimates* began a political struggle with Caesar, Pompey was asked to protect the state against him and this gave him a chance to be pre-eminent again.

In the following source, Plutarch records that both Caesar and Pompey had decided that the other had to be removed from 'his position of power', and 'the man who wanted to be on top had to get rid of the one who was for the moment on top.'[34]

> It was only recently that Pompey had come to fear Caesar. Up till this time he had despised him. It was through his influence, he thought, that Caesar had grown great, and it would be just as easy to put him down as it had been to raise him up.

SOURCE 9.20 Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic: Caesar*, 28

Cicero never had any real sympathy with the *populares* and when he became consul for 63, he connected himself with the *optimates*. He admired many of Caesar's talents and thought of Pompey as a friend but was disappointed in the formation of the Triumvirate. He refused Caesar's offer to join the political alliance and could not support the triumvirs against the Senate.

When the Civil War broke out, he was disappointed in Pompey's immediate actions and was in a dilemma as to which side he should support. Eventually he threw his lot in with Pompey and crossed to Greece. After Pharsalus, Caesar pardoned him and treated him with respect and kindness, and allowed him to return to Rome. After Caesar's death, he put himself at the head of the *optimates* and began attacking Mark Antony.

> ... in private, he wrote many letters to Caesar, giving him his advice, and had many personal interviews in which he interceded with Pompey ... Soon, however, things had gone too far for any remedy as Caesar was advancing on Rome. ... It was evident that, with his judgment pulling him in both directions, he was in great distress of mind. He writes in his letters [to his friend Atticus] that he does not know which way to turn. ... So much for the evidence of the letters. When Caesar set out for Spain, Cicero sailed immediately to join Pompey.

SOURCE 9.21 At the beginning of the Civil War, in Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic*: *Cicero*, 37

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ACTIVITY 9.10

Explain what is meant by 'the ambiguous positions of Pompey and Cicero' in regard to their relationships with Caesar.

Caesar's personal relationships

Women in his life

- In his early life, Caesar was very close to his mother Aurelia and her influential family, the Aurelii Cottas.
- His first wife Cornelia was the daughter of the *popularis* Lucius Cornelius Cinna. He refused to divorce her on the demand of Sulla and honoured her with a public funeral oration.
- Caesar divorced his second wife, Pompeia, for her part in the Bona Dea scandal.
- Caesar's daughter, Julia, his only legitimate child, was married to Pompey as a way of sealing the alliance with him (the Triumvirate) and it appears that a real love developed between Julia and her husband. Her death after a miscarriage contributed to the breakdown of the political alliance.
- Calpurnia, the daughter of Lucius Calpurnius Piso, was Caesar's third wife. Caesar and Calpurnia had no children. She appears to have known about Caesar's relationship with Cleopatra but created no public scandal about it. She survived his death and never remarried.
- Caesar's long-term mistress was the patrician Servilia, half-sister of Cato. He was very fond of her and they remained friends until his death, despite her son Brutus (who some thought was Caesar's son, although it is unlikely) fighting on Pompey's side in the Civil War.
- When Caesar landed in Egypt after Pompey's flight from Pharsalus, he met the 21-year-old Cleopatra. By becoming Caesar's lover, Cleopatra was able to enhance her own position and save Egypt. During Caesar's stay in Egypt, Cleopatra gave birth to a son named Ptolemy Caesar or Caesarion ('little Caesar'). She wanted Caesar to name the boy his heir, but he refused. However, Cleopatra and her son visited Rome, staying in one of Caesar's country houses. Her presence caused a scandal, especially when Caesar erected a golden statue of her as Isis in the temple of Venus Genetrix, the divine ancestress of his family. Cleopatra was in Rome when Caesar was assassinated.

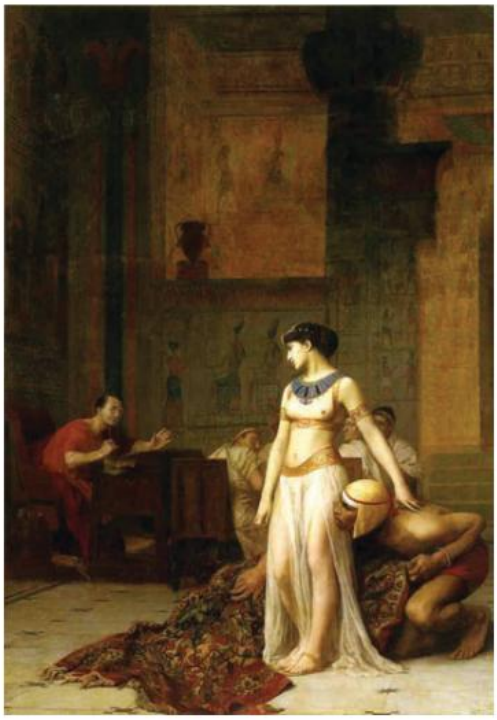

FIGURE 9.32 A painting of Caesar and Cleopatra

Impact of Caesar's personality on his career

Caesar was no different from any of his contemporaries in his ambition for advancement, and his desire for glory and *dignitas*. In order to achieve this advancement, Caesar needed to excel in a whole range of skills; gain riches and a large clientele; distinguish himself as a military officer; and win popularity and respect through his mastery of law and ability in oratory. All these things, Caesar achieved. However, by taking all the highest honours in the state towards the end of his life, Caesar was seen by others in the Senate as depriving them of legitimate political ambitions and overlooking their *dignitas*.

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Although much of what motivated and impacted Caesar's career was due to the traditional expectations of a Roman noble, he did have certain personal traits that helped him to rise above most of his peers. He was a cultured patrician blessed with:

- an innate intelligence and intuition
- a quick mind
- shrewdness
- determination
- confidence
- readiness to take risks
- ability to win people over
- practical good sense.

While ruthlessness was seen as a virtue in a Roman leader, so was *clementia* (forgiveness, mercy, forbearance and humanity). Caesar was known for his clemency towards his enemies, and even his opponents admired him for this. Cicero, the great friend of Pompey, compared Pompey unfavourably with Caesar with regard to clemency.

Michael Grant, in *The Twelve Caesars*, mentions some of Caesar's traits that made him so successful.

> The gift which contributed most largely to [Caesar's] success was an abnormally energetic ability to get things done. This was conspicuously apparent in the occupation of warfare in which he excelled all his rivals ... The point was that he could do everything with extraordinary speed ... Caesar lived at a faster tempo than the people who had to contend with him, and this gave him an enormous advantage, offering the widest scope to that capacity for the unexpected, unpredictable action which his friends found such an irresistibly attractive feature of his talents ... His character was an amalgamation of genius, method, memory, culture, thoroughness, intellect, and industry.

SOURCE 9.22 M. Grant, *The Twelve Caesars*, pp. 31–3

However, there were times when he was exceedingly impatient and arrogant.

Significance of his writing

Caesar had a diversified knowledge and a love of literature. He was the author of many works, the majority of which have been lost. His only works to have survived are the *Commentarii*, something like memoirs or reports: his *De Bello Gallico* in seven books, which give an account of his campaigns in his conquest of Gaul; and *De Bello Civili*, the history of the Civil War down to the outbreak of hostilities at Alexandria. These were issued in annual instalments at the time of his wars, but were published later with an eye to the future.

The purity of his Latin and the elegance and clearness of his style were praised by the ancients, as they still are today. Cicero, often a critic of Caesar's political actions, was an admirer of his writing as he was of his oratory, and Hurtius, who completed *De Bello Gallico,* wrote that 'It is an accepted fact that all the most strenuous literary efforts of others are surpassed by the elegance of these Commentaries' and that 'Caesar not only had the gift of writing with consummate elegance, but also knew how most exactly to convey what his intentions were'.[35]

Despite Caesar's qualities as a writer, some things in the Gallic Wars are deliberately not mentioned, such as the large personal fortunes he and his associates made, and his lack of self-criticism, typical of most memoirs of any general. However, taking into account some personal distortions and exaggerations, most of the account is invaluable as a source on the history and institutions of the Gauls during that period. Also, 'it is the only narrative written by a great general of antiquity about his own campaigns'.[36] It was written basically to justify Caesar politically for those of the Roman governing class who had been consistently hostile to him.

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His *Civil War,* also beautifully written, shows signs of being intended as propaganda. Obviously, it is a personal perspective on the war and in it he tries to justify his motives for invading Italy.

ACTIVITY 9.11

1. What motivated Caesar's so-called ambition to succeed?
2. Describe the personal characteristics that made Caesar more successful than his peers.
3. Why was he admired for his writing in his own time, even by his opponents?

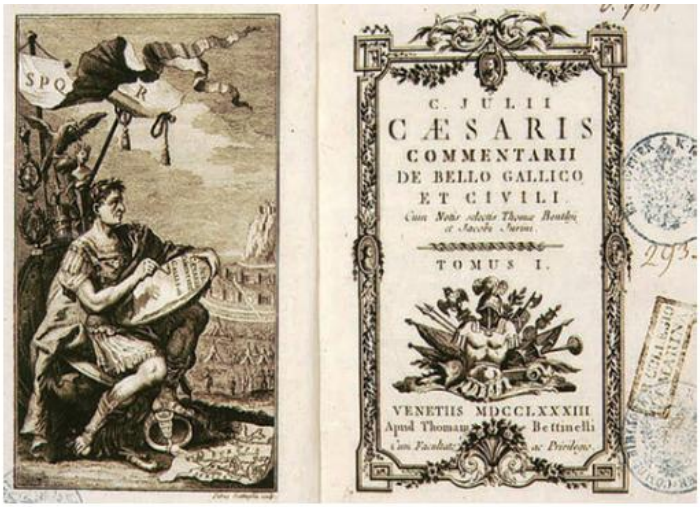

FIGURE 9.33 A copy of Caesar's Gallic Commentaries

Caesar's powers and honours by 44

During the Civil War period Caesar accepted extravagant powers and honours by senatorial decree from a subservient Senate.

As dictator for life (*dictator perpetuus*), Caesar was raised above the veto of the tribunes and the *imperium* of all other magistrates and so was able to dominate the Senate, magistrates and people.

censorship the office of a censor who was elected every 5 years, for 18 months, and who controlled the list of citizens

> Not only did he accept extensive honours, such as life consulship, a life dictatorship, a perpetual **Censorship**, the title of '*Imperator*' put before his name and the title of 'Father of his Country' appended to it ... but took other honours which as a mere mortal, he should have refused.

SOURCE 9.23 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 76

A COMMENT ON...

The titles: 'Father of his Country' and Dictator for life

- In 45 BC, Caesar was granted by the Senate the honourary title of *parens patriae* for having restored peace after the Civil War. It was a rarely-awarded honour during the republic. Cicero had been granted the title '*pater patriae*' for his execution of the Roman conspirators in the Catalinarian conspiracy, whereas Caesar was given the form of '*parens patriae*' which was a widely used positive term for a benefactor because of his *clementia* to Roman citizens during the Civil War.
- In 44 BC, Caesar's title of Dictator for the fourth time was converted into a lifelong dictatorship which begins to appear on a number of coins just before his death. Roman dictatorship was a temporary, emergency appointment and this life-long position given to Caesar must have shocked his opponents as it bore similarities to the hated term 'king' (*rex*).This led to rumours that Caesar was aiming for kingship. However, he already had the power of a king and there was certainly no advantage to him in seeking the status of a king. Besides, Caesar probably calculated that this position, although it 'strained the constitution, it did not break it'.[37]

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Apart from those titles mentioned by Suetonius, Caesar was also:

- given the right to speak first in the Senate and to nominate Roman and provincial magistrates
- made a member of all priestly colleges (as well as *pontifex maximus*, which he still held). This gave him great influence in the state's religion
- provided with tribunician sacrosanctity (45 BC). Caesar could not be a tribune since he was a patrician but he could sit with the tribunes
- awarded the honour of his statue being carried with that of Victory at games; an ivory statue of him carried with those of the gods in festive processions; statues of him placed near those of the kings of Rome in the temple of Quirinus; and permission to use a gilded chair and wear a laurel crown on special occasions
- honoured with the month of Quinctilis named after him: Iulius (July); a temple erected to his clemency; a new college of priests established called the Julian Luperci; and his head appearing on coins in 44 BC.

Caesar as Dictator

Policies and reforms

During the intervals Caesar was in Italy between 49 and 45 BC, he worked with great energy achieving notable reforms and 'showing himself a practical politician with an eye for social needs that were shared by few of his contemporaries'.[38] Some of his aims were to:

- prevent bribery in the courts and remove other abuses
- increase penalties for crime
- strengthen the Senate
- deal with economic problems such as debt and the corn dole
- sort out the calendar, which was in a chaotic state
- extend the **franchise**
- undertake colonisation of his veterans
- rebuild the city.

franchise the rights of a citizen, especially the right to vote

Some legislation was to increase efficiency and others had more far-reaching effects, but his reforms did not impress his opponents. No matter how moderate they were, or how they may have benefited the people of Rome, Italy and the provinces, the conservatives resented his actions. Even his reform of the calendar offended those, like Cicero, who were jealous of his power.

TABLE 9.9 Some of Caesar's reforms

Franchise	He granted Roman citizenship to people in Cisalpine Gaul and Transpadane Gaul (beyond the Po), as well as to particular leaders in Spain and Gaul, to selected provincial towns and colonial cities, and to one Gallic legion. The franchise enhanced the status of the province, prevented the resentment of the provincials and secured their support for Rome's policies.
Colonisation	He promoted overseas colonies for his veterans and the urban poor in such places as Carthage and Corinth, which owed their rebirth to him. Other colonies founded or planned included Hispalis and Tarraco in Spain, Sinope in the East and Cirta in Africa. Colonies had either Roman or Latin status. This, along with extending the franchise, was his most statesmanlike reform. With Caesar, the effective Romanisation of the empire began.

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TABLE 9.9 *(continued)*

Italy and the provinces	He provided a uniform system of local government for all towns in Italy possessing the right to vote. Locally elected Senate and magistrates managed affairs of each town. He limited the tenure of governors in the provinces to ensure just government and reduce corruption, and he reformed the tax system in Sicily and Asia by replacing private tax collectors with state officials. This did away with the middlemen.
Finances	He replenished the public treasury with war spoils, reformed the degraded currency and struck the first gold coins. He passed measures to relieve debt and to protect creditors from incurring heavy losses. This helped stabilise the economy.
Senate and magistrates	He increased the number of senators to 900, enrolling prominent Gauls and Spaniards. This gave the Senate a relevance beyond Italy. To help provide more magistrates to administer the empire, he increased the number of *quaestors* from 20 to 40, *aediles* from 4 to 6 and *praetors* from 8 to 16.
Army	He paid his soldiers handsome bounties and pensions, and raised their pay from 120 to 225 **denarii** a year. This ensured he had a loyal military force.
Public works	He began to extend the Forum and pave it. He built the Julian Forum and planned to build a vast library, to drain the Pontine Marshes, to improve the city's drainage, to deepen the harbour at Ostia, to build a new road over the Apennine mountains and to cut a canal at the Isthmus of Corinth in Greece. The scope of these plans revealed genuine statesmanship.
Law	The courts were now composed of equal numbers of senators and *equites*, and penalties for criminal offences were increased.
Calendar	He employed Sosigenes, a Greek mathematician from Alexandria, to reform the Roman calendar. The resultant Julian calendar (with a few modifications) is still in use today.
Miscellaneous	He suppressed all private clubs, except guilds of craftsmen, to prevent rival gangs creating chaos in the city.

Plans for the future

When Caesar returned from his last campaign in Spain (Munda) in 45, he probably began to give some thought for his future. This took two forms:

1 He drew up a will which left most of his extremely valuable estate to his grandnephew, Gaius Octavius. However, there was nothing in the will that indicated that he saw Octavius as a successor to him in the state, or even that he had any idea what the future of the Roman state would be after his death. There is no evidence that Caesar had taken steps to get the people of Rome to accept a hereditary successor.

2 He was planning to leave Rome again to campaign against Parthia (beyond the easternmost part of the Roman Empire) and had already recruited an enormous army of 16 legions and 10 000 cavalry and archers, and nominated the magistrates who were to control Rome and the provinces for the next two years. He planned to leave in March 44.

denarii (or denarius) was the standard Roman silver coin from 211 BC to 238–244 AD

FIGURE 9.34 The remains of the Julian Forum

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> It was strange that Caesar, for all his insight, did not trouble to discern that a perpetual dictator ruling by remote control was so frightful that it could not be endured.

SOURCE 9.24 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 221

A COMMENT ON...

Was Caesar planning to become a king?

- The myth that Caesar wanted to make himself a king stems from a hostile tradition. His enemies 'were ready to put an adverse interpretation on his every passing remark and action and to detect tyrannical arrogance and contempt for the Senate'.[39] Some modern historians have taken up this view.
- Caesar knew the Romans regarded a king (*rex*) as a tyrant. He is supposed to have once said, '*non sum rex, sed Caesar*' ('I am not a king, I am Caesar').
- Caesar, as *Pontifex Maximus* (a position held for life), was already living in a palace and performing the religious duties of the old Roman kings, and he was already a dictator for life.
- One of Caesar's closest friends, Gaius Matius, indicated that he had given no real thought to any alternative form of government, even though he believed that the republic – which his opponents wanted restored – was finished.
- Plutarch wrote 'that what made Caesar most openly hated was his passion to be made king'.[40]

The question of whether Caesar wanted to be a king is not important: 'The fact was, whatever title Caesar took, he was not going to abandon his power.'[41] Gelzer also maintains that 'Caesar had only one unshakeable principle – that he would not let go of the power he had won'.[42]

ACTIVITY 9.12

1. Draw a diagram summarising the powers and honours Caesar was granted before he died. Make sure you distinguish between 'powers' and 'honours' in your diagram.
2. To what extent did Caesar have a flair for administration?
3. Debate whether Caesar planned to become king from the very beginning as suggested by Plutarch. (See comment box above.)

Caesar's assassination

In 44 BC, 60 senators formed a widespread conspiracy to assassinate Caesar. Many of these men had been ex-Pompeians pardoned by Caesar after the Battle of Pharsalus as part of his policy of *clementia*.

The instigator of the assassination plot was one of the *praetors*, Gaius Cassius Longinus, a stern, proud man who had come over to Caesar's side after Pharsalus, but who harboured hostility towards him.

However, the figurehead of the conspiracy was the intense Marcus Junius Brutus, whose mother had once been Caesar's lover and who also benefited from Caesar's clemency after Pharsalus. Brutus had served on Caesar's staff, even though he was married to the daughter of Caesar's enemy, the *optimate* leader Cato. If Brutus had been in any dilemma about the plot, he was won over by Cassius who exploited his obsession with his ancestors, Lucius Brutus and Servilius Ahala, both of whom had been responsible for freeing Rome of a hated king and tyrant.

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Another notable conspirator was Decimus Junius Brutus Albinus, who had been with Caesar all along and was even mentioned in his will. Cicero was not informed of the plot because the conspirators thought he would not be able to hold his tongue.

FIGURE 9.35 A Renaissance bust of Marcus Junius Brutus, one of the leaders of the assassination plot against Caesar

Motives for the assassination

There were a variety of motives guiding the individual conspirators. For example, some:

- resented Caesar's autocracy and excessive power and could not endure the possibility of a perpetual dictator ruling from the East
- could not abide his scorn of traditional precedent, such as admitting men of foreign birth to the Senate
- felt humiliated by his failure to stand when they came 'en masse' bearing a list of flattering decrees, even though he was in ill-health
- had personal grievances about being overlooked, not gaining the advancements they hoped for or that any future appointments depended on the whim of a single man
- were idealistic about the republic.

They all believed they stood for freedom, but they 'certainly miscalculated in the most disastrous way when they supposed that, once the deed was done, the Republic would automatically resuscitate itself and renew its ancient existence'.[43]

> The issue was not one of 'tyranny' versus 'democracy'. The freedom they wanted was the freedom to gain as much power as possible for themselves, the traditional ruling class of Rome, the *nobiles*, with their long lines of consuls, their ancient control of the senate. They had ideals but it would be wrong to think that they were necessarily, or even likely to be men who would solve Rome's economic or social problems. Look back over the past twenty years, and the history of the *optimates*' attitude to reform, and it is clear that the ordinary people of Rome were not going to assume that the death of the 'tyrant' was very good news for them.

SOURCE 9.25 L. R. Taylor, *Cicero and Rome*, p. 82

The manner of Caesar's death

The decision was taken to kill Caesar on the Ides of March (15th) when he was to announce details of his Parthian campaign, which would mean his absence from Rome for a considerable time. The conspirators surrounded him as if to pay their respects and Cimber took the lead by coming up close to Caesar as if to ask a question.

> Caesar made a gesture of postponement and Cimber caught hold of his shoulders. 'This is violence!' Caesar cried and ... as he turned away, one of the Casca brothers with a sweep of the dagger stabbed him just below the throat ... Confronted by a ring of drawn daggers, he drew the top of his gown over his face, and at the same time ungirded the lower part ... so that he could die with both legs decently covered. Twenty-three dagger thrusts went home as he stood there ... the entire Senate then dispersed in confusion, and Caesar was left lying dead for some time.

SOURCE 9.26 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 82

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Plutarch maintains that he fell down at the foot of Pompey's statue, 'so that one might have thought that Pompey himself was presiding over this act of vengeance against his enemy'.[44] Refer back to Figure 9.3.

FIGURE 9.36 *The Flight of the Conspirators*, by Jean Leon Jerome

The impact of his death

1 The assassins claimed the right of 'tyrannicide' or the killing of a tyrant, and Caesar's supporters were initially cautious.

2 Mark Antony, Caesar's colleague in the consulship, took the initiative, gained Caesar's documents and will from Calpurnia and called a meeting of the Senate at which a compromise was reached:
- an amnesty against the murders
- permission for those with provincial commands to take them up
- Caesar's laws to remain unchanged
- his will to be read in public
- his body to be buried with all the usual honours.

3 When Antony read the will, which included a bequest of 75 denarii to every member of the Roman plebs and the use of Caesar's gardens beyond the Tiber, 'a wave of deep affection for Caesar and powerful sense of loss swept over the people'.[45]

deified treated like a god or goddess

4 During Antony's funeral oration over the body of Caesar and the display of his blood-stained toga, with the gashes made by the daggers, the people 'almost lost control of their emotions'.[46] Serious rioting broke out and the conspirators fled the city.

5 In 42 BC, by a decree of the Senate, Julius Caesar was given the title *Divus Iulius*, or the Divine Julius, the first historical Roman to be officially **deified**.

6 Out of Caesar's death came the end of the republican party:
- with the death of Brutus and Cassius
- another civil war between Antony and Octavian (Caesar's heir)
- the rule of one man: the principate of Augustus (Octavian Caesar).

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ACTIVITY 9.13

1. Explain what motivated 60 senators to kill Caesar.
2. What is Taylor's view expressed in Source 9.25 about those who claimed to be saving the republic by their actions?
3. Research more about the assassination in Plutarch's *Caesar*, 6–67 and then use his and Suetonius' account to describe in your own words how the senators went about murdering Caesar.
4. Identify the impact of Caesar's death in the:
   - short term
   - long term?

FIGURE 9.37 A coin commemorating the Ides of March

9.4 Evaluation

Impact and influence on his time

Caesar:

- stood up to the dictator Sulla and incurred his opposition
- used his oratorical skills to make a name for himself in the courts
- gained financial support from the wealthiest man in Rome
- held the most prestigious sacred position of *pontifex maximus* for life
- brokered a famous and influential alliance with Pompey and Crassus to overcome *the optimates*' opposition; it was the breakdown of the Triumvirate that ultimately led to civil war
- set a standard for excellence during his extensive command in Gaul
- built up a loyal clientele in the provinces and retained the loyalty of his legions
- added more territory, people and resources to the Roman Empire by conquest
- plunged Rome into civil war
- embodied the idea of *clementia* in dealing with his enemies
- received more honours, titles and power than any other previous leader
- achieved deification after his death.

Assessment of his life and career

- Caesar was ambitious for political power, status and prestige (*dignitas*), as were all Roman nobles, but until his first consulship in 59, his career followed the standard military and political requirements of the *cursus honorum*. However, he did reveal that if he was forced into it, he was prepared to disregard constitutional restrictions to achieve his aims.
- From the time he supported Pompey's work in undermining the Sullan constitution until the Civil War, he was consistent in his support of popular measures and reforms. Even the legislation of his dictatorship was aimed at improving the conditions of the people of Rome and the empire, unlike Sulla's dictatorial legislation which aimed at restoring the power and prosperity of the ruling elite.
- He was a master of politics and understood and directed political trends with consummate skill.
- His practical good sense gave him a flair for administrative efficiency and he made and carried out decisions swiftly – often too quickly in the view of his opponents. Although he sometimes responded to opposition with extreme impatience, the evidence of his administration and legislation cannot be reconciled with the hostile tradition.

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- He was an outstanding soldier and military leader. Although he made mistakes, his own narrative and his achievements reveal that he had a brilliant grasp of strategy, tactics and engineering. More importantly, strong ties of respect and loyalty bound his men to him.
- Although he could be ruthless at times, Suetonius says 'he was not naturally vindictive'.[47] However, some of his campaigns in Gaul were marked by 'sickening brutalities'[48] as a means to intimidate the Gallic tribesmen. During the Civil War, he promoted clemency towards those Romans who fought against him and in fact promoted many of them. Unlike Sulla, he did not carry out any bloody **proscriptions** or confiscations.

proscription the act of announcing the name of a person as condemned to death and subject to confiscation of property

- He introduced a number of statesmanlike measures during his career, such as the extension of Roman citizenship.
- His enrolment of extra senators was interpreted by his opponents as stacking the body with 'yes' men and they ridiculed many of the new senators as 'trouser-wearing captives from Caesar's triumphs'.[49] The evidence suggests that those who were admitted were Romanised and of high social status. He could see that the increasing workload of governing an empire required more magistrates.
- He realised the old republican form of government was finished and made no attempts to hide his opinion, often behaving tactlessly. He either failed to realise, or did not care, that his autocratic power and behaviour gave offence to many leading Romans.
- Despite being in a position to exert patronage, such as when he recommended candidates for the years he was to be away in Parthia, the evidence does not suggest that he was intending to do away with the senatorial machinery. It is likely that he had not at that stage worked out any long-term solution for bringing about much-needed political stability.
- He had little interest in religion, although he made an efficient *pontifex maximus*. The only goddess he associated with was Venus, from whom he claimed the Caesars were descended. 'Religious scruples never deterred him for a moment.'[50]
- He was a highly intelligent and cultured man. Cicero 'confessed that he knew no more eloquent speaker than Caesar'[51] and he also admired his writing style: 'his memoirs are cleanly, directly and gracefully composed'.[52] Although there is a propaganda element in his Civil Wars, and his Gallic Wars are not without distortions with regard to motives, they are elegantly and clearly written.

Legacy

- Caesar left an empire much larger than when he first came to power. He added Gallia Comata and Africa Nova, and extended Further Spain and Cilicia. He settled trouble spots in Nearer Spain, Narbonese and Cisalpine Gaul, Bithynia-Pontus and Asia. He made the first invasion of Britain, something that was not attempted again until it became a Roman province under the Emperor Claudius.

> It was largely through his aggressions, atrocities and genocides that this multi-racial state [empire] became not only Mediterranean, but continental as well, the ancestor of what we know as Europe.

SOURCE 9.27 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 16

- Caesar's *Commentaries* on the Gallic and Civil Wars have provided historians with source material that might otherwise have not been available. '*The Gallic War* is our only direct source on the history and institutions of the Gauls in that period, and it is also the only narrative actually written by a great general in antiquity about his own campaigns.'[53]

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- He left the Senate with its additional members from Italy, the provinces and many walks of life, which was more reflective of the diversity within the Roman Empire.
- His body of legislation provided the social and political groundwork for the principate of Augustus.
- His achievements and failures provided an example for Augustus, who with a more conservative temperament realised that while establishing one-man rule, he had to be more sensitive to the needs of his peers in the nobility.
- The Julian calendar, with a few minor changes, is still in operation today. See Table 9.9 p.293.
- Generals such as Napoleon and Douglas MacArthur were admirers and imitators of Caesar in their own quest for glory and, thousands of years later, emperors adopted the name Caesar as a title: Czar and Kaiser.

FIGURE 9.38 The extent of the Roman Empire at the time of Caesar's death

Ancient and modern interpretations of Julius Caesar

Ancient views

Julius Caesar was a complicated and contradictory man and this is reflected in both the ancient and modern views of him, which range from a man determined from the beginning to be a king and who destroyed the republic, to the champion of the people and accomplished statesman.

It should be remembered that Caesar lived and died in the context of a Rome in chaos and that his contemporaries – some of Rome's most famous figures: Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Cicero, Cato and Antony – were just as ambitious as Caesar for supremacy and honour.

Many of these contemporaries were critical of his motives and actions. Some of their views may have been valid, but generally they reveal resentment and jealousy of his ambitious rise to power.

Most of the writers of the period were predominantly pro-conservative, like Cicero, who defended the republican institutions against authoritarian rule. He was generally hostile to Caesar, although he admired him for his writing, oratory and clemency. Sallust, on the other hand, was a supporter of Caesar and his work is valuable as one of the few that presents an anti-conservative viewpoint.

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Other near contemporaries – for example, the poets Catullus, Virgil (*Aeneid*) and Lucan (*Pharsalia*) – used Caesar in their epic poems, but they were not historians and used whichever facts suited their purpose.

Plutarch and Suetonius, who wrote in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, are major sources for the period, but the picture they present of Caesar must be treated with caution. Plutarch was a biographer, not a historian. See Evaluation of Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* on p. 303.

In his *The Twelve Caesars*, Suetonius reported everything like a series of anecdotes. He included material both for and against Caesar and rarely made any personal judgements. Suetonius' 'own opinions are rarely permitted to intrude',[54] and he makes little effort to make a decision about Caesar.

Interpretation of Caesar during the Middle Ages

Some notable writers during the Middle Ages – such as Shakespeare – used Caesar in their works. For example:

- Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century wrote a legendary account of Caesar's invasion of Britain in his *Histora Regum Britanniae.*
- Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* depicts Caesar in the section on 'Limbo', a place for the virtuous un-Christian.
- Jacques de Longuyon's *Voeux Du Paon* (14th century) included Caesar among those who in the Middle Ages were regarded as the nine 'Worthies', or those who personified the ideals of chivalry.
- Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Monk's Tale' in his *Canterbury Tales* recounts Caesar's civil war and assassination.

A COMMENT ON...

Shakespeare's tragedy, *Julius Caesar*

- Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was, according to Maria Wyke, Professor of Latin at the University College of London, written at a time when Elizabethan England was concerned over the succession. Their elderly queen had refused to name a successor and the people were anxious that civil war, like that in Rome, might break out in England.
- Shakespeare was not writing a history, but a play about historical personages to entertain the public, more specifically about the assassination of Caesar and the dilemma facing Brutus.
- He depicts Caesar as popular with the common people, but aiming to become king, so threatening the conspirators' cherished Roman republic.
- However, Shakespeare failed to understand the sense of personal *dignitas* of Roman nobles.
- He tried to address the question of Caesar's ambition in Mark Antony's famous funeral speech, giving examples of Caesar's qualities that did not indicate ambition.

18th–20th-century depictions and interpretations

Around the same time that James Boswell, Scottish diarist and author, called Caesar the greatest man of any age, Handel produced his opera, *Giulio Cesare*, and the Italian artist Vincenzo Camuccini painted his *Assassination of Caesar*, one of many paintings produced over the years depicting this dramatic event.

The views of many 19th- and 20th-century scholars reflect their own political and social context. For example:

- The 19th-century German historian Theodor Mommsen produced his famous *History of Rome* in three volumes in the mid 1850s. He is believed to have compared what was happening in Rome at the time

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of Caesar with the situation in Germany when he was writing. To him, the *populares* were a group rather like his own German Progressive Party and the Roman *optimates* resembled the Prussian Junkers [landed nobility], although he did 'recognize the lack of principle or program among the *populares*'.[55] He praised Caesar as the saviour of a decaying corrupt state: 'When a Government cannot govern, it ceases to be legitimate, and he who has the power to overthrow it has also the right.'[56] He saw Caesar as a 'heroic legislator' who laid the foundations of an empire that served the needs of all, writing '[W]e may well conclude that Caesar with his reforms came as near to the measure of what was possible as it was given to a statesman and a Roman to come'.[57]

- During the first half of the 20th century, after having experienced leaders such as Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini, the views of Caesar changed. J. P. V. D. Balsdon, an English ancient historian, in his work *Julius Caesar and Rome*, maintains that the leaders of the conspiracy against Caesar were idealists, who resented the arrogance of Caesar and knew that while ever he was alive, his autocracy would take a more stifling grip on Rome.
- In 1968, the German scholar, Mathias Gelzer, published *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*. The following quotes summarise his evaluation of Caesar.

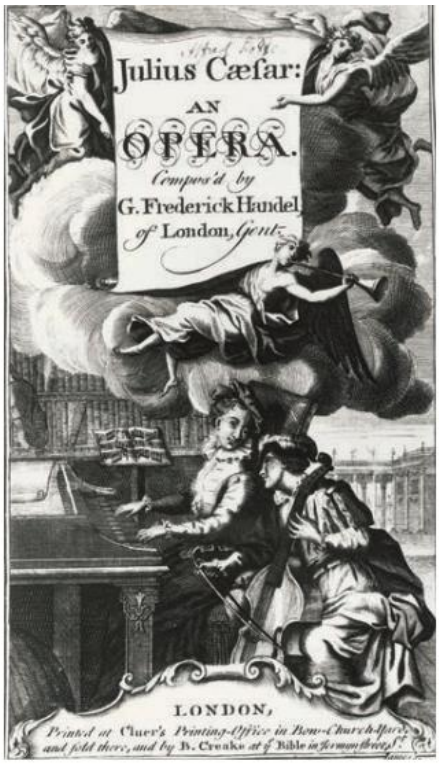

FIGURE 9.39 Title page of the opera *Julius Caesar* by George Frideric Handel

> What a tragedy lies over the life of the greatest genius produced by Rome – to be snuffed out by Romans who imagined that they were acting on behalf of their *res publica*! His demonic genius raised him in every respect above all his contemporaries – through his spiritual and physical vigour, through the faster tempo of his life, through his free-ranging gaze which, unfettered by traditional concepts, everywhere discovered new possibilities, and through the masterful way in which he overcame difficulties and realized the most daring plans. ... Although he had followers of lower rank, who served him with limitless admiration, and could count on his veterans, among his peers, he found no allies who saw in him more than the furtherer of their own selfish ambitions, none who, convinced of the necessity of his political work became willing pillars of his rule ... On his way to power he did not meet men who could impress him. He only saw selfishness and envy, and eventually emerged from a life of continuous and bitter conflict as a cynic who assessed all relationships only according to their political value ...

SOURCE 9.28 M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman*, pp. 329–31

- In the 1970s Michael Grant presented a more balanced evaluation of Caesar.

> He was an astute politician, a masterly propagandist and showman, a clever and effective administrator, an exceptionally gifted writer, a man of great and wide learning and taste, and a military genius who moved with terrifying speed and exercised a magnetic authority over his troops. He possessed extraordinary personal charm, and was so successful with women that his ancient biographers often attributed to him the morals of the farmyard. But this was

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not wholly accurate, since there was a calculating element in his sex life that applied even to the famous affair with Cleopatra … In the end, he wooed [his fellow Romans] in vain, since he became an autocrat they could no longer endure … circumstances drove him from minor illegalities to major ones, and before long nothing could save him from retribution except despotism which would place him forever beyond his enemies' reach.

SOURCE 9.29 M. Grant, *Julius Caesar*, p. 15

- In the 1990s, another German historian, Christian Meier, published a biography of Caesar in which – unlike many previous scholars – he attempted to show him within the context of the late Roman republic, the limitations imposed on him, and the social and political forces that shaped him. He believes that Caesar's unique drive, self-confidence and detachment were bound to bring him into conflict with established institutions.

Caesar in popular culture

Like most extraordinary personalities of the past, Caesar has been depicted in modern pop culture from theatre, film, documentaries and TV mini-series, to comics and video games.

The range of actors who have played Caesar on film from 1911 to 2005 is extensive, and each interpretation of the great man has been different.

In 2006, a fascinating book by Professor Maria Wyke was published called *Julius Caesar: A life in Western Culture*. It explores the significance of Julius Caesar to different periods, societies and people, and ranges over the fields of religious, military and political history, archaeology, architecture and urban planning, the visual arts, and literary, film, theatre and cultural studies.

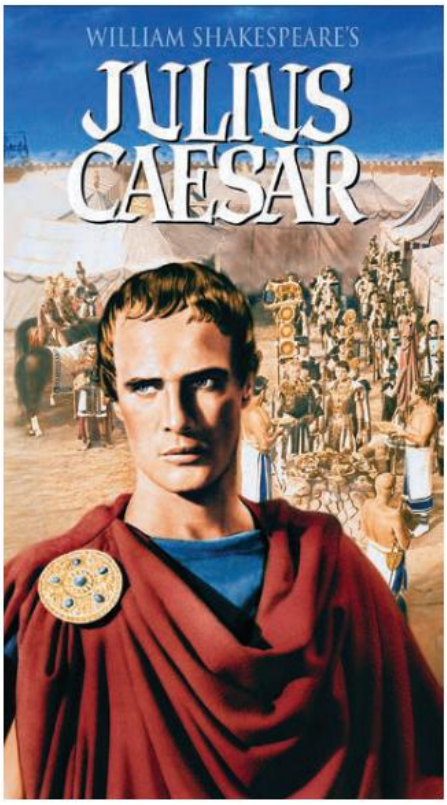

FIGURE 9.40 Movie poster for the 1953 film *Julius Caesar* starring Marlon Brando

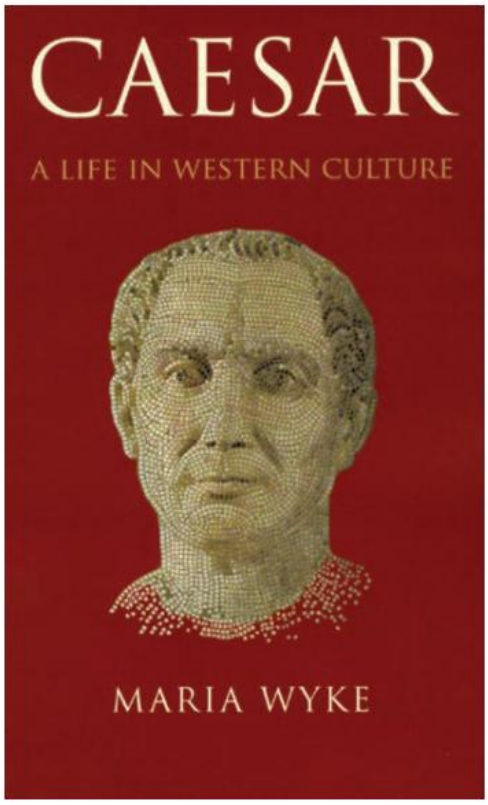

FIGURE 9.41 Cover of Professor Maria Wyke's *Julius Caesar: A life in Western Culture*

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ACTIVITY 9.14

1 Assess Caesar's achievements.
2 Explain how images of Caesar have changed over time.

9.5 The value and limitation of Plutarch's *Life of Caesar* as a source

Plutarch – who lived roughly 100 years after Caesar's death – was a Greek biographer who wrote a series of parallel *Lives* (of famous Greeks and Romans) in which he followed the usual ancient biographical format: birth, family, education, description of typical events, his legacy and influence. He linked Alexander the Great and Caesar together, although the comparisons are somewhat contrived. He shows how Julius Caesar's career, like Alexander's, 'rendered him vulnerable to the temptations that beset the holders of supreme power'.[58]

Plutarch 'was a collector of facts, far better at amassing evidence than sifting it.'[59] It is obvious that he used a wide range of sources, although not all are equally reliable. He used Caesar's own *Commentaries* for the Gallic Wars and Civil War, and sourced the works of Cicero, who was relatively hostile to Caesar. He either used or had access to some of the senatorial archives and public documents. Unfortunately, Plutarch 'accepts, rather uncritically, the aristocratic tradition'.[60]

We can get some idea, from his own words, of his approach to writing biographies.

> I do not record all their most celebrated achievements or describe any of them exhaustively, but merely summarise for the most part what they accomplished ... for I am writing biography, not history ... it is my task to dwell upon those actions which illuminate the workings of the soul, and by this means to create a portrait of each man's life. I leave the story of his greatest struggles and achievements to be told by others.

SOURCE 9.30 Plutarch, *Alexander*, 9.1

Since Caesar's career corresponded to a transformative 'period of perpetual struggle for power or for survival in the confused, corrupt and squalid world of Roman politics',[61] it is unlikely that we will get much reliable insight into the social and political context of his career from Plutarch, who indicates that he was not particularly interested in some of the following:

- the changing power politics of the 60s and 50s that influenced Caesar's actions
- that Caesar was concerned with finding men of influence who would help him progress up the ladder of office, which might mean changing alliances mid-career
- that like all elite Roman males, Caesar was ambitious to do well and his *dignitas* or prestige was all important to him
- that if he was ever to make a successful career for himself, Caesar had to take risks and improve his financial situation; Plutarch's constant references to Caesar's 'bribery' indicate he did not seem to understand that this was common among the political class
- that a politician/statesman is far more often faced with a conflict of opposing interests than with a straight choice between right and wrong.[62]

Plutarch preferred to attribute Caesar's various actions solely to his character or personality, to focus on a particular quality about him (excessive ambition and passion for glory) and then to make moral judgements about him. This approach led him to misinterpret much about Caesar.

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The most insidious feature of the work as a whole is the assumption, by no means peculiar to Plutarch, that Caesar had planned from the outset of his career to overthrow the republic and seize absolute power. There is nothing to be said for it.

SOURCE 9.31 Robin Seager, *Plutarch, Fall of the Roman Republic*, p. 243

- 'His main efforts were directed towards becoming the first power in the state'.[63]
- His 'influence had become too great for anything to be done about it and was plainly aimed directly at a complete revolution of the state.'[64]
- Cicero was 'the first to detect in everything Caesar planned or undertook in politics a purpose that was aiming at absolute power.'[65]
- 'Spent money recklessly to buy himself the greatest place in the world.'[66]
- Wished to make the *populares* party 'his own.'[67]
- A 'sign that he was aiming at securing supreme power in the state for himself.'[68]
- 'Your artillery is planted in the open and it is there for the capture of the state.'[69]
- 'The people, they said, would be glad to see him triumph over everyone to be the first man in the state.'[70]
- 'Would lead the people forward in a course of violent extremism.'[71]
- 'So greatly was he suspected of planning to seize power for himself.'[72]
- His perpetual dictatorship was 'undisguised tyranny; his power was now not only absolute but perpetual'.[73]
- 'But what made Caesar most openly and mortally hated was his passion to be made king.'[74]
- '… as for the supreme power which he had pursued during the whole course of his life …'[75]

Despite Plutarch's work being unreliable with regard to the political context of Caesar's career, and the fact that he uncritically followed the conservative line about Caesar (Cicero, Cato and the *optimates*), he:

- shows a depth of insight into human nature
- provides details on dramatic incidents in Caesar's life such as:
  - his capture by the pirates
  - the Bona Dea scandal when Clodius dressed as a woman and infiltrated an all-woman religious rite supervised by Caesar's wife
  - the death of Julia, Caesar's daughter
  - the surrender of Vercingetorix
  - strange signs, omens and prodigies, prophecies from soothsayers and oracles, dreams and apparitions
  - the dramatic moments at the Rubicon (although not mentioned in Caesar's own work)
  - Caesar's assignation with Cleopatra
  - the assassination – the most dramatic of all events
- gives positive examples of Caesar's humanity and clemency, the devotion of his army and his generalship.

The value and limitation of Plutarch's *Caesar* depends on what exactly we are looking for. For example, if we want to know some of the details of Caesar's personal life, and some aspects of his personality, then his biography is helpful, as is Suetonius' *Julius Caesar* which is full of fascinating, though often scandalous, detail. Suetonius 'has a welcome absence of subjective bias',[76] and tends to give a number of views of an event such as the crossing of the Rubicon, without giving his own opinion.

However, if we are looking for information about Caesar's place in terms of the major political events of his day, then Plutarch is not generally a reliable source. Other sources need to be consulted, such as Cicero's huge collection of letters to friends (700) which 'represent the nearest approach to a connected history of the period' and from which Cicero's relationship with Caesar can be discerned. His 58 surviving speeches and treatises add many other features to an understanding of political events of Caesar's time.

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Sallust, an anti-conservative writer whose intention, in his monograph called *The War of Cataline,* was to pillory what he regarded as the degenerate nobles, contrasts Caesar (*populares*) and Cato (*optimate*) both as imposing characters.

A significant non-literary source for an understanding of Caesar's constitutional position and aims in the last years of his life are a series of coins minted not long before his death. It was not until 44 BC that Caesar's portrait first appeared on coins. It is unclear if the use of his portrait before his death was sanctioned by the state, but it was a visual depiction of the power he wielded at the time.

ACTIVITY 9.15

Draw up a two-columned chart showing the strengths and weaknesses of Plutarch for a study of Caesar.

FIGURE 9.42 Julius Caesar as dictator of Rome, wearing the laurel crown

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

9.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- By Caesar's time, Rome had control of an empire from Spain to Asia that provided resources, slaves and auxiliaries for the armies.
- Society was divided into three classes: senatorial, equestrian and plebs. The Senate, traditionally only an advisory body, was effectively, in control of the state. Those wishing to follow a political career had to climb the established ladder of office (*cursus honorum*). Two of these offices had *imperium* (right to command).
- During Caesar's childhood his uncle by marriage, Marius, introduced military reforms that transferred loyalty of the legions to their general rather than the state, and two factions emerged in Roman politics: *optimates* and *populares*, which impacted the career of Caesar.

9.2 BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE

- Caesar, born in 100 BC, belonged to the patrician Julian clan (on his father's side) that had declined in power and wealth over time, but due to their association with Marius (seven times consul) the family became more influential: Caesar's father became governor of the province of Asia. Aurelia, Caesar's mother, came from the influential and wealthy Cotta family. She was highly regarded for her intelligence, common sense and beauty, and influenced Caesar's youth. Caesar lost his father when he was 15 and needed to start finding a network of supporters. These included Cornelius Cinna (a *populares* associate of Marius, the leading man in Rome and Caesar became engaged to Cinna's daughter). This led Cinna's opponent, Sulla, to become an opponent of young Caesar and he fled to the East to join the staff of the governor of Asia. While in the East, Caesar studied rhetoric, which allowed him to serve a political apprenticeship in the law courts when he returned to Rome, which gained him popularity.
- At the minimum age he became *quaestor* and for the next 10 years followed the *cursus honorum*. During this time he built up a body of provincial clients, made money to repay his debts to Crassus, and gained a reputation for his military successes and provincial administration. His next step was the consulship but his ambitions were thwarted by the *optimates* in the senate, led by Cato.

9.3 KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CAREER OF CAESAR

- According to the Senate, three men now appeared to threaten the state: Pompey, Crassus and Caesar. Due to their frustrated needs, the three formed a powerful Triumvirate. With their help, Caesar became Consul in 59 but he knew that due to the opposition of the *optimates*, he would have to resort to illegal acts to meet his obligations to Pompey and Crassus and to secure a pro-consular appointment for himself that would provide military opportunities. Before he went to Gaul, to which he was appointed for five years, he secured his position in Rome by removing his opponents (Cato and Cicero sent into exile) and marrying his daughter Julia to Pompey. However, while he was away in his province, cracks appeared in the Triumvirate, then Crassus was killed at Carrhae, Julia died and Pompey's jealousy of Caesar's Gallic successes meant he moved towards the *optimates*.
- Caesar's Gallic Wars (58–50) gave him military prestige, more provincial clients, wealth to buy more political support and the dedication of his legions. Rome acquired territory as large as Italy and vast resources.

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- The hard-liners in the Senate, determined to destroy Caesar's career, tried forcing him back to Rome where (without the protection of *imperium*) they intended to prosecute him for his previous illegal acts. A struggle between Caesar and the *optimates* began while he was still in Gaul and the only way to solve the impasse was by war. A minority 'pushed' Caesar into moving into Italy with his army and led to a Mediterranean-wide Civil War between 49–44 between the forces of Caesar and the senate led by Pompey. Between his various military successes at Pharselus, Thapsus and Munda, and the death of Pompey, Caesar returned to Rome where he was honoured with excessive powers (consecutive consulships and dictatorships for 11 days, one year, 10 years and for life) and initiated a reform and building program (that covered such things as the franchise, colonisation, administration of Italy and the provinces, finances, changes to the Senate and the magistrates, army, public works, the law, the calendar and other miscellaneous improvements).
- Caesar's opponents included the *optimates* and individuals such as Cato, Bibulus, Metellus Scipio, Brutus and Cassius, as well as Pompey and Cicero from time to time. His supporters included the equestrians, the Roman people, Caesar's legionaries and veterans, as well as Crassus, Clodius, Curio and Mark Antony.
- Caesar's personality traits contributed to his achievements and to his assassination.
- His assassination in 44 by 60 senators in the Senate house was motivated by those who believed he had too much power, was arrogant and wanted to make himself king, those who had individual grievances and those who were idealistic about the republic.

9.4 EVALUATION

- The impact Caesar had on his own time can be seen in his actions in the law courts, his open support of the *populares*, his brokerage of the Triumvirate, his illegal acts to thwart the *optimate* opposition, his extensive and successful command in Gaul, his body of provincial clients and devotion of his legions, his part in the outbreak of the Civil War, his reforms and his assassination.
- Assessment of his life and career: ambitious for political power, prepared to resort to illegality to get what he wanted, prepared to take risks, understood (and used) political trends, had a flair for administrative efficiency, aimed to improve the welfare of the people, ruthless at times, often utilised *clementia*, realised the republic was finished but was tactless and arrogant in his beliefs about this, highly intelligent and cultured.
- Legacy: an expanded empire, a more diverse senate, a body of legislation that his successors could build on, a new calendar, and he set the precedent for the one-man rule of Augustus and imperial Rome.
- Julius Caesar was a complicated man and this is reflected in the ancient and modern interpretations of him.

9.5 THE VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF PLUTARCH'S LIFE OF CAESAR AS A SOURCE

- Plutarch, by his own admission, was not interested in the social and political context of Caesar's career, preferring to attribute his various actions solely to his character or personality, to focus on a particular quality about him (excessive ambition and passion for glory) and then to make moral judgments about him. This approach led him to misinterpret much about Caesar.
- However, he does show a depth of insight into human nature and provides details on some of the dramatic incidents in Caesar's life.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- consuls
- deified
- franchise
- *imperator*
- *imperium*
- lictors
- *nobiles*
- oligarchy
- *optimates*
- *populares*
- *potestas*
- principate
- proscriptions
- rhetoric
- sacrosanct
- triumph

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) List the changes in the status of Caesar from 69–44 BC.

2) Identify the causes for the breakdown in the Triumvirate.

3) Explain the significance of each of the following in the early career of Julius Caesar:
- the 'Marians'
- the study of rhetoric
- the quaestorship (69) and aedileship (65)
- the position of *pontifex maximus*
- the pro-praetor governorship of Farther Spain.

4) What is the perspective of Caesar expressed in each of the following quotes:
- 'there are many Mariuses in this fellow Caesar'. (Sulla)
- 'He spent money recklessly and many people thought he was purchasing a moment's brief fame at an enormous price, whereas, in reality, he was buying the greatest place in the world at inconsiderable expense.' (Plutarch)
- 'These soldiers who in other campaigns had not shown themselves to be any better than average became irresistible and invincible and ready to confront any danger if it was a question of fighting for Caesar's honour and glory'. (Plutarch)
- 'If I don't cross this river, it will be the start of much distress for me: if I cross it there will be much distress for everyone'. These words put an end to his doubts and he crossed over crying out as he did so, '*Alea iacta est*' (The die is cast)'. (Appian)
- 'Not only did he accept extensive honours … but took other honours which as a mere mortal, he should have refused.' (Suetonius)

Historical skills

1) To what extent did Caesar's early political career follow the traditional path for an aspiring politician?

2) In what ways did the formation of the Triumvirate signal future problems for Caesar and Pompey?

3) Evaluate the responsibility for the Civil War of 49–44.

4) Explain the reasons for Caesar's assassination.

5) Assess Julius Caesar's
- reforms
- military leadership.

6) Explain Caesar's impact during his own time and his legacy for the future.

7) Discuss the reliability of Plutarch as a source on Julius Caesar.

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FIGURE 9.43 *The Death of Julius Caesar* by Tancredi Scarpelli (1866–1937)

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CHAPTER 10
Agrippina the Younger

FIGURE 10.1 Statue of Agrippina the Younger

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FIGURE 10.2 The Roman Empire when Agrippina was born

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Agrippina the Younger through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The historical context • Agrippina's background and rise to prominence • Key features and developments of Agrippina's life and career • Evaluation • The value and limitations of visual sources in understanding Agrippina

The Roman imperial system was unfair to a woman like Agrippina whose talents and energies were such that she would have achieved high office, quite likely the principate itself, had she been a man.

SOURCE 10.1 Anthony Barrett, *Agrippina the Younger*, p. xiii–iv

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 10.3 The Gemma Claudia, a 12-centimetre-high onyx and gold cameo featuring two Julio-Claudian couples: the Emperor Claudius and his new wife Agrippina the Younger depicted as Cybele, goddess of fertility; and the parents of Agrippina, Agrippina the Elder and Germanicus, the brother of Claudius

Look carefully at the image in Figure 10.3, note carefully what you see and consider the following questions. What do you think might be the symbolism behind this cameo? When do you think it might have been made and for what purpose?

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CHAPTER 10 Overview

KEY IDEA

The career of Agrippina the Younger, an intelligent, shrewd and ambitious woman with a distinguished lineage, must be considered within the context of the imperial household with all its intrigues and self-seeking, and of a society when women like her, who aimed at political power, had no choice but to work through the agencies of male relatives, clients and a host of other male allies. Due to her manipulative and often ruthless methods to get rid of opponents, she managed to gain power during the reign of Claudius, making some positive contributions, and she secured the principate for her son, Nero. However, she suffered the same fate she had inflicted on many others and the ancient sources were uniformly hostile to her.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

In our modern society with the constant raising of female issues, it might be worth considering an ancient woman who believed she was entitled to share political power with a man, took each opportunity as it presented itself, used the only methods available to an ambitious woman of her day and achieved her aims despite opposition. It is almost impossible to imagine Agrippina the Younger complaining about being a victim or not taking responsibility for her actions.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- Augusta
- *carpentum*
- cenotaph
- *clientela*
- cornucopia
- deification
- emancipation
- *imperium*
- legate
- lictors
- manumitted
- mausoleum
- obverse
- Praetorian Guard
- *princeps iuventutis*
- principate
- proscriptions
- Romanisation
- sacrosanctity
- *salutatio*
- sesterces
- *toga virilis*

INQUIRY QUESTION

How significant was Agrippina's lineage to her career?

Painting the picture

Agrippina the Younger was a member of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty that followed Augustus after his death in 14 AD. These rulers, Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius and Nero, were either the descendants of Augustus – referred to as Julians – or the descendants of Augustus' wife, Livia and her first husband Tiberius Claudius Nero, who were Claudians. Agrippina was the great granddaughter of Augustus, and was the sister, wife and mother of Roman emperors. She became the most influential and powerful woman of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty.

In her own right, she was an intelligent, energetic and ambitious woman who exploited her direct blood lineage to Augustus. She lived at a time when the imperial court was constantly beset by intrigue and violence, most of which was related to questions of the succession in which imperial women, including Agrippina herself, were involved, often helped by the Praetorian Guard and the powerful and wealthy imperial freedmen (ex-slaves).

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FIGURE 10.4 A bust of Agrippina the Younger

She grew up in a toxic environment after the death of her father, as her mother became the enemy of the Emperor Tiberius; she was married at 13, producing a son (the future Nero); was honoured by her brother, the Emperor Gaius/Caligula, and then exiled by him for being involved in a plan to overthrow him. She was a consummate schemer and an expert manipulator in order to gain the throne for her son and power for herself. This she achieved when the notorious third wife of her uncle (the Emperor Claudius) was executed, and Agrippina took her place.

She enjoyed great political power and influence during Claudius' reign, and should be credited with bringing efficiency and stability to his later years. She was at the peak of her power in the early years of her adolescent son's reign, until she had a falling out with Nero and his advisers for failure to relinquish power and allow him to reign without interference. Eventually she was brutally murdered on his instigation, and it seems as if there were few who mourned her death.

She was treated harshly by the ancient sources who were 'blinded by the evils of female ambition',[1] and many modern scholars have likewise focused on her more negative image rather than on her achievements.

TABLE 10.1 Timeline of Agrippina's life

14 AD	Death of Augustus
15	Birth of Agrippina the Younger
17	Germanicus' triumph and departure to the East
19	Death of Germanicus and the return of his ashes
26	Clash between Agrippina the Elder and Tiberius
28	Marriage of the 13-year-old Agrippina the Younger to Domitius Ahenobarbus
29	Death of Livia, and exile of Agrippina the Elder and her son
33	Death of Agrippina the Elder
37	Death of Tiberius and accession of Caligula and birth of Nero
39	Agrippina and Livilla exiled by Caligula
40	Death of Domitius
41	Assassination of Caligula and the accession of Claudius; recall of Agrippina and Livilla from exile; Agrippina marries her second husband
49	Marriage of Claudius and Agrippina and recall of Seneca from exile
50	Agrippina given the title of 'Augusta' ('partner in power'); adoption of Nero by Claudius and the foundation of a colony at Agrippina's birthplace in Germany that is called after her
51	Manhood ceremony of Nero and appointment of Burrus as praetorian prefect
53	Marriage of Nero and Octavia
54	Death of Claudius and accession of Nero, death of Narcissus, and Agrippina's power begins to wane
55	Clash between Nero and Agrippina over Acte, removal of Pallas, death of Britannicus and expulsion of Agrippina from the palace
59	Murder of Agrippina on the instigation of Nero

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10.1 Historical context

By the time of Agrippina's birth, the territory of the Roman Empire (see Figure 10.2) extended from Gaul and Spain in the west, to Syria and Asia in the west, and from the Danube and Rhine Rivers in the North, to Egypt and the coast of North Africa in the South. The empire had been largely pacified, consolidated and its boundaries set, where possible, at defensible sites such as the Danube, Rhine and Elbe Rivers. The frontiers of most concern at this time were in the north where German tribes and other 'barbarians' threatened Gaul and Italy.

The extent of the empire meant that Rome benefited from an enormous influx of resources, including the following:

- gold, silver and precious stones such as emeralds
- copper, tin, iron and lead
- marble and timber
- grain, oil, wool, hides, fish and horses
- linen, textiles, papyrus, purple dye, pottery and glass.

Also, they received products from trade beyond the empire such as:

- silk and hemp
- amber and ivory
- frankincense and other perfumes
- wild animals and ostriches
- bitumen and silphium (a medicinal herb).

An overview of Roman social and political structures

Agrippina the Younger's great grandfather, Augustus, who died one year before her birth, made major changes in the Roman political/social scene. Although the social groups remained basically the same, Augustus introduced reforms that changed their roles and influence.

principate a form of government led by a princeps or 'first man/citizen'. The term was used to describe Roman rulers from the time of Augustus

The principate

After defeating Mark Antony in a civil war for control of the Roman world, Augustus – the former Octavian (heir to Julius Caesar) – established a new form of government.

Augustus believed that the safety and wellbeing of Rome and its empire depended on him, as the previous form of government (dominated by the Senate) had failed in preventing ambitious commanders – including himself – from plunging the state into civil war. He saw the only way to achieve this was to keep control of the armed forces himself. However, unlike Julius Caesar, he was conservative. He preferred constitutional government, and wanted to avoid any hostility with his peers and the fate of Caesar (assassination). He needed a new form of government that would address these issues. The solution he came up with was referred to as the **principate**, where he, as the leading man in the state (princeps), supposedly shared responsibilities for running the empire with the leading classes, while still holding control of the military. For four decades, he maintained peace and prosperity throughout the empire by his power, authority, popularity, propaganda and reforms.

FIGURE 10.5 A statue of Augustus

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A COMMENT ON...

Princeps or emperor?

- Although the principate was not hereditary, Augustus hoped that a Julian (direct descendant of himself as the 'son' of Julius Caesar) would succeed him, but it was his adopted son, Tiberius (a Claudian) who eventually became princeps when Augustus died in 14 AD.
- Although his successors, the Julio-Claudians, were not called 'emperor' in their own day, most modern sources refer to them in this way, and in this study princeps and emperor are used synonymously.

Roman social structure

Table 10.2 summarises the socio/political classes at the time of Agrippina the Younger.

TABLE 10.2 Social classes at the time of Agrippina

The senatorial class	• This elite group of senators over time dominated the political scene, but Augustus reformed the situation so that he, as *princeps*, shared power with the Senate. However, throughout the Julio-Claudian period, senators became increasingly subservient and the Senate declined in power as more and more of its members were eliminated through treason and conspiracy trials.
The equestrian class (*equites*)	• The members of this class were, by the late republic, Rome's businessmen, bankers and tax agents in the provinces. Augustus found positions for *equites* in his new regime by creating new posts which had never been part of the republican government.
Plebs (both urban and rural)	• The urban 'mob' who lived in overcrowded Rome had to be kept fed, entertained and bribed: first, by those wishing to seek higher office, and then by the various Julio-Claudian emperors.
Freedmen (*libertini*)	• Freedmen and women were former slaves freed (**manumitted**) by their masters. Although Augustus tried to limit their numbers, the proportion of freedmen to free-born was rather high in Rome. Under Augustus, and more so under the Julio-Claudians, some freedmen became extremely wealthy and successful. Those who were part of Augustus' household and the Julio-Claudians' personal freedmen (*liberti Caesaris*) were used to manage their private affairs and finances.
Slaves	• Slavery was the pillar of Roman society and slaves worked in all areas of the Roman economy. The imperial household was the greatest employer of slaves, who were known as *familia Caesaris*. Livia, the wife of Augustus, was by far the largest owner of slaves, estimated to be about 90.

manumitted refers to the freeing of a slave

The Praetorian Guard

Praetorian Guard an elite body of troops within the army that helped protect the city of Rome, the princeps and the imperial household

The **Praetorian Guard** became a vital force in the power politics of Rome during the time of the Julio-Claudians and the career of Agrippina the Younger.

Because Augustus realised that he needed to have a protective force in Rome and Italy, he formed the Praetorian Guard, composed of nine cohorts (500, and later 1000, men in each). However, as he wanted to uphold the republican image of the

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principate, he allowed only three cohorts to be on duty in the capital at any one time. While they patrolled the palace and major buildings, the other six cohorts were stationed in surrounding towns. At the time of Augustus' successor, Tiberius, the number of cohorts was increased to 12, each with 1000 men, and in 23 AD, further changes occurred: the whole Guard were housed as a single unit in a camp – the *Castra Praetoria* in the northeastern suburbs of Rome. The Guard became notorious for its intrigue and interference in imperial politics during the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius and Nero, often contributing to their overthrow and appointment of their successors.

FIGURE 10.6 A relief depicting the Praetorian Guard

Upper-class women in Roman society

During the reign of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians, upper-class and imperial women were more **emancipated** than they had been previously, and many were wealthy in their own right.

They were:

- permitted to own and leave their property to whomever they wished
- able to carry out legal transactions without the guidance of a male relative if – under Augustus' law – they had at least three children
- allowed to own businesses and slaves. Some invested funds in brick factories and shipping corporations, and loaned money to their peers.

emancipated not constrained or restricted by custom or tradition

However, they were still expected to perpetuate the ideal of the virtuous, loyal, industrious wife and devoted mother under the control of the male head of the family.

No matter what a woman's status, she was expected to marry – usually at a very young age and based on political or economic considerations – have children and manage a household (even if she had numerous slaves). All women, including members of the emperor's household, were involved in some form of wool/textile working, which was a major contributor to the economy.

Augustus, who wanted the sophisticated women of his household to respect the old-fashioned virtues, set them to work on wool.

> On all special occasions, he wore house clothes woven and sewn for him by either Livia [his wife], Octavia [his sister], Julia [his daughter], or one of his grand-daughters.

SOURCE 10.2 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Augustus*, 73

In Rome, women from the socially prestigious families were politically aware, but due to the fact they had no direct role in government, they were forced to resort to what Ronald Syme describes as 'the real or secret power'. This involved exerting influence behind the scenes, either through their husbands or sons, through the status of other family members even though deceased, and /or by private liaisons (often sexual, monetary negotiations and privileges), as in the case of many of the Julio-Claudian women. Livia, the wife of Augustus, worked tirelessly on behalf of her husband behind the scenes, had her own political clients and pushed many proteges into political offices, while still retaining the appearance of a traditional wife.

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The only formal involvement of elite women in public affairs was limited to religious cult activities, particularly those that involved the worship of powerful goddesses and allowed some form of ecstatic experience. Some women held high religious positions as priestesses, such as the Vestal Virgins, who maintained the sacred fire of the Vesta, the goddess of the hearth. These women, chosen from prominent families as children, spent 30 years as a Vestal and although their lives were severely regulated, they were free from the restrictions of ordinary women. They had certain privileges and they were protected from any form of violence (sacrosanct).

From the time of Augustus, the women of the imperial household were permitted the privileges and sacrosanctity of the Vestals.

A COMMENT ON...

The ancient sources on upper-class women

- The majority of women were ignored by the male elite who wrote histories and biographies, and when we are offered something about notable women, it is usually written through the filters of gender bias and specific personal or political agendas. In some sources, women are often described in fictitious or overly dramatic anecdotes to add colour to their writing.
- The ancient sources appear to have been obsessed with preconceived stereotypes, particularly of politically ambitious women and the fear of what such women would do. They saw the elevation of women 'as an inversion of the natural order'[2] with the general belief that given a chance, women become 'impervious to the kinds of restraint that kept men within the bounds of decency'.
- Where women are mentioned, the information often seems to be added as an afterthought, in the context of the actions of significant men.
- It is difficult to tell from the sources on Roman imperial women just how real the influence of individuals like Livia, Agrippina the Elder and Agrippina the Younger was.

FIGURE 10.7 Fresco of an upper-class woman from the 1st century AD

ACTIVITY 10.1

1 Consider the following background facts:
   - the size of the empire at the time of Agrippina the Younger, and its impact on the army, provincial affairs, the Roman economy and imperial family
   - the form of government Agrippina's great grandfather, Augustus, instituted and the effect of the *pax Romana* (Roman peace) he established
   - the role played by freedmen in the imperial household

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- the significance of the Praetorian Guard in the lives of the Julio-Claudians
- the increasing servility of senators
- the relative emancipation of upper-class Roman women.

2 What were the ideals upper-class women were expected to exhibit?

3 What does Ronald Syme say about the only way a woman could exert political influence in the early imperial period?

4 What is the main problem in trying to understand women in the ancient world? How were women in Agrippina's day generally depicted in the sources?

10.2 Agrippina's background and rise to prominence

Family background and status

Agrippina the Younger was descended from two noble and influential clans (*gens*):

1 the Julii

2 the Claudii.

Despite the fact that she made much of her Julian lineage through her mother Agrippina the Elder to Augustus, it was the proud and ancient Claudian side of the family, through her father Germanicus, her grandfather Drusus and back to her great grandmother, Livia, that had had a longer history of distinction in Roman politics.

> It is clear, that she [Livia] was in many respects Augustus' mental equal, if not his superior, and it is hardly surprising that he sought her advice and counsel in affairs of state, and even prepared written memoranda of topics to discuss with her in private.

SOURCE 10.3 Anthony A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power, and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 15

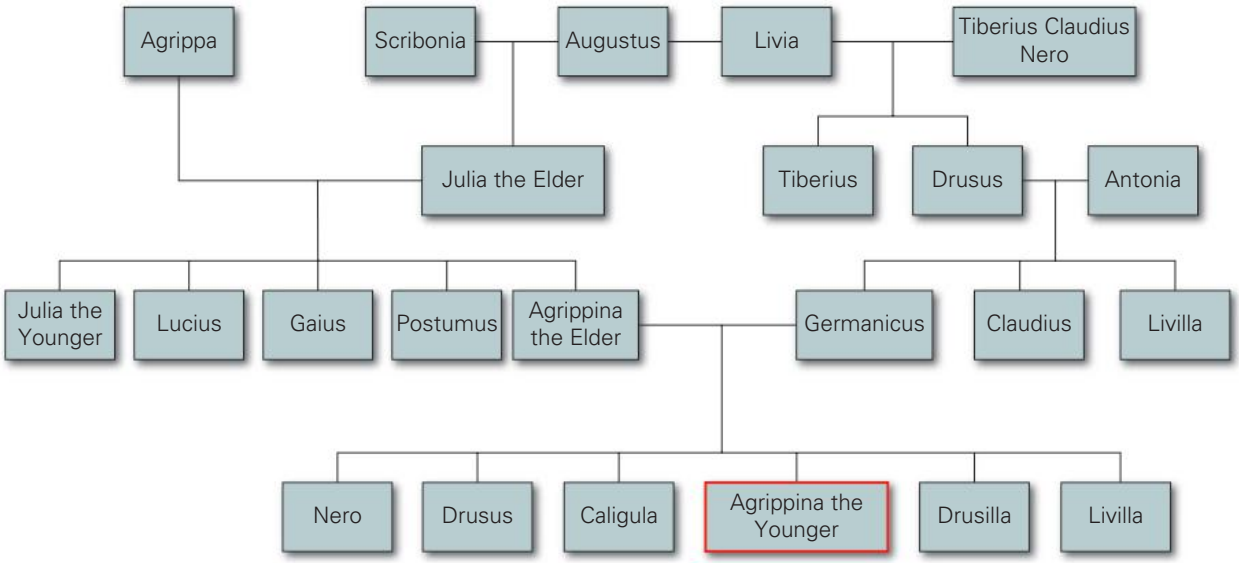

FIGURE 10.8 Diagram of Agrippina the Younger's lineage

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TABLE 10.3 Agrippina, the Younger's notable female predecessors

Livia	• Agrippina the Younger's great-grandmother, Livia, had been married to her cousin, Tiberius Claudius Nero (from the Claudii) to whom she had her first son, Tiberius, at 16. She was 19, and pregnant with her second son, Drusus, when Augustus (named Octavian at that time) fell in love with her and ordered Claudius Nero to divorce her. Augustus already had a daughter, Julia, from his previous wife Scribonia, but his union with Livia produced no children.
	• Livia was a devoted wife to Augustus, who relied on her intelligence. In public, she was an example of the dignity her husband expected; however, she had 'an influence over affairs of state to a degree unprecedented for a woman'.[3] • She was wealthy, owned widespread properties, had her own clients, commissioned public buildings in her name and was granted many honours by Augustus, such as devoted public statues, and was given the reverential title of 'Augusta' when her husband died. • However, Tacitus treats Livia harshly, describing her as an obsessive mother and a ruthless manipulator plotting the deaths of those who got in the way of the succession of her son Tiberius. Tacitus also says that when Tiberius became emperor (the first of the Julio-Claudians), he resented her interference in affairs of state. There is a similar pattern in Tacitus' description of Agrippina the Younger and her son Nero.
Antonia Minor	• Antonia Minor was a daughter, niece, sister-in-law, wife, mother and grandmother of powerful Roman men. • She was the daughter of Augustus' sister, Octavia, and Mark Antony. • She married Livia's younger son, Drusus, a popular commander and brother of the Emperor Tiberius. • Drusus died prematurely from a fall from a horse, and Antonia, who never married again, brought up her three children alone: Claudius (later emperor), Livilla and Germanicus (Agrippina's father). • She was the paternal grandmother of the Emperor Caligula and Agrippina the Younger, as well as both maternal great-grandmother and paternal great-aunt of the Emperor Nero. • She owned properties in Italy, Greece and Egypt and as a wealthy and powerful woman, she often entertained influential men who were visiting Rome.
Julia the Elder	• Augustus used his only natural child, Julia (by Scribonia his first wife), as a political pawn to ensure a Julian succession. • She was Agrippina the Younger's other grandmother, and appears to have been 'highly intelligent, well-read and knowledgeable with a penchant for lively and witty company',[4] but her high spiritedness and provocative behaviour did not go down well with her father Augustus. • Although she provided Agrippa with three sons and two daughters, she is accused in the sources of being involved in all kinds of immorality. • Eventually Augustus, in disgust, exiled her from Rome for the remainder of her life. • She was prohibited in her father's will from being allowed into his **mausoleum** after her death. Anthony Barrett suggests there may have been more to the treatment of Julia than just her immorality: 'An amorous entanglement with a ruler's daughter must always involve a mixture of both erotic attraction and political ambition.'[5]

mausoleum a free-standing monument enclosing the burial chamber of a deceased person or group of people

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... In bringing up his daughter and his granddaughters he forbade them to say or do anything except openly and such as might be recorded in the household diary. He was most strict in keeping them from meeting strangers, once writing to Lucius Vinicius, a young man of good position and character: 'You have acted presumptuously in coming to Baiae to call on my daughter. ... But at the height of his happiness and his confidence in his family and its training, Fortune proved fickle. He found the two Julias, his daughter and granddaughter, guilty of every form of vice, and banished them ... he informed the senate of his daughter's fall through a letter read in his absence by a quaestor, and for very shame would meet no one for a long time, and even thought of putting her to death ... After Julia was banished, he denied her the use of wine and every form of luxury, and would not allow any man, bond or free, to come near her without his permission ... it was not until five years later that he moved her from the island to the mainland but he could not by any means be prevailed on to recall her altogether, and when the Roman people several times interceded for her and urgently pressed their suit, he in open assembly called upon the gods to curse them with like daughters and like wives ... at every mention of the Julias, he would sigh deeply and even cry out: 'Would that I had never been married and would that I had died without offspring.'

SOURCE 10.4 The treatment by Augustus of his only offspring, Julia the Elder, in Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 63–65

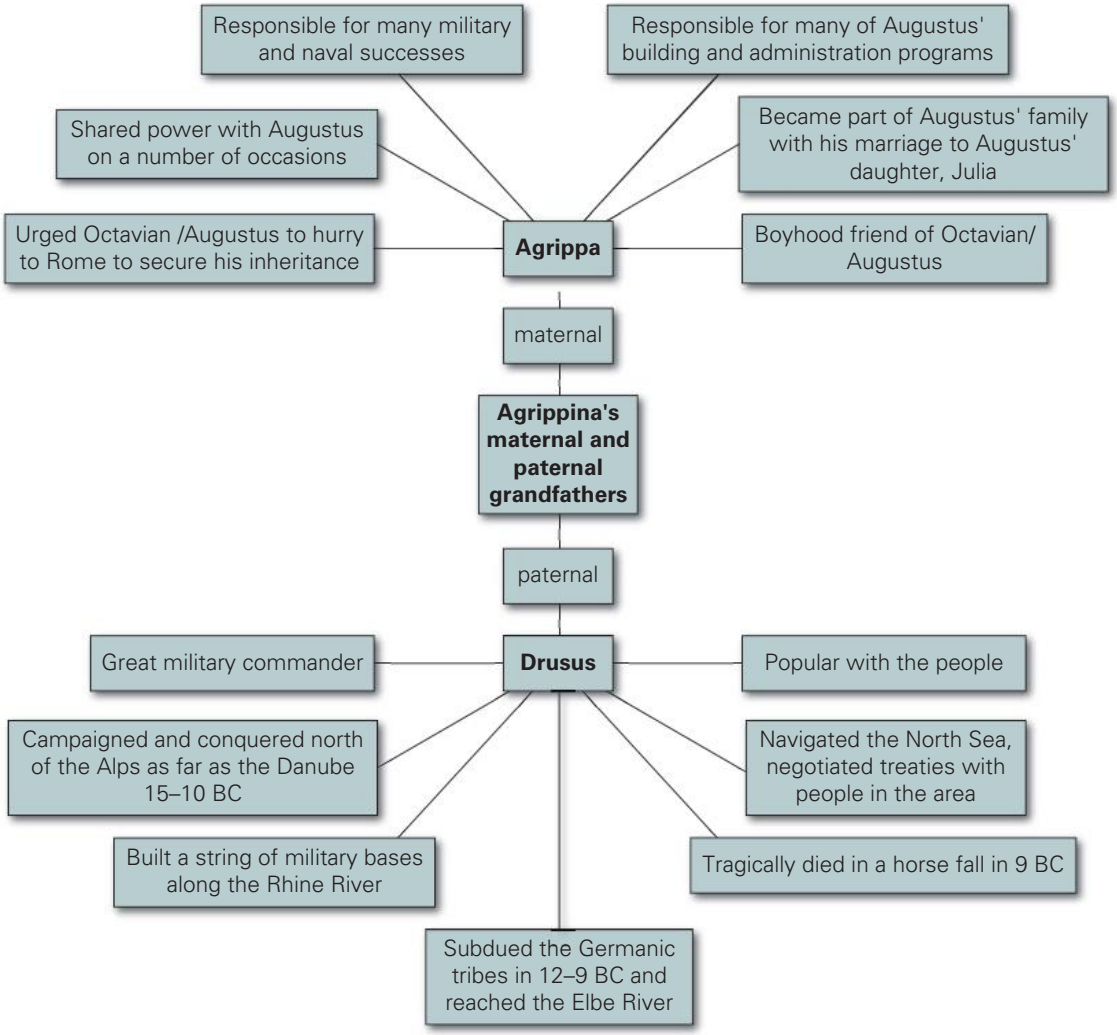

FIGURE 10.9 Diagram of Agrippina the Younger's maternal and paternal grandfathers

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Parents

Germanicus

Agrippina the Younger's father, Germanicus, was a military commander and the adopted heir of the new Emperor Tiberius. According to the sources, Germanicus was:

- charismatic
- immensely popular with the Roman people and the army
- a loyal commander
- a good diplomat.

Suetonius describes him as 'of outstanding physical and moral excellence. He was handsome, courageous, a past-master of Greek and Latin oratory, conspicuously kind-hearted, and gifted with the powerful desire and capacity for winning respect and inspiring affection'.[6] Apparently these qualities did not turn his head, as he was concerned for others and had an ability to inspire affection.

Tacitus mentions his moral decency, his 'unassuming personality and popular manner',[7] and records that in the funeral speeches after Germanicus' death in Syria, he was likened to Alexander the Great, only better.

However, the excessive praise heaped on him by the ancient sources is probably exaggerated, as there were times in his career when he showed a certain amount of irresponsibility and lack of judgement, and was responsible for a number of military blunders. Also, he was not immune from a desire for personal glory. However, 'in the minds of the public Germanicus could do no wrong (even when he clearly did)'.[8]

Agrippina the Elder

Not much is known of her early life, but in her temperament, she was vastly different to her husband. She was headstrong, outspoken, fierce and often scathing in her comments – lacking both tact and subtlety, with an arrogant pride in her lineage to Augustus, and single-minded in her attempts to use whatever means to work for the succession of her two sons, Nero and Drusus.

She and her family spent much of her time with her husband in the military camps on the northern border of the empire, where she was a valuable support to Germanicus. She saved her husband's army from being trapped across the Rhine and saved his reputation. She certainly knew how to play to the army and, according to Tacitus, often acted as though a commander. She 'dispensed clothes to the needy soldiers and dressed the wounds' and 'stood at the bridge-head to thank and congratulate the returning column'. Tiberius, the emperor, believed there 'was something behind these careful attentions to the army'.[9]

Tacitus says: she 'knew no feminine weaknesses. Intolerant of rivalry, thirsting for power, she had a man's preoccupations'.[10]

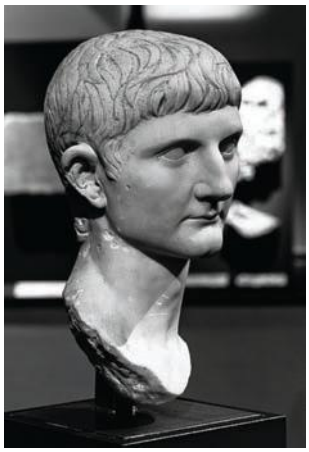

FIGURE 10.10 A bust of Germanicus

FIGURE 10.11 A marble head of Agrippina the Elder

Birth and early life of Agrippina the Younger

Agrippina the Younger was born at Oppidium Ubiorum (modern Cologne), the capital of the Roman province of Germania Inferior on the western bank of the Rhine River in 15 AD, a year after the death of her great-grandfather, Augustus. According to Tacitus, 'Agrippina's exceptionally illustrious birth is indisputable'.[11]

She spent her earliest years in the military camps with her father, her mother and her sisters and brothers. Her parents had nine children, of which six survived into adulthood. In 17 AD, as a two-year-old, she drove in her father's chariot through Rome with her siblings during his triumph, celebrated for

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his supposed victories over the tribes west of the Elbe River. His successes in Germany, 'more apparent than real … confirmed his heroic image in Rome.'[12]

The emperor, Tiberius, then sent Germanicus to the East on a diplomatic mission where he became ill and died in Syria. Tacitus and Suetonius imply that the governor, Piso, and his wife Plancina poisoned him on the instigation of Tiberius, who was jealous of Germanicus' popularity.

The claim that Germanicus was poisoned is unlikely, but it added to his mystique, and Agrippina the Elder knew how to gain public sympathy for herself and her children. Although her husband's glowing reputation lived on, his early death at 33 saved him from facing the realities and difficulties of governing as princeps.

Agrippina would have barely known her father, but her mother, who brought her husband's ashes back to Rome, made sure her children believed, as she did, that their father had been deprived of his birthright to succeed Tiberius as emperor.

FIGURE 10.12 A map of the Roman province of Germania Superior and the site of modern Cologne, Agrippina's birth place

According to Tacitus, on her journey back to Rome with her husband's ashes, 'the cries of men and women, relatives and strangers blended into a single universal groan'.[13]

> On the day when the remains were conducted to the Mausoleum of Augustus there was a desolate silence – rent only by wailing. The streets were full, the Field of Mars ablaze with torches. Everyone – armed soldiers, officials without their insignia, the people organized in their tribes – reiterated that Rome was done for, all hope gone.

SOURCE 10.5 Tacitus, *Annals*, III.2

Tacitus also added that there was popular enthusiasm for Germanicus' wife: 'The glory of the country, they called her – the only true descendant of Augustus, the unmatched model of traditional behaviour.'[14]

This was probably one of Agrippina the Younger's earliest memories and undoubtedly had a life-long influence on her.

After her father's death, her brothers Nero and Drusus went to live with Tiberius' son, perhaps to get them away from the bitterness of their mother, while she, her sisters and youngest brother, Gaius, lived with their mother.

FIGURE 10.13 Nicolas Poussin's painting of the *Death of Germanicus*

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FIGURE 10.14 Benjamin West's 18th-century painting *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus*

The impact of her father's death

According to Michael Grant, Agrippina the Younger grew up 'in an appalling atmosphere of malevolence, suspicion and criminal violence'.[15]

- After Germanicus' funeral, Agrippina the Elder began verbally attacking Tiberius with: 'I, born of his sacred blood [Augustus] am his incarnation.'[16] Over a period of nine years, she never wavered from her ambition to have one of her sons succeed Tiberius. She believed that everything she did in their interests was right, and according to Tacitus she built up a 'party' of supporters.
- Sejanus, the Praetorian prefect, was as ambitious to succeed Tiberius as Agrippina the Elder was for one of her sons to do so. She stood in Sejanus' way, but he found it difficult to attack her, as her apparent virtue made her unassailable. Eventually, her continued insubordination to Tiberius gave him an excuse to undermine her. He notified Tiberius that 'proud of her large family and relying on her popularity', she had designs on the throne. To this end Sejanus employed 'skillful slanders'.[17]
- It appears that Agrippina the Elder and her son, Nero, were put under house arrest, with the Praetorian Guard instructed to send detailed reports on their daily activities.
- While her mother's movements were restricted, Agrippina the Younger, along with her sisters and brother Gaius, went to live with their great-grandmother, Livia, in 'a house filled with tension and foreboding'.[18]
- Sejanus played Agrippina's older sons off against each other, encouraging their ambition and jealousy, but it was not until the death of Livia that he was able to remove their mother, because Livia still had a moderating influence on Tiberius. However, soon after Livia's death, Tiberius, under the influence of Sejanus, sent a letter to the Senate charging Agrippina with 'insubordinate language and a disobedient spirit', and Nero Caesar with 'homosexual indecency'.[19]
- They were banished to barren prison islands and Drusus Caesar was imprisoned in Rome. Nero is believed to have been driven to suicide, and Drusus was apparently starved to death in prison in 33, the year of his mother's death. She starved herself, despite efforts to force-feed her.

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> We can assume that even in her [Agrippina the Younger] early youth she would have learned from her mother a powerful sense of her important place in the scheme of things, a place intended for her as a daughter of the acclaimed Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder, the last surviving grandchild of Augustus. The unfortunate fates of her mother and brothers would also have taught her the need for caution and diplomacy in political matters.

SOURCE 10.6 A. A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 41

Agrippina the Younger's first marriage

While her mother was under house arrest, Tiberius arranged for the 13-year-old Agrippina the Younger to be married to Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, who was about 30 at the time.

> Tiberius had personally entrusted his grandchild Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus, to Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus. His choice, Domitius, was a man of ancient family and a blood-relation of the Caesars; for his grandmother was Octavia, and Augustus his great-uncle.

SOURCE 10.7 Tacitus, *Annals*, IV.73

It was not until nine years into the marriage, when Agrippina was 21, that she gave birth to her son, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus (the later Emperor Nero). It has been suggested that the birth, nine months after the death of Tiberius, was significant. Due to the history of her doomed family, perhaps she had feared to have a child while Tiberius was alive. It was a difficult breech birth, and although she married twice more (Crispus Passienus in AD 41 and her uncle, the Emperor Claudius in 49 AD – see p. 332) she never had another child.

She recorded Nero's traumatic birth in her later memoirs.

ACTIVITY 10.2

1. How were each of the following related to Agrippina?
   - Augustus
   - Livia
   - Antonia
   - Agrippa
   - Drusus
   - Julia the Elder
2. Use Table 10.3, Sources 10.3 and 10.4, and Figure 10.9 and list the attributes of each of her grandparents and great-grandparents. What influences, if any, would these people have had on Agrippina?
3. Who were her parents? What do the sources say about her father and her mother?
4. Where was she born? Why did she spend her earliest years in military camps? Keep this in mind as you study her life and career.
5. Where and how did her father die? How did his death impact:
   - the people of Rome
   - her mother
   - Agrippina the Younger's early life?

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6 Explain Michael Grant's comment that Agrippina the Younger grew up 'in an appalling atmosphere of malevolence, suspicion and criminal violence'.

7 How might this have shaped her life? What does Source 10.6 say about the lessons she would have retained from this toxic period?

8 Why did Tiberius marry Agrippina at 13 to Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus?

10.3 Key features and developments of Agrippina's life and career

The basis of her future power

Agrippina's career was unique by the standards of the day. She 'represents a political paradox in the early Roman empire, the woman who managed to exercise great power and influence in a society that offered no constitutional role to powerful and influential women'.[20]

The basis of her power included:

1 her family connections: direct lineage to Augustus and Livia; the popularity of her deceased grandfather, Drusus, and the high regard of her grandmother, Antonia; the powerful emotional attachment to Germanicus' name in Rome, Italy and the provinces long after his death, and her position as sister, wife and mother of an emperor

2 the wealth she inherited from her various husbands – Domitius Ahenobarbus and Crispus Passienus, and from other sources – that helped her gain support and promotion for herself

3 the network of clients and those on whom she bestowed her influence to promote their careers

4 political alliances with influential senators

5 honours given to her during the reigns of Gaius/Caligula, Claudius and Nero (see pp. 352–3)

6 her personality, which enabled her to learn from the mistakes of her mother and to use her intelligence, shrewdness and awareness in seizing the right opportunities to achieve her ambitions.

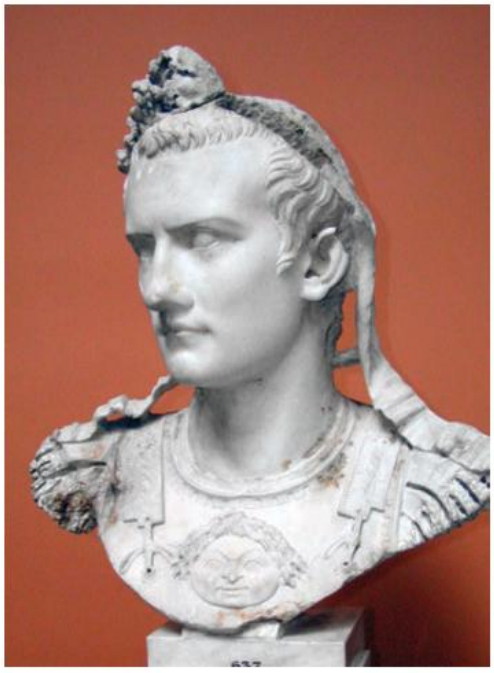

FIGURE 10.15 A bust of Gaius/Caligula

Life and exile during the reign of Gaius/Caligula

Agrippina must have felt a certain amount of security when her brother Gaius succeeded Tiberius as emperor in 37 AD.

Gaius had spent time as a small child with his mother and father with the army in the provinces where he was a much-loved mascot. The army gave him the nickname of Caligula ('little caliga') after the small hobnailed sandal boots (*caligae*) he wore.

At 19, he was taken to Capri to live with Tiberius away from the political life of Rome but appears to have been given no training by Tiberius to assume greater responsibility. Caligula won the support of Macro, the Praetorian Prefect who had succeeded the ambitious Sejanus, and on Tiberius' death Macro declared Caligula as princeps, and the Senate was unanimous in its conferment on him of absolute power. Suetonius says, 'Gaius' accession seemed to the Roman people – one might even say, to the whole world – like a dream come true',[21] since he was the

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son of the popular Germanicus: 'It was in the heady atmosphere of the new reign that Agrippina gave birth to her son'.[22]

In the first few months of his reign, Caligula appeared to confirm the people's belief in him and wisely attempted to conciliate the senatorial nobility. He also paid great honours to his family. Whether this was due to genuine affection or for a political purpose is not known.

Caligula:

- renamed the month of September as Germanicus
- dismissed the charges imposed against his mother
- honoured their birthdays with sacrifices
- issued coins with their heads on the reverse
- went to the prison islands and brought back the ashes of his brother Nero and his mother and placed them in the Mausoleum of Augustus. As he couldn't find the remains of his brother Drusus, he built him a **cenotaph**
- assigned a carriage (***carpentum***), usually reserved for priests and the images of gods, to carry his mother's image in processions
- awarded his grandmother, Antonia, with all the honours given to Livia
- chose his uncle Claudius to share the consulship with him
- issued a coin – the first of its kind – commemorating a deceased member of the Julio-Claudians on both sides.

However, it was on his three sisters, Agrippina, Drusilla (his favourite) and Livilla, that he heaped the greatest honours. Not only did they receive the rights of the Vestal Virgins and have their names included in the annual vow for the wellbeing of the emperor, but he also insisted that they:

- be mentioned when consuls proposed motions in the Senate: 'May this be good and fortunate for Gaius Caesar and his sisters.'[23]
- be included in the significant oath of allegiance to the emperor: 'Nor shall I consider myself or my children more precious than I do Gaius and his sisters.'[24] At this time, a remarkable coin was issued which represented, for the first time, living women identified by both image and name. It had the traditional head of the emperor on the **obverse** and his sisters on the reverse. Each sister was identified by her name and represented as a goddess: Agrippina as Securitas, Drusilla as Concordia and Livilla as Fortuna.

> Caligula's actions represent a key stage in the elevation of the women of the imperial house, not to the status of joint ruler … but to a more symbolic recognition that they shared the mystique and majesty of the principate.

SOURCE 10.8 A. A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 53

cenotaph a monument erected in honour of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere

carpentum a two-wheeled carriage with an arched covering

obverse the side of a coin bearing the head or principal design

FIGURE 10.16 Caligula returning the ashes of his mother and brother to Rome, painted in 1647 by Eustache Le Sueur

FIGURE 10.17 A coin depicting Agrippina and her sisters

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A COMMENT ON...

Caligula's supposed incest with his sisters

- Caligula's close bond to his sisters inevitably led to claims of incest by some of the ancient sources such as Suetonius: 'It was his habit to commit incest with each of his three sisters in turn.'[25]
- However, such charges are not only difficult to prove, but were also often used as a way to smear someone of prominence.
- Although Tacitus is hostile to Agrippina, he makes no mention of her being sexually involved with her brother.

A few months after he became emperor, Caligula fell ill and was not expected to recover. When he did, he appeared to be a changed person. Suetonius says, 'So much for Caligula the Emperor; the rest of history must needs deal with Caligula the Monster.'[26] He became more reckless, less restrained and carried out numerous acts of cruelty, tyranny and extravagance. He began calling himself 'the Best and Greatest of the Caesars',[27] insisted on being treated as a god, and did away with the pretence of working in partnership with the Senate, reintroducing treason trials and attacking senators. There also seemed to be some tension between the army commanders. Caligula was alienating both groups.

It was about this time that Agrippina first became involved in political affairs, perhaps to save the principate from being destroyed by Caligula's mad behaviour.

In 38 AD, he had his original co-heir Tiberius Gemellus (Tiberius' grandson) killed and then Drusilla died. Overwhelmed with grief, he had her declared a goddess with a special college of priests formed to carry out her worship.

First signs of Agrippina's involvement in political affairs

While Caligula's sister Drusilla was alive, her husband Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, a member of a powerful noble family, had seemed destined to be the chosen successor to Caligula (the emperor had no sons). As a member of the imperial family, Lepidus was in a privileged position, and even after Drusilla's death appeared to be still on very friendly terms with Caligula.

However, in 39 AD Caligula reintroduced treason trials and began attacks on senators, and there appears to have been some tension among the army commanders. If the principate was to continue, Caligula could not alienate both of these groups.

Although the records for 39 AD are not clear, Caligula was informed of a conspiracy against him led by the ambitious army commander of Upper Germany, Gaetulicus, in which Caligula's brother-in-law Lepidus, and his two remaining sisters, Agrippina and Livilla, were accused of being involved.

Everything about this situation is murky. Perhaps Gaetulicus was going to march on Rome; certainly Lepidus, if he were to succeed Caligula, would need to be remarried to a woman of Julian lineage (either Agrippina or Livilla) and gain the support of the army.

Why would Agrippina have got involved in such a plan? Perhaps:

- she could see that the principate would not survive if Caligula continued to alienate both the senators and the army
- as her husband Domitius Ahenobarbus was sick, she may have thought it necessary to form a liaison with someone of Lepidus' influence with the possibility of future marriage in order to protect her son Nero
- she may have seen Gaetulicus as a useful ally considering her background links with Germany (her father's campaigns and popularity with the legions as well as her own birth in the province).

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Tacitus says that Agrippina became involved with Lepidus to gain power, but by the exposure of the plot, 'Agrippina's hopes were blasted'.[28]

Caligula, on his way to Germany, possibly accompanied by Lepidus, Livilla and Agrippina, discovered the plot and:

- sent Galba, his replacement commander of the Rhine forces, to dispose of Gaetulicus
- charged Lepidus and his sisters with immoral behaviour and conspiracy, and provided the Senate with letters as evidence; Lepidus was condemned to death and a Praetorian tribune cut his throat
- forced Agrippina to carry Lepidus' ashes to Rome
- exiled both sisters, one to the island of Pontia, the other to Pandateria, confiscated their property and had it auctioned off
- placed the infant, Nero, in the care of his aunt Domitia, whose affection towards the boy caused Agrippina's life-long hatred of her sister-in-law.

Agrippina's husband Domitius Ahenobarbus is believed to have left Rome in 39 AD, possibly due to his wife's disgrace, and died towards the end of the following year.

When Caligula returned from Germany in the middle of 40 AD, his hostile attitude towards the senators intensified, particularly towards those who sympathised with his sisters, leading to several plots to assassinate him. In 41 AD, at the age of 29, he was murdered at the Palatine Games by a tribune of the Praetorian Guard. 'On that day Caligula finally learned that he was not a god'.[29]

ACTIVITY 10.3

1. Draw a diagram illustrating the sources of Agrippina's power throughout her life.
2. Why were the people overjoyed when Agrippina's brother, Gaius Caligula, succeeded Tiberius? What opportunities do you think Agrippina would have seen opening up in front of her?
3. How did Gaius honour his three sisters, Drusilla, Livilla and Agrippina the Younger in the first year of his reign?
4. Comment on Anthony Barret's belief about Gaius' symbolic recognition of his sisters.
5. What might have motivated Agrippina to become involved in a conspiracy against her brother? Tacitus, in typical fashion, had his own opinion. What was that?
6. What were the two major repercussions for Agrippina of involving herself in political affairs which would have impacted on her later life?

FIGURE 10.18 A bust of the Emperor Claudius

Agrippina's role during the reign of Claudius

While Agrippina and Livilla languished in exile, their brother was murdered and their uncle Claudius succeeded Caligula as emperor. The Praetorian Guardsmen supposedly found him hiding in the palace and took him to the barracks where he was pressed to accept the imperial power from them. Unaware of what happened, the Senate resisted the guards' choice, but eventually conferred the imperial title on Claudius.

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A COMMENT ON...

Claudius' early life

- Claudius was the grandson of Livia, and the son of Antonia, both of whom appear to have had little time for him as a child because of his physical disabilities.
- According to Suetonius, 'nearly the whole of his childhood was so troubled by various diseases that he grew dull-witted and had little physical strength', and his mother often called him 'a monster: a man whom Mother Nature had begun to work upon but then flung aside'.[30]
- He is supposed to have been awkward and unsteady on his feet, had a stammer and a nervous tic of the head. Although he was not the bumbling idiot of tradition, he was made aware early on of his inferiority, especially compared with his brother Germanicus.
- He kept out of the limelight and devoted himself to his studies and was a prolific scholar: he spoke and read Greek, studied history under Livy and started a *History of Rome* when he was still a boy. Augustus had been concerned for his future, but when Claudius was given several official positions, he surprised Augustus with his ability.

Claudius had already married his third wife, the notorious Valeria Messalina, daughter of Agrippina's hated sister-in-law, Domitia, who had charge of Nero while Agrippina was in exile.

Messalina had two children to Claudius: Octavia and Britannicus. The tradition is particularly hostile to Messalina, who has been described as an envious and vindictive woman involved in intrigue and criminal activities, but, worse, as a sexual deviant – unlike Agrippina who used 'sex as a means to political ends'.[31]

A COMMENT ON...

Bad press for Valeria Messalina

- She was depicted in the sources as a woman who was ruthless, sexually insatiable and whose husband, Claudius, was unaware of her numerous adulterous escapades.
- Sexual excesses, however, were one of the usual forms of smear used against someone who was a political enemy. Her reputation was deliberately blackened at the time because her successor as wife to Claudius (Agrippina) was her enemy who wanted her own son, Nero, to replace Messalina's son as the emperor's heir.
- Pliny the Elder added a story about her all-night sexual competition with a prostitute and Juvenal described how she would work in a brothel at night under the name of 'She-Wolf'.

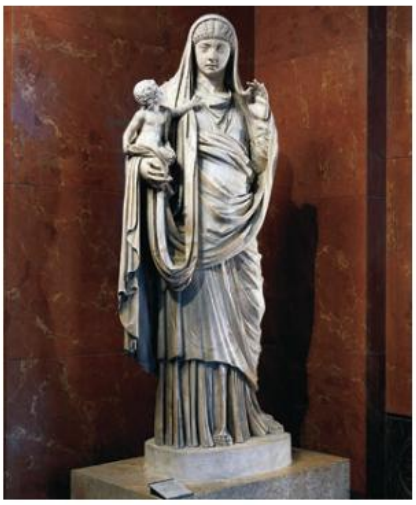

FIGURE 10.19 Statue of Messalina holding Britannicus, her son by Claudius

Agrippina's return from exile and remarriage

Agrippina was 25 when her uncle recalled her and her sister from exile.

Although it has been claimed that she decided from the moment she returned to Rome to supplant Messalina, she is highly unlikely to have done anything so foolish in 41 AD. She was shrewd enough to know that patience and discretion would eventually get her what she wanted and that she could wait for 'Messalina to destroy herself'.[32]

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In the meantime, she needed a husband to revive her financial situation after Caligula had sold off her property and seized the estate of her husband, Domitius, when he died. Also, she needed protection for her son.

According to the sources she set her sights on the patrician, Servius Sulpicius Galba, whose lineage was ancient and who was very wealthy. Livia had promoted his career and also left him 50 million **sesterces** in her will. To add to his qualifications as a future husband for Agrippina, he was a successful commander in Germany and had been suggested as a possible successor of Caligula.

sesterces Roman coins made of bronze

clientela a body of supportive attendants

However, either Claudius considered him 'far too powerful already to be allowed to become guardian of her son'[33] or Galba thought that an association with Agrippina would be too dangerous for his future.

Claudius agreed instead to her marriage to the much older Gaius Sallustius Crispus Passienus, the previous husband of her despised sister-in-law, Domitia. Passienus had gained imperial favour due to his sharp wit, his rhetorical abilities and literary talents. He had been consul twice and pro-consul of Asia. More importantly, he was extremely rich and a generous benefactor.

When he died somewhere around 47 AD, he left his wealth to Agrippina, leading to the usual suspicions that she had aided his death with poison.

> The death from a purely political standpoint, can be seen as convenient, since it provided Agrippina with the financial means to build a ***clientela***, and it freed her for the time when Claudius [the emperor] himself became available as a husband.

SOURCE 10.9 A. A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 86

While Agrippina appears to have kept a low profile, her sister Livilla was once again exiled, having 'fallen victim to the general tension and paranoia that surrounded the court after Claudius' accession'.[34] This may have been due to her marriage to Marcus Vinicius who was once mentioned as a possible candidate for the principate, or because of a supposed affair with Seneca, the famed philosopher, who pleaded that he was innocent. They were banished and, according to Cassius Dio, shortly afterwards Messalina arranged Livilla's death.

Not much is recorded of Agrippina at this time and it is possible she was out of Rome with her husband, which was fortunate for her since she was extremely vulnerable to the intrigues of Messalina, who Tacitus says had a long-standing hostility to her. The first clash between the two women had occurred during the Secular Games when Nero received greater applause from the crowd than Britannicus, due to his inheritance from Germanicus.

FIGURE 10.20 An 18th-century painting by Franceso Solimena of the murder of Messalina

Agrippina, who had been patiently biding her time, was finally rewarded with the destruction of Messalina caused by her 'new and almost maniacal love affair' with 'the best-looking young man in Rome, Gaius Silius'.[35] Although the affair became well known, with rumours that Silius desired the throne, Claudius appears to have been unaware of what was going

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on. When it was reported that the pair had been illegally married, Claudius' freedmen, Callistus, Narcissus and Pallas, discussed what to do. It was Narcissus who took action, planning 'to denounce her without forewarning of charge or accuser'.[36]

When Claudius was made aware of the seriousness of the situation, Silius and all those who had knowledge of the affair were executed, and Messalina was run through with a dagger by a colonel of the Praetorian Guard as she sat in the Gardens of Lucullus.

According to Tacitus, 'the vengeance on Messalina was just' but 'her death convulsed the imperial household'.[37]

Agrippina's marriage to Claudius

The way was now open for Agrippina to gain the power she wanted, both for herself and her son. Claudius needed to remarry 'because he needed a political ally to help him keep at bay the forces still threatening to topple the principate. And he needed an ally he could rely on'.[38]

However, competition was fierce among the women at court, and among Claudius' freedmen Pallas, Narcissus and Callistus, who lobbied for their own particular candidates: Agrippina, Aelia Paetina (she had been Claudius' wife earlier) and Lollia Paulina. Finally, it was Pallas' candidate, Agrippina, who had the most overwhelming advantages and Claudius could not afford to dismiss the arguments Pallas presented on her behalf.

> Pallas ... emphasized that the son whom she would bring with her was Germanicus' grandson, eminently deserving of imperial rank; let the emperor ally himself with a noble race and unite two branches of the Claudian house, rather than allow this lady of proved capacity for child-bearing, still young, to transfer the glorious name of the Caesars to another family.

SOURCE 10.10 Tacitus, *Annals*, XII.1

Tacitus and Suetonius maintain that, added to these convincing arguments, was the fact that Agrippina seduced her uncle, using the privileges of a niece to kiss and caress him 'in anticipation of treating her as his wife'.[39] Not too much credence should be placed on these comments. If there were backroom discussions between uncle and niece, they were more likely to have been of a political rather than a sexual nature.

Once sure of her future, Agrippina began planning for the betrothal of her son to Claudius' daughter Octavia, even though the young girl was already engaged to the distinguished Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus, who Claudius had generously promoted as his future son-in-law.

According to Tacitus, Agrippina's plan required criminal methods, and it was Lucius Vitellius who now gained Agrippina's favour by getting involved in her project. He:

1 prosecuted Junius Silanus' sister for behaving shamelessly and made innuendoes about the affection between brother and sister. Silanus was struck off the Senate list and his engagement to Octavia cancelled. He later committed suicide.

2 also helped Claudius overcome the unprecedented nature of a marriage between a niece and uncle – regarded as incestuous – by a rousing speech in the Senate. He ingeniously played on the senators' vanity by suggesting that they could set a precedent and increase the Senate's powers in the future by 'the nation presenting an emperor with a wife'.[40]

In 49 AD, Agrippina married her 58-year-old uncle, the Emperor Claudius. While his political position was strengthened, Agrippina 'would now come into her own as no member of the *domus* [imperial household], not even Livia, had ever done'.[41] Both Tacitus and Cassius Dio maintain that from the moment of her marriage, Agrippina had complete control over Claudius. Her two goals were now to claim the position of partner in the principate and to promote the future of her son.

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From this moment, the country was transformed. Complete obedience was accorded to a woman – and not a woman like Messalina who toyed with the national affairs to satisfy her appetites. This was a rigorous, almost masculine despotism. In public, Agrippina was austere and often arrogant. Her private life was chaste – unless power was to be gained. Her passion to acquire money was unbounded. She wanted it as a stepping stone to supremacy.

SOURCE 10.11 Tacitus, *Annals*, XII.5

It was about this time that the onyx and gold cameo known as the Gemma Claudia (refer back to Figure 10.3) was carved, supposedly in commemoration of the marriage of Claudius and Agrippina.

Benefits of the marriage to Claudius included the following:

1 The emperor was now in the fortunate position of having a wife who 'would be an aggressive supporter of his political agenda', a woman who 'brought to the marriage a keen political sense that controversial policies should be preceded by careful groundwork and the building up of approval and consensus'.[42]

2 Agrippina brought stability to Claudius' reign, particularly in regard to the relationship between princeps and Senate. There was less hostility, more cooperation and fewer treason trials.

Another change brought about by Agrippina at this time was significant for the futures of both her and her son: the recall of Seneca (stoic philosopher) from exile and her wise choice to appoint him as tutor for the young Nero.

It is likely that Seneca's role as tutor would have been predominantly political. Agrippina wanted her son educated by someone 'whose views about ruling the Roman state coincided with her own'.[43] Of course, she would also have gained popularity with the public for recalling such a distinguished literary figure. Seneca became an influential ally to Agrippina during the next few years. For further details on Agrippina and Seneca, see p. 340.

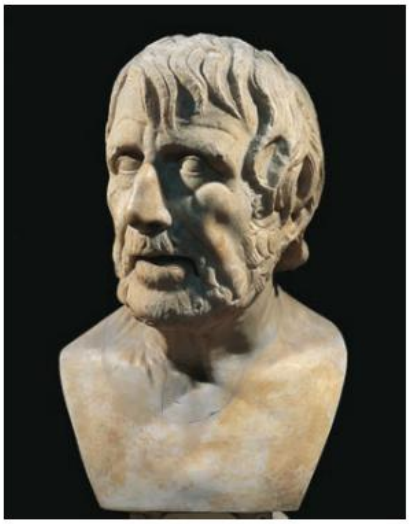

FIGURE 10.21 A marble bust of Seneca

ACTIVITY 10.4

1 Suggest three reasons why Agrippina felt the need to marry again once she was recalled from exile.
2 Why did Claudius veto her first choice?
3 What was the major advantage of her second husband, Sallustius Crispus Passienus, to her future?
4 While Agrippina was keeping a low profile at court, what two events occurred that enabled her to:
   - build up a large clientele
   - put into effect her two most important objectives: power for herself and promotion for her son?
5 What did Tacitus mean by:
   - 'the vengeance of Messalina was just'
   - 'the competition among the women was fierce'?
6 Who supported Agrippina in her ambition to marry Claudius? What were the advantages for Claudius in marrying Agrippina, cited in Source 10.10?

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7 What was the first act carried out by Agrippina on behalf of her son, Nero, once she was assured of her future position as wife of Claudius? Tacitus said that her plan required criminal methods.

8 What impact did her determination to carry out her plan have on:

- Claudius' daughter, Octavia
- the distinguished noble Lucius Junius Silanus?

9 What did Tacitus mean (in Source 10.11) when he said that once she was married to Claudius, the country was 'transformed' into a 'masculine despotism'?

10 What benefits did Claudius' principate gain from his marriage to Agrippina?

11 Why did she now recall Seneca from exile? How significant was this move for Agrippina?

Promotion of Nero and honours for Agrippina

In the following two years (50–51 AD), Agrippina's plans for her son began to fall into place and her own status was raised both in Rome and the provinces.

The adoption and elevation in status of Nero

Once her son was engaged to Octavia, Agrippina was anxious to have Claudius adopt him, and in this endeavour she used her ally, the freedman Pallas, to act as intermediary with Claudius.

Tacitus suggests that Pallas 'pressed Claudius to consider the national interests and furnish the boy Britannicus with a protector',[44] but it is highly unlikely that Claudius was won over by that argument. The emperor would have been considering what was in his own best interests. It made sense to adopt Nero and make the boys joint heirs. He would also have considered that Britannicus was only nine; his mother was the disgraced Messalina; and Nero was a direct descendent of Augustus.

Although Claudius appears to have given his adoptive son precedence over his natural son, there is no evidence that he turned against Britannicus. Once the Senate approved the adoption, Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus became known as Nero.

toga virilis a garment worn by boys entering manhood

imperium the power to command, including an army, held by consuls, praetors, dictators, proconsuls and pro-praetors

princeps iuventutis 'first among the youth': an honorary title for young princes destined to rule

Augusta a title of religious and social significance associated with reverence and veneration

The following year Nero was further elevated in status:

- Claudius, consul for the fifth time, presided over Nero's rites of manhood when he received, at 14, the ***toga virilis***. This indicated that he was now regarded as competent to become princeps.
- Nero was also elected as consul-designate to assume the office when he turned 20, which gave him pro-consular authority outside the city. This highlighted the difference in status between Nero and Britannicus, when at the circus games 'Britannicus wore the white and purple toga of youth, while Nero wore the magisterial robes that marked the tenure of ***imperium***'.[45]
- He was also given the title ***princeps iuventutis***, which was usually an indicator that its holder was a potential successor.

There would be no doubt in the mind of the public who was intended to succeed Claudius, and this must have caused Agrippina great satisfaction.

Titles and honours for Agrippina

1 She received the title of '**Augusta**' and from that time on was depicted on coins with the inscription *Iulia Augusta Agrippina*. This was unprecedented as she was the first wife of a living emperor to be given the title. Livia had received the title, but she was a widow at the time. The title 'conveyed the notion of an empress … someone who could lay equal claim to the majesty that the office of emperor conveyed'.[46]

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2 She was included in the morning gathering (***salutatio***) during which Claudius' clients and imperial courtiers paid him homage.

3 She was given her own Praetorian bodyguard.

4 She convinced Claudius to found a new colony of veteran soldiers at her birthplace at Ara Ubiorum. It became known as *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* (Colony of Claudius and Altar of the Agrippinians). Colonies were part of Claudius' provincial policy for creating clients and the **Romanisation** of the empire, but this colony elevated Agrippina's status and provided her with personal clients who called themselves Agrippinenses.

5 The Senate granted her the right to use the *carpentum*, or special carriage, for transporting images of the gods.

6 She was the first living woman to be depicted on coins with the corn-ear crown of Ceres/Demeter (fertility), the 'archetypal mother'.[47]

Tacitus says that all of this 'increased the reverence felt for a woman who to this day remains unique as the daughter of a great commander and the sister, wife and mother of emperors'.[48]

salutatio the formal morning greeting of the Roman patron by his clients

Romanisation the adoption of Roman culture by conquered people within the empire

FIGURE 10.22 A coin depicting Claudius with Agrippina as 'Augusta' on the reverse

Agrippina's use of the Praetorian Guard to isolate Britannicus

Tacitus says that Agrippina now found an opportunity to remove those closest to Britannicus.

- Firstly, she disposed of his loyal freedmen and tutors by complaining to Claudius that they were corrupting the young boy. Claudius put Britannicus 'under the control of his stepmother's nominees'.[49]
- More significantly, she eliminated staff officers and company commanders of the Praetorian Guard who were sympathetic to Britannicus. Some of these she removed 'on various fictitious grounds; sometimes promotion was the pretext'.[50] Agrippina would have learnt early on that having loyal Praetorians was essential in maintaining the principate.
- However, she was not content until she had removed the two Praetorian Prefects, Lucius Geta and Rufrius Crispinus, who she believed were loyal to Messalina's children. She convinced Claudius that the loyalty of the Guard was split by having two prefects and that stricter discipline could be maintained under one prefect. She had the pair replaced by Sextus Afranius Burrus, a distinguished soldier who knew whose influence was responsible for his appointment and that he was to ensure Nero's smooth accession to the throne, when the time came.

'The appointment of Burrus, can have left Romans in little doubt about the strength of Agrippina's position.'[51]

A partner in power

There is an interesting sculpture from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias in modern Turkey depicting Agrippina clasping Claudius' right hand and holding up ears of corn in the other. Although some scholars believe that the handshaking in Roman art represents marital harmony, R. R. Smith, in *The Imperial Reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias*, believes that in this case, it suggests 'the equality of rank between the two figures'.[52]

FIGURE 10.23 Marble heads of Agrippina and Claudius

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The evidence suggests that Agrippina was a competent administrator and participated in both domestic and foreign affairs. She was not only interested in public works, but also in financial management of the empire, about which she was probably kept informed by Pallas.

The strength of her position while Claudius was emperor can be detected in two events of importance in the Roman empire. The comment below outlines the background of one these.

A COMMENT ON...

Claudius' annexation of Britain in 43 AD

Claudius conquered and annexed Britain because he believed that:

- the Roman province of Gaul would never be Romanised while Britain remained independent
- a successful conquest would strengthen his regime and increase his popularity.

An army of 50 000 men crossed the channel and Claudius followed with reinforcements, the Romans took the leading British town (modern-day Colchester), and captured a famous British tribal king, Caratacus, who was sent as a prisoner to Rome.

1 A grand ceremony was held in Rome at which the captured British leader, Caratacus, and other British prisoners paid homage to Claudius and Agrippina (sitting on a separate dais), accompanied by the military and Praetorian Guard. Tacitus says 'that a woman should sit before Roman standards was an unprecedented novelty. She was asserting her partnership in the empire her ancestors had won'.[53] Susan Wood, in *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images 40 BCE–68CE*, believes that this event was evidence of the acknowledgement of her role in foreign and provincial affairs.

2 She was involved in a behind-the-scenes power play in the East, where she supported the Jews in the province of Judaea, and she also recommended the appointment of Felix, the freedman brother of Pallas, as procurator of Judaea, a controversial choice as he was an ex-slave.

Continued promotion of Nero and the death of Claudius

By 53 AD, according to Dio Cassius, 'Agrippina was leaving no stone unturned in order to make Nero popular with the masses and to cause him to be regarded as the only successor to imperial power'.[54]

- When Claudius fell ill, Nero sponsored games for the emperor's recovery.
- Octavia and Nero were married.
- Agrippina destroyed the mother of Messalina and grandmother of Britannicus, who had a powerful lineage and could remind people that Britannicus also had Julian links.

Narcissus, Claudius' loyal freedman whose relationship with Agrippina had been hostile since she married Claudius, openly promoted Britannicus over Nero and believed that 'with Britannicus as his successor the emperor has nothing to fear. But the intrigues of the stepmother in Nero's interests are fatal to the imperial house.'[55]

Claudius' death

It was at this time, according to Tacitus and Suetonius, that Agrippina was beginning to lose her influence over Claudius. It appears that he might have been having a change of heart about his treatment of Britannicus and the succession.

Agrippina was anxious to get Nero on the throne as soon as possible, and E. T. Salmon suggests that she would have 'preferred to have her son become emperor at an age when he was still amenable to her influence'.[56]

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Tacitus and Cassius Dio believe she planned to kill Claudius with poisoned mushrooms, and that in this she had the help of Claudius' popular freedman, doctor Gaius Stertinius Xenophon. However, Suetonius leaves some doubt about her part in his death. Modern scholars are also divided on this. Read Tacitus' account in the *Annals*, pp. 281–2.

Claudius' death in 54 AD was not made public until all was made ready for the handover of power to Nero.

1 Burrus had to make sure a loyal cohort of Praetorians was on duty.
2 Seneca, Nero's tutor, had to have time to write the speeches given by Nero to the Praetorians and the senate.
3 Agrippina sent dispatches to the various provincial **legates** to maintain support of the legions.

While Agrippina guarded Britannicus inside the palace, Nero was taken outside and presented to the Praetorian camp at the Viminal Gate. At barely 17 years of age, he made the speech written by Seneca, and was declared emperor by the Praetorian troops, to each of whom he gave around 15 000 sesterces.

At the Senate, there was the same euphoria that had greeted Caligula. The senators naively bestowed on him the right to do whatever he thought was in the best interests of the state. Despite the expectations of the senators, there was no reading of Claudius' will. Anthony Barrett suggests that Agrippina took a calculated risk and suppressed it because it might have left the emperor's estate to both Nero and Britannicus. She may have done this on the advice of Pallas, who was 'a shrewd financial manipulator'[57] so that the entire estate went to Nero.

legate high-ranking officer in the Roman army, in charge of a legion

deification the act of regarding someone as a god

ACTIVITY 10.5

1 What steps did Agrippina take to secure her son's future after her marriage to Claudius?
2 Draw a diagram to illustrate the titles and honours Agrippina received from Claudius.
3 Explain the significance of the term 'Augusta'.
4 Provide two examples of her elevated status and role in foreign affairs at this time.
5 If Agrippina did in fact plan to murder Claudius, suggest possible motives.
6 How did Agrippina orchestrate the smooth accession of Nero?
7 Discuss the suggestion that her effect on the principate of Claudius was predominantly positive.

FIGURE 10.24 A statue of an adolescent Nero

Agrippina's role and changing relationship with Nero during his reign

Agrippina gave Claudius a lavish funeral, perhaps as a political ploy to gain public support for her piety, then organised the smooth passage through the Senate of her ex-husband's **deification**. She was appointed as a female priest in his cult. Was this a piece of propaganda whereby Nero could be depicted as *Divis Filius*, or son of a deified father?

During the first years of Nero's reign, Agrippina was at the peak of her career and without a doubt the most influential person in Rome,[58] and Suetonius tells us that Nero turned over all his public and private affairs to Agrippina's management.

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The relationship at this time was close, judging by the new watchword he gave to the Praetorian Guard, the 'Best of Mothers', and for a while this was borne out by her behaviour and his devotion to her when they appeared together in public.

She received numerous honours in her elevated status as mother of the emperor, but she was also determined to remove potential rivals, perhaps those who thought Nero was too young to rule and the position should have gone to someone of distinction and mature years.

TABLE 10.4 Honours and removal of potential rivals

Honours	Removal of potential rivals
• Some of the meetings of the Senate occurred on the Palatine so that she could enter through a back door and listen to the proceedings from behind a thick curtain. This applied particularly when the Senate decided to amend some of Claudius' legislation to which Agrippina objected. • The senate granted her two **lictors** to accompany her when she was out in public. This was a significant symbolic honour as lictors suggested the authority of a chief magistrate. • The gold and silver coinage (aurei and denarii) of the period depicted her facing her son, the emperor, as if equals and co-rulers with the titles: 'Agrippa Augusta, wife of the deified Claudius and Mother of Caesar'. Such depiction was unprecedented and shows the extent of her influence at this time.	• Agrippina had the 40-year-old noble, Marcus Junius Silanus, the governor of Asia, poisoned through two of Nero's agents in the East, Celer and Helius. Agrippina saw him as a threat to Nero as he was the son of the granddaughter of Augustus, and members of his family had proven in the past to be ambitious for power. • She placed her enemy, the imperial freedman Narcissus (supporter of Britannicus), under strict supervision, but before the end of 54 AD he was dead, either murdered or forced to commit suicide. • According to Tacitus, 'other murders were meant to follow', but Burrus and Seneca prevented them. 'Agrippina's violence, enflamed by all the passions of ill-gotten tyranny encountered their united opposition'.[59] (See p. 340 for Agrippina's changing relationship with Burrus and Seneca).

lictors attendants of magistrates who held *imperium*

FIGURE 10.25 A coins showing Agrippina facing her son as if co-rulers

FIGURE 10.26 An engraving depicting Nero and Agrippina the Younger

Turning points in Agrippina's relationship with Nero

Anthony Barrett writes: 'To many Romans, Agrippina would have seemed in 54 AD, not merely offensive, but a dangerous threat to the whole Roman order.'[60] This was shown when a delegation of Armenians arrived in Rome.

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When an Armenian delegation was pleading before Nero, she [Agrippina] was just about to mount the emperor's dais and sit beside him. Everyone was stupefied. But Seneca instructed Nero to advance to meet his mother. This show of filial dutifulness averted the scandal.

SOURCE 10.12 Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.4

Although Agrippina was still a force to be reckoned with, her influence was already beginning to wane.

Despite her ability to deal with senators and army commanders, she was unable to cope with her self-centred son who appeared to want to dispense with her support and rule alone. Nero would not have appreciated his mother's constant reminder of his immaturity, what she had done for him and 'her obsessive surveillance and constant criticisms',[61] particularly with regard to his extravagant spending habits.

The relationship between mother and son deteriorated when Nero, already alienated from his young wife Octavia, fell in love with a freedwoman named Acte.

Agrippina displayed feminine rage at having an ex-slave as her rival and a servant girl as her [possible] daughter-in-law, and so on ... But her violent scoldings only intensified his affection for Acte. In the end, deeply in love, he became openly disobedient to his mother and turned to Seneca ... Agrippina now changed her tactics, and indulgently offered the privacy of her own bedroom for the relaxations natural to Nero's age and position: this change from excessive severity to extravagant compliance did not deceive Nero – and it alarmed his friends, who urged him to beware of the tricks of this always terrible and now insincere woman.

SOURCE 10.13 Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.9

A new and highly dangerous stage in the relationship

The usual view held by historians is that by 55 AD, Agrippina was no longer a close confidante of her son, but she was still too powerful for him to confront directly, so Nero decided to attack the one person on whom she relied: the freedman Pallas, who the ancient sources believe was her lover. Due to his control of the finances, Pallas had been able to virtually control the empire. He was deposed from his position and forced to leave the palace.

Tacitus tells us Agrippina now became 'angry and menacing',[62] making threats to support Britannicus and hints about her powerful allies among the Praetorian Guard. She let Nero hear her say 'that Britannicus was grown up and was the worthy heir of his father's supreme position – now held, she added, by an adopted intruder who used it to maltreat his mother'.[63]

Nero, worried by his mother's behaviour, considered bringing a charge against his 14-year-old stepbrother, but could find none. Instead, he decided on murder by having poison administered during Britannicus' evening meal among the imperial princes. It cannot be ruled out, however, that the young boy died from an epileptic fit, since the sources say that his body turned dark, and there is no known poison used in the ancient world that would have caused that. 'The darkening of the body points to death by tetanoid epilepsy.'[64]

He was supposedly cremated immediately and it appears that there was no objection to his death as his removal was regarded as necessary to protect the state.

Agrippina now became the supporter of Octavia, Nero's wife, and 'was gracious to officers, and attentive to such able and high-ranking noblemen who survived. She seemed to be looking around for a Party and a leader for it'.[65]

Nero reacted by:

- removing her privilege of a military watch of Praetorians on the excuse that they were needed for purely military duties, and also removing her personal bodyguard of Germans

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- expelling her from the palace on the excuse that her large morning gatherings of clients were a nuisance. She was moved to a nearby house once owned by her grandmother Antonia, 'after which he did everything possible to annoy her by sending people to pester her with law suits while she stayed in Rome, and when she took refuge on her riverside estate, making them constantly drive or sail past the windows, disturbing her with threats and cat-calls'.[66]

Had her influence really waned so much that she had to keep a lower profile, as has been suggested? See comment on p. 344.

ACTIVITY 10.6

1. How did Agrippina see her position in the first year of Nero's reign and how did the coinage reflect this?
2. What was the significance of the granting of two lictors to accompany Agrippina?
3. How and why did the administration change after Agrippina's 'scandalous' behaviour during the Armenian delegation's presentation to Nero?
4. Describe Agrippina's behaviour as she realised she was losing control over Nero.
5. What actions did Nero take – probably under the guidance of Seneca – to reduce his mother's influence?

FIGURE 10.27 *Nero and Seneca*, by Eduardo Barrón (1904). Museo del Prado

Agrippina's relationship with members of the imperial court

Seneca and Burras owed allegiance to Agrippina when she first employed them to educate and guide her son.

Seneca, the Stoic philosopher, was born in Spain, brought to Rome as a child and eventually, in 31 AD, entered the Roman Senate. He was exiled on a possible trumped-up charge by Messalina (adultery with Livilla, Agrippina's sister) and exiled for eight years. He was finally recalled by Claudius under the influence of Agrippina to become the tutor of Nero. This increased her popularity with the people.

Burrus, born in Gallia Narbonensis, was a distinguished soldier, had held posts in Livia's household and was appointed as sole Praetorian Prefect by Agrippina, who wanted him to facilitate the smooth transference of power to Nero when Claudius died.

> These two men with an equanimity rare among partners in power, were by different methods, equally influential. Burrus' strength lay in soldierly efficiency and seriousness of character, Seneca's in amiable high principles … They collaborated in controlling the emperor's perilous adolescence; their policy was to direct his deviations from virtue into licensed channels of indulgence.

SOURCE 10.14 Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.1

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As well as helping Nero become emperor, Burrus led Nero to the Praetorian Guard to be hailed as emperor, and Seneca wrote the polished speech to the senate in which Nero pledged to remove the influence of bribery and favouritism from the imperial household and bring to an end the decisions made in the palace behind closed doors.

After Nero's accession, Seneca and Burrus became concerned with Agrippina's unbridled ambition and attempts to rule through her son. This was a new phenomenon: a dangerous woman seeking power in her own right. They could see that she was a woman who was happy to help her son become ruler but, once he did, she was unable to endure his rule without her. They were unhappy about her highly visible role, such as her attempt to sit on the dais with Nero during the visit of the Armenian delegation. According to Scullard, they 'had no love for petticoat government'[67] and may have decided to switch allegiance for their own survival.

> [Seneca and Burrus] laboured to prevent any public business from being again committed to Agrippina's hands. When they had accomplished this, they took the rule entirely into their own hands and administered affairs in the very best and fairest manner they could, with the result that they won the approval of everybody alike.

SOURCE 10.15 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, vol. 8, p. 39

Under their guidance, the first five years of Nero's rule – known as *Quinquennium Neronis* – was marked by reasonable government. Seneca drafted most of Nero's speeches and prevented him from making some serious mistakes, and when Nero became openly disobedient to his mother, he turned to Seneca.

Agrippina's relationship with the imperial freedmen

Claudius had developed specialised departments under the control of freedmen (ex-slaves), most of whom were intelligent, capable, loyal advisors and civil servants in Claudius' administration.

However, their excessive wealth and power angered the senatorial and equestrian classes.

The three most influential were:

- Narcissus, a kind of secretary handling all correspondence between the emperor and the officials of the empire. He also granted Roman citizenship, and awarded commissions and promotions in the army.
- Pallas, head of the financial department, supervising all revenues that flowed into the imperial treasuries and that also included money from Claudius' personal estates.
- Callistus, who was the legal secretary. His role was to deal with all petitions and requests, to deal with all judicial enquiries and to prepare all papers on investigations that came before the emperor.

As these men grew closer to the centre of power, their careers would have depended more on the amount of personal influence they had with the emperor. They became involved in court intrigues and manipulations. While looking after the emperor's interests, they were also consistently looking out for their own survival. They secured the condemnation of anyone on the flimsiest of evidence, could initiate the arrest and condemnation of an emperor's wife for treason, and participate in the choice of an emperor's wife.

It was Narcissus and Pallas who played the biggest part in Agrippina's career.

Agrippina, Narcissus and Pallas

> Narcissus does seem to have been genuinely loyal to Claudius' interests and until the marriage to Agrippina, was the most influential of the freedmen. He was the arch-enemy of Agrippina. She for her part had an ally in the other powerful freedman of the period, Marcus Antonius Pallas.

SOURCE 10.16 A. A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 77

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TABLE 10.5 Narcissus and Pallas

Narcissus	Pallas
• Narcissus had been an ardent supporter of Messalina but he was the activist in her condemnation and execution. • In the lobbying that occurred in the wake of Messalina's death, Narcissus, who nominated Aelia Paetina, was outmanouevred by Pallas, leading to his resentment of both Pallas and Agrippina. • Narcissus allied with Britannicus' circle in order to secure his future, as heir to Claudius. • The sources consistently reveal the private tensions between Narcissus and Agrippina. • An example that brought their private opposition out into the public arena occurred when Claudius appointed Narcissus to oversee the construction of a canal to drain the Fucine Lake. Agrippina engineered a charge of embezzlement against him. He in turn accused her of 'female imperiousness' and 'excessive ambition'. • Tacitus records that Narcissus hoped to bring down Agrippina by revealing her affair to Claudius. • This was the beginning of the end for Narcissus. He was in Campania having treatment for gout when Claudius was murdered. Foolishly he returned to Rome but he was now completely vulnerable. He was placed under guard, harshly treated, and according to Tacitus, 'the threat of imminent execution drove him to suicide'[68] although it is possible that he was murdered.	• In the case of Messalina, Pallas appeared to distance himself from the action, which led to the possible belief that he was already acting on behalf of Agrippina and may have been carrying out her instructions to provoke Narcissus to take the lead. • Pallas' support for Agrippina's candidacy for Claudius' fourth wife gave him a powerful patron. • Agrippina used Pallas to argue the case for the adoption of Nero by Claudius. • She rewarded Pallas' brother, Felix, with the prestigious procurator's position in Judaea, after disturbances in the provinces. However, this was an unprecedented appointment as Felix was an ex-slave. • Agrippina exercised an influence on finances by using Pallas' influential administrative position as head of the imperial revenues. • Due to their close collaboration, they were believed to have been having an adulterous affair, although this is highly unlikely as Agrippina, who was obsessed with her lineage, would not be likely to have an affair with an ex-slave. • When Nero was no longer on close terms with his mother and resented her interference in his life, he decided that – as she was still powerful – he would at least get rid of Pallas who was charged with financial improprieties. In return for the freedman agreeing to resign peacefully, Nero would forgo retrospective enquiry into his affairs. • Tacitus says that the removal of Pallas pushed Agrippina into a highly dangerous stage in her relationship with Nero.

ACTIVITY 10.7

1. What roles had Seneca and Burrus been employed by Agrippina to fulfil?
2. What does Tacitus say about the influence of each of these men in Source 10.14?
3. Explain why they became concerned with Agrippina's behaviour and how they dealt with it.

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4 Explain why the relationship between Agrippina and Narcissus was one of open hostility.
5 What part did Agrippina play in his downfall and death?
6 Why was Pallas Agrippina's closest ally among the imperial freedmen?
7 How did this relationship benefit:
   - Agrippina
   - Pallas?
8 Why and how did Nero remove him from power and what was the main impact on Agrippina?

Agrippina's personality and its impact

Agrippina was:

- obsessed with her lineage, which she exploited at every opportunity
- focused totally on securing the throne for her son, Nero
- politically ambitious for herself
- obsessed with acquiring money to build up a political support base (*clientela*)
- relentless and ruthless in getting what she wanted, even using sex and murder for political ends if necessary
- an opportunist, but who knew when to act and when to hold back
- astute at diplomacy, knew when to be cautious and carefully planned her many 'projects'.

According to Tacitus, she had an almost masculine approach to things.

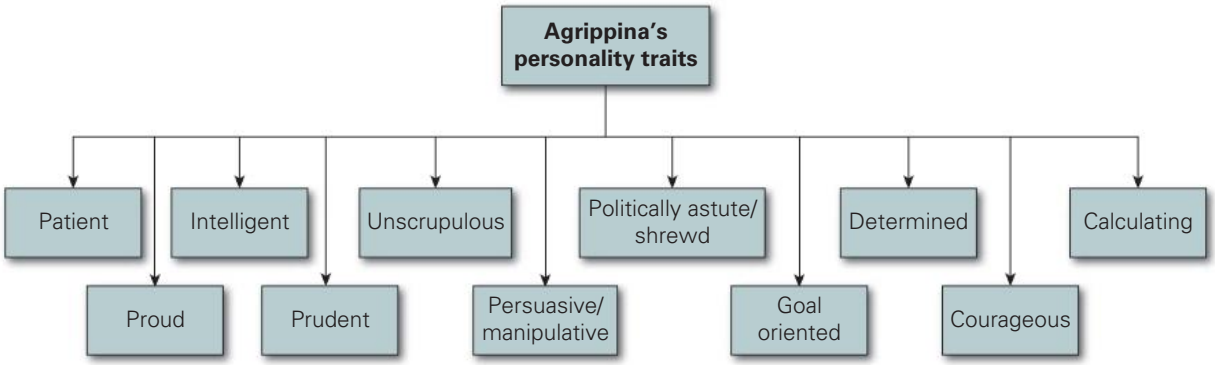

FIGURE 10.28 Agrippina's personality traits

ACTIVITY 10.8

Since aspects of Agrippina's personality have been referenced throughout this study, draw up a table of two columns. In one, list these traits; in the other, provide examples from the text.

Attempts on Agrippina's life and her eventual death

Since there is little known of Agrippina's activities in the four years before her death, it has been assumed that her power and influence over Nero had declined and that she had to keep a lower profile.

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A COMMENT ON...

Loss of influence or not?

- A problem with determining if Agrippina lost influence with Nero in early 55 is the confusion of dates in the literary sources, and the assumption that her waning influence with her son was due to Seneca and Burrus preventing her from being involved in any political business.
- Tacitus says that her influence declined in 55, but she was still powerful enough to have her opponents punished, and some four years later her influence must have still been strong, because Tacitus says that one of the reasons Nero decided to kill her was that Poppaea, his lover, taunted him with being under his mother's control.
- If she did remain a force in Nero's life, as suggested by Barrett, then she must have played some part in the so-called five good years of his early reign (54–59).
- Also, in 59, just prior to her death, she was still able to count on the loyalty of the Praetorian Guard.
- Finally, the sources say that Nero really went off the rails after the death of his mother.

It is difficult to know what motivated Nero to kill his mother in 59 AD.

The sources mention a number of possible reasons, such as:

1 the jealousy and ambition of Nero's latest lover, Poppaea Sabina, who despaired of ever marrying Nero while his mother was alive because of her support for Octavia.

2 a rumour of incest between mother and son. Tacitus records that Acte (refer back to Source 10.13) warned Nero that his mother 'was boasting of her intimacy with her son and that her boasts had received wide publicity, and that the army would never tolerate a sacrilegious emperor'.[69] The rumour of incest is highly unlikely.

Nero avoided his mother, as he believed 'that wherever Agrippina was she was intolerable'[70] and decided to kill her. According to Tacitus, Seneca and Burrus like 'everyone longed for the mother's domination to end'.[71] Although they must have known that Nero planned to kill his mother, they played no part in her eventual murder, perhaps reluctant to tarnish their own reputations.

The accounts of Agrippina's death in the sources are melodramatic, sensationalised and contradictory (read Tacitus' account in the *Annals,* XIV, 4–10).

Nero supposedly hired Anicetus, the prefect of the naval fleet at Misenum (Bay of Naples), as the assassin. The farcical scenes of several failed attempts on Agrippina's life took place in and around the Bay of Naples where Nero was staying at Baiae. Her eventual murder occurred at her villa nearby.

1 The aim was originally to loosen the supports of her bedroom ceiling in her villa so that it would collapse on her while she slept. This plan was discovered.

2 This was followed by another scheme to build a ship with a collapsing cabin roof and to entice Agrippina onto the boat to return her to her villa after having dinner with her son at Baiae. Some way offshore, the canopy of the cabin collapsed, killing members of the crew and throwing Agrippina and her freedwoman Agerinus into the sea. Agerinus died at the scene. Agrippina, with an injured shoulder, managed to swim to nearby fishing boats or to shore and was helped back to her villa.

3 Aware of her son's responsibility for the attempt on her life and knowing that he would be waiting anxiously for news of her death, she feigned ignorance and reported to him that she had miraculously survived.

4 Nero was terrified that she would arm her slaves, call on the Praetorians and denounce him in front of the Senate or assembly. He asked Seneca and Burrus to help. 'Seneca had ventured to ask Burrus if the troops

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should be ordered to kill her', but Burras replied that 'the Guard were devoted to the whole imperial house and to Germanicus' memory; they would commit no violence against his offspring.'[72] Anthony Barrett believes 'Burrus does not come out of this well. He lacked the courage to object to the murder, but also lacked the courage to follow the emperor's orders to carry it out'.[73]

5 Anicetus and his men cordoned off her villa and she faced her death courageously, supposedly pointing to her womb and crying out 'Strike here!'[74] They struck her on the head many times with a club and finished her off with a sword. She was only 44 when she died.

FIGURE 10.29 A 19th-century painting by Antonio Rizzi of Nero inspecting his mother's body

6 According to Suetonius, Nero rushed to inspect his mother's body, after which she was cremated on her dining couch. She did not get a proper burial and was never interred in the Mausoleum of Augustus with her family.

The impact of her death

Now that she was out of the way, the self-interest of the Praetorians took over and Burrus led them in a cringing show of loyalty to Nero. Seneca penned a letter for Nero to send to the Senate, blaming Agrippina's freedwoman for trying to murder him, and appealing to the senators' age-old prejudices about powerful and ambitious women.

> She [Agrippina] had wanted to be co-ruler – to receive oaths of allegiance from the Guard, and to subject Senate and public to the same humiliation. Disappointed of this she had hated all of them – army, senate and people. She had opposed gratuities to soldiers and civilians alike. She had contrived the deaths of distinguished men. Only with the utmost difficulty, added Nero, had he prevented her from breaking into the Senate-house and delivering verdicts to foreign envoys.

SOURCE 10.17 Letter to the Senate from Nero, in Tacitus, *Annals,* XIV.10

Nero blamed his mother for all the scandals during the reign of Claudius and described her death 'as a national blessing'.[75]

- Agrippina's statues were destroyed and her inscriptions removed from public buildings.
- Despite her great influence, it seems that few mourned her death.
- Her birthday was declared a day of ill-omen.
- From this time, Nero 'plunged into the wildest improprieties, which vestiges of respect for his mother had hitherto not indeed repressed, but at least impeded'.[76]
- After 62 AD, reasonable government was replaced with a tyranny marked by cruelty and debauchery, as Seneca and Burrus lost control over Nero and he came under the influence of Poppaea, first his lover, then his wife. When Burrus died, Seneca lost his influence and vicious Tigellinus replaced Burrus as Prefect of the Praetorian Guard.

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ACTIVITY 10.9

1 What motives are suggested in the sources for Nero's decision to kill his mother?
2 How did he justify her murder in a letter to the Senate, written by Seneca?
3 Describe the immediate and longer-term repercussions of her murder.

10.4 Evaluation

Agrippina's impact and achievements must be gauged against the society of her day and its attitudes to women, as well as the personal factors that shaped her life. Also, the information on her is so limited that much of her life is a mystery, and because the ancient sources are uniformly hostile, the truth about her is difficult to discern.

Impact on her time

Agrippina the Younger wielded power and authority at the centre of the Roman Empire in ways unmatched by almost any other woman in Roman history.

Her impact on her time was unique in its extent and nature.

1 The impact of her status as the great-granddaughter of Augustus and Livia, the granddaughter of Antonia, Julia, Drusus and Agrippa, and the daughter of the popular general Germanicus and tragic mother, Agrippina the Elder:
   - led to her popularity in the provinces and among the legions
   - gave her the support she received until the end of her life from the Praetorian Guard
   - allowed her to make political alliances with influential senators
   - decided Claudius' choice of her as his fourth wife
   - was the reason for the excessive honours bestowed on her
   - influenced the adoption of Nero by Claudius and the marriage of Octavia to Nero
   - gave her 'permission' to act as 'partner' in the powers of Claudius.
2 Her impact on Claudius' reign and administration included stability, a more benign relationship between Claudius and the Senate, an interest in his building projects and her role in foreign affairs, dealing with military generals and even being responsible for appointing the governor of Judaea.
3 She impacted Nero's reign in a positive way by appointing Seneca and Burrus to guide him, but her refusal to give up her power and to continue interfering in his reign and behaving in a scandalous way had a negative impact. In the end, her behaviour, which led to her murder, impacted the remainder of Nero's career as his government descended into tyranny, cruelty and debauchery with his eventual assassination.
4 Her obsession to promote her son impacted the lives and careers of many people. She made and destroyed careers. She ruthlessly removed – either by disgrace, forced suicide or calculated murder – anyone who stood in her way. She promoted the careers of Seneca, Burrus and Pallas; destroyed Narcissus in the end; shamed the future husband of Claudius' daughter, Julius Silanus Torquatus, until he was struck off the Senate list and later committed suicide; sent her agents into the provinces to poison the governor of Asia, Marcus Junius Silanus, because she saw him as a threat to Nero; and destroyed the careers and lives of any of those close to Britannicus (advisors, loyal Praetorians and Messalina's mother).
5 Her impact was seen in her title of Augusta and in the coinage of Claudius and Nero's reign. She was represented on coins like no other royal woman ever was.

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An assessment of her life and career

Although Agrippina does not come across as a particularly appealing person, she was not only the most honoured and glorified of all the women in the imperial family, but also exercised the most political influence. Barrett says that any woman in ancient Rome who, like Agrippina, was ambitious for power is probably 'by necessity, rather awful'.[77] He believes that it is fairer to judge her on her achievements rather than her personality.

Any assessment of Agrippina's life and career must take into account the following considerations:

1 her importance as the transmitter of the bloodline of Augustus, which gave her the right to share in the influence of the Julio-Claudians and which she exploited brilliantly to gain de facto power.

2 her popularity and prestige inherited from her famous military father Germanicus, which allowed her to dispense political favours.

3 her intelligence, political awareness and background experience by which she learnt how to proceed in achieving her ambitions.

4 her awareness that the imperial system had no formal political role for intelligent and ambitious women who had to achieve power and influence through the men in their lives.

Early lessons

From her early life under Tiberius and her brother Gaius, Agrippina learnt:

- the methods used by those in power (Tiberius, Sejanus and Gaius Caligula) to eliminate real or potential threats: exile, murder, executions, forced suicides and proscriptions
- the damage that could be inflicted by an incompetent ruler like her brother (his contempt for the Senate and humiliations of the nobility, and his self-indulgence and extravagant building projects that created a financial crisis, leading to opposition and riots)
- to keep a low profile at times, to conceal her ambitions (after the Lepidus conspiracy and her exile), to watch for the right opportunities and to plan and proceed carefully
- that money is power: she needed it to achieve her aims, gain supporters and protect her son, but she learnt the value of being frugal with finances
- it was essential to have the right people in the right place at the right time.

Her positive achievements as the wife of Claudius

- Prior to her marriage to Claudius, Agrippina had the sense and patience to wait for Messalina to 'destroy' herself and then made the most of the opportunity to marry her uncle by fostering supporters in the form of Pallas and Vitellius, and promoting her direct lineage to Augustus. She realised that the Messalina affair had exposed the vulnerability of Claudius' regime and that she could provide the emperor with respectability, stability and a much-needed link with the Julian family. On the other hand, Claudius could help boost her son's career.
- She managed her son's adoption by Claudius and so ensured a real Julian would succeed to the principate.
- She helped transform a repressive regime with many trials and executions into a relatively benign partnership.
- Together with Seneca she encouraged diplomacy and tact in Claudius' relationship with the Senate to secure collaboration where there had previously been hostility.
- She knew that the security of the principate depended on the loyalty of the army, particularly the Praetorian Guard in Rome. However, she knew that it was not enough to have the support of the Praetorian prefect, but that she must infiltrate the Guard with loyal supporters at all levels. It was here that her relationship with Germanicus benefited her. The Guard remained loyal to her until the end of her life.

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- She managed to gain the support of talented men such as Seneca and Burrus and manoeuvred them into key positions where they could be of most help to her, and she developed a network of political alliances, especially from the senatorial ranks and through promotions and patronage.
- She played a part in Claudius' administration to make it more highly organised and tended to function through consensus and careful planning. She was interested in the provinces, where she was able to influence events, and in public works, seeing them as an opportunity to gain positive public exposure.
- Whether she was responsible for her husband's death or not, she was astute enough to prepare for a smooth takeover by Nero.
- Her 'partnership in power' during Claudius' reign was a remarkable achievement. She also achieved her aim of getting her son Nero on the throne. During the first few years of his reign, she was at the peak of her power and prestige, appearing almost as joint ruler.

Agrippina's mistakes

- Agrippina was proud and arrogant concerning her lineage. She was certainly more talented than many of the males of her family, but she overlooked the political conventions and openly displayed her power.
- Her attempt to manipulate her son, restrict his personal life and criticise his every move once he became emperor alienated him.
- Her determination to hang onto power at all costs and her refusal to leave Nero to rule alone, with the help of Seneca and Burrus, lost her the support of her two allies, her privileges and eventually her life.

Legacy

1 In the short term, Agrippina the Younger's legacy (negative) was her son Nero.
   - After her death, he began to alienate all classes of Romans, particularly humiliating senators and *equites*, and putting to death wealthy people in order to confiscate their property to finance his artistic and debauched whims. After the Great Fire of 64 AD, he embarked on such a ferocious attack on the Christians, who he used as scapegoats, that the Roman citizens were eventually sickened by his brutality.
   - Through Tigellinus, the vicious Praetorian Prefect, Nero decimated the ranks of the old nobility, the troops began to hate him as much as the general public did and there were revolts among the legions. Eventually, he committed suicide at the age of 31, which brought to an end the proud Julio-Claudian Dynasty and was followed by a chaotic year when four emperors in succession ruled Rome.

2 Ronald Syme says that Agrippina passed from the scene, like most powerful women of the past, with no lasting effect. In one sense, he is correct. Her attempt to change the attitude of her contemporaries to the role of women in politics failed and she was the last imperial woman to play a dominant role for the next 150 years.

3 Although Agrippina left her own memoirs, they have not survived and there were no Agrippina supporters who could subsequently set the hostile record straight about her.

4 The legacy – not of Agrippina herself, but of the Agrippina in the distorted literary sources – so fascinated people over time that she has continued in the modern popular tradition as the scheming and obsessive mother, a ruthless power-seeker and a woman who would go to any lengths, including seduction and murder, to get rid of those who stood in her way.

5 In 1709, the great German composer Handel wrote an opera in three acts named 'Agrippina'.

6 In 1993, the citizens of the German city of Cologne – where Agrippina was born and subsequently founded a Roman colony called *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium* – took the decision to erect a statue to her, finally reinstating her to a place of honour.

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7 In 2015, Cologne celebrated the 2000th anniversary of Agrippina's birth with an exhibition at the Romano-Germanic Museum, where she is celebrated as 'a female founder of a 2000-year-old German city, who is mother, maiden and monster all at the same time!'[78]

FIGURE 10.30 A statue of Agrippina in the Roman-Germanic Museum in Cologne

Images and interpretations of Agrippina the Younger

The ancient literary sources

Throughout this option it has become obvious that the ancient literary sources of evidence for the life and achievements of Agrippina the Younger are generally negative. These sources reflect the prejudices and aims of the writers.

Tacitus

- Tacitus, the most lucid of the existing sources, claimed his aim was to expose the evils of the principate under the Julio-Claudians and show its degeneration into tyranny. The account in *The Annals* was geared to convince the reader of this. Not only was he biased against the principate as a system, but also against the members of the imperial family, particularly those ambitious imperial women, like Agrippina, who stepped outside the conservative Roman role of women in society and wanted to participate in the political process.
- Like other ancient writers, he saw certain groups, especially women, as stereotypes rather than as individuals, and so the accounts of Agrippina's life 'have been moulded by the standardized preconception of the politically ambitious woman'.[79]
- Tacitus is hostile to Agrippina, and his depiction of her should be treated with caution since there are certain recurring patterns in his work. His treatment of the scheming mothers, Livia and Agrippina, parallel each other: women use their seductive charms; they are sexually perverted or commit incest; they are arrogant, irrational or deceitful; they plot and intrigue for personal or political ends; and they use poison to get rid of their rivals.
- Some of Tacitus' major objections to Agrippina are that she:
  - overturned all the ideals of basic decency by her masculine ambitions: he says her behaviour as the wife of Claudius revealed a 'rigorous almost masculine despotism'[80]
  - everything she did was motivated by her desire to gain the power that rightly belonged to the Senate and people of Rome. For example, she became involved with Lepidus as a means to power; she used sex with Pallas to gain political support; her passion for money was a stepping stone to supremacy; she recalled Seneca whose political views were similar to her own; she appointed Burrus to make sure she had the support of the Praetorian Guard; she was highly visible in her attempts to gain and maintain power (for example, Caratacus and the Armenian delegation); she isolated Britannicus and had Claudius killed to advance the power of Nero and, through him, her own; she seemed to be looking around for a Party (a similar charge made against her mother).
- However, there is some grudging admiration of Agrippina in Tacitus for her energy, competence and general modesty in her private life. He also admits that the honours she received revealed a reverence felt for a unique woman.
- 'In his portrayal of Agrippina the Younger, Tacitus seems to have been torn between outright hostility and reluctant admiration'.[81]

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Suetonius

- Suetonius was a biographer, not a historian.
- Much of his work about Agrippina is selective as he was more interested in gossip and interesting anecdotes about the emperors.
- His treatment of Agrippina, though inconsistent, is in the same hostile tradition of Tacitus and Cassius Dio.
- He refers to her as 'shameless' in her advances to Galba; as having 'hooked' Claudius by kissing him and caressing until she enflamed his passions; as 'unchaste' after Claudius repented of marrying her; as an obsessive mother with Nero, keeping 'an over-critical eye on him';[82] and as a threatening and violent person who terrified her son into killing her.

Cassius Dio

- Cassius Dio, like Tacitus, was conservative in outlook and had a moral lesson to teach: that it is important to learn the lessons of the past.
- In his excessively negative treatment of Agrippina, Dio often appears to lack discernment between what is absurd and what is reasonable. However, he does admit that many of the claims made about Agrippina were simply gossip or speculation.
- He agrees with Tacitus that Agrippina's motivation was power, but he adds that 'nothing ever seemed enough' for her and that even though 'she exercised the same power as Claudius, she desired to have his title outright'.[83]
- He says her gratification for sex, money and power knew no bounds, and focuses a great deal on her immorality and depravity (particularly her adultery), criminality and lack of moderation.
- He says she seduced Claudius before their marriage; she was the mistress of both Pallas and Seneca; and that she was a second Messalina.
- In order to show the extent of Agrippina's depravity, he describes how she demanded the head of Lollia Paulina be brought to her after her forced suicide.

Modern images and interpretations

Most modern scholars until the late 20th century have tended to treat Agrippina in the same hostile way as the ancient sources.

1 T. Mommsen (1882), the German historian in *A History of the Roman World Under the Emperors*, described Agrippina as a 'mass of riddles'.[84] He was in no doubt that her morals 'were little better than Messalina' but worse still, 'she was madly ambitious'.[85]

2 Guglielmo Ferrero – the only apologist for Agrippina – in *The Women of the Caesars* (1911) presents the view that Tacitus and subsequent history judged Agrippina harshly and that Tacitus falsified some of his account. Ferrero gives a positive and sympathetic view of her as noble and self-sacrificing when she married Claudius, bringing her intelligence and strength of will to counter her husband's many deficiencies (hesitations and terrors): 'The moment she appeared … all hearts were filled with hope when they saw this respectable, active and energetic woman take her place beside Claudius the weakling.'[86] According to Ferrero, 'the government of Agrippina from the first was a great success … a certain concord returned to the imperial house, to the aristocracy, to the senate and to the state'.[87] He also challenges her involvement in Claudius' murder and credits the good government of the early years of Nero's government to her administrative skills.

3 Ronald Syme, in *Tacitus* (1958), accused her of being 'violent', 'merciless' and 'corrupt', 'with a robust criminality'.

4 D. R. Dudley, in *The World of Tacitus* (1968), says that she pursued her ambitions with relentless vigour.

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5 H. H. Scullard, in *From the Gracchi to Nero: A History of Rome from 133 BC to AD 68* (1970), says 'ambitious and unscrupulous, Agrippina struck down a series of victims: no man or woman was safe if she suspected rivalry or desired their wealth. Her weapons were poison or a trumped-up charge …'[88]

6 R. H. Martin, in *Tacitus* (1981), says 'Agrippina employed a steely resolve worthy of a man: there was no sexual looseness – unless it helped to advance her political control'.[89]

7 E. T. Salmon, in *A History of the Roman World 30 BC to AD 138* (1968), says 'She was no paragon of female virtue … she was prepared, if necessary, to wade through slaughter to a throne'.[90]

8 R. A. Bauman, in *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (1992), believed that 'She also shared Messalina's indifference to conventional morality, except that she kept a tight rein on her passions'.[91] However, 'in spite of her many unpleasant qualities, one cannot help feeling a certain admiration for Julia Agrippina, the last of the really great Julio-Claudian matrons'.[92]

More balanced views

Some studies, while still seeing Agrippina as ruthless in her pursuit of power, have tried to see her as an individual rather than a stereotype: a product of her environment and family in which the only way a woman could acquire influence or power was through her association with a husband or son.

1 Edwin Judge says in his article, *Agrippina as Ruler of Rome* (1988), that in Roman society those females from noble families, like Agrippina, who carried the family line, came to share in the political influence of their family.

2 Susan Wood, in *Imperial Women: A Study in Public Images 40 BC–AD 68* (1999), who has challenged Tacitus' reliability with regard to Agrippina, agrees that she was a victim of the Roman system, but asserts that she was responsible for her actions. Wood does not compare her favourably with Livia or Octavia and maintains that the reversal in her political influence under Nero was caused by her proud and flawed nature.

3 Anthony Barrett, in *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Roman Empire* (1999), has tried to remedy what he calls the lopsided view of Agrippina. He believes the evidence reveals that she made a positive contribution, even though she 'was a distinctly unattractive individual'.[93]

4 Judith Ginsberg's 2007 book, *Representing Agrippina*, provides a fresh look at Agrippina. She neither condemns her, nor tries to rehabilitate her, and she doesn't try to dredge up the 'real' Agrippina. She dissects the various depictions of her in both the literary and material sources such as statuary and coinage, showing the stark difference between them.

> Ginsberg's painstaking dissection of the portrayal by historians exposes the rhetorical tropes, the recurrent motifs and the craft that shaped the literary image of Agrippina.

SOURCE 10.18 Synopsis of J. Ginsberg (2007), *Representing Agrippina*, Oxford University Press, Canada

ACTIVITY 10.10

1 Assess Agrippina's achievements during the reigns of Claudius and Nero.
2 Describe the representations of Agrippina in the ancient literary sources.
3 Summarise the more balanced modern views of her by Edwin Judge, Susan Wood and Anthony Barrett.
4 How did Judith Ginsberg approach the question of Agrippina?
5 Explain Source 10.12.

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10.5 The value and limitations of visual sources in understanding Agrippina

Throughout this study of Agrippina, various categories of visual sources have been utilised to illustrate and explain the text. These include coins, statues in the round, relief statuary and cameos like the Gemma Claudia. These give a more favourable impression than the predominantly hostile literary views constantly paraded out – the stereotypical domineering woman, sexual transgressor, interfering mother. In the visual images, according to Judith Ginsberg, we are given quite a different image: a traditional matron and priestess, and an icon of domestic correctness, moral rightness and public piety.

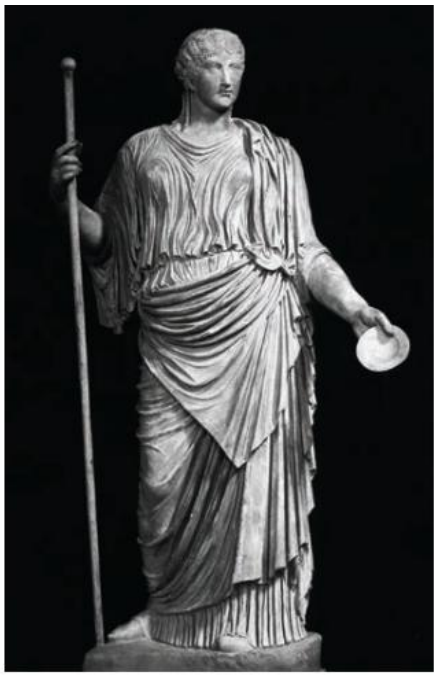

FIGURE 10.31 Image of a more mature Agrippina

However, it must be remembered that visual images were products of the culture of the imperial dynasty and its supporters and, like literary images, were fabricated to serve a purpose and reflect the interests of the Julio-Claudians. They were used to manipulate public opinion, counter criticism and flatter.

Coins

Numismatics, the study of coins, is important for historians because they provide a visual record of particular people and events, such as rulers and changes in a person's political or religious status; they are devices of propaganda which indicate what rulers want people to know about their reign; they throw light on domestic political issues and administration; and they convey a variety of details about individuals (appearance, clothing, hairdos, headdresses etc.), buildings and religious practices. However, they contain very little information, can be misinterpreted and are sometimes meaningless without a historical context provided by ancient writers.

The coins featuring Agrippina from the reigns of Gaius, Claudius and Nero provide an impression of her prominence in each reign.

> The issues of all three reigns are unique for coins minted by the imperial authorities in the role that give the living sister, wife and mother of the reigning princeps and they illustrate the progress that Agrippina made towards a shared rule.

SOURCE 10.19 A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 225

There are three remarkable coins featuring Agrippina from her career as sister, wife and mother of emperors.

1 During the reign of her brother, Gaius, a large coin (a sesterce) for the first time featured living women identified by both image and name. It had the traditional head of the emperor on the obverse and his sisters on the reverse. Each sister was identified by her name and represented as a goddess: Agrippina as Securitas, Drusilla as Concordia and Livilla as Fortuna. According to Barrett, this coin represented a significant stage in the elevation of imperial women. It was a symbolic recognition that his sisters 'shared the majesty of the principate'[94]. Refer to Figure 10.17.

2 Under the principate of Claudius, the famous Augusta coin appeared. It featured Agrippina with the title *Iulia Augusta Agrippina* on the reverse. This was unprecedented as she was the first wife of a living emperor to be given the title of Augusta. Also, the coin featured with the corn-ear crown of Ceres/Demeter (fertility), the 'archetypal mother'. She was the first living woman to be depicted on coins in this way. According to Judith Ginsberg, in her book *Representing Agrippina, Constructions of Female*

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Power in the Early Roman Empire, the Augusta coin promoted a number of impressions. Through its title (which was bestowed on Agrippina at about the same time Nero was adopted by Claudius) and its Ceres/Demeter element, it:

- suggested the imperial couple were to a certain extent equivalent
- placed Agrippina in the same league as her two revered ancestors, Livia and Antonia the Younger
- associated Agrippina with Ceres, who symbolised fertility and motherhood, and also implied she was the mother of the successor to Claudius
- contributed to the view of the imperial family as promoters of traditional Roman values. Refer to Figure 10.22.

3 During the early part of Nero's reign, a gold *aureus* depicted her facing her son, the emperor, as if equals and co-rulers, with the titles: 'Agrippa Augusta, wife of the deified Claudius and Mother of Caesar'. Such depiction was unprecedented and shows the extent of her influence at this time. Refer to Figure 10.25.

As well as throwing light on Agrippina's status, the coins of this period can also reveal something of her appearance. The sum total of our knowledge about her appearance in Tacitus is his claim that she was a beautiful woman who seduced men, including Claudius, as a means to political power. Imperial coins tended to feature individualised and realistic portraits of the rulers. Agrippina's face on the gold and silver coinage does not appear very attractive, she appears to have had heavy rounded features, rather jowly and with a large nose.

Other visual images

The Gemma Claudia

The Gemma Claudia (refer to Figure 10.3) has been discussed several times throughout the chapter. It was obviously an attempt to link Claudius to Agrippina's lineage with Augustus, and to 'reinforce the links to Agrippina's illustrious parents' at a time when 'Claudius needed to re-establish his political position'.[95] It also seems to be indicating the wellbeing brought to the empire through the marriage.

Statues and busts

Because no statue base bearing Agrippina's name has been linked to any surviving statue with certainty it has been 'impossible to produce a secure corpus of portraits of her'.[96] The identification of statues and busts usually depends on the subjective judgement of scholars who tend to compare them with the images of her on coins and with other members of her family. Some of those identified as her look remarkably similar to her father Germanicus, once again reminding the general public of her illustrious background.

One piece of sculpture claimed to be her shows the following facial features: tightly-set lips with the top one protruding slightly above the lower one; prominent cheekbones; broad chin; large eyes; prominent nose with a rounded end, all producing a rather masculine look.

FIGURE 10.32 Nero and Agrippina from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias

The provincial sculptures of the *Sebasteion* in Aphrodisias

These two reliefs already discussed in the chapter reveal that the local sponsors of Aphrodisias were keen to promote Agrippina's interest in the provinces and that they appear to have recognised her power in both the reigns of Claudius and Nero. In the

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sculpture with Claudius, she is represented as Ceres/Demeter and appears to be symbolised either in a harmonious marital relationship or a political alliance. In the one with the young Nero, she is depicted as the goddess Fortuna placing an oak crown on her son's head, as though raising him from heir to emperor: 'The gesture should be seen as alluding to Agrippina's precedence and pre-eminent status.'[97]

ACTIVITY 10.11

Assess the value and limitations of the Agrippina coins, the Gemma Claudia and the statuary reliefs at the Sebasteion for an understanding of Agrippina's status during the reigns of Claudius and Nero.

FIGURE 10.33 The Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, Turkey

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

10.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- By the time of Agrippina's birth, the Roman Empire extended from Gaul and Spain in the west, Syria and Asia in the East, and from the Danube and Rhine in the north, to Egypt and the coast of North Africa in the south, leading to an empire-wide trading network and the influx of food, building, decorative and luxury resources to Rome.
- Agrippina the Younger's great-grandfather Augustus had set up a new form of government known as the principate (rule by the 'first man'). Society comprised three Roman classes: senatorial, equestrians, and plebs, as well as an increasingly influential group of freedmen (ex-slaves) and an increasing number of slaves.
- Upper-class and imperial women were more emancipated than previously and some were independently wealthy. However, although politically aware, the only way they could exert influence was either through seduction, by 'buying' the support of male clients and through males within the family such as husbands and sons.

10.2 AGRIPPINA'S BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE

- Agrippina the Younger was descended from two noble clans: the Julii and Claudii.
- The examples of her male and female predecessors may have had an influence on her.
- Her mother was the headstrong, outspoken and fierce Agrippina the Elder, and her father the ever-popular general Germanicus. She was born in the Roman province of Germania Inferior, spent her early years in the military camps and was very young when her father died unexpectedly in Syria.
- The reaction of her mother to her loss, her intrigues against the Emperor Tiberius and attempts to get her sons the throne created a toxic atmosphere in which Agrippina grew up. After the imprisonments and subsequent deaths of her mother and brothers, Nero Caesar and Drusus Caesar, Tiberius married her off at the age of 13 to the nobleman Gn. Domitius Ahenobarbus, to whom she had a son the year after the death of Tiberius.

10.3 KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENTS OF AGRIPPINA'S LIFE AND CAREER

- The basis of her future power included her family connections; the wealth she inherited from her first two marriages; the network of clients she placed in influential positions; political alliances with senators; honours granted to her by her brother Gaius Caligula, her third husband, Claudius, and her son Nero; and her personality (intelligence, shrewdness and knowing when to seize the right opportunity to achieve her aims).
- During the reign of Gaius Caligula, she and her two sisters were elevated to positions of symbolic power by the excessive honour he bestowed on them, but when, after a serious illness, he became what Suetonius called a 'monster', she is supposed to have taken part in a conspiracy against his life and she was exiled, had all her property confiscated and her son was sent to live with his aunt.
- Recalled during the reign of her uncle, Claudius, she kept a low profile, until the emperor's scandalous wife Messalina was killed, after which she began intriguing to secure her own and her son's future.

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After her marriage to Claudius and the adoption of her son Nero by Claudius over his natural son, Britannicus, the country was 'transformed', as Agrippina became Claudius' 'partner in power', supporting his agenda, bringing stability to his reign and employing the philosopher Seneca as her son's tutor. Both Agrippina and Nero were bestowed with honours, and she was given the name 'Augusta', an unprecedented move. She had the support of Burrus, the sole Praetorian Prefect and the guardsmen, as well as the army, due to her lineage from Germanicus, and she had the total support of the influential imperial freedman, Pallas, who was in charge of the empire's finances. She may have been responsible for Claudius' death by poisoning.

- In the first years of Nero's reign, Agrippina was at the peak of her career, the most influential person in the empire, as she managed Nero's affairs and received honours as the mother of the emperor. A coin was issued with her facing Nero, as if they were co-rulers. However, her continual interference in his life and her unwillingness to give up her power became a danger to the state and ultimately led him to plan her murder. Seneca and Burrus were happy to see the end of her power.
- With the death of his mother, and later Burrus, the loss of influence of Seneca, the rise of the vicious new Praetorian Prefect Tigellinus, and the influence of Poppaea, first Nero's mistress and then wife, Nero's reign deteriorated dramatically, leading to conspiracies against him and his eventual suicide.

10.4 EVALUATION

- Agrippina the Younger wielded power and authority at the centre of the Roman Empire in ways unmatched by almost any other woman in Roman history. Her impact (both positive and negative) was unique in its extent and nature, particularly during the reigns of Claudius and Nero.
- Any assessment of Agrippina's life and career must take into account her popularity and prestige due to her lineage, her background experiences and her awareness that the imperial system had no formal role for intelligent and ambitious women who had to achieve power and influence through the men in their lives. She made positive achievements during the reign of Claudius, but she made mistakes during the reign of her son, Nero, by refusing to give up her power.
- She passed from the scene like most powerful women of the past. Her lasting legacy was her son Nero and the impact that he had by bringing the Julio-Claudian Dynasty to an end, which led to a chaotic aftermath.
- The ancient literary sources are generally hostile to her, as are most modern interpretations, although more recently, historians have attempted to present a more balanced view of her.

10.5 THE VALUE AND LIMITATIONS OF VISUAL SOURCES IN UNDERSTANDING AGRIPPINA

- Visual sources such as coins, cameos and relief statuary give a more favourable impression of Agrippina than the predominantly hostile literary views. They provide a variety of details about her appearance, about the chronology of her rise to power and about significant events in her life. They can throw light on political and religious issues, but they are all a form of imperial propaganda, and can be misinterpreted. They are also meaningless without a historical context.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- Augusta
- *carpentum*
- *clientela*
- lictors
- obverse
- Praetorian Guard
- principate
- *toga virilis*

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What change occurred in the government of Rome under Agrippina's great-grandfather, Augustus?

2) What negative changes occurred in the principates of:
- Gaius Caligula
- Nero?

3) Describe the cause of:
- the hostility between Agrippina the Elder and the Emperor Tiberius
- the exile of Agrippina the Younger at the time of Gaius Caligula
- the hostility between Agrippina the Younger and the freedman Narcissus.

4) How significant was:
- Agrippina the Younger's lineage for her political influence
- her second marriage to Gaius Sallustius Crispus Passienus for her political influence
- the role of Pallas in fulfilling Agrippina the Younger's ambition for herself and her son
- the role of Burrus in ensuring the smooth succession of Nero after the death of Claudius
- the role of Seneca in the reign of Nero?

5) What was the perspective of Tacitus on:
- politically ambitious women like Agrippina the Younger
- the impact of the marriage of Claudius to Agrippina
- the effect of Agrippina's murder on the reign of Nero?

Historical skills

1) Describe the public image of Agrippina between 37–59 AD.

2) Describe the various ways in which Agrippina exerted political influence.

3) What do the following events reveal about Agrippina's power during the reign of Claudius:
- The adoption of Nero as Claudius' son
- The issuing of the 'Augusta coin'
- The foundation of a new colony at her birth place in Germania Inferior called *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*
- The isolation of Brittanicus
- The ceremony of homage by captured British leader, Caratacus
- The appointment of Felix as governor of Judaea
- The smooth transition of power to Nero.

4) Evaluate Agrippina's achievements during the reign of Claudius and Nero.

5) Explain the reasons for Agrippina's apparent waning influence with Nero and how the sources say she reacted to her loss of power.

6) Explain how her personality aided her in her pursuit of power for herself and her son.

7) Describe the representations of Agrippina the Younger by:
- Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio Cassius
- historians from the early 20th to 21st centuries.

8) Consider whether – in the light of Judith Ginsberg's statement about 'the recurrent motifs and the craft that shaped the literary image of Agrippina' – we can ever know the 'real' Agrippina.

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PART 3
Historical periods

CHAPTER

Chapter 11 New Kingdom Egypt to the death of Thutmose IV

Chapter 12 The Greek world 500–440 BC

Chapter 13 The Augustan age 44 BC–14 AD (digital chapter)

Chapter 14 The Julio-Claudians and the Roman Empire 14–69 AD

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PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

This was a transformative period in Egyptian history, a time of increased contact with the outside world, when a series of outstanding kings, supported by influential queens, campaigned far beyond Egypt's borders creating what has been termed an Egyptian 'empire'. With conquests came enormous wealth, the influx of foreigners and changes: in the army, in the image of the pharaoh, in the status of the god Amun-Re, in the additions of magnificent buildings, and in an expanded bureaucracy to cope with an empire.

This period in Greek history, which focuses chiefly on the city-states of Sparta and Athens, is marked by inter-city tensions and rivalries, invasion and change. It traces the ways each city reacted to outside forces, includes stories of outstanding military achievements, courage, sacrifice, betrayal and selfishness. Out of all of this emerged an aggressive Athenian empire and a radical democracy that created fear and suspicion in oligarchic Sparta with its oppressed helot population. These events became the prelude to a massive Greek civil war at the end of the century.

Augustan Rome emerged from years of upheaval in the late Roman Republic, as powerful men waged war across its empire for control, without an awareness that the Republic was no longer a functioning entity. Augustus created a blueprint for a new form of government (rule by the 'first man' or principate), while at the same time appearing to retain Republican forms to prevent hostility among the leading groups in the state. His principate was based on efficiency, justice, old virtues, prosperity and fairness. The army, under his direct control and the real basis of his power, kept the provinces relatively secure.

The success of the principate set up by Augustus depended to a large extent on the character and ability of the individual who became princeps, but the Julio-Claudian successors of Augustus suffered from unfortunate character traits. They were also faced with a servile Senate, ambitious women who intrigued on behalf of their sons, powerful freedmen who ran the bureaucracy and interference by the powerful Praetorian Guard. The imperial court was a hot-bed of intrigue, conspiracies, gratuitous brutality, the ruthless removal of any opponents and even murder. Despite these difficulties, two of the Julio-Claudian emperors, Tiberius and Claudius, did prove to be effective administrators. However, it is hard to get an accurate picture of these rulers as the literary sources are consistently hostile.

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CHAPTER 11
New Kingdom Egypt to the death of Thutmose IV

FIGURE 11.1 An image of the god Amun with the double-plumed headdress of ostrich feathers

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FIGURE 11.2 The areas of Egyptian control, influence and contact by the time of Thutmose IV

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of New Kingdom Egypt society during the Ramesside period through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The chronological and geographical context • Internal developments • Expansion of Egypt's boundaries

A king is he, mighty of arm, the excellent fortress of his armies, the iron will of his people.

He attacks every land with his sword … his arrows do not miss; mighty of arm.

His equal does not exist, Montu on the battlefield.

SOURCE 11.1 The Gebel Barkal Stela, trans, S. Yeivin, *Journal of The Palestine Oriental Society*, 14 (3), p. 194

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

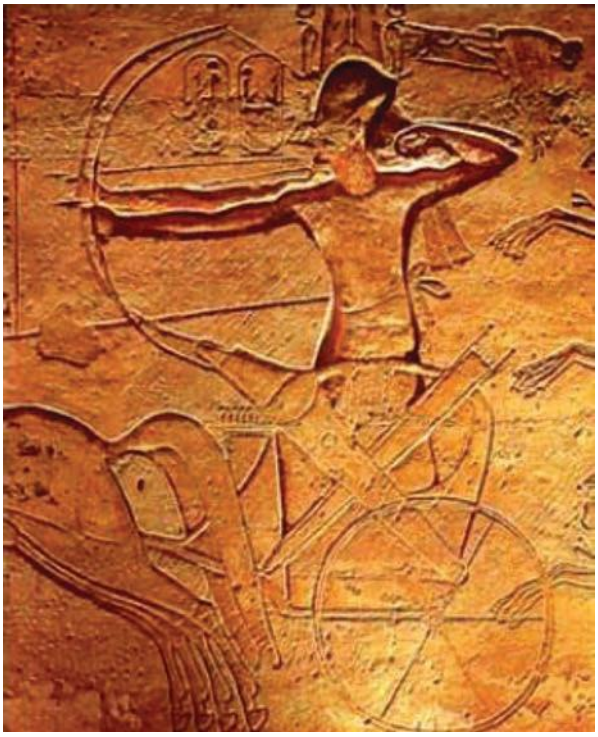

FIGURE 11.3 An Egyptian pharaoh in his horse-drawn chariot wearing the blue war crown

FIGURE 11.4 A catalogue of captive Syrian/Palestinian towns inscribed at Karnak

Study Figures 11.3 and 11.4 carefully. What do they suggest about the historical period you are about to study? Think about the types of changes in traditional Egyptian life that might have occurred during this time.

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CHAPTER 11 Overview

KEY IDEA

This was a transformative period in Egyptian history, a time of increased contact with the outside world, when a series of outstanding kings, supported by influential queens, campaigned far beyond Egypt's borders creating what has been termed an Egyptian 'empire'. With conquests came enormous wealth, the influx of foreigners and changes: in the army, in the image of the pharaoh, in the status of the god Amun-Re, in the additions of magnificent buildings and in an expanded bureaucracy to cope with an empire.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Although the catalysts for the transformation of societies vary throughout history, they always require adaptations to political and cultural institutions as well as in the lives of people. Within the context of ancient Egypt, the changes that occurred in the early 18th Dynasty were transformative and far-reaching. We should consider – as we attempt to cope with the dramatic and rapid changes that have transformed 21st society – that people of the past also faced similar problems, although the pace of change was slower.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- barque
- booty
- co-regency
- cult temple
- deified
- dynasty
- Heb-sed
- *khepresh*
- *ma'at*
- Medjay
- mortuary temple
- necropolis
- New Kingdom
- pylon
- regent
- scimitar
- tribute
- vassal

INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the image of the pharaoh change during this period?

Painting the picture

The **New Kingdom** and the 18th **Dynasty** emerged from a struggle to expel the Hyksos – foreigners from western Asia – who had settled in the Nile delta during the Second Intermediate Period when Egypt was ruled by a series of weak and insignificant Egyptian kings. It was this occupation, lasting for approximately 100 years, that later Egyptians saw as the 'great humiliation' and it was the eventual liberation of Egypt from these foreigners that was the catalyst that transformed the Egyptian state.

New Kingdom the period of the 18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties from c. 1550–1070 BC

dynasty a line of kings and queens from the same family

Kamose (the last of the 17th Dynasty) initiated a war of liberation against the Hyksos, and Ahmose (regarded as the first king of the 18th Dynasty) defeated and expelled them from Egypt and reunited the land under one powerful king. During this period, a number of outstanding queens – Tetisheri, Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari – played prominent roles (military, political and religious) in establishing and consolidating the new dynasty.

Ahmose was followed by a series of vigorous, intelligent warrior kings (and a female pharaoh) who extended Egypt's borders by campaigns in the south (Nubia) and in the north (Palestine and Syria), establishing what some historians call an Egyptian 'empire'.

These pharaohs promoted the local Theban god Amun – who they believed had given them victory – into a state god and associated him with the great god Re to become Amun-Re. Anxious to show their devotion to this god, they embarked on a frenzy of religious building, mostly at Amun's temple at Karnak, based on the wealth that began to pour into Egypt as a result of their conquests (booty and tribute) as well as increased foreign trade. By the time of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III, the cult of Amun-Re and its priesthood had achieved unprecedented power and wealth.

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As a response to the expansion of Egypt, changes occurred in the army, and a massive restructure of the administration, plus an increase in the civil, religious and military bureaucracy, was needed to carry out internal and external affairs.

The reign of Thutmose IV was a turning point in terms of the 'empire'; the need for constant military actions in Syria had ended and all that was necessary in the future were some minor raids to keep the frontiers safe. Diplomacy, rather than war, was employed to deal with foreign powers.

TABLE 11.1 A summary of pharaonic rule from the time of Ahmose to Thutmose IV

REIGN	PHARAOH	MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS
1550–1525	Ahmose	• Sacked the Hyksos capital of Avaris • Liberated Egypt from the Hyksos: – Laid siege to Sharuhen in southern Palestine – Established control in Nubia • Reunified Egypt • Put down several rebellions
1525–1504	Amenhotep I	• Began the process of reconquering Nubia and consolidating Egypt's control of it • Took first steps in developing the west bank at Thebes into a vast necropolis • Founded the special workforce for building royal tombs, housed in the village of Deir el-Medina; he and his mother were patrons of the village
1504–1493	Thutmose I	• Incorporated Nubia into the nascent Egyptian 'empire' • Campaigned and developed a sphere of influence in western Asia • Set the pattern for later pharaohs by ordering the construction of his tomb in the Valley of the Kings • Built extensively from Giza to Nubia, but particularly in honour of Amun-Re at Karnak
1493–1479	Thutmose II	• Crushed a serious rebellion in Nubia and an uprising in Palestine
1479–1458	Hatshepsut and Thutmose III	• Ruled as a female pharaoh in a co-regency with her nephew, Thutmose III, for over 20 years • Carried out an extensive building program, particularly her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri and obelisks at Karnak • Sent a trading expedition to Punt for incense and other tropical products • Promoted Amun-Re at every opportunity and, under her, Amun's priesthood achieved great prestige and influence
1458–1425	Sole reign of Thutmose III	• Carried out 17 military campaigns in western Asia: conquest and maintenance of an 'empire' • Attributed all his victories to Amun-Re, whose cult reached its peak under his reign • Gave the major share of booty and tribute to Amun-Re • Built extensively and energetically from the delta to Gebel Barkal in Nubia, but especially at Karnak

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TABLE 11.1 (*continued*)

REIGN	PHARAOH	MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS
1427–1401	Amenhotep II	• Consolidated his father's conquests • Brought peace to the 'empire' • Began diplomatic relations with the previous enemy of Egypt, the king of Mitanni in north-west Asia
1401–1391	Thutmose IV	• Used diplomacy rather than wars – a turning point in terms of the 'empire' • Favoured the sun cult of Heliopolis • Formed an alliance with the Mitannians • Set a pattern for future kings by marrying the daughter of a foreign king

Source: the dates in this table follow those suggested by John Baines and Jeromir Malek in their *Atlas of Ancient Egypt*.

11.1 The chronological and geographical context

The Egyptian view of the people and lands beyond Egypt

The nature of ancient Egyptian civilisation was determined to a large extent by the physical environment in which the people lived. The predominant forces of nature which influenced their lives were the Nile and its annual inundation, the deserts which encroached on the fertile ribbon of land adjacent to the river and the ever-present sun.

The long fertile valley, enclosed by deserts on both sides, provided a secure environment for its inhabitants. Although the deserts were not total barriers to invasion and foreign influences, the Egyptians were confident for most of their history in their relative isolation and prosperity. They developed a conservative attitude to life where nothing much changed from one year to the next, and their world view was insular.

Their land was known in antiquity as *Kemet* or the *Black Land*, and in their creation myth, *Kemet* was the centre of the world that ran according to divine order (*ma'at*), established since the time of the gods. This divine land was surrounded by areas of chaos: deserts and foreign lands. For millennia, Egyptian armies had defended their land against the forces of chaos which had to be driven away. During the Middle Kingdom (c. 2040–1640), several kings built 'walls-of-the-Ruler' to bar Asiatics from entering Egypt and set up border stones to mark the extent of their territory and to prevent any Nubian crossing it by land or water.

The Egyptians referred to themselves as 'the People' and these foreigners as 'The Nine Bows' to whom they gave epithets such as 'wretched', 'vile', 'craven' and 'miserable' who had to be 'crushed'. For a long time, the Egyptians did not differentiate between the different groups from the east, calling them all Asiatics or 'sand dwellers'. These terms used about foreigners were not based on their ethnicity, but on the Egyptian's belief in their cultural inferiority. The Egyptians 'kept up the pretence of their own superiority even when the facts did not warrant it'[1] but, the inscriptional references did not equate with reality.

Contact with foreigners

For centuries, Egyptians had been exploiting Nubia for its products, particularly gold, and had commercial links with Palestine and Syria as far as Ugarit, where they traded for valuable cedar wood, resin used in mummification, Syrian silver and lapis lazuli that came from Afghanistan via Mesopotamia. They also sent trading expeditions to the lands along the Red Sea, including Punt.

Also, the Bedouin from the Sinai, as well as Palestinians and Libyans, often moved into Egypt to escape drought in their own lands and were permitted to settle along the Nile.

Those from outside Egypt who came peacefully as traders or messengers enjoyed special status, and there had also been foreigners (the **Medjay**) used as trackers and mercenaries in the Egyptian army since the Middle Kingdom.

Medjay Nubians used by the Egyptians as mercenary soldiers and as police in Egypt

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Be informed, if you please, that two males and three female Medjay came down from the desert in year 3, 3rd month of the 2nd season, day 27. They said: 'We have come to serve the palace!' They were questioned about the state of the desert. They said: 'We have not heard anything, but the desert is dying of hunger ...

SOURCE 11.2 From the Semna Despatches, a group of papyri that reported on activities in the vicinity of the Middle Kingdom forts around Semna; Despatch No. 5, trans. Paul Smithers, *The Journal of Egyptology*, 31:3–10

FIGURE 11.5 Evidence of trade with Asiatics in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt

The Second Intermediate period

The Second Intermediate Period (c. 1640–1550) divided two of the greatest eras in Egyptian history: the Middle Kingdom (11th and 12th Dynasties) and New Kingdom (18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties).

It was a period marked by the 100-year occupation and control of Lower Egypt by a series of foreign kings known as Hyksos. The term 'Hyksos' was a Greek version of the name *Hekau-khasu* that translates as 'Rulers of Foreign Lands'. They were a Semitic people, believed to have come from south-western Asia (Palestine) and were likely traders who had been coming to Egypt for a long time. They had first been welcomed in Hutwaret (Avaris), a trading town established during the Middle Kingdom because of its easy access by land to Sinai and Palestine. It would have been natural for them to have sent word to their friends and families to come to join them, resulting in a growth in population. When the Hyksos first arrived, they would not have posed any threat to Egyptian security as they were peaceful and because to the Egyptians, any threat from outside was unthinkable.

However, due to the weakness of the Egyptian kings of the 13th Dynasty, the Hyksos were eventually able to exert political and military power. They took Memphis, the original Egyptian capital, and when the Egyptian rulers moved their capital to Thebes in Upper Egypt, Lower Egypt was virtually handed over to the Hyksos without their having to strike a blow.

During the 2nd Intermediate Period, there was no centralised rule in Egypt. The country was divided into two:

1 The Hyksos ruled in Lower Egypt from their stronghold city Avaris, in the eastern delta and eventually as far south as Cusae.

2 A native Egyptian dynasty ruled from their capital of Thebes in Upper Egypt in semi-independence. Their area of control extended from Abydos to Elephantine on the border of Egypt and Nubia.

FIGURE 11.6 Hyksos and Theban spheres of influence towards the end of the 17th Dynasty

Biased Egyptian contemporary records and those from later periods referred to the Hyksos as uncouth Asiatics whose rule was totally disastrous for Egypt. A description by Manetho, an Egyptian

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priest – writing over 1000 years after the events – described them as invaders who appeared like a 'blast of God', their war chariots laying waste to the country. He wrote that they 'burned our cities ruthlessly, razed to the ground the temples of the gods, and treated the natives with cruel hostility.'[2] Egyptians regarded this occupation as the 'great humiliation', a period during which, according to 20th-century scholar J. Wilson, 'the proud superiority of Egypt over all her previous opponents was very rudely dashed to the ground with important consequences for the Egyptian spirit.'[3]

Unfortunately, the Second Intermediate Period is a rather confusing time because:

- of the number of dynasties ruling concurrently
- huge gaps and bias in the historical record
- the incomplete and confusing nature of the archaeological remains.

However, some of the finds from sites in the delta, such as Tell el-Dab'a (former Avaris), and careful modern analyses have shown that there is another side to the Hyksos story.

The evidence shows that their administration was not oppressive, and that they assimilated with Egyptian culture and religion:

- The Hyksos' kings adopted the titles of the kings of Egypt, and even used Egyptian names.
- They included Egyptian officials in their administration.
- They modelled their official religion on that of the Egyptians. Their Asiatic god, Baal, seems to have been assimilated with Seth, the Egyptian god of Avaris. They seem to have accepted other Egyptian gods also. The Hyksos kings honoured Re, the sun-god, by including him as part of their throne names. For example, the last Hyksos king, Apophis, took the throne name of Aweserre.
- The Hyksos introduced many new processes and products into Egypt that had a future impact on the 18th Dynasty.

> The Hyksos did enter Egypt but did not appear there suddenly … they entered gradually over a series of decades until the Egyptians realized the danger they posed in their midst. Most of the Asiatics came across Egypt's borders for centuries without much of a stir.

SOURCE 11.3 M. Bunsen, *The Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, p. 119

The Nubian (Kushite) kingdom to the south

While the Hyksos' power was growing in Lower Egypt, another power was growing in the south as a serious threat to the Theban dynasties.

During the Middle Kingdom, the Egyptian rulers had secured the border between Egypt and Nubia (the lands of the upper Nile and the Sudan) at the 1st Cataract and had built garrisoned fortresses between the 2nd and 3rd Cataracts.

However, during the Second Intermediate Period the rulers in Thebes failed to maintain and supply these forts, and as they neglected the south, a powerful Kushite Nubian kingdom, centred on the town of Kerma, filled the vacuum left by the Egyptians. The Kushites leaders 'sought to portray themselves as true kings, queens and noblemen using Egypt for inspiration'.[4] A number of the Egyptian forts were destroyed and the border with Egypt shifted and fluctuated.

Relations between the Egyptians, Hyksos and Kushites

Contrary to earlier views that this was a period of discord, chaos and upheaval, the groups appear to have lived on relatively peaceful terms with each other, although that is not to say there was no hostility. They interacted through trade and appeared not to interfere in each other's sphere of influence except perhaps to impose taxes when trade was carried on beyond their own boundaries. There seems to have been a kind of truce as traders from each area plied the Nile. The Kushites, however, had control of the overland desert

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route via the western oases which enabled them to bypass Theban territory in their dealings with the Hyksos. This route also gave the Hyksos direct access to the gold of Nubia.

ACTIVITY 11.1

Read and reflect on the following background information before you attempt the activities.

- The predominant forces that influenced life along the Nile
- The reasons for Egyptian confidence in their security and isolation
- The effect of the concept of *ma'at* on the way Egyptians saw their land and the people in the surrounding areas
- The various ways they described foreigners
- Early trade contacts with Nubia and Syria/Palestine
- The role of the Medjay in Egypt since Middle Kingdom times
- The reasons for foreigners occasionally settling in Egypt
- The location of Nubia (Wawat and Kush) – refer to Figure 11.2.

1 What was the Second Intermediate Period in Egyptian history? Explain why the events of this period appear so confusing and contradictory.

2 Who were the Hyksos? When did they first enter Egypt and establish power in the Delta area?

3 Explain why later Egyptians considered their presence:

- a 'great humiliation'
- an 'invasion'
- as having 'dashed the proud superiority of the Egyptians to the ground'?

4 Use Source 11.3 to correct the negative view that they were ruthless invaders.

5 Who was the last Hyksos king?

6 Provide evidence that they were not oppressive rulers as later Egyptians depicted them.

7 Describe the division of Egypt in the late 17th Dynasty and the growing kingdom of Kush in the south.

8 How did these groups interact with one another?

11.2 Internal developments

The impact of the Hyksos on Egyptian life

Although the Hyksos' occupation of Egypt had undermined the Egyptians' false sense of security and feelings of superiority, it brought benefits to Egypt's economic, cultural and military life. The Hyksos introduced them to foreign lifestyles, new forms of military attack, different religious beliefs, artistic styles, products and processes.

The Hyksos' benefits to Egypt included:

1 technological processes

- the greater use of bronze instead of copper
- improved silver-working techniques
- the potter's wheel
- the vertical and lighter loom that improved methods of weaving

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2 agricultural products
   - the introduction of olive and pomegranate trees
   - the hump-backed Zebu cattle
3 preservation of Egypt's cultural heritage by copying such texts as the:
   - Edwin Smith Medical Papyrus
   - Rhind Mathematical Papyrus
   - Westcar Papyrus
4 new musical instruments
   - the long-necked lute
   - oboe
   - 12-stringed lute
   - tambourine
5 innovations in weaponry, e.g. horse-drawn chariot and composite bow. See below.

The Hyksos also enhanced and widened Egyptian trade and diplomacy. From the available material evidence (though limited), Donald Redford suggests that Apophis, and possibly his predecessor Khayan, had 'an active court at Avaris, and appear to have 'had international interests' such as 'sending diplomatic presents and perhaps arranging marriages with the city states of Palestine and Syria and the Aegean'.[5] They also engaged in widespread trade.

> ... hundreds of ships of fresh cedar which were filled with gold, lapis, silver, turquoise, bronze axes without number, not to mention the moringa-oil, fat, honey, willow, box-wood, sticks, and all their fine woods – all the fine products of Syria.

SOURCE 11.4 From Kamose's Stela at Karnak in D. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, p. 120

FIGURE 11.7 Baal, god of the Hyksos, who was associated with the Egyptian god Seth

Hyksos' military innovations

The most important of the Hyksos' innovations for Egypt's future expansion beyond its borders were the horse-drawn war chariot and the composite bow.

- Chariots provided greater mobility and striking power. They featured a light wooden semi-circular frame with an open back, two wheels with leather tyres and a long pole attached to the axle to which two horses were yoked. They carried two soldiers: a charioteer and warrior armed with a spear, a bow and a shield. King Kamose apparently captured chariots in his attack on the Hyksos and they were definitely in use by the Egyptian army at the time of King Ahmose. The tomb record of one of his soldiers, Ahmose son of Ebana, says, 'I followed the king [Ahmose] on foot when he rode abroad in his chariot'.[6]
- The powerful recurved composite bow was made using a technique of adding laminated materials that gave it more elasticity, greater range and better penetration than the small Egyptian bows. It later became the most important long-range weapon in the Egyptian armoury.
- New bronze weapons were introduced, including a longer, narrower battle-axe and a new form of bronze dagger/sword called the *khopesh* with a curved blade. Both of these were used in hand-to-hand fighting.

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- Two forms of protective armour were introduced: the upper body was protected by a leather or linen corselet covered with small bronze scales, and the head by a war helmet made of leather and sewn with metal disks. These helmets were later added to the Egyptian warrior pharaoh's regalia in the form of the blue war crown.

FIGURE 11.8 A scale model of a Hyksos chariot

FIGURE 11.9 A *khopesh*

ACTIVITY 11.2

1 Draw a diagram illustrating the positive impact of the Hyksos on Egyptian society. Organise the diagram under the following headings:
   - Weaponry
   - Technology
   - Agriculture
   - Entertainment
   - Trade and diplomacy

2 Describe the military innovations introduced by the Hyksos and explain – by referring to Table 11.1 – how the Egyptians' adoption of these had a far-reaching effect.

Wars of liberation against the Hyksos and the establishment of the 18th Dynasty

At some point, the Egyptian rulers at Thebes were bound to respond militarily to the humiliation of being hemmed in between the Hyksos and Kushites, and having to pay taxes to both powers when travelling north of Cusae and south of Elephantine. Also, to the Egyptians, the Hyksos' occupation was seen as an affront to *ma'at* (divine order and rightness) and only by ridding the country of them could they overthrow chaos and restore the right balance in Egypt.

However, the lack of evidence makes it difficult to know who initiated the first phase of the war against the Hyksos.

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According to the Egyptians, the opening shots in the war of liberation were caused by an inflammatory letter sent to the Theban King Seqenenre from King Apophis concerning the river.

Seqenenre Tao 17th Dynasty

It is possible that it was King Seqenenre Tao, of the 17th Dynasty, who made the first moves against the Hyksos, based on:

- the state of his mummy and the epithet of 'the brave' ascribed to him.
- evidence from a later folk tale that suggests that Apophis, the Hyksos king, might have behaved in a provocative manner towards Seqenenre, although it is more likely that both leaders exchanged insults with each other.
- the discovery of a mud-brick building associated with a palace at Deir el-Ballas north of Thebes that may have been a military observation post or a site for mustering a large force. Jannine Bourriau believes that 'it seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the purpose of the settlement deliberately built in a remote place, was military'.[7] Perhaps after years of skirmishes with the Hyksos, Seqenenre was preparing for a military confrontation.

Sequenenre's mummy

His mummy indicates that he died a violent death, probably around the age of 40. His head reveals a wound behind one ear caused by a dagger probably inflicted while he was prone, his nose and cheek smashed by a mace-like weapon and the bone above his forehead cut through with a battle-axe of Palestinian origin. There were no wounds on his hands and arms, which suggests that he was not able to defend himself.

> ... it is not known whether he fell upon the field of battle or was the victim of some plot; the appearance of his mummy proves that ... two or three men, whether assassins or soldiers, must have surrounded and despatched him before help was available. A blow from an axe must have severed part of his left cheek, exposed the teeth, fractured the jaw, and sent him senseless to the ground; another blow must have seriously injured the skull, and a dagger or javelin has cut open the forehead on the right side, a little above the eye. His body must have remained lying where it fell for some time: when found, decomposition had set in, and the embalming had to be hastily performed as best it might

SOURCE 11.5 Gaston Maspero, 'History of Egypt, Chaldaea, Syria, Babylonia, and Assyria', vol. 4, Project Gutenberg EBook, 2005

The main hypotheses were that he had either died in battle or was killed while sleeping. However, in 2009, further analysis by Garry Shaw (Egyptologist) and a reconstruction of his death by Robert Mason (weapons expert) concluded that the likeliest scenario is that he was killed in a 'ceremonial execution at the hands of an enemy commander, following a Theban defeat on the battlefield.'[8]

FIGURE 11.10 The head of the mummy of Seqenenre showing the wounds that caused his death

King Kamose (17th Dynasty)

Seqenenre was succeeded by Kamose, believed to have been his son, and from fragments of two limestone stelae Kamose set up at the Temple of Amun at Karnak in Thebes, we know that he launched a war of revenge against the Hyksos in the third year of his reign. His motivation was outlined to his council of nobles.

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Let me understand what this strength of mine is for! There is one prince in Avaris, another in Ethiopia [Nubia], and here I sit associated with an Asiatic and Negro! Each man has his slice of this Egypt dividing up the land with me. I cannot pass by him as far as Memphis [although it is] the waters of Egypt ... Behold he [even] has Hermopolis. No man can settle down, being despoiled by the demands [taxes] of the Asiatics.

SOURCE 11.6 The Great Stela of Ahmose, cited in J. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, p. 131

However, before heading north against the Hyksos, Kamose had to deal with a major threat from the Nubian Kushites, southern allies of the Hyksos.

A recent discovery of an inscription from the tomb of Sobeknakht, governor of El-Kab, near Thebes, indicates that there was a previously unknown Kushite-led invasion of Kamose's kingdom. If that was the case, then it was a good strategic decision by Ahmose to launch an attack on the Nubian fort at Buhen on the 2nd Cataract, to protect his rear before marching north. This defeat of the Kushites 'may come to be interpreted as a critical event in Egypt's subsequent defeat of the Hyksos.'[9]

However, when Kamose outlined his plan to attack Apophis and the Hyksos, 'so that he might cut open his belly'[10], his nobles did not support him. They appear to have been satisfied with the way things were at the time.

The great men of his council spoke: behold, it is Asiatic water as far as Cusae ... we are at our ease in our part of Egypt. Elephantine is strong, and the middle of the land is with us as far as Cusae. The richest of their fields are ploughed for us, and our cattle are pastured in the Delta. Emmer is sent for our pigs. Our cattle have not been taken away ... he holds the land of the Asiatics: we hold Egypt. If someone should come and act against us, then we shall act against them'.

SOURCE 11.7 The Great Stela of Ahmose, cited in J. Wilson, *The Culture of Ancient Egypt*, p. 131

Kamose ignored their advice. His stela, erected at Karnak, records that on the command of Amun – the god of Thebes – they sailed north with a powerful army that included Medjay archers. His army raided deep into Hyksos-held territory, destroying towns and ships, slaughtering and capturing people, cutting down trees and seizing horses. In his own words, his army acted 'like lions with their spoil'.[11]

During the campaign, his men caught a messenger with a dispatch from Apophis going south to Kush, via the inland oases. It requested help from the Kushite ruler against Kamose, promising to divide the towns of Egypt between them if they defeated the Thebans. Kamose returned the intercepted letter to Apophis with an account of what his troops had already done to Hyksos' territory in Middle Egypt.

O you vile Asiatic? Look! I drink of the wine of your vineyards which the Asiatics whom I captured pressed out for me. I have smashed up your resthouse. I have cut down your trees, I have forced your women into ships' holds. I have seized [your] horses; I haven't left a plank to the hundreds of ships of fine cedar ... I haven't left a thing to Avaris ... the Asiatic has perished.

SOURCE 11.8 The Great Stelae of Ahmose cited in D. Redford, *Textual Sources for the Hyksos Period*, pp. 14–15

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Because the season of flood made any further fighting impossible, Kamose sailed triumphantly back to Thebes where he held victory celebrations, giving thanks to Amun and instructing that an inscribed stela be set up in the Temple of Karnak recording everything he achieved.

When Kamose died of unknown causes after only three years on the throne, he was succeeded by Ahmose, his brother (or half-brother).

FIGURE 11.11 The limestone stela of King Kamose

King Ahmose, the expulsion of the Hyksos and the beginning of the 18th Dynasty

Although Ahmose was the son and brother of the 17th Dynasty kings Seqenenre and Kamose, he is regarded as the first king of the 18th Dynasty.

Ahmose was thought to have been about seven when his father Seqenenre was killed and only about 10 when his brother Kamose died after only three years on the throne. Since he was still a child when he became king, there was probably no immediate follow-up of Kamose's successes. For some years, his mother Queen Ahhotep ruled as his regent and the evidence suggests that she put down a rebellion and directed the army (see p. 378.)

When he reached adulthood, Ahmose campaigned against the Hyksos, laid siege to their capital, Avaris, and drove them out of Egypt. His campaigns were a warning to the princes of Palestine and Syria that a new force had emerged in Egypt.

Chief sources for Ahmose's campaign to rid Egypt of the Hyksos

1 For the sketchy period leading up to the siege of Avaris there are brief military commentaries (like diary entries) on the back of the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus.

These reveal something of Ahmose's strategy: 'Regnal year 11, second month of *shomu*, Heliopolis was entered. First month of *akhet*, day 23, this southern prince broke into Tjaru.'[12] This shows that he moved into the eastern delta to take the border fortification of Tjaru in order to isolate Avaris from Palestinian help before laying siege to it. In 2003, excavations at Tell el-Habua, associated with ancient Tjaru, have revealed battle wounds on skeletons discovered in a two-storey administrative building dating to the Hyksos period, as well as burned buildings, confirming the textual evidence.

2 The tomb inscriptions of Ahmose, son of Ebana, who took part in the king's attack on the Hyksos stronghold of Avaris, is a rare source, in that unlike a lot of tomb inscriptions, it is a purely military autobiography of a soldier who fought both on land and water.

Although it is personal and sketchy, we learn that the king:

- conducted a series of campaigns (possibly three) against Avaris before it fell to his troops. The siege of the Hyksos' capital took many years.
- drove the Hyksos out of Egypt and campaigned in southern Palestine as far as the city of Sharuhen. 'Sharuhen was besieged for three years. His majesty despoiled it and I brought spoil from it'.[13]

3 The tomb inscription of another El-Kab noble, Ahmose Pen-Nekhbet in the service of Ahmose, records that after the siege of Sharuhen, the king pushed the Hyksos further north into Syria. If this was the case, it was intended only to break the power of the Hyksos, not for conquest.

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4 Fragmentary reliefs from Ahmose's Temple at Abydos reveal scenes of fallen Hyksos soldiers and both land and naval warfare.

5 Archaeological work carried out at Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris) does not reveal large-scale slaughter, but rather signs of abandonment and no signs that the Hyksos re-occupied the site.

FIGURE 11.12 The tomb biography of Ahmose, son of Ebana, who served the pharaohs Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I

A COMMENT ON...

How did the Egyptians defeat the Hyksos?

Considering that the Hyksos had introduced the horse-drawn chariot, the composite bow and better weaponry into Egypt, it is surprising that they were defeated by the Egyptians. How did this happen?

Was Ahmose able to unite the Theban elite behind him?

Did they have greater motivation?

Was it that the Egyptians had adopted the Hyksos' improved military innovations and were able to use them more effectively?

Or was it – as the excavations at Tell el-Dab'a revealed – that the Hyksos weapons at this time were no longer made from bronze, with its ability to produce a sharper cutting edge, but were of unalloyed copper?

Were the Hyksos' weapons by this stage purely for status and display?

After the liberation of Egypt from the Hyksos, Ahmose campaigned in Nubia where he defeated the ruling prince and regained the northernmost part of the country (Wawat) as far south as the 2nd Cataract and 'made a great slaughter among them. The king was joyous with the might of victory, for he had conquered Southerners and Northerners'.[14]

Despite his successes, Ahmose had to put down several internal rebellions. One of these was led by a man named Aata who was captured alive and 'all his people as booty', and another led by Tetian who had 'gathered the malcontents to himself'.[15] Because Ahmose would not tolerate any rivals to his supreme rule, he killed Tetian and slaughtered all his troops.

These measures were obviously very effective because there is no evidence of further internal rebellions during the reigns of his successors.

Ahmose' successes ended over a century of foreign rule and he took the first steps towards uniting Egypt once again under a powerful king.

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According to J. H. Breasted, the Hyksos' domination 'determined the character of the New Kingdom,'[16] as Egypt, no longer isolated, began to play a 'full part in the developments of the eastern Mediterranean'.[17]

> Hyksos rule in Egypt lasted just over 100 years, not the unmitigated disaster proclaimed by the native historians of later periods, but the catalyst that impelled Egypt into its imperial age, providing it with the incentive for expansion and, more importantly, the means with which to achieve it. The shock of the Hyksos invasion had had a salutary effect upon the Egyptians, who looked upon other nations with scorn. ... The Hyksos had destroyed their age-old sense of security, for the first time bringing home to them that they were not inviolable.

SOURCE 11.9 B. Watterson, *The Egyptians*, p. 60

The 18th Dynasty that emerged from the defeat of the Hyksos was shaped by the following pharaonic concerns:

- devotion to the god Amun
- an extensive building program
- the exploitation of Nubia
- the expansion into Palestine and Syria
- development of a bureaucracy to administer both Egypt and an 'empire'.

ACTIVITY 11.3

1. What material evidence is there that King Seqenenre initiated the conflict?
2. What is the latest theory (2009) about the cause of his death?
3. What does:
   - Source 11.6 reveal about King Kamose's reasons for wanting to get rid of the Hyksos?
   - Source 11.7 reveal about the reaction of his nobles and advisors to his plans? What does this show about the relationship between Thebans and Hyksos at this time?
4. Why would it be more appropriate to refer to Kamose's actions in the north as a 'raid' rather than a serious military campaign?
5. Why was it sometime before another attempt was made to dislodge the Hyksos?
6. Draw a diagram of the main sources for King Ahmose's war of liberation.
7. What do we learn from them about the phases of the war, its length and apparent difficulty?
8. Suggest the most likely reason for the Egyptian defeat of the Hyksos.
9. What other military activities did Ahmose undertake during his time as king?
10. What do Breasted and Watterson indicate about the long-term effects of Ahmose on the new 18th Dynasty of which he became the first king?
11. What were the main forces that shaped the 18th Dynasty?

Role of queens

The respect and love felt by many New Kingdom pharaohs for the chief queen and dowager queen mother is reflected in the honours bestowed on them, and none more so than the women of the Theban royal house at the time of the liberation of the Hyksos.

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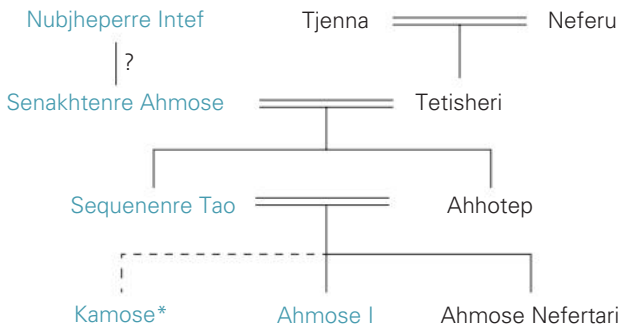
They were as full of fire and courage as their men, playing a prominent political and military part in the affairs of their day, either because the king was away fighting or had been killed, leaving an heir too young to rule.

> Queen Tetisheri, the commoner wife of the 17th Dynasty king Sekenenre Tao I, was the first in a succession of particularly forceful consorts which extended to include the queens of the 18th Dynasty, a remarkable group of women who managed to play a prominent role in the political life of the country at a time of economic and military expansion. These 17th and 18th Dynasty consorts were accorded more titles than their predecessors ...

SOURCE 11.10 Joyce Tyldesley, *Daughters of Isis*, p. 197

Lineage of late 17th and early 18th Dynasty queens



*Kamose lineage is unknown

FIGURE 11.13 Diagram of the lineage of the late 17th and early 18th Dynasty queens

A COMMENT ON...

Royal brother-sister marriages

Egyptians generally had a relaxed attitude to incest, although it was not as common in the general population as it was within royalty. Brother-sister marriages are particularly understandable in the late 17th and early 18th Dynasties, when they wanted to restrict entry into the royal family in order to preserve the purity of the dynastic line and prevent issues over succession.

Brother-sister marriages served other purposes. They:

- reinforced the link between kingship and the gods, many of which were in incestuous relationships, e.g. Isis and Osiris
- kept royal estates in fewer hands
- provided suitable husbands for high-ranking princesses who would otherwise have remained unmarried.

However, not all pharaohs married their sisters.

Tetisheri

Tetisheri, although a 17th-Dynasty queen of non-royal lineage, is regarded as having played a significant role in the founding of the 18th Dynasty. She was the mother of Seqenenre Tao II who began the war against the Hyksos, and the beloved grandmother of King Ahmose who expelled the foreigners from Egypt. She was also the mother of Queen Ahhotep and grandmother of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari. She is believed to have died at the ripe old age of about 70, after surviving 30 years of war. She lived to see Egyptian power restored, and was buried by her grandson.

Evidence of her importance is to be found on the so-called *Donation Stela* erected by King Ahmose at Abydos, in which he expresses his desire to build for her a pyramid and a chapel close to his own mortuary complex at Abydos.

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I, it is, who have remembered the mother of my mother and the mother of my father, great king's wife and king's mother, Tetisheri, triumphant. [Although] she already has a tomb and a mortuary chapel on the soil of Thebes and Abydos … my majesty has desired to have made for her [also] a pyramid and a house in Tazeser, as a monumental donation of my majesty. Its lake shall be dug, its trees planted, its offerings shall be founded, equipped with people, endowed with lands, presented with herds, mortuary priests and ritual priests having their duties … his majesty did this because he so greatly loved her, beyond everything. Never did former kings, the like of it, for their mothers.

SOURCE 11.11 The Donation Stela, in J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. II, pp. 15–16

In 1902, when the Egyptian Exploration Fund discovered the *Donation Stela*, they also found a mud-brick structure. Portions of limestone (a pyramid-shaped capstone) were also found. Recently, magnetic surveys discovered an enclosure of 70 by 90 metres in size, confirming the details in the *Donation Stela* of a pyramid and chapel.

lunette in reference to a stela, it represents the rounded space at the top used as a prelude to the stela's theme

flies of honour golden flies that were given as awards for valour in battle

Ahhotep

A COMMENT ON…

The riddle of the two Ahhoteps

According to the commonly-held view, there appear to have been two royal women with the name of Ahhotep at this time. The confusion over names is quite common in the Egyptian records. Those who subscribe to the two-Ahhotep theory have confused matters by labelling them Ahhotep I and Ahhotep II, according to when the existence of each was discovered.

- One is supposed to be daughter of Tetisheri, the wife of King Seqenenre and mother of King Ahmose.
- The other is a noble woman somehow connected to the royal family, about whom little is known except for the stunning funerary goods in her tomb, many of which are of a military nature: weapons (ceremonial axe and jewelled dagger) and jewellery, including the '**flies of honour**'. The presence of these objects raise many questions because they bear the names of both Ahmose and Kamose.

FIGURE 11.14 The **lunette** of the Donation Stela of Ahmose honouring his grandmother Tetisheri

Marianne Eaton-Krauss has attempted to explain the presence of the two Ahhoteps by proposing a theory that in fact there was only one queen. Because the coffin in the tomb with the military objects is similar to that of Seqenenre, but does not describe the occupant as *King's Mother*, Eaton-Krauss suggests that the coffin could have been constructed for Ahhotep during her husband's reign but before she gave birth to Ahmose.[18]

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Ahhotep, the daughter of Tetisheri, the wife of her brother Seqenenre, and the mother of Ahmose, is believed to have become regent for her son when her husband was killed, as he was too young to rule alone. There seems to have been a break in hostilities with the Hyksos while she brought up her son.

She is supposed to have played an active political and military role in the consolidation of the dynasty, holding the kingdom together during a time of civil unrest and rebellion that was spreading throughout the country. It appears that she must have had considerable influence on Ahmose, for in year 18 of his reign, he honoured her on a unique stela at Karnak, outlining what she did to maintain the dynasty.

> Praise the mistress of the country, the sovereign of the lands of Hau-nebet whose name is lifted up in all the foreign lands, who takes the decisions in respect of the people, King's Wife, King's Sister ... King's daughter, respected Mother of the King who is in control of affairs, who unites Egypt. She has assembled her notables with whom she has assured cohesion: she has brought back its fugitives, she has gathered its dissidents; she has pacified Upper Egypt, she has put down its rebels; the King's Wife, Ahhotep who lives.

SOURCE 11.12 K. Sethe, *URK* (*Urkunden Des Altes Reichs*,) IV, 21

It is possible that when Ahmose campaigned in Nubia, his mother foiled an attempt to take the throne, and it is possible that her son awarded her with the golden flies of valour. He also presented her with a cache of stunning jewellery and ornamental weapons, including a ceremonial battle-axe made from cedar wood, with a gold-plated copper head, inlaid with electrum and jewels and featuring Egyptian motifs. However, remember that these objects were found in the tomb of another supposed Ahhotep.

rishi coffin a coffin adorned with feathers

FIGURE 11.15 Flies of honour awarded to Ahhotep by her husband

FIGURE 11.16 The outer **rishi coffin** of Ahhotep

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Ahmose-Nefertari

Ahmose-Nefertari was the daughter of Ahhotep and the sister/wife of king Ahmose. From the evidence available it seems that Queen Ahmose-Nefertari was the most able, respected and beloved woman of her time, with a reputation almost without equal in the history of Egypt. She had enormous religious status and was closely linked with the rise to pre-eminence of Amun-Re at the time of her husband's reign.

From the *Donation Stela* found at Karnak, it appears that:

- she was granted the title of *God's Wife of Amun* – the first queen to have this title – which carried enormous religious and economic status. She was given vast estates on the west bank of Thebes, labour to work them and a steward to administer them for her; provided with a high-ranking woman (superior of the harem and adorer of the god) to assist her, and a group of court women (singers and musicians); and given permission for her female descendants to inherit this position with all its wealth and power
- the king increased her status in the cult of Amun by purchasing her the office of second priesthood of Amun
- she also held the office of the Divine **Adoratrice**, another influential position in the cult of Amun
- the enormous number of objects dedicated to her is evidence of her ritual importance and it seems that in her priestly role she was involved in her husband's building program
- she and her son, Amenhotep I, founded the royal tomb workers' village at Deir el-Medina, and were later **deified**. They became the patron deities of the royal **necropolis**
- Ahmose-Nefertari was worshipped as *Mistress of the West* and the cult of her and her son continued throughout the New Kingdom.

adoratrice quasi-royal priestess in Ancient Egypt

deified treated like a god or goddess

necropolis cemetery or 'city of the dead'

FIGURE 11.17 The deified Ahmose-Nefertari

ACTIVITY 11.4

1. What does Source 11.10 indicate about the queens of the late 17th and early 18th Dynasties?
2. Discuss the issue of brother-sister marriages within the royal family.
3. Who was Tetisheri and what evidence is there that she played a significant role in the events of her day and was a much loved and respected woman?
4. What was the royal status of Queen Ahhotep? What does Source 11.12 say about her role in the events of her time? What does this indicate about her abilities and character?
5. Discuss the riddle of the two Ahhoteps.
6. Explain why King Ahmose's queen consort Ahmose-Nefertari had a religious reputation without equal in the history of Egypt.
7. Refer back to Table 11.1 and read about Hatshepsut, another exceptional queen who became a king. See also Chapter 5, where her contribution to this period is discussed in more detail.

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Development and importance of the cult of Amun

'More than any other deity Amun was the creation of political circumstances.'[19]

The most significant religious developments of this period were:

1 the elevation of the local Theban cult of the god Amun to that of the state cult of the new dynasty (18th)
2 the close links between Amun and the king
3 the wealth and power of the priesthood of the cult of Amun.

cult temple temples in Ancient Egypt featuring images of deities, who were the recipients of daily worship

The rulers of Thebes had worshipped the god Amun since the Middle Kingdom when he replaced the local god Montu (a war god), and they began to build a **cult temple** for him which they called *Ipet-esut*, a name that means 'the most select of places', at what is today known as Karnak.

As the god of the kings who expelled the Hyksos, Amun increased in status and his once purely local cult became the state cult of the 18th Dynasty.

FIGURE 11.18 An image of Amun with the double-plumed headdress of ostrich feathers

A new myth was formulated in which Amun became the invisible, all-powerful creator of mankind, and Thebes became the original mound on which he created the world. In this Theban view of creation, Amun was linked to Mut (the vulture goddess) and Khonsu (the moon god) as their son.

Amun was a god of air and was referred to as the *Hidden One*. He was depicted in human form with a headdress of tall ostrich feathers, and as a god of creation was sometimes depicted as a goose or a ram with its horns curved downwards.

As a deliberate theological move, so that Amun would have no rival in Egypt, he was associated with the creator god, Re, whose close link with royalty went as far back as the 5th Dynasty. Amun absorbed all the characteristics of the solar god, and a sun-disk was added to Amun's feathered headdress. 'Without any modification of his [Amun's] human form he had become the sun-god, Amun-Re'[20] and during the New Kingdom became known as *Amun-Re, King of the Gods*. Amun could now become the divine 'father' of kings, and they, his 'sons' as they had been in their relationship with Re. The action of merging one god with another, a common practice in Egypt, is referred to as syncretism.

Links between Amun-Re and royalty

From the very beginning of the 18th Dynasty, King Ahmose had given the prestigious title of *God's Wife of Amun* or *Divine Consort* to his

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wife, Ahmose-Nefertari. It had originally been held by a priestess of Amun whose 'marriage' to the god was believed to have ensured the continuance of the work of creation. By allowing this title to be passed down through her royal female descendants, it gave each recipient great prestige and influence.

The early 18th Dynasty kings were anxious to show their connection with Amun in other ways. This was achieved by the:

- justification of their right to rule via their divine birth (conception via their 'father' Amun in the guise of their physical father), and from **oracles** pronounced by Amun
- support of Amun in their achievements, particularly their military successes
- dedication of all their buildings, particularly their own **mortuary temples** on the west bank at Thebes to the god Amun. Each of the mortuary temples was in reality an Amun temple
- association of their **Heb-sed** festival with Amun
- participation in the two annual festivals dedicated to Amun: the Opet Festival and the Valley Festival.

oracles advice or prophecy received from a god through the mediumship of a priest or priestess in ancient times

mortuary temple a temple where the funerary rites of the Egyptian rulers were carried out by a special group of mortuary priests

Heb-sed the king's jubilee, generally held every 30 years to rejuvenate the king's powers and reinforce his authority to rule

theogamous birth refers to the concept of being fathered by a god

Divine birth and oracles

All pharaohs of this period believed that they were the 'sons' of their 'divine father', Amun. However, this concept of a **theogamous birth** was nothing new. It had been an integral element in the ideological nature of kingship since the 5th Dynasty, when kings were regarded as the 'sons of Re' as a way of legitimising a king's right to rule.

It was Hatshepsut who, during this time, gave greater emphasis to her divine birth and the oracle from Amun, prophesying her succession, due to the atypical nature of her assumption of power and her gender.

She had the texts and detailed reliefs associated with these inscribed on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. These reliefs and texts include some of the following:

- Amun prophesying her birth before a council of gods.
- The god in the form of Thutmose I (her father) visiting Ahmose (her mother).
- The god informing the queen she has conceived, and Queen Ahmose being led off to give birth.
- The child being purified and presented to the gods by Amun.
- The journey with her father Thutmose I through Egypt to announce her as the future king.
- Her crowning by the gods.

Oracles were utilised when there were questions of legitimacy or new blood. Hatshepsut claimed that she was chosen by Amun to succeed her father on the throne (bypassing completely her husband, Thutmose II) and Thutmose III followed suit. He claimed that as a child (the son of Thutmose II and a palace concubine named Isis), the statue of Amun-Re stopped in front of him during a religious procession at Karnak, then led him to the place reserved for the king.

> The god made a circuit of the hypostyle on both sides of it … while he searched for me in every place. On recognizing me, behold, he halted! [I threw myself on] the pavement, I prostrated himself in his presence. He set me before his majesty … Then [the priests of Amun] revealed, before the people the secrets of the hearts of the gods … I was presented with the dignities of a god, with … my diadems.

SOURCE 11.13 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, Vol. II, pp. 323–4

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Amun and military conquests

Amun was believed to have been responsible for the expulsion of the Hyksos and for leading the Egyptian armies to victory in western Asia and Nubia, thus laying the foundation of the empire. It was Amun who permitted a campaign, who gave his sword to pharaoh, whose standard the soldiers followed into battle and who brought victory to the king, his son, giving him the strength of thousands of men and protecting him in the midst of battle. See p. 409 on the establishment of an empire and the image of the warrior pharaoh. According to Breasted, 'the beginning of Thutmose III's conquests of Asia marked a sudden and profound change in the cult of Amun'.

> I have achieved this according to that which was ordained for me by my father, Amun-Re, Lord of the Thrones of the Two Lands, who leads my majesty on the good road by means of his excellent plans.

SOURCE 11.14 'Documents of Egyptian Empire', *The Australian Institute of Archaeology*, p. 32

> His majesty, commanded to record the victories his father Amun had given him by an inscription in the temple which his majesty had made for his father Amun, so as to record each campaign together with the booty which his majesty had brought from it and the tribute of every foreign land ...

SOURCE 11.15 From the 'Annals of Thutmose III', trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 30

Dedication of buildings and participation in annual festivals

Kings of this period (as did others during the whole New Kingdom) dedicated buildings to Amun, particularly to the god's cult centre at Karnak. They added new buildings, colonnaded courts and halls, obelisks, pylons (huge gateways) and sphinx-lined processional ways for the **barque** of the god's statue when taken from its sanctuary. Hatshepsut also dedicated her mortuary temple to Amun, and had it built in direct alignment with Amun's temple at Karnak. Along with building additions, the pharaohs endowed vast wealth (from booty and tribute) and prisoners to the god and his temple.

barque a ceremonial boat for carrying the statue of a god in a procession, carried on the shoulders of priests

The pharaohs played a vital role in the Opet and Valley festivals held annually in Thebes.

1 The Opet Festival – held in the second month of the Inundation (flood) and lasting 11 days.

During the festival, the images of Amun, his 'wife' Mut and 'son' Khonshu were taken from their sanctuaries at Karnak Temple to begin a processional journey to the Temple of Luxor 3 kilometres to the south. The gods were carried in portable barques on the shoulders of priests. The purpose of the rituals conducted in the darkened, incense-filled chambers at Luxor, in the presence of the statue of Amun and the *ka* statues of the king, are believed to have served two purposes:

- a renewal of the sacred 'marriage' of Amun and Mut
- the transformation of the king.

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2 The Valley Festival, also dedicated to Amun, was held in the 10th month at the time of the full moon

During this festival, Amun's statue left Karnak on a gilded barge and crossed the Nile to the west bank to 'visit' the valley of the kings and stayed overnight in the temple of the reigning king.

All the kings of the early 18th Dynasty were pious in their devotion to their 'father' Amun-Re, but it was Hatshepsut and Thutmose III who increased the god's power and prestige, although they did not ignore the cults of the other gods and gave them a share in the increasing wealth of Egypt, by building and restoring temples dedicated to them.

TABLE 11.2 A summary of the devotion of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III to Amun

Hatshepsut	Thutmose III
• Held the prestigious position of *God's Wife of Amun* before she became king. • Gained support from Hapusoneb, High Priest of Amun at Thebes, and promoted him to Chief of the Prophets of the South and the North, giving him jurisdiction over all aspects of the cult throughout Egypt and over the cults of other gods. • Made a feature of her divine conception by the god Amun on the walls of her mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri. • Claimed to have been chosen by Amun via an oracle to rule Egypt. She is shown being crowned by the gods on the walls of her mortuary temple. • Sent her trading expedition to Punt in the name of Amun. • Shared her mortuary temple with Amun.	• Spent time as an apprentice priest in the Temple of Amun at Karnak. • Recorded that he was chosen as a future king by an oracle of Amun. • Married Merytre-Hatshepsut, who was the God's Wife of Amun. • Attributed all his military successes to Amun. His conquests in Asia marked a sudden and profound change in the cult with the enormous wealth that flowed into the temple's treasury. • Lavished the god with offerings, feasts, land, slaves and buildings. • Recorded that he made every law, regulation and enactment in the interests of Amun.

The priesthood of Amun-Re

From the time of Hatshepsut, the status of Amun was raised above all other gods and his priesthood acquired great religious, economic and political influence.

It should be mentioned that the High Priest of Amun was a political appointment by the king and was someone who usually had a high profile and a distinguished career at court. A number of high priests also held the position of vizier (pharaoh's chief minister) or at least had the powers that went with this highest of civil positions.

Thutmose III emphasised to the priests that they must carry out their duties properly.

> ... be vigilant concerning your duty, be ye not careless concerning all your rules; be ye pure, be ye clean concerning divine things, take heed concerning matters of transgression, guard your heart lest your speech ..., every man looking to his own steps therein.

SOURCE 11.16 Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 226

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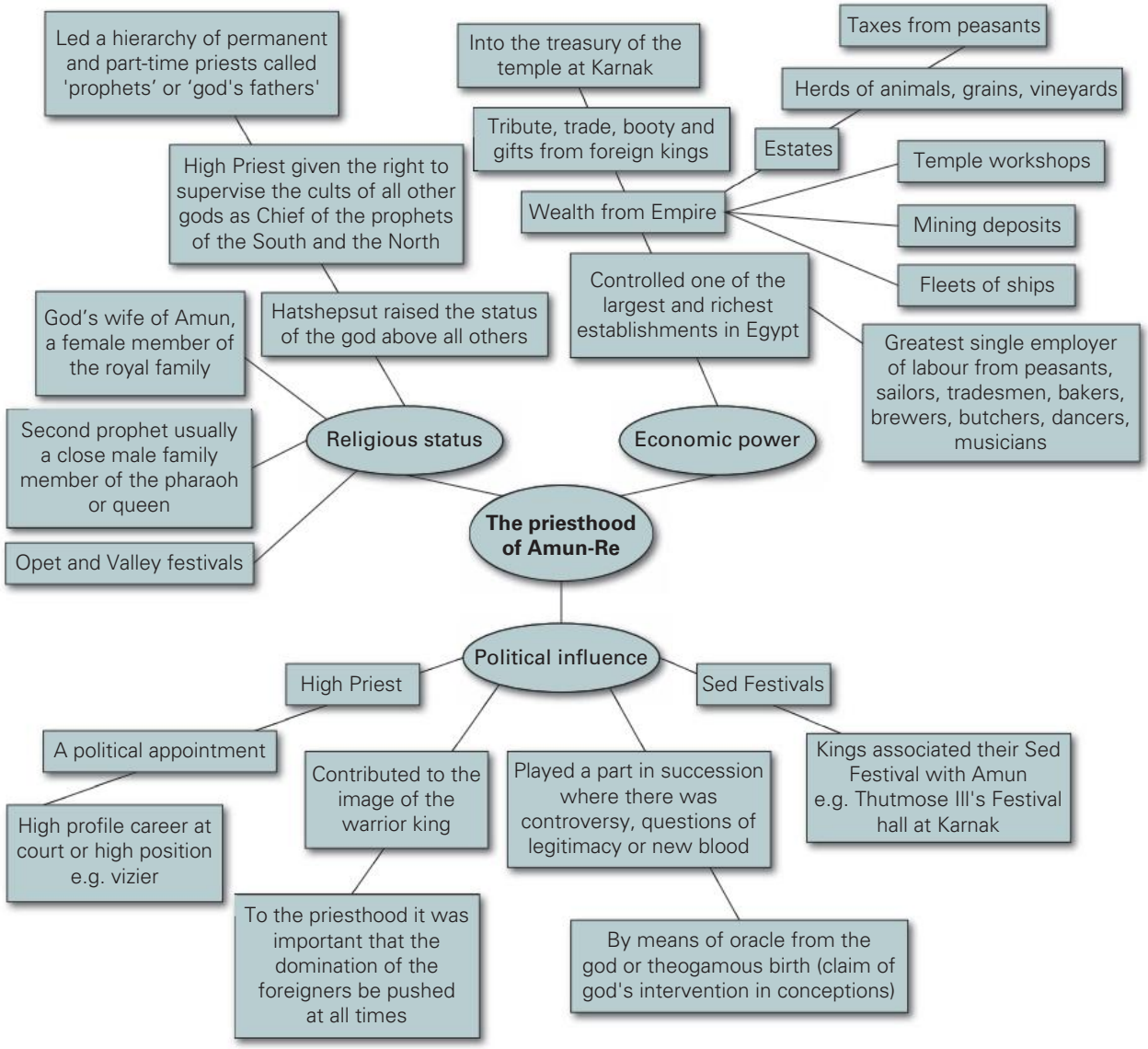

FIGURE 11.19 A summary of the power and influence of the priesthood of Amun

The following sources, text and tables emphasise some of the features summarised in Figure 11.19.

> The formation of a priesthood of the whole land into a coherent organization with a single individual at its head appears for the first time. This new and great organization, was thus through Hapusoneb, enlisted on the side of Hatshepsut.

SOURCE 11.17 W. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 161

> I gave you valour and victory over all lands.
> I set your might, your fear in every country ...
> I magnified your awe in everybody ...
> The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp,

continued...

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...continued
I stretched out my own hands and bound them for you.
I fettered Nubia's Bowmen by ten thousand thousands,
The northerners a hundred thousand captives.
I made your enemies succumb beneath your soles.
So that you crushed the rebels and the traitors.
For I bestowed on you the earth, its length and breadth,
Westerners and easterners are under your command.

SOURCE 11.18 A poem of victory devised by the priesthood of Amun as a constant reminder of the debt of gratitude the king owed Amun, 'The Poetical Stela of Thutmose III', trans. M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 36

The economic influence of Amun's priesthood

The priesthood controlled everything the Temple of Amun at Karnak 'owned':

- large estates all over Egypt and some in conquered territory, cultivated either by temple labourers, temple agents, or rented out to officials and small farmers
- huge herds of animals, extensive vineyards, beehives, fishing and fowling rights along the river
- mining deposits from which many of the raw materials used in the temple workshops came
- taxes in the form of grain, beer, wine, metals and other goods from all over Egypt
- a fleet of ships and massive warehouses.

The Temple of Amun became the greatest single employer of labour in the country, and its priesthood controlled:

- enormous numbers of agricultural labourers, herders, fishermen and slaves
- skilled craftsmen who worked on the temple sites and in the workshops, and unskilled workmen
- sailors and traders
- temple singers, dancers and musicians
- a huge body of scribes employed to carry out the daily administrative and financial affairs of the god and treasury officials
- those who worked in the slaughterhouses, bakeries and breweries.

The economic importance of the priesthood can be gauged by the titles found in a number of early 18th Dynasty tombs during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. For example:

• Chief steward of Amun • Overseer of the granaries of Amun • Overseer of the cattle of Amun • Chief of the weavers of Amun • Overseer of all the works of the god • Overseer of the estate of Amun • Counter of grain in the granary of divine offerings • Chief servant who weighs the silver and gold of the estate of Amun	• Agent of Amun • Overseer of the gold-land of Amun • Overseer of goldsmiths • Necropolis stonemason of Amun • Weigher of Amun • Overseer of the ploughed lands of Amun • Head of the makers of fine linen of the estate of Amun • Overseer of works of Amun at Karnak • Overseer of the peasants of Amun

Some of the wealth dedicated to Amun can be seen in the list of booty taken by Thutmose III and Amenhotep II in a single campaign.

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TABLE 11.3 Booty taken during Thutmose III's campaign in year 23 and Amenhotep II's campaign in year 2

Thutmose III in year 23	Amenhotep II in year 2
captives – 340 horses – over 250 chariots, some worked with gold – 924 bronze suits of armour – 202 bows – 502 silver tent poles – 7 cows – 1929 goats – 2000 sheep – 20 500 (33)	captives of officer rank – 550, and their wives – 240 vessels of fine gold – 6800 vessels of copper – 50 000 horses – 210 chariots – 300 (34)

ACTIVITY 11.5

1. What was the first step in the elevation of the local Theban god Amun to becoming a state god?
2. How was Amun represented in the Theban temples?
3. Why was Amun joined with Re of Heliopolis to become Amun-Re in the 18th Dynasty?
4. Describe how the early 18th Dynasty kings revealed their connection with Amun-Re in a new ideology of kingship.
5. Use Table 11.2 to answer the following:
   - How did Hashepsut raise the status of the High Priest of Amun?
   - What claims did Hatshepsut and Thutmose III make regarding their succession?
   - Which of their major achievements did they attribute to Amun?
6. What does Source 11.16 indicate about Thutmose III's expectations from Amun's priesthood?
7. What evidence is there for the tremendous economic wealth of Amun's priesthood?
8. Use Figure 11.20 to guide you in planning the following essay:
   - Assess the status and power of the priesthood of Amun in the 18th Dynasty.

Political and religious significance of building programs

Architecture flourished in Egypt in the expansionist phase after the expulsion of the Hyksos. With the wealth that poured into Egypt in the form of tribute, booty and trade, the pharaohs built and restored cult temples and shrines throughout Egypt from the delta to Nubia. However, their major focus was on the city of Thebes, and more particularly on the great temple complex at Karnak, centre of the cult of Amun. On the western bank at Thebes they constructed their tombs, hidden away in the Valley of the Kings, and stunning mortuary temples on the desert edge opposite the cult temples of Karnak and Luxor.

Types and features of temples

All temples (both cult and mortuary) of the early 18th Dynasty were built for impressiveness and durability. They were constructed almost exclusively of stone (white sandstone) which enabled the kings to decorate the walls and columns with carved reliefs and brilliantly painted scenes and hieroglyphs. Other raw materials such as granite, alabaster, copper, electrum, silver and gold were used as well. The cult temples at Karnak and Luxor featured soaring pylons (gateways) and obelisks (some as high as 27.5 metres), and the pharaohs lost no opportunity to advertise their deeds on the temple walls.

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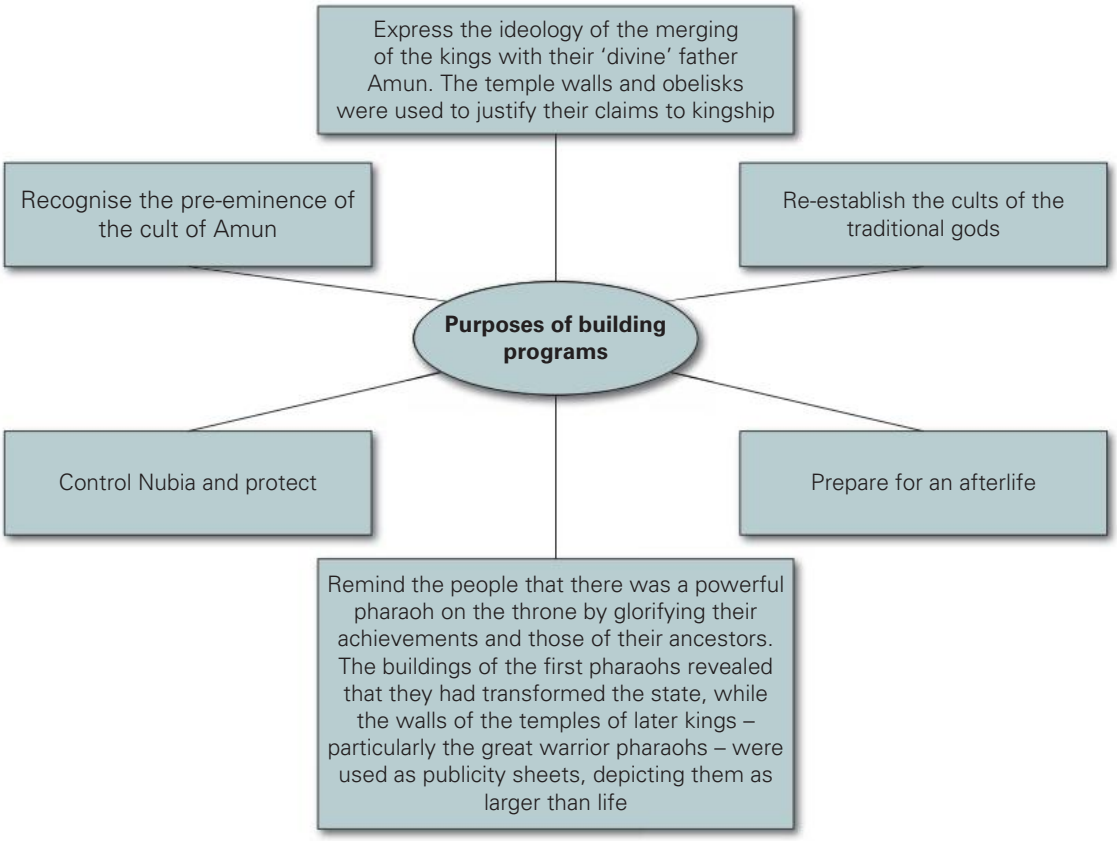

FIGURE 11.20 Diagram of the political and religious purposes of building programs

'Most Splendid' the temple of myriads of years: its great doors fashioned of black copper, the inlaid figures of electrum ... the great seat of Amun, his horizon in the west; all its doors of real cedar, wrought with bronze. The house of Amun, his enduring horizon of eternity; its floor wrought with gold and silver; its beauty was like the horizon of heaven. A great shrine of ebony of Nubia, the stairs beneath it high and wide, of pure alabaster of Hatnub. A palace of the god, wrought with gold and silver; it illuminated the faces of the people with its brightness.

SOURCE 11.19 J. H. Breasted, *Records of Ancient Egypt,* vol. II, p 156

A COMMENT ON...

Publicity and propaganda 'display boards'

The purpose of the huge reliefs on the great billboards of the temple pylons (gateways) which were able to be viewed by the ordinary people, most of whom could not read, was to:

- reiterate the divine status of the king
- honour the gods
- demonstrate that the king was maintaining *ma'at* by crushing Egypt's enemies (forces of chaos) and defending his people
- justify his right to the throne

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- commemorate his deeds in the most favourable light, ignoring anything negative
- depict what was traditional rather than what actually happened.

Although the inside of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple was seen by very few officials and certainly not the ordinary public, she used its walls to rewrite her own history in the form of the Divine Birth and Coronation reliefs, she advertised her trading voyage to Punt, her military campaign into Nubia as well as the cutting and transporting of her obelisks, all of which were dedicated to Amun.

These official texts are often regarded by historians as a form of propaganda as they were seen as being 'slanted away from reality'.[21]

The layout and symbolism of cult temples

A cult temple, like that at Karnak, was the focus of the worship of a particular god and generally followed a standard plan:

1 a massive pylon gateway
2 a large open colonnaded courtyard to which there was limited access during festivals
3 a hypostyle hall which acted as a screen for the innermost part of the temple
4 a barque sanctuary (holy of holies) where the image of the god was kept, together with rooms for cult equipment
5 a sacred lake close to the houses of the priests and storehouses.

Another important feature of a temple complex was the processional way, usually paved with stone and lined with ram or human-headed sphinxes. These processional ways allowed the gods to make 'divine visits' to other temples.

Each cult temple, 'the god's house', was built with features of a domestic house, but also every temple was believed to replicate in stone the features of the original island of creation that emerged from the waters of Nun and on which the original reed sanctuary was built.

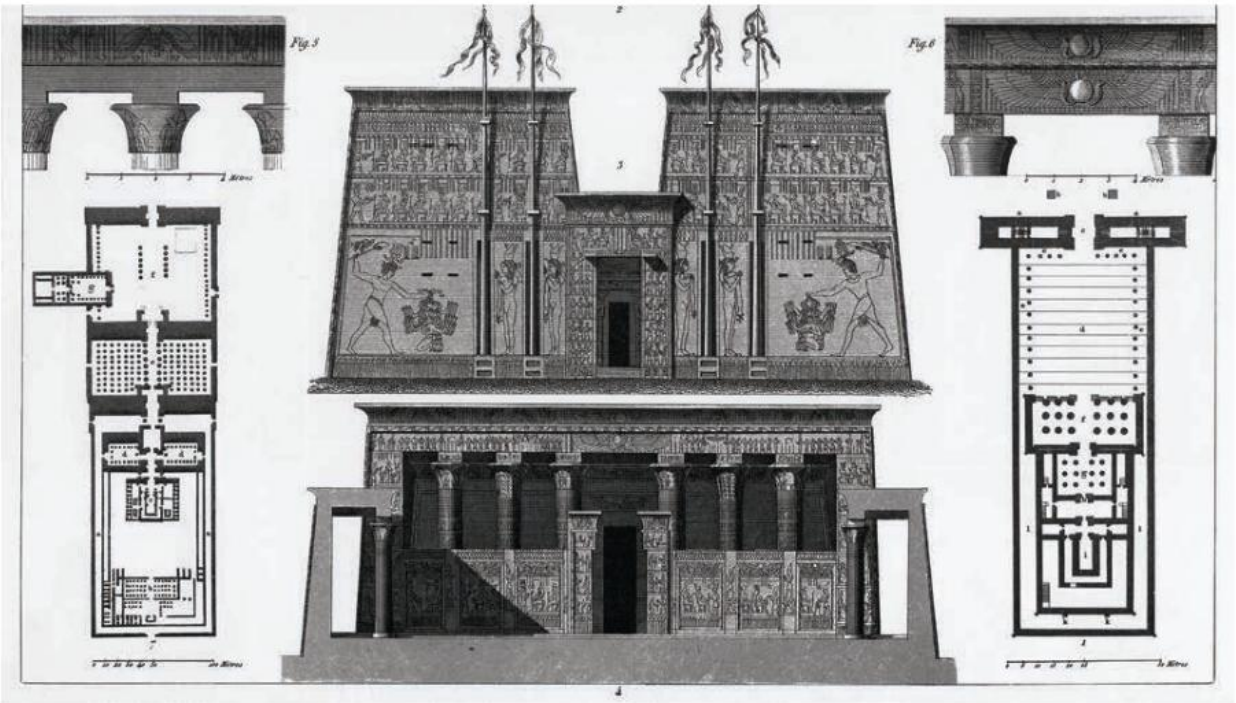

FIGURE 11.21 The layout of a standard cult temple

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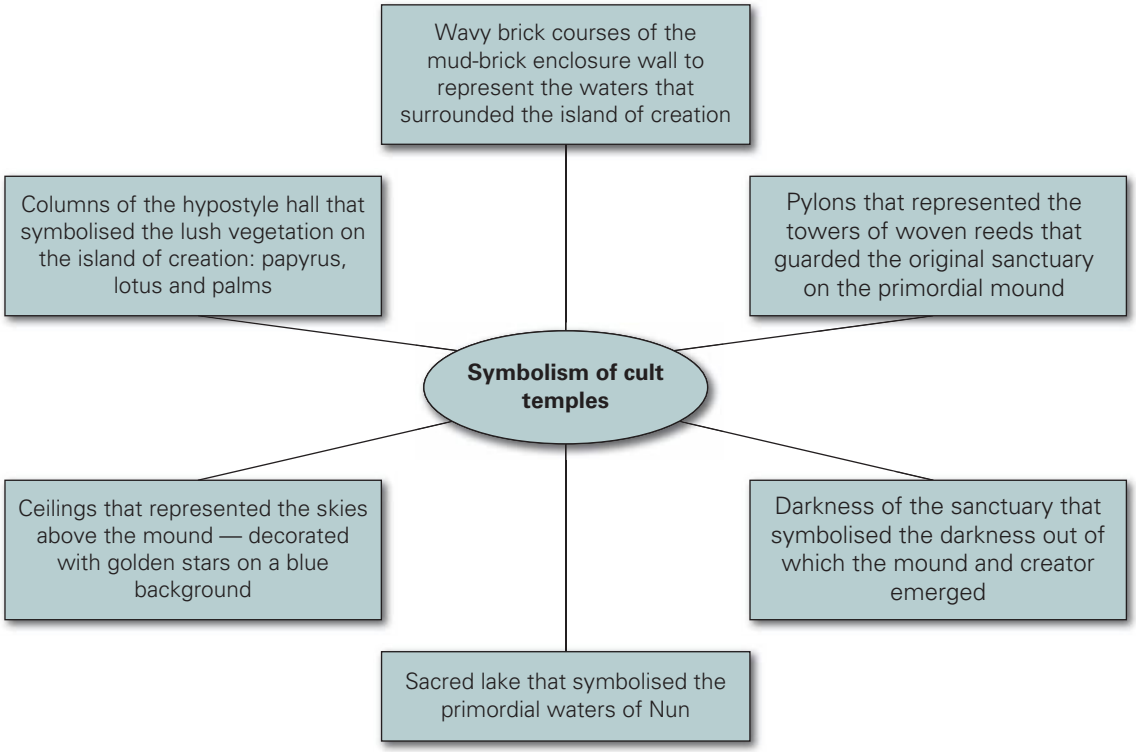

FIGURE 11.22 Symbolism in cult temples

The temples were aligned east–west or vice versa so that the rising or setting sun between the twin pylons made the hieroglyph for 'horizon', and also shone along the axis of the temple to the sanctuary.

Mortuary temples

These funerary temples, for the continuing cult of a dead pharaoh, were built on the western side of the river at Thebes. In many cases they appear to have been similar to the cult temple layout, except that they did not have a single sanctuary at the rear, but a suite of chambers dedicated to various gods associated with the afterlife, and a central apartment dedicated to Amun, and another for the king and his royal ancestors. The design of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri appears to have been unique in the 18th Dynasty in its design.

Examples of buildings constructed by pharaohs of this period

Ahmose

- Built a palace on the site of the former Hyksos capital of Avaris
- Redeveloped Memphis, where he built a temple to Ptah
- Added cedar and limestone features to the temple of Amun-Re at Karnak where his Donation Stela – recording the religious positions he gave to his wife, Ahmose-Nefertari – was erected
- Built a small pyramid temple at Abydos for his grandmother, Tetisheri.

Amenhotep I

- Erected beautiful monuments made from the finest white limestone at Karnak
- Added a barque sanctuary and a monumental pylon decorated with scenes from his Heb-sed festival
- Rebuilt Middle Kingdom fortresses in Nubia
- Commissioned the workers' village (the *Place of Truth*) at Deir el-Medina on the west bank where a special workforce was employed on building and decorating the tombs of the pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings

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- Was the first king to build his mortuary temple separate from his tomb in an attempt to keep his tomb safe from robbers
- Built temples in Upper Egypt at Abydos, Elephantine and Kom Ombo.

Thutmose I

- Converted a Middle Kingdom shrine at Karnak into an enclosed court with columned porticoes and statues of the king as Osiris
- Constructed a monumental pylon in front of the court with cedar flagpoles and a great door of Asiatic copper; he gave this door the name of *Amun Mighty in Wealth*
- Built a second pylon 13 metres high in front of the first and roofed the space between to form a hall
- Erected two 20-metre-high red granite obelisks with tips sheathed in gold to celebrate his Heb-sed festival
- Built the first tomb in the Valley of the Kings
- Constructed buildings in Memphis, Armant, Edfu and Ombos, as well as some minor buildings in Nubia at Semna, Buhen, Aniba and Quban.

Thutmose II

- Embellished Karnak like his predecessors
- Built in Nubia at Napata, Semna and Kumna.

Hatshepsut

- Built a cliff-cut temple to the lion goddess Pakhet at Beni Hasan in Middle Egypt (Speos Artemidos) with an inscription that outlined her building projects
- Restored the Temple of Hathor at Cusae and the Temple of Thoth at Hermopolis
- Constructed her magnificent mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri, which she shared with Amun and her father Thutmose I, on the walls of which she commemorated her divine birth and coronation, her trading expedition to Punt and the transportation of a pair of obelisks
- Built the 8th pylon at Karnak on a new axis aligned with the Temple of Mut
- Erected obelisks to honour her 'father' Amun
- Constructed a red granite chapel (the Red Chapel) for the barque of Amun that featured scenes from the Heb-sed and the Festival of Opet, and supported her claim to the throne.

Thutmose III

- Constructed a Festival Hall at Karnak devoted to his Heb-sed festival with five aisles and columns tapered to look like the tent poles of a sed festival pavilion. Within it, he built a hall of ancestors, and a chamber on the walls of which he recorded all the exotic plants and flowers that he had collected in Syria during his third campaign – referred to as Thutmose's *botanical garden*. It has been suggested that it may have been his answer to Hatshepsut's depiction of the flora and fauna of Punt
- Built a red granite chamber at Karnak
- Erected two monumental pylons (gateways)
- Commissioned five obelisks for Karnak and two for Heliopolis, not one of which remains in Egypt, having been removed to other sites in the early days of excavation in Egypt
- Built a huge mud-brick harem palace complex, known as *Mer-Wer*, at the mouth of the Faiyum which functioned as an independent economic unit, with huge storerooms and specialising in textile manufacture.

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Amenhotep II

- Added a Jubilee (Heb-sed) Hall at the Temple of Amun at Karnak
- Built temples at Amada in Nubia and at Elephantine
- Constructed a temple to the god Horemakhet beside the Sphinx at Giza.

Thutmose IV

- Built a peristyle court before the 4th pylon at Karnak
- Erected the tallest of the obelisks of his grandfather (Thutmose III) that had remained on the ground since his death 35 years before

FIGURE 11.23 The reconstructed alabaster chapel of Amenhotep I at Karnak

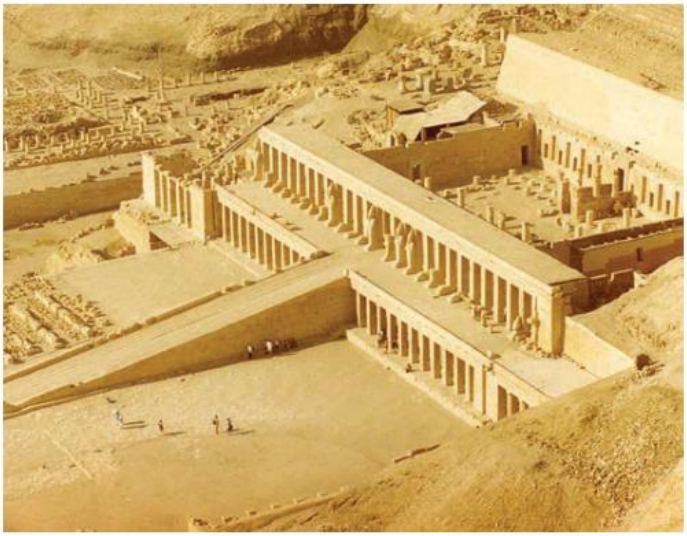

FIGURE 11.24 Hatshepsut's mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri

FIGURE 11.25 Thutmose III's Festival Hall at Karnak

ACTIVITY 11.6

1. Use Figure 11.21 to explain what motivated the early 18th Dynasty pharaohs to engage in a massive building program.
2. How were they able to do this?
3. What is the difference between a cult and a mortuary temple?
4. Use Fig 11.22 and 11.23 to describe the symbolism featured in cult temples.
5. How were cult and mortuary temples used for royal propaganda?
6. List some of the types of buildings and architectural features with which these pharaohs embellished Karnak, the cult centre of Amun.

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The role and contribution of kings from Ahmose to Thutmose IV

ACTIVITY 11.7

Since most of the information about the general contribution of these pharaohs has already been covered, you will need to:

1. Review Table 11.1 and all textual material under the heading Internal Developments.
2. Examine the images, maps and sources provided.
3. Chose three pharaohs that you believe made major contributions to the early 18th Dynasty and summarise their influence and contribution in a diagrammatic form of your choice.

The role of prominent officials

The pharaohs from Ahmose to Thutmose IV developed a stable and prosperous Egypt, which could not have been achieved without the continuing support of a vast network of competent civil, religious and

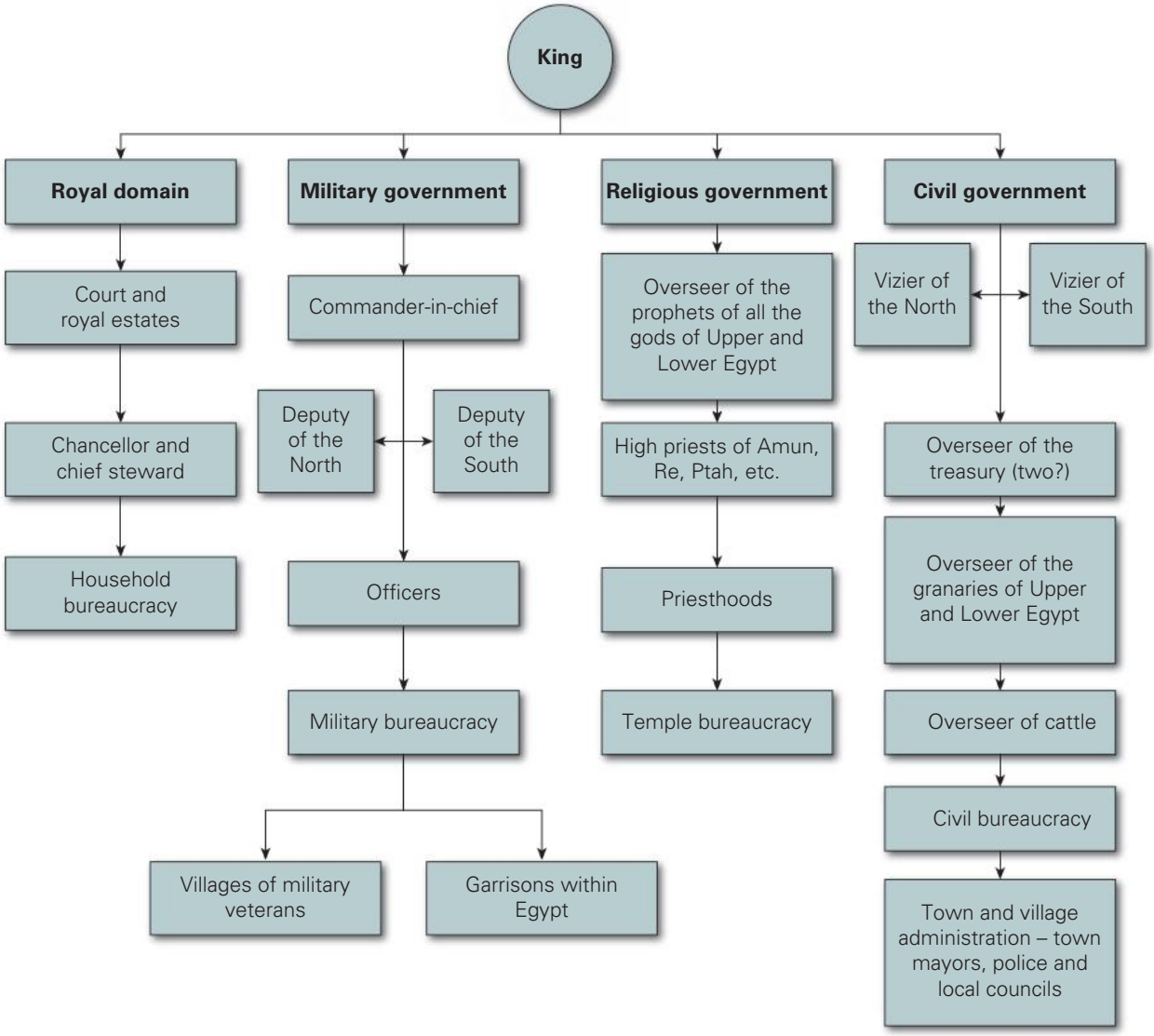

FIGURE 11.26 Diagram of the structure of the Egyptian government in the Early New Kingdom

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military officials to administer both internal and external affairs. Initially it was military officials who carried out the pharaohs' policies, but as Egypt's 'empire' grew, a larger bureaucracy was needed.

The most powerful officials were vizier, Viceroy of Kush, First Prophet of Amun, Commander-in-chief of the Army and Chancellor. These men were the heads of the four major divisions of the government: civil, religious, army and the royal domains (the court and royal estates). They reported directly to the king and were supported by deputies and a vast bureaucracy.

There was a tendency for positions of importance to be monopolised by a small elite group. Several officials held more than one position and some served more than one king, indicating internal stability.

1 The vizier was the pharaoh's chief minister, second only to the king in power.
Although there were two viziers, one for the north and one for the south, most of the evidence describes only the southern or Theban vizier.
The reliefs and texts in the splendid tomb of Rekhmire, who served under Thutmose III, is one of the most detailed on the nature of the position of vizier and his responsibilities.
The vizier was in total control of the civil bureaucracy and was chief judge of the kingdom. Some of his duties included daily reports to the king; supervision of all public building works including the king's mortuary temple, tomb and workshops; reception of petitions; supervision of foreign tribute and dues to the temple of Amun; and inspection of taxes. The vizier's role was not only extensive but also difficult. Under the vizier were other important officials such as the Treasurer.

His majesty said to him:
Look to the office of the vizier,
Watch over all that is done in it,
It is the pillar for the whole land.
Lo, being vizier
It is not sweet
It is bitter as gall
He is the copper that shields the gold of his master's house
He is not one that bends his face to magistrates and councillors,
Not one who makes of anyone his client.

SOURCE 11.20 The Installation of the Vizier, from the tomb of Rekhmire, M.Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 22

2 In the countries of the empire outside Egypt, such as Palestine and Syria, the administration was usually in the hands of local princes, watched over by garrisons of Egyptian soldiers. However, in Nubia (Wawat or Lower Nubia and Kush or Upper Nubia), which had virtually become an extension of Egypt, there was a special viceroy (Viceroy of Kush) with great independence. He was responsible for protecting his province from internal and external threats; the construction of temples, fortresses, canals and storehouses; the administration of justice; and delivery of all payments (taxes and tribute) to pharaoh on time.

FIGURE 11.27 A tomb relief of the Vizier Rekhmire

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3 In the religious sphere, you have already seen the influence and authority wielded by the High Priest of Amun.

4 For the organisation of the military command and bureaucracy, see p. 412.

5 Of the officials who administered the King's estate, it was the chancellor (king's seal-bearer), the chamberlain and chief steward of the king's household who were the most influential.

Examples of talented men in the administration

TABLE 11.4 Talented Egyptian administrators

Official	Kings served	Nature and role
Neferperet	Ahmose	Chief treasurer and superintendent of building projects. He opened the fine limestone quarry at Tura (near modern Cairo) and also transported limestone to Thebes from the Hyksos' ruins in the delta. These were used for building the temples of Ptah and Amun.
Ineni	Amenhotep I, Thutmose I, Thutmose II, Hatshepsut	Ineni was an architect responsible for the buildings of Thutmose I, including his tomb in the Valley of the Kings and possibly the works of Thutmose II. During the reign of Hatshepsut, he had the titles of foreman of the foremen and overseer of the double gold and silver houses (treasuries).
Paheri	Thutmose II, Hatshepsut, Thutmose III	Paheri was a notable nomarch (governor) of Nekheb. He performed similar duties to the vizier but on a local level: tax collection and administration of justice. He also supervised the weighing and transportation of gold to Thebes from the gold mines in the desert of Nekheb.
Hapusoneb	Hatshepsut	Hapusoneb was Hatshepsut's most influential official. As First Prophet of Amun and *Chief of all Prophets in the South and the North* he controlled all cults throughout Egypt. For a time, he is believed to have been vizier and supervised the building of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple and tomb.
Senenmut	Hatshepsut	Senenmut became Hatshepsut's most favoured and trusted supporter. He was steward of Amun and king's chief steward and as such controlled the estate of Amun (fields, gardens, cattle and peasants), royal household and the king's estate, which together comprised a large part of Egypt's resources. He claimed to have been controller of works, in which position he organised and supervised the construction of many of Hatshepsut's buildings. He was responsible for the quarrying and transportation of two of her giant obelisks and was closely associated with her trading expedition to Punt.
Nehesy	Hatshepsut	Nehesy was chancellor and king's messenger who, with a contingent of troops, led Hatshepsut's famous trading expedition to Punt to open up peaceful trade in the area and bring back the exotic goods in great demand in Egypt.

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TABLE 11.4 (continued)

Official	Kings served	Nature and role
Rekhmire	Thutmose III, Amenhotep II	Rekhmire as Vizier of the South was the most important of Thutmose III's officials, and also served Amenhotep II. His tomb featured the most significant single source of information on the government of Egypt in the 18th Dynasty. It included information on his appointment as vizier and instructions from the king regarding the administration of his office and the duties of a vizier.
Menkheperreseneb	Thutmose III	Menkheperreseneb was a High Priest of Amun and as *Overseer of the houses of gold and silver* (treasurer) he was an influential official under Thutmose III. In his tomb, he is shown in charge of Thutmose III's building works at Karnak and receiving tribute from Asia and treasure from the mines of Africa.
Djehuty, Nehi and Intef	Thutmose III	Djehuty, Nehi and Intef helped Thutmose III administer the empire. Djehuty was overseer of northern lands and Nehi was the Viceroy of Kush. Intef was the royal herald who accompanied the king on his campaigns. He exercised a kind of police control wherever the pharaoh went, communicated to foreign countries the amount of tribute they were required to be paid, and reported to pharaoh those who acted courageously and deserved rewards.
Sennefer	Amenhotep II	Sennefer was the mayor of Thebes, a high-ranking position. He worked closely with the southern vizier to oversee the great building projects in Thebes, supervised the workers' village at Deir el-Medina and organised all the religious festivals.

ACTIVITY 11.8

1. What does Figure 11.25 indicate about the structure of Egyptian government?
2. Choose the statements in Source 11.20 that indicate the difficult nature of the vizierate.
3. From Table 11.5, make a list of the areas for which each of these officials were responsible.
4. Research more about Rekhmire and explain why he was one of the greatest viziers in this period.

11.3 Expansion of Egypt's boundaries

At the beginning of the 18th Dynasty, the need to drive out the Hyksos from Egypt, the Kushites from Lower Nubia and to prevent future occupation meant that the Egyptian pharaohs needed to create buffer zones in Palestine and at the 2nd Cataract. These were the first steps to further conquests.

The development and role of the army

In earlier periods, each nome (province) had its own militia conscripted from able-bodied men who served seasonally and then returned home. In times of emergencies these local militia were organised under a commander and provided with weapons from the royal armoury.

By the time of the war against the Hyksos, the Egyptians had adopted the superior weapons and horse-drawn chariots of their enemies and had incorporated the indispensable Medjay troops into their army. Mobile warfare based on chariots, the use of the Nubians and a new patriotic fervour transformed the Egyptian state into a military power.

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However, as King Ahmose's successors extended Egypt's boundaries they came into contact with powerful forces in western Asia (Mitanni) and were faced with periodic rebellions in the territories they had already conquered. Added to this was the need to leave garrisons at strategic sites, all of which necessitated the development of a highly effective professional national army that would always be prepared for rapid military action.

Changes in structure and operation of the army

By the time of Thutmose III, Egypt had developed a new-style permanent professional army based on a continuous levying and training program.

The pharaoh was the head of the armed forces and in this period usually led the army in person, in keeping with the New Kingdom image of the warrior pharaoh.

There were two branches in the Egyptian military:

1 the fighting force with its hierarchy of field officers
2 the military bureaucracy with highly placed officers in charge of recruits, supplies, communications, accounts, records and other operations.

The Egyptian fighting force

The fighting force was composed of a nucleus of native Egyptians organised into two divisions: the Division of Amun from Thebes and the Division of Re from Heliopolis.

Each division of 5000 men was composed of smaller units: host (500), company (250), platoon (50) and squad (10). These divisions were augmented by mercenary troops from surrounding countries.

The core of the Egyptian army was the infantry, which included archers, axe-bearers, clubmen and slingers. In battle the archers formed the front line, firing their arrows at the advancing army to disrupt their line of attack. The rank-and-file foot soldiers followed using their close-range weapons.

Within the army at any one time were three groups based on differences in skill and experience:

1 an elite group of first-class warriors
2 a corps of seasoned soldiers
3 the newest recruits.

As well, there were scouts, spies and messengers who made up the intelligence branch of the army.

The chariotry were the elite divisions of the army. The royal charioteers were distinguished, well-educated young men of high birth called *maryannu* (young heroes) and it was from this group that future viceroys of Kush were selected.

Chariots had revolutionised fighting:

- they were mobile
- they could take an enemy by surprise
- they could pursue and harass the enemy once their lines were broken.

The manoeuvring skill of the chariot driver was vital during battle.

The army on campaign

The evidence suggests that after a pharaoh decided to send an army abroad, he consulted with his war council of senior officers concerning a plan of action. However, he was not obliged to follow their advice.

The first task was to call up the troops and issue them with weapons. This solemn affair, supervised by the pharaoh himself, was carried out by scribes who scrupulously recorded the name of each man and his equipment.

The order of march appears to have been as follows: part of the infantry; trumpeters; officers of the king's personal staff; a chariot bearing the standard of Amun-Re, the sacred ram crowned with the sun-disk; the royal chariot, driven by the king himself; more infantry; the chariotry; and supplies carried by asses and wagons.

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Throughout the campaign, the soldiers and subordinate officers were provided with rations of bread, beef, cakes, vegetables and wine. Ordinary soldiers also received some share in the booty.

On the return journey, high-ranking prisoners, led by ropes around their necks, marched in front of the pharaoh's chariot. As soon as the army re-entered Egypt, the celebrations began with some of the prisoners put to death by the priests. Later, at a dedication ceremony, the fate of the rest of the prisoners was decided and the booty consecrated to the various gods. The pharaoh acknowledged his 'father' Amun-Re for his victory and presented his temple with the greater share of prisoners and booty.

See p. 467 for Thutmose III's own account of his Megiddo campaign in year 23 of his reign.

The army during peacetime

Some troops were left behind to garrison foreign cities and states. These soldiers and officers were maintained at the expense of the conquered people.

Of those who returned home, some were quartered in the capitals and residence-cities throughout Egypt. Others were settled as military colonists on farms with their families who could inherit the land. These troops were rapidly mobilised when the need arose.

In times of peace, troops were employed on public works, accompanied trading and mining expeditions and acted as bodyguards. Hatshepsut's trading expedition to Punt was organised and led by the *kings messenger* Nehsy (Nehsi), and accompanied by a small military contingent. It was common practice for a force of soldiers to escort royal journeys.

FIGURE 11.28 A military contingent accompanying Hatshepsut's trading expedition to Punt

The Egyptian navy

The main task of the Egyptian navy was to transport troops and equipment to a campaign. In the case of the Theban war of liberation against the Hyksos, it appears that there were some battles involving soldiers on board ships. During the campaigns of Thutmose III, the navy was part of his strategy to land men and equipment in the ports of Syria in his campaign against the Mitanni. Refer to p. 406.

> The Crew Commander, Ahmose son of Ebana ... my father being a soldier of ... Seqenenre ... I became a soldier in his stead on the ship 'The Wild Bull'... Now when I had established a household, I was taken to the ship 'Northern', because I was brave, I followed the sovereign on foot when he rode on his chariot. When the town of Avaris was besieged, I fought bravely on foot in his majesty's presence.
> Thereupon, I was appointed to the ship 'Rising in Memphis'. Then there was fighting on the water in 'Pjedku' of Avaris.'

SOURCE 11.21 Tomb Inscription of Ahmose son of Ebana, trans., M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. II, p. 12

> And my Majesty sailed to the northern border of Asia. My Majesty ordered that many ships be built of cedar from the mountains of God's land in the neighbourhood of the Mistress of Byblos. They were placed on wagons towed by bulls. They travelled ahead of my Majesty to ferry across that river that is between this foreign land and Naharin.

SOURCE 11.22 The Napata stela of Thutmose III

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Promotions, rewards and distinguished military careers

There were always opportunities for men of initiative, courage and loyalty to be promoted within the Egyptian army, and those who showed outstanding bravery or merit might be rewarded with the gold of valour (a necklace of gold decorations presented in public ceremonies), as well as land and slaves.

An ordinary soldier in the infantry might hope to advance to the position of standard-bearer, and then further to become commander of archers. On retirement, successful field officers often continued to hold important positions in the bureaucracy as chief of police or steward of the royal estates. Others retired in great comfort.

Three men whose military careers are recorded in their tomb biographies and in a personal letter from a king provide valuable evidence for their distinguished achievements, the pharaohs they served, the nature of the campaigns they were involved in, their rewards and promotions, and the career opportunities provided by the army. These military men were:

1 Ahmose son of Ebana
2 Ahmose Pen Nekhbet
3 Usersatet

Ahmose, son of Ebana

He served under kings Ahmose, Amenhotep I and Thutmose I.

- He started his military career as a young marine, then was promoted to the king's northern fleet because of his bravery.
- His services to the king during the first attack on the Hyksos capital of Avaris earned him another promotion to a ship called *Rising-in-Memphis*.
- He accompanied Ahmose during his siege of Sharuhen in Palestine and in his campaign against the Nubians.
- During the reign of Amenhotep I, he sailed with the king to Nubia where he fought at the head of the army. He was once again rewarded and promoted to a position called 'Warrior of the Ruler'.
- He survived to serve under Thutmose I in Nubia, 'to crush rebellion throughout the lands. I was brave in his presence in the bad water, in towing the ship over the cataract … I was made crew commander'.[22]
- He was leader of the troops of the king's campaign against the Mitanni and ended his days as a man of great position and wealth, with many slaves and land holdings.

> I have been rewarded seven times with gold in the sight of the whole land with male and female slaves as well. I have been endowed with many fields.

SOURCE 11.23 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 12

Ahmose Pen Nekhbet

He began his career under Ahmose and served all pharaohs until the joint rule of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. He:

- fought under Ahmose in Palestine
- followed Amenhotep I to Nubia
- accompanied Thutmose I to Naharin
- campaigned with Thutmose II in Sinai.

He held many offices, such as 'Wearer of the Royal Seal', 'Chief Treasurer and Herald', and claimed to have been the tutor of Neferure, the daughter of Hatshepsut.

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I followed the Kings of Upper and Lower Egypt, the gods; I was with their majesties when they went to the South and North country, in every place where they went; [from] King Nebpehtire (Ahmose I), triumphant, King Djeserkare (Amenhotep I), triumphant, King Aakheperkare (Thutmosis I), triumphant, King Aakhepernenre (Thutmosis II), triumphant, until this Good God, King Menkheperre (Thutmose III) who is given life forever. I have attained a good old age, having had a life of royal favor, having had honor under their majesties and the love of me having been in the court.

SOURCE 11.24 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 259

Usersatet

He served under Amenhotep II, with whom he had a close personal relationship, having been brought up in the royal nursery. He:

- began his official career as a royal herald
- progressed to the royal chariot corps and accompanied the king on his campaign to Syria
- was appointed to the influential position of Viceroy of Kush
- he cleared five canals in the region of Aswan, and there are a large number of monuments to him in Lower Nubia (Wawat).

On the 23rd anniversary of Amenhotep II's reign, the king sent him a letter recalling their youthful time together campaigning in Syria, and also offering advice on not trusting the Nubians. Usersatet had the royal letter inscribed on a stela at Semna in Nubia.

Copy of the order which His Majesty wrote himself, with his own hand, to the Viceroy Usersatet. His Majesty was in the [royal] Residence ... Look, this order of the king is brought to you ... who are in faraway Nubia, a hero who brought booty from all foreign countries, a charioteer ... you (are) master of a wife from Babylon and a maidservant from Byblos, a young girl from Alalakh and an old woman from Arapkha. Now, these people from Tekshi (Syria) are worthless –what are they good for? Another message for the viceroy: Do not trust the Nubians, but beware of their people and their witchcraft. ... do not listen to their words and do not heed their messages!

SOURCE 11.25 Erik Hornung, 'The Pharaoh' in Sergio Donadoni, *The Egyptians*, p. 291

ACTIVITY 11.9

1. What caused further changes to be made in the army during the reigns of Ahmose's successors? What were some of these changes and their significance?
2. How was the army utilised during peacetime?
3. What evidence is there for the use of a navy during this period?
4. Describe the kinds of rewards that could be granted for distinguished military service.
5. Use the careers of Ahmose, son of Ebana, Akmose Pen Nekhbet and Usersatet to show the opportunities available to men of initiative and loyalty.

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Egyptian foreign policy and the establishment of an 'empire'

There is no doubt that the Egyptians needed to maintain a sense of security after the Hyksos experience, but Cyril Aldred suggests that for some pharaohs, the taste for warfare after the liberation of the Hyksos 'developed into an appetite for imperial adventures'.[23] As well as gaining valuable resources, these kings were motivated by their need to enhance their warrior image (see p. 409) and the prestige of Amun, their 'father'.

FIGURE 11.29 Tribute from Nubia

Nubia

Nubia was divided into two parts:

1 Wawat (Lower Nubia), the northern part of the country that extended from the border of Egypt (1st Cataract) to the vicinity of the 2nd Cataract

2 Kush (Upper Nubia), the southernmost part of Nubia that extended beyond the Second Cataract.

The early 18th Dynasty pharaohs were motivated in their relations with Nubia by their need:

- for its valuable resources and the fact that it was the connecting link between Egypt and tropical Africa. There were enormous quantities of gold and copper, building materials and semi-precious stones which the Egyptians prized so much; the potential for taxes from the Nubian tribes; and exotic goods from tropical Africa such as frankincense and myrrh, ebony, ivory, animal skins, ostrich feathers and slaves. To ensure the continued supply of these products, the regions of Nubia and all connecting desert routes had to be under Egyptian control
- to secure Egypt's borders. The warlike Kerma tribe of Kush, as allies of the Hyksos, had already threatened Egyptian territory. Most of the Egyptian kings were forced to campaign in Nubia at the beginning of their reigns as the native tribes saw a new king on the throne as a chance to rebel.

FIGURE 11.30 Map of Egypt and Nubia

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Military campaigns and consolidation in Nubia

TABLE 11.5 Nubian campaigns

Amenhotep I	Amenhotep began the process of reconquering Nubia and consolidating Egyptian control over it. According to the biography of Ahmose, son of Ebana, Amenhotep 'sailed south to Kush to enlarge the borders of Egypt'.[24] This is the first mention of a deliberate expansionist policy. Large numbers of captives were transported to Egypt and any who tried to escape were executed. Amenhotep continued the policy of Middle Kingdom rulers by rebuilding forts that protected Egyptians living and working in Nubia and to make sure the flow of gold and tropical products was not interrupted. The commandant of Buhan, appointed by King Ahmose, was now made 'King's son, overseer of southern lands', the forerunner of the Viceroy of Kush.
Thutmose I	It seems that the Nubian tribesmen took the opportunity of a new king on the throne to rebel. Thutmose I devoted the whole of his second year to crushing rebellion in the highlands and suppressing the raiding in the desert region. During the year-long campaign, Thutmose personally led his troops well beyond the 3rd Cataract as far as the island of Argo. This opened the way for the Egyptians to extend their control of Kush as far as the 4th Cataract. To guard the frontier, Thutmose ordered the construction of a fortress on the island of Tombos. He returned to Thebes with the body of a dead Nubian chieftain hanging upside down at the bow of his flagship for all to see. It appears that he made another expedition to Nubia, in the course of which he ordered a canal that had been built during the 12th Dynasty to be cleared in order to make travel upstream from Egypt to Nubia easier. This helped integrate Nubia into the Egyptian empire. 'His Majesty commanded to dig this canal after he found it stopped up with stones [so that] no [ship sailed upon it'] and 'His Majesty sailed this canal in victory and in the power of his return from overthrowing the wretched Kush'.[25] He continued building fortresses and established a new administrative system under the King's Son of Kush (Viceroy of Kush). By setting up this permanent civilian position in Nubia, Thutmose I made it easier for future kings to control the area.
Thutmose II	At the beginning of his relatively short reign, Thutmose II had to deal with a serious rebellion when tribesmen attacked one of the forts built by Thutmose I. After his victory, he returned to Egypt with one of the sons of the prince of Kush to be held as a hostage.
Hatshepsut	It appears that there was a war in Nubia early in Hatshepsut's reign. One of Hatshepsut's chief officials (treasurer), Tiy, inscribed a graffito on the island of Sehel near Aswan indicating that Hatshepsut led the campaign herself and that he was an eyewitness. Another text inscribed by the scribe Djehuty seems to confirm this, describing how he saw Hatshepsut destroy the Nubians and the booty she collected from them.
Thutmose III	Nubia seems to have been substantially subdued during the reigns of Thutmose III's predecessors, but two expeditions late in his reign set the boundary of the Egyptian empire in the south at Napata. In year 47 of his reign he set up a stela and built a temple at Gebel Barkal recording his Asiatic campaigns, possibly to impress his Nubian subjects.

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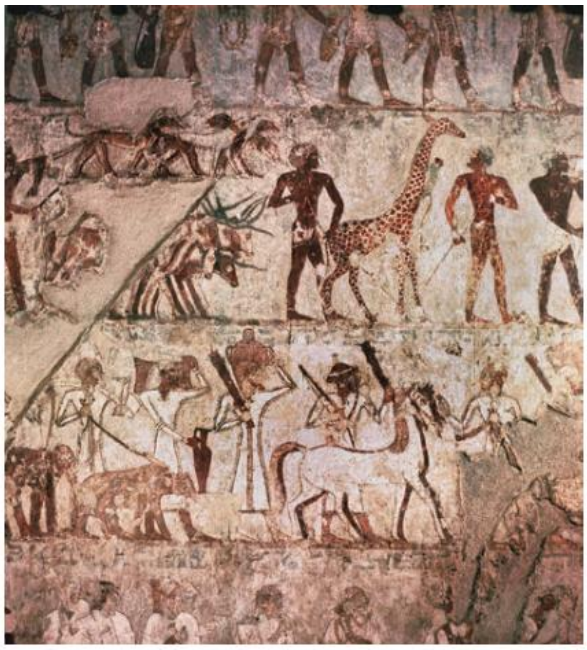

FIGURE 11.31 Tribute bearers in the tomb of Rekhmire

FIGURE 11.32 Nubian tribute bearers from the tomb of Nebamun

Palestine-Syria (western Asia) and the kingdom of the Mitanni

The situation in Syria and Palestine in the early 18th Dynasty was much more complex than that of Nubia.

- It comprised over 300 independent city-states, each controlled by local princes or chieftains.
- The cities were prosperous since they were on the main trade routes from Egypt and the Mediterranean ports to the great kingdoms in Asia Minor and around the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.
- The area was politically disunited and the princes bickered with and intrigued against each other.
- They made alliances to suit their individual needs at any particular time and were capable of unity only when faced with a common enemy, when they could be formidable opponents.
- Of all the cities, Kadesh was Egypt's greatest antagonist. It was a fortress city encircled by thick walls and protected by two branches of the Orontes River.

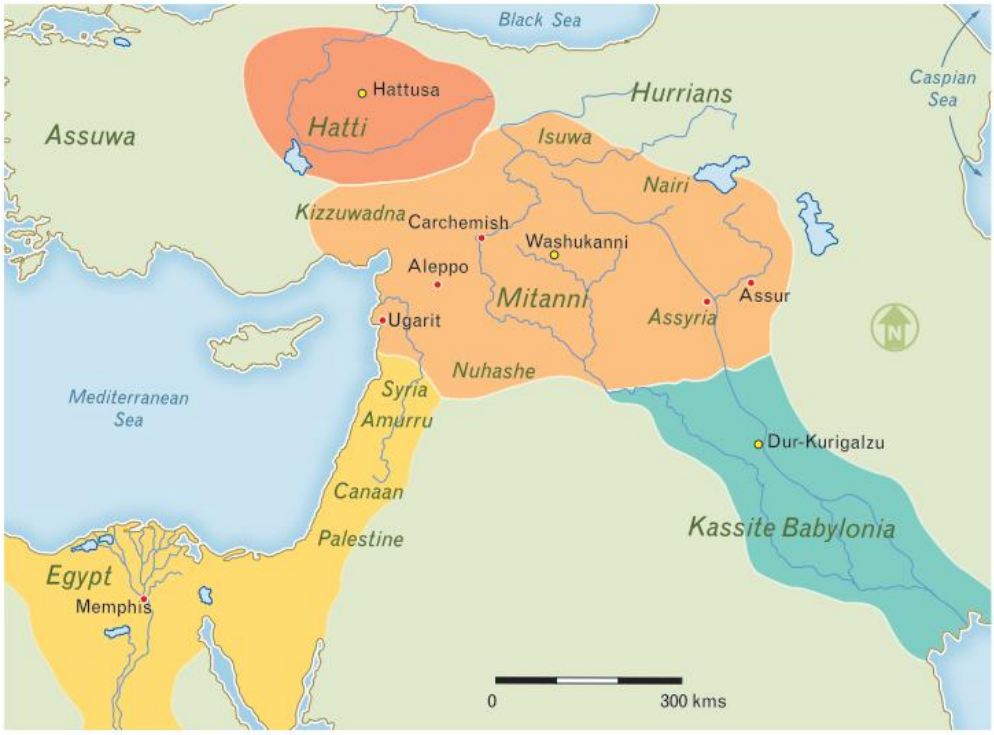

FIGURE 11.33 Palestine–Syria and Mitanni

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Surrounding the cities of western Asia were a number of powerful kingdoms, all of which at some time were interested in gaining control of Syria. The Mitannian kingdom (Naharin), beyond the Euphrates River, was the power from which the Egyptians felt most threatened during this period, especially when it allied itself during the reign of Thutmose III with cities like Kadesh. The Mitanni (the Egyptian inscriptions refer to 'Mitanni' and 'Naharin' synonymously) also promoted rivalry between the small city-states through a subtle game of switching alliances. They hoped to keep their Egyptian rivals occupied with local Palestinian and Syrian struggles.

FIGURE 11.34 Asiatic tribute bearers, probably from the Tomb of Sobekhotep

Campaigns in Syria–Palestine (Retjenu) *and the kingdom of Mitanni*

TABLE 11.6 Syria–Palestine and Mitanni campaigns

Thutmose I	Thutmose I campaigned twice in the lands of western Asia. On his second campaign, he marched through Syria, accepting the subjection and tribute of the local princes. Then he continued as far north as the Euphrates River. He led his army across the river into the territory of the powerful Mitanni of Naharin, the farthest any Egyptian king had gone. When the Egyptian and Mitannian armies met, Thutmose's troops proved to be superior and 'countless were the living prisoners which his majesty brought back from his victories'.[26] In recognition of this great victory, the king ordered the erection of a commemorative stela on the banks of the Euphrates, proclaiming his mighty deeds to all future generations. Unfortunately, this no longer exists. Although the rulers of Syria had pledged their allegiance to Egypt, as soon as he returned to Egypt they ceased paying tribute and began fortifying their cities against a further Egyptian attack. His majesty arrived at Naharin; his majesty found that foe when he was planning destruction; His majesty made a great slaughter among them. Numberless were the living prisoners which his majesty brought off from his victories. **SOURCE 11.26** From the tomb of Ahmose son of Ebana He brought the ends of the earth into his domain: he trod its two extremities with his mighty sword, seeking battle; but he found no-one who faced him. He penetrated valleys which the royal ancestors knew not, which the wearers of the double-crown had not seen. His southern boundary is as far as the frontier of this land [Nubia], his northern as far as that inverted water [Euphrates River] which goes downstream instead of upstream. **SOURCE 11.27** From the Tombos Stela of Thutmose I

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TABLE 11.6 (continued)

Thutmose III	Thutmose III, described by the historian J. H. Breasted as 'unquestionably the greatest military leader of ancient Egypt',[27] carried out an extraordinary series of campaigns in western Asia (17 campaigns over 20 years between his regnal years 22 and 42). See further on for a profile of Thutmose III.
Amenhotep II	For the first 10 years of his reign, Amenhotep II was concerned with consolidating the military achievements of his father. According to the sources (stelae found at Karnak, Memphis, Elephantine and Amada in Nubia), it is known that he carried out two, possibly three campaigns as far as the river Orontes in response to a revolt by Syrian cities after the death of his father. He suppressed the rebellions in the north; punished the city of Ugarit because its inhabitants were threatening the Egyptian garrison, and when he reached the district of Takhsi (near Kadesh) he plundered 30 cities and forced the inhabitants of Kadesh to take an oath of loyalty. The leaders of the rebellion in Takhsi were put to death and on his return to Egypt, their bodies were hung from the walls of Thebes and Napata in Nubia. His second campaign focused on Palestine, where he took numerous prisoners and carried out wholesale deportations. According to the Memphis Stela of Amenhotep, the powerful kingdoms to the north and east are believed to have recognised Egyptian influence in Syria, sending gifts and prayers for peace. For the last 20 years of his reign there appear to have been no records of further military action.

Changes in the north

Towards the end of Amenhotep II's reign, things were changing in the north with the rise to power of the Hittites of Khatte. Because this presented a possible threat to the Mittani of Naharin, who would be caught between the powers of Khatte and Egypt, the Mitannians started negotiations for an alliance with Egypt. It is possible that such a treaty was signed towards the end of Amenhotep's reign.

Although his successor, Thutmose IV, was required to suppress a few minor revolts in Syria, he continued to consolidate his predecessors' work, and diplomacy replaced force. His reign was a turning point in terms of the empire.

Thutmose re-negotiated the alliance with the Mitannian king, Artatama, and cemented it with marriage to his daughter, who entered Thutmose IV's harem. This ended years of hostility, and the marriage alliance between Egypt and the eastern rulers was a pattern followed in the succeeding generations. For nearly half a century there was peace and prosperity in Egypt and its empire.

ACTIVITY 11.10

1. Provide four factors that motivated Egyptian foreign policy.
2. What does Table 11.5 indicate about the difficulties associated with travelling through Nubia?
3. Use Table 11.6 to describe the methods used by Amenhototep I and Thutmose I to:
   - secure Nubia (military constructions)
   - improve the administration of Nubia
   - facilitate movement along the Nile.
4. What do Figures 11.28 and 11.30 indicate about the importance of Nubia to Egypt?
5. Why was Syria/Palestine a more complex area to secure and govern?

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6 What was the biggest threat to the Syria/Palestine area?
7 Describe the achievements of Thutmose I, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II in these northern lands.
8 What significant changes occurred in Egypt's foreign policy in the reign of Thutmose IV?

Profile of Thutmose III

When Thutmose III embarked on his extraordinary series of campaigns he was motivated by the:

- need to regain Palestine and southern Syria and to punish rebellious princes
- desire to expand Egypt's borders
- ambition to emulate the exploits of his famous grandfather, Thutmose I.

Palestine and Syria became the battlefield for supremacy as Thutmose III's aim to expand northward clashed with Mitanni's expansion of its sphere of influence southward.

Fortunately for historians, Thutmose III's campaigns were recorded:

1 in his *Annals* inscribed on the walls of a red granite chamber at Karnak copied from the field journal of an army scribe. The *Annals* forms 'the most complete account of the military achievements of any Egyptian king',[28] and is believed by historians to be more factual than the official records of other pharaohs. Most of the 223 lines of the inscription record his great victory at Megiddo. His other campaigns are rather sketchy and focus more on the amount of booty and tribute collected and dedicated to Amun.

FIGURE 11.35 A basalt statue of Thutmose III

2 on his stela erected at Napata in Nubia (Gebel Barkal) near the 4th Cataract. This contains more details of his victory at Megiddo, his other conquests in Syria and his success as far as the Euphrates River.

3 as part of the tomb biographies of his officials, such as his general, Amenemhab.

TABLE 11.7 The likely sequence of Thutmose's campaigns. Those of years 23, 30, 33 and 42 were the most significant

YEAR	CAMPAIGNS
23	Megiddo in Palestine – considered by Thutmose III to be his finest military achievement. After his victory, Thutmose introduced the policy of taking hostages to ensure the continued submission of the Palestinian and Syrian princes, and made annual tours of inspection. By this campaign he controlled Palestine and created a buffer zone between Egypt and the north. However, it ensured the enmity of Kadesh and the Kingdom of Mitanni, both of which Thutmose knew would have to be dealt with in the future (see p. 406 for details): In the conquest of Megiddo the pharaoh had won at a single stroke all of northern Palestine and the remaining princes of Syria made haste to announce their allegiance by dispatching gifts to the conqueror.[29]
24–28	Three campaigns in this period. They were probably more in the nature of tours of inspection, during which Thutmose seized the wheat harvests and collected tribute.

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TABLE 11.7 *(continued)*

YEAR	CAMPAIGNS
29	This fifth campaign was against the prince of Tunip and his allies from Kadesh and Naharin (Mitanni). Thutmose secured the coast around Ullaza and captured Arvad in preparation for his assault on Kadesh. Behold his majesty overthrew the city of Arvad with its grain, cutting down all its pleasant trees. Behold there were found the products of all Zahi [coastline of Phoenicia]. Their gardens were filled with their fruit, their wines were found remaining in their presses … the army of his majesty were drunk and anointed every day as a feast.[30]
30	Sixth campaign was against the Syrian stronghold of Kadesh, as the prince of Kadesh had organised the rebellion against Egypt at Megiddo in year 23. The city was plundered and hostages taken. He arrived in the city of Kadesh, overthrew it, cut down its groves, harvested its grain.[31]
31	Another campaign in Syria against Ullaza, which had rejoined the anti-Egyptian coalition. This campaign resulted in the subjugation of the Phoenician ports, giving Thutmose a secure coastline and supply bases for his future attack on the Mitanni. Now every harbour at which his majesty arrived was supplied with loaves, oil, incense, wine, honey, fruit – abundant were they beyond everything, beyond the knowledge of his majesty's army.[32] I had many ships of cedar built on the mountains of God's Land near the city of the lady of Byblos.[33]
33	Campaign against the powerful Mitanni in Naharin beyond the Euphrates River. I desolated his towns and his tribes and set fire to them. My majesty turned them into ruin-mounds and they will never be re-settled.[34] Like his grandfather before him, Thutmose III took time out for an elephant hunt at Niy and set up a commemorative stela on the eastern side of the Euphrates. The victorious Thutmose returned to Egypt with the plunder and tribute of Mitanni.
34–41	Thutmose had not put an end to Mitannian influence in northern Syria and in 35 he dealt with a new Mitannian coalition near Aleppo.
42	The final defeat of his long-time enemy, the prince of Kadesh. That this was a complete victory is shown by the fact that there were no further troubles in the north or expeditions to Syria during Thutmose's reign. His majesty sent forth every valiant man in his army in order to breach the new wall which Kadesh had made.[35]

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Thutmose's Battle of Megiddo: year 23

Although most accounts of ancient military campaigns are rather sketchy, and don't allow the when, why, where, what and how questions to be answered, Thutmose's *Annals* are reasonably detailed.

- In year 23 of his reign, shortly after the death of Hatshepsut, Thutmose was in Tharu on the border of Palestine 'on the first victorious expedition to extend the boundaries of Egypt with might'.[36] Nine to 10 days later he had reached Gaza, and within two weeks he and his army were camped on the plain of Megiddo preparing for battle.
- According to the *Annals,* 330 princes from Palestine and Syria, each with their own army, formed a confederation under the prince of Kadesh. They centred their rebellion on the fortress city of Megiddo overlooking the Plain of Esdraelon, which was the focus of all the major roads north and north-east. The Megiddo Pass was of great military importance. The aim of the Palestinian and Syrian princes was to prevent Egypt bringing Syria under its control and threatening its ally, Mitanni.
- Thutmose called a council of war with his army chiefs to discuss the route by which they would approach Megiddo. There were three approaches. The most direct, through a mountain pass, was also the slowest and most dangerous. The war council opposed the direct route as it would make the Egyptians more vulnerable, but Thutmose ignored their advice and advised them he would take the road to Aruna (the most direct) as he trusted in Amun-Re to give him victory.
- He took his place at the head of the army and by the time they reached the plain of Megiddo there was no opposition to meet them. The enemy had expected them to arrive by one of the easier routes and had split their forces. Thutmose deployed his army in several divisions across the plain.
- On the day of battle, the king paraded at the head of his forces 'in a chariot of electrum, arrayed in his weapons of war like Horus, the Smiter, lord of power; like Montu of Thebes while his father Amun strengthened his arms'.[37] The size of the enemy force is not known but judging by the 924 chariots captured after the battle, the Syrian and Palestinian chariotry force must have been substantial. There are no details of the actual battle, but the *Annals* record that the Egyptians prevailed and that the enemy forces, leaving their horses and chariots, fled to Megiddo for safety.
- To the disgust of Thutmose, his men began to plunder the belongings of the enemy instead of focusing on the capture of Megiddo: 'They went around counting their share of the plunder as the troops defeated lay stretched out like fish on the ground.'[38] Because of their greed, Thutmose was forced to spend seven months laying siege to the city. The city's walls were too strong to be taken by assault, so the alternative was to starve the inhabitants into submission. He ordered his men to enclose the city with trenches and a timber wall. Famine finally took its toll and the Gebel Barkal stela says that the princes within Megiddo sent out 'all their children bearing abundant tribute' while 'they stood on the walls doing obeisance to Thutmose III'.[39] The raising of the siege added to the booty taken from the battlefield.
- Thutmose's reaction to the surrender was restrained. Instead of killing the rebellious princes as a lesson for the future, he:
  - administered an oath of loyalty by which his opponents promised not to rebel against Egypt in the future
  - gave those within Megiddo permission to return to their cities. As he had their chariots, he sent them away on donkeys. According to J. Wilson, 'by his restraint, pharaoh laid the cornerstone of empire for a century'.[40]
- Thutmose III introduced a policy of taking hostages from the defeated princes to ensure future loyalty. The sons and brothers of the princes were taken to Egypt and educated as Egyptians, hoping they would eventually rule as 'friends of Egypt' in their own cities. This proved to be one of the most effective aspects of Thutmose's administration of the empire. See p. 412.
- Although Thutmose had effectively broken up the coalition of Palestinian and Syrian princes, he ensured their continued submission by making annual tours of inspection of the area and accepting tribute.

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A COMMENT ON...

Successes, losses and the sources

- Thutmose's inscriptions emphasise several times that the accounts of his campaigns are truthful. Although what was recorded may be accurate, god-kings did not record losses and serious setbacks.
- Thutmose had his set-backs, such as the lost opportunity to take Megiddo which necessitated a long siege that he had not planned for. It is obvious that some of his campaigns were less than successful, otherwise he would not have had to return several times to recapture areas taken previously. For example, two years after his supposedly great defeat of the Mitanni and their allies, the king returned to northern Syria to once again subdue the prince of the region. Northern Syria was always difficult to control.
- However, the evidence for his successes includes:
  - the gifts sent to him by the great kings of Babylon, Assyria, Khatte, Cyprus and Crete
  - the continued payment of tribute from Syria as recorded in the tombs of Rekhmire, Puemere and Menkheperreseneb.
  - the lack of any military operations in Syria from year 42 until his death in year 54.

- Thutmose's success at Megiddo ensured that his foes, the prince of Kadesh and King of Mitanni, would not need to be confronted in the future.
- The greatest beneficiary of Thutmose's victories was the temple of Amun and its priesthood.
- There is no doubt about Thutmose III's ability to plan an entire campaign or series of campaigns to achieve his ends. The best evidence for this comes from those carried out between years 29 and 33. His **strategy** for dealing with Kadesh and Mitanni involved:
  - campaigning during the harvest season when his enemy was most vulnerable
  - securing the coastal cities to secure their loyalty
  - provisioning the coastal cities with food and other military requirements

strategy long-term planning

FIGURE 11.36 An aerial view of Tell Megiddo today

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– transporting his army to the Syrian coast by sea
– building prefabricated cedar boats at Byblos to be used by the army for crossing the Euphrates
– capturing the Syrian strongholds of the interior (such as Tunip and Kadesh) before proceeding further north and east
– ravaging the countryside around cities to maximise his victories.

ACTIVITY 11.11

1 How do historians know more about Thutmose III's military achievements than about any other pharaoh?
2 How many military campaigns did he conduct between years 32–42 of his reign?
3 Why were the campaigns of 23, 30, 33 and 43 so significant?
4 Answer the following questions about Thutmose III's Megiddo campaign:
   - When did this campaign occur?
   - Why was it necessary?
   - Where did the major battle take place?
   - What were the major incidents of this campaign?
   - How did the armies on both sides perform?
   - How was victory eventually achieved?
   - How did the victorious army treat the enemy?
   - What follow-up actions were taken on both sides?
   - What was the significance of the campaign for both sides?
5 In an extended piece of writing, assess Breasted's claim that Thutmose III was the greatest military leader of Ancient Egypt. You might need to consider in this assessment the length of his reign and the sources available to historians.

Summary of Egypt's foreign policy in western Asia

Egypt's foreign policy for approximately 380 years, between the reigns of Ahmose and Thutmose IV, seems to have been marked by three different approaches.

1 From Ahmose to Hatshepsut, Egyptian kings tended to focus on military raids to protect their borders by creating a buffer zone north of Egypt and to maintain trade. Even the two campaigns of the great warrior pharaoh, Thutmose I – who marched through Syria accepting the subjection of the local princes, and faced and defeated the powerful Mitanni – did not attempt to bring the area thoroughly under control by organising a permanent unified administration similar to that set up in Nubia.
2 The reign of Thutmose III, who carried out sustained military campaigns in western Asia for over 20 years, is the pivotal time frame for the creation of the Egyptian 'empire' in Asia. He took the first steps in setting up an imperial administrative system in Syria and Palestine. See p. 413.
3 The reigns of Amenhotep II to Thutmose IV focused on the consolidation and maintenance of the 'empire' by force (initially) and by diplomacy and foreign marriage alliances.

Image of the warrior pharaoh

One of the responsibilities of the god-king in upholding *ma'at* (divine order) was to defend the people against physical threats, and evil or chaotic forces.

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The traditional image of the pharaoh since the beginning of Egyptian history, as a smasher of heads, continued throughout the early 18th Dynasty with his towering figure striding forward and grasping in his left hand the hair of a captive or captives while the mace-head or scimitar in his right hand is about to beat out the enemy's brains.

However, the militarism of the 18th Dynasty produced a more heroic image of the pharaohs, many of whom were true warrior kings like Thutmose I, Thutmose III and Amenhotep II, who led their troops in war.

> To the new militarism in society the portrayal of kingship responded with a greatly reinforced image of military leadership. The greater power of arms was matched by the king being presented as a military hero; some of them responded to this with a taste for the battlefield.

SOURCE 11.28 B. Kemp, Ancient Egypt: *Anatomy of a Civilization*, p. 229

Other kings simply directed or participated in campaigns only in the first years of their reigns. However, this was enough to maintain Egyptian power abroad and to reinforce the tradition of the warrior king who had divine support and approval.

No matter what the abilities of the individual pharaoh, or the incidents of history, the kings of the 18th Dynasty were:

- associated with Montu, the winged war god of Thebes
- described as superhuman in the midst of battle: alone in their chariots, with the reins fastened around their waists and vastly outnumbered, their arrows always found their mark and the enemy was utterly powerless against them
- known by Horus names such as *Who Conquers all Lands by his Might* and *Powerful Bull, Great of Strength*
- shown wearing the ***khepresh***. This crown was added to the collection of royal regalia. It was made of blue leather covered with gold studs and was not just worn in battle, but whenever a pharaoh wanted to emphasise his warlike powers and military feats
- depicted with the scimitar as well as other royal sceptres (pastoral crook and whip or flail)
- shown sometimes in the guise of a sphinx trampling their enemies to death or with Nubians and Syrians on the base of the king's throne or footstool – symbolically under the king's feet
- depicted making offering of spoils of war to Amun as the inspiration of their victories.

khepresh the blue war crown of the pharaoh

FIGURE 11.37 An image of a New Kingdom warrior pharaoh, larger than life and wearing a blue war crown

FIGURE 11.38 Amenhotep II shown shooting an arrow through a copper target

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The following sources that refer to Thutmose III and his son Amenhotep II reveal the 'language' used to describe the warrior king.

> A king is he, mighty of arm, the excellent fortress of his armies, the iron will of his people. He attacks every land with his sword, without there being millions of men behind him, throwing and striking his target every time he stretches out his hand. His arrows do not miss; mighty of arm, his equal does not exist, Montu on the battlefield.

SOURCE 11.29 S. Yeivin, *Journal of The Palestine Oriental Society*, 14 (3), p. 194

> Now his majesty saw a few Asiatics coming in chariots at a gallop ... his majesty became terrible like the strength of Seth in his hour. They panicked when they saw his majesty alone among them. Then his majesty felled their commander himself with his battle-axe. He carried off this Asiatic at the side of his chariot, and also captured his team, his chariot and all his weapons of war.

SOURCE 11.30 C. Forbes and G. Garner, *Documents of the Egyptian Empire*, p. 35

Another aspect of the warrior image was that of the elite athlete and sportsman. Both Thutmose I and III are described as engaging in elephant hunts at Niy on the Euphrates River and Amenhotep II was renowned for his ability to run, row and use the bow, and was shown firing an arrow through a copper target.

> I began again to see another perfect action performed by the master of the two worlds in the country of Nii. He took in hunting 120 elephants for their tusks. The largest among them attempted to fight face to face with his majesty. As for me, I cut off his foot [tusk], although he was alive.

SOURCE 11.31 From the tomb inscription of *Amenemheb in* A. H. Sayce (ed.) *Records of the Past*, Series 2, vol. IV, 1890

> He [Amenhotep II] could not be approached in fleetness. Strong was he of arms, one who never wearied when he took the oar; but rowed at the stern of his falcon-boat as the best of two hundred men.

SOURCE 11.32 Trans. by G. Steindorff and K. Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, pp. 67–8

ACTIVITY 11.12

1. Use Figures 11.38 and 11.39 plus Sources 11.29–11.32 to describe the changes that occurred in the image of the pharaoh during this period.
2. How many campaigns did Thutmose III conduct between years 23–42 of his reign?

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Administration of the empire

Due to the different nature of the lands of Nubia and Retenu (Palestine/Syria), different forms of control were needed:

1 Nubia had a history of Egyptian conquest and construction of forts in the Middle Kingdom. It was more suitable for colonisation and a unified administrative structure.

2 The area of Palestine–Syria had a more complex political organisation of independent city-states that were linked in power blocs and alliances. To organise a unified administration would have required more military and administrative resources than the Egyptians had available.

However, despite their differences, the Egyptians implemented a policy of taking hostages in both areas. They carried off the sons of Nubian chiefs and Syrian princes to Egypt where they were brought up at court in the Egyptian capital. This policy served two purposes.

1 It kept rebellious chiefs in check.

2 It provided future Egyptianised officials and rulers for the conquered territories.

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

Some of these former hostages became administrators, scribes and deputies to the viceroy in Nubia, while others, who succeeded their fathers as chiefs, administered the Nubian communities and liaised with Egyptian officials. In western Asia, when a **vassal** prince died or rebelled, these Egyptianised Syrians were sent back to rule in their father's place.

Organisation of Nubia

The pharaohs of the 18th Dynasty strengthened Nubian forts, established Egyptian colonies around fortified temple towns, took the sons of rulers to Egypt as hostages and created an administration headed by the Viceroy of Kush, who had great independence and extensive authority.

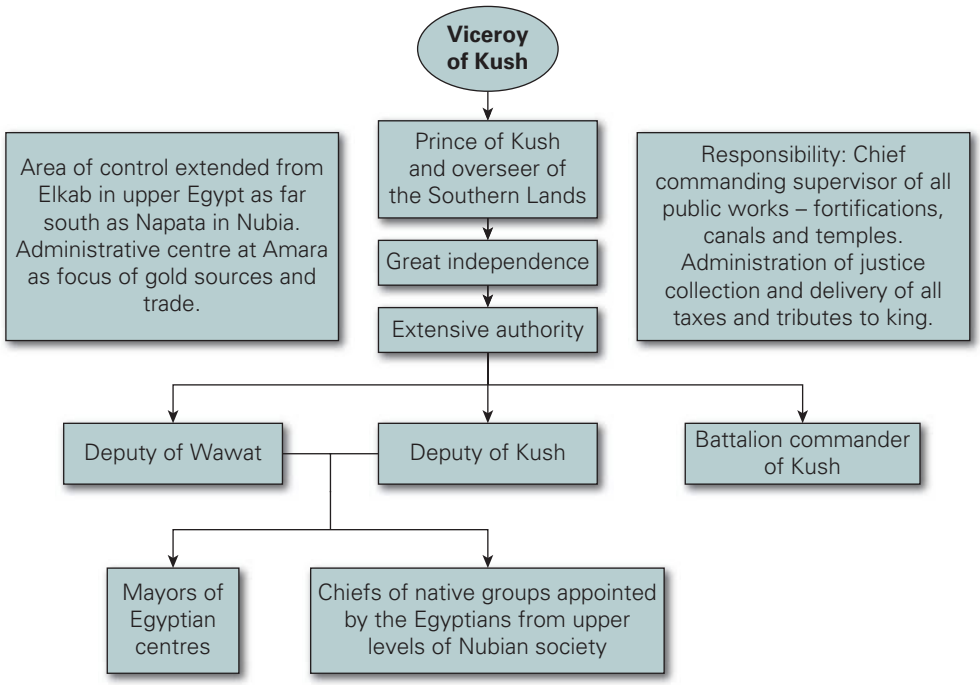

FIGURE 11.39 Diagram of Egyptian administration in Nubia

The administration of the Nubian province under the Viceroy of Kush was generally sound and as a result the country developed and its people became completely Egyptianised.

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However, despite Nubia's well-ordered administration, the authorities were faced with periodic disruptions, particularly from groups around the 5th and 6th cataracts. The Egyptians would tolerate no interference to the supplies of gold coming from the mines of Kush, nor to the exotic products from east Africa, so regular patrols and occasional military campaigns were carried out in these areas.

Sometimes the Nubian people had to be reminded of the power of the Egyptian king. The following source illustrates how Amenhotep II achieved this. The king had returned from a campaign in Asia with the bodies of seven princes whom he had killed himself.

> He hanged six of these fallen ones on the face of the wall at Thebes and the hands as well. Then the other fallen one was taken up river and hanged on the wall at Napata [Nubia], to show his majesty's victories forever and ever in all the lands and in all the countries of the negro ...

SOURCE 11.33 'Documents of the Egyptian Empire', *The Australian Institute of Archaeology*, p. 37

Organisation of Palestine and Syria

Thutmose III – unlike his grandfather, Thutmose I who made no attempt to bring the cities he conquered permanently under Egyptian control – took the first steps in setting up an administrative system in Syria and Palestine. He implemented a number of effective methods to subjugate and maintain control of the areas he gained, but it was not until much later that governors were appointed. Thutmose III:

- created a buffer zone in Palestine to protect Egypt by demolishing fortified centres and deporting their populations
- permitted the local princes to retain their authority as long as they recognised the pharaoh as their lord; the exception to this rule were the lands in the wheat belt of northern Palestine, which became part of the estate of the king and of Amun
- ignored petty quarrels between states provided they continued to pay tribute and did not interfere with trade
- demanded oaths of loyalty and possibly re-administered these on a regular basis
- imposed an annual tribute of slaves, grain, cattle, fruit and luxury items on vassal princes
- carried out frequent parades of power: occasional shows of force and personal appearances led to a tradition of 'king's fury'
- left garrisons in strategic cities like Gaza, Ullaza and Ugarit
- appointed an overseer of all northern lands with headquarters at Gaza
- established supply depots in coastal cities
- expected local rulers to supply Egyptian armies passing through their lands with all necessities
- issued stern warnings against rebellions or defections
- relied on royal envoys and couriers to maintain contact between the Egyptian court and vassal states.

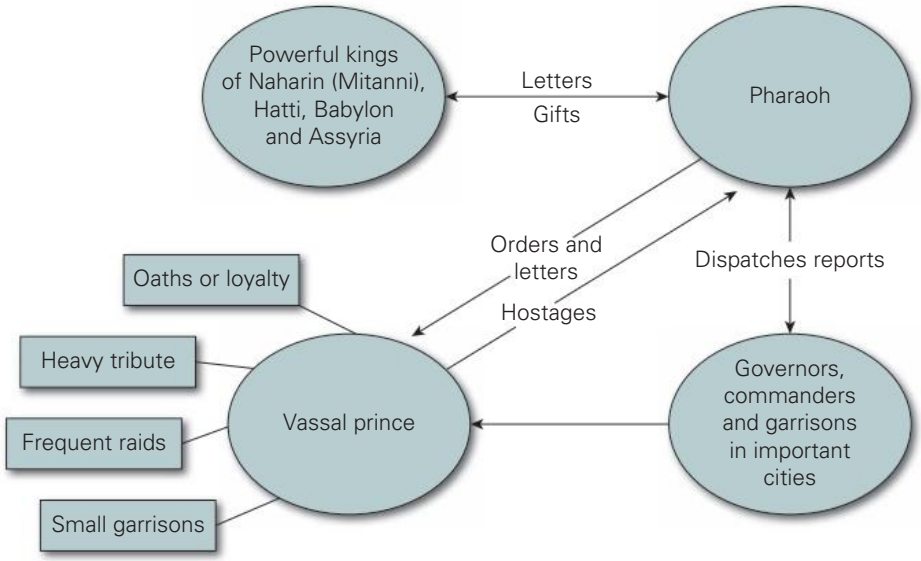

FIGURE 11.40 Diagrammatic summary of Egyptian control of Syria/Palestine

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FIGURE 11.41 The extent of the Egyptian 'empire' at the time of Thutmose III

ACTIVITY 11.13

1. Use Figures 11.40 and 11.41 to explain the differences between the way Nubia and Syria/Palestine were governed.
2. What role did hostage-taking play in the control of each area?

The nature of Egyptian 'imperialism'

As imperialism is a modern concept, can it really be applied to the Egyptian conquests and methods of control in Nubia and Syria-Palestine? Some scholars, such as Sir Alan Gardiner, doubt whether the vast area under Egyptian influence could ever have been called an empire.

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A COMMENT ON...

The definition of imperialism

The term 'imperialism' includes the following:

- carrying out a policy of extending a country's power, rule and influence over another state, by means of colonisation, use of military force or other means
- indirect rule whereby local rulers are allowed to maintain their positions of authority and status and cooperate with the mother country
- direct rule where local elites are removed from power and replaced by a new set of officials brought from the 'mother' country.

Many different kinds of imperialism have existed over time.

The features of Egyptian administration in Nubia and Syria/Palestine – from the form of rule, the degree of military control, the status and obligations of inhabitants, the economic benefits for Egypt and the degree of integration – indicate the following:

1 Egyptian control over Nubia was closer to the modern concept of imperialism, as it included:
   - permanent military occupation in fortresses
   - colonies centred on temple towns
   - administration by an Egyptian viceroy
   - exploitation of resources for the benefit of Egypt
   - Egyptianisation of subject populations.
2 Egyptian control in western Asia, especially in northern Syria, was more limited. Although there were garrisons, the Egyptians relied on oaths of loyalty and periodic raids to ensure the payment of tribute. Some areas in Egypt's empire in western Asia might be more appropriately called a 'sphere of influence'.

However, it is difficult to come to any firm conclusion about Egyptian 'imperialism' and this is reflected in the scholarly debate over the motivating factors for Egypt's conquests and expansion. For example:

1 Barry Kemp believes the historical themes of conquests and subjugation of non-Egyptians on temple walls are 'theological documents'[41] related to the concept of divine kingship, rather than statements of foreign policy. He believes that the actual conquests are 'entirely subordinated to a predetermined format'[42] that shows the god-king maintaining *ma'at* or 'right order' by protecting Egypt and its people from physical enemies and other chaotic forces. The inscribed lists of conquered people on the walls and pylons of Karnak may have been 'regarded as magically efficacious in protecting Egypt from foreign hostility.[43] … This symbolism was exploited at every opportunity'.[44] These theological themes were, according to Liverani in *Prestige and Interest. International Relations in the Near East ca. 1600–1100*, aimed at an internal audience and 'divorced from the practical functioning of empire and international relations'.[45]
2 The view of Stuart Tyson Smith, in *Ancient Egyptian Imperialism: Ideological Vision or Economic Explanation?*, is that economic factors determined Egypt's imperial policy, that it was more about what Egypt could gain. This is born out in the frequent references to tribute and booty.[46]
3 Others believe that motivations for expansion were more complex and included politics, ideology, economics and other factors like cultural identity.

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Egyptian 'imperialism', that is, the conquest and maintenance of control of Nubia and Palestine–Syria must be looked at in the light of the Egyptian need to:

- maintain a sense of security
- gain access to valuable resources
- enhance the warrior image of the pharaohs
- preserve the interests of the ruling classes and the priests of Amun whose power and lifestyle depended on the wealth that flowed into Egypt
- sustain the prestige and influence of the army in Egyptian society.

ACTIVITY 11.14

1. Outline the scholarly arguments over the motivating factors involved in Egyptian imperialism.
2. Debate the following: Areas under Egyptian influence should not really be called an empire (Sir Alan Gardiner).

FIGURE 11.42 The archaeological site of Megiddo today

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

11.1 THE CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- Egyptians believed their land, *Kemet*, was the centre of the world and that they were safe in their divine land from the 'forces of chaos' (deserts and foreign lands) that surrounded them. They referred to themselves as 'the people' and others as 'wretched', 'vile', 'craven' and 'miserable'.
- Despite previous foreign trading contacts, the gradual occupation of Lower Egypt by the Hyksos, later described as 'ruthless invaders', was seen as a great humiliation.
- In the late 17th Dynasty, Egypt had no unified centralised power. It was divided into Lower Egypt ruled by Hyksos, Egyptian princes ruling from Thebes in Upper Egypt, and a powerful Kushite Kingdom in Nubia.

11.2 INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS

- The Hyksos had a significant impact on Egypt. Their administration was not oppressive and they assimilated with Egyptian culture and religion; introduced new products and technologies that improved agriculture (Zebu cattle, olive and pomegranates) and industry (bronze and solver working, potters' wheel, better looms); influenced entertainment (new musical instruments); copied Egyptian texts; widened Egyptian trade and diplomacy; but most importantly introduced innovations in weaponry (chariots, composite bow, armour, scimitar or *khopesh*).
- Wars against the Hyksos were carried out by kings Seqenenre, Kamose and Ahmose. Ahmose finally expelled the Hyksos, secured the northern boundary, re-unified the country under one powerful ruler and initiated the 18th Dynasty.
- Queens of the late 17th and early 18th Dynasties: were full of fire and courage revealed in the honours given them by husbands, sons and grandsons. Played prominent political, military and religious roles, e.g. Tetisheri, Ahhotep and Ahmose-Nefertari. Ahhotep served as a regent, played a part in the consolidation of the dynasty, held the kingdom together during a time of unrest and rebellion. Ahmose-Nefertari was given the prestigious position of 'God's Wife of Amun'. She and her son founded the village of royal tomb builders and were worshipped throughout the New Kingdom. Later queens followed in the footsteps of these royal women,
- As a local god of Thebes, Amun was elevated to the god of empire after the expulsion of the Hyksos and the first steps taken to extend Egypt's borders. Later, absorbed the characteristics of Re, the sun-god as Amun-Re. Amun became closely linked with royalty (military conquests, divine birth, succession through oracles, God's Wife of Amun', buildings and annual festivals).
- Massive building programs financed by booty, tribute, trade and local taxes, and motivated by need to dedicate to Amun and other gods, reveal a powerful king on the throne and to glorify his/her achievements. The cult temple of Amun at Karnak (Thebes) was the focus of most building, as well as the mortuary temples and tombs on the west bank at Thebes.
- No matter how powerful or successful pharaohs were, they needed the support of a vast network of talented and efficient officials who looked after all branches of government: royal household, civil administration, military organisation, religious matters and foreign affairs. The two most powerful officials were the vizier and Viceroy of Kush.

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11.3 EXPANSION OF EGYPT'S BOUNDARIES

- The first changes in the army during this period occurred by adopting Hyksos chariotry (the elite contingent) and weaponry and by the time of Thutmose III, Egypt had developed a permanent professional army based on a continuous levying and training program. The pharaoh, head of the armed forces and with a council of senior officers, usually led the army into battle at this time. During peacetime, the army was used to escort royal journeys and accompany trading and mining expeditions. The navy was used to transport troops and equipment.
- The foreign policy of the pharaohs was focused on maintaining the security of, and expanding, their borders, gaining valuable resources (e.g. gold, ivory, ebony, incense and tropical products from Nubia and beyond), enhancing the prestige of Amun and their own warrior image. In Nubia (Wawat and Kush), control was in the hands of the Viceroy of Kush, However, Syria/Palestine (Retjenu) was much more difficult to subdue and retain since it was politically disunited with over 300 independent city-states (e.g. Kadesh, the greatest) ruled by local princes forever changing alliances; and also, beyond the Euphrates was the powerful Kingdom of Naharin (Mitanni) that promoted rivalry between the cities of Syria.
- The image of the larger-than-life, heroic 'warrior pharaoh' that emerged during this time was exemplified by Thutmose I, and more so by his grandson, the great Thutmose III, who campaigned 17 times in Syria/Palestine and who organised the administration of the north by taking elite hostages (as also occurred in Nubia), leaving garrisons and governors at strategic locations.
- Egyptian imperialism passed through three phases: military raids to secure borders and create a buffer zone north of Egypt; sustained military campaigns and first attempts at an imperial administration; and a third phase of consolidation and maintenance of the 'empires' where force was replaced with diplomacy, foreign alliances and marriages.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- cult temple
- dynasty
- *khepresh*
- Medjay
- New Kingdom
- pylon
- tribute
- Viceroy of Kush

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What was the cause of:
- the War of Liberation against the Hyksos
- the Battle of Megiddo in year 23 of the reign of Thutmose III?

2) What changes occurred in:
- the status of Amun-Re
- the army
- the image of the pharaoh
- Egypt's foreign policy?

3) Give two examples for the significance of each of the following individuals in this period:
- Ahmose
- Queen Ahhotep
- Amenhotep I
- Queen Ahmose-Nefertari
- Thutmose I
- The female pharaoh Hatshepsut
- Thutmose III
- Thutmose IV

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4) What was the significance of the following for historians in understanding this period:
   - The Great Stela of Kamose
   - The tomb autobiography of Ahmose, son of Ebana
   - The Donation Stela of Ahmose
   - Hatshepsut's mortuary temple
   - The Annals of Thutmose III
   - The Tomb of the Vizier Rekhmire.

Historical skills

1) What impact did the Hyksos have on the formation and nature of the early 18th Dynasty?
2) How influential were royal women during this period?
3) Assess the links between Amun-Re and kingship during this period.
4) Comment on the statement that 'more than any other deity, Amun was the creation of political circumstances'.
5) Explain the purpose behind, and nature of, the building program during this period.
6) Assess the role of the army and its increasing status during this period.
7) To what extent was the formation of the Egyptian empire the result of the actions of Thutmose III?
8) Explain the differences between the forms of administration in Nubia and Syria/ Palestine.
9) Use the following quote to discuss the extent to which Egypt had an empire during this period.

> I gave your valour over all lands . . .
> The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp.
> *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, p. 36

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CHAPTER 12
The Greek world 500–440 BC

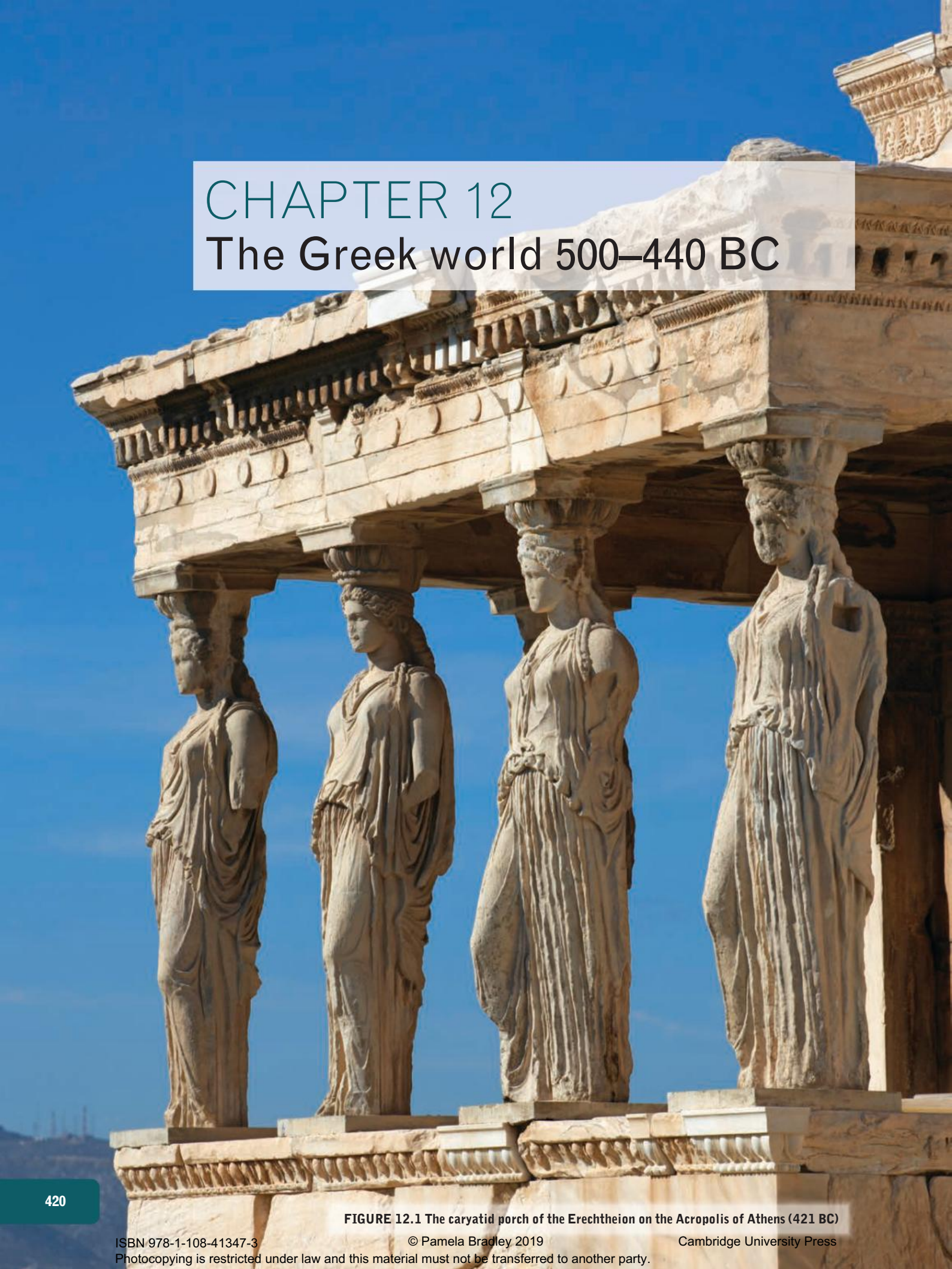

FIGURE 12.1 The caryatid porch of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis of Athens (421 BC)

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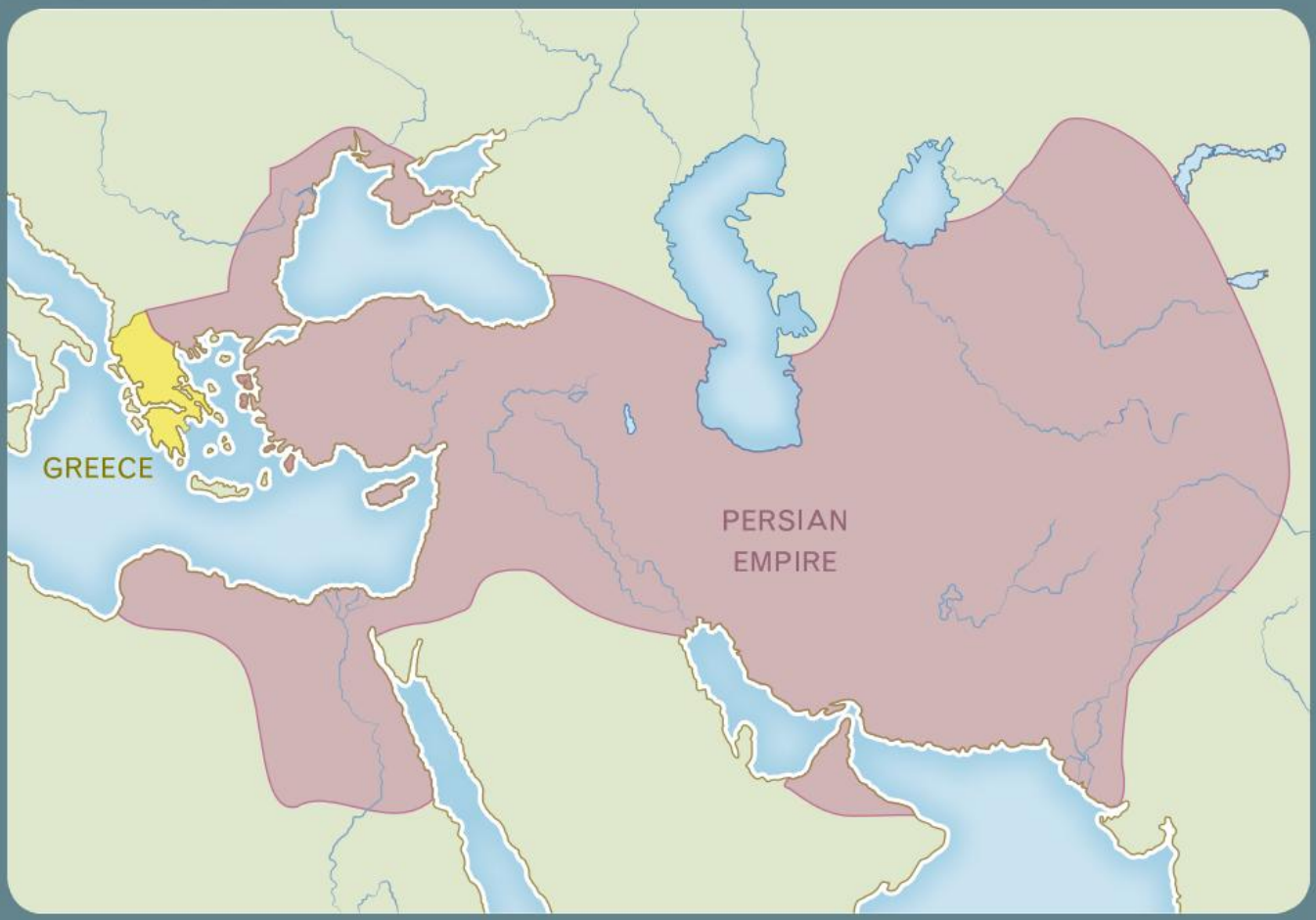
FIGURE 12.2 Map showing the relative sizes of Greece and the Persian Empire at the beginning of the 5th century BC



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?	
FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of the Greek World 500–440 BC through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The chronological and geographical context • The Persian Wars • The development of Athens and the Athenian Empire 478–440 BC • Athens and Sparta

We did nothing extraordinary, nothing contrary to human nature in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so: security, honour and self-interest.

SOURCE 12.1 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk I. 76

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 12.3 An artistic depiction of Athens in the 5th century BC

FIGURE 12.4 A tribute list

Study Figures 12.3 and 12.4 carefully. Note everything that you can see in Figure 12.3. What does this reveal about Athens in the 5th century BC? What does the image in Figure 12.4 suggest about the possible relationship between it and Figure 12.3?

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CHAPTER 12 Overview

KEY IDEA

This period in Greek history, which focuses chiefly on the city-states of Sparta and Athens, is marked by inter-city tensions and rivalries, invasion and change. It traces the ways each city reacted to outside forces and includes stories of outstanding military achievements, courage, sacrifice, betrayal and selfishness. Out of all of this emerged an aggressive Athenian empire and a radical democracy that created fear and suspicion in oligarchic Sparta, with its oppressed helot population. These events became the prelude to a massive Greek civil war at the end of the century.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

A study of this period in Greek history reveals how a small state can overcome tremendous military odds with courage, unity and motivation, as well as the nature of imperialism even in the ancient world. This period also reveals the development of the first Western democracy in history, which was, however, only possible with the wealth from empire and the presence of slavery in society. The city of Athens, the stunning remains of which are still visited by millions today, emerged from this period.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- acropolis
- agora
- Areopagus
- autonomous
- cleruchy
- democracy
- *dioklos*
- epigram
- epigraphic
- hegemony
- *heliaea*
- *Hellentamiae*
- lot
- medism
- oligarchy
- oracle
- ostracism
- ostraka
- panhellenic
- phalanx
- *phoros*
- *poleis* (sing., *polis*)
- polemarch
- Pythia
- secession
- *strategoi*
- trireme

Painting the picture

The major themes of the period between 500 and 440 BC are threefold: the Persian Wars, the development of Athens and its empire, and the changing relations between Athens and Sparta.

Although the initial conflict between Greece and Persia began in 499 with the Ionian Revolt, it was the First Invasion of Greece in 490 and the Second Invasion in 480–479 that were the most significant events for the future of Greece. In 490 the Athenians, under the leadership of Miltiades, defeated the Persians at the Battle of Marathon, which proved to be a test for the infant democracy. In the 10 years before the next Persian invasion in 480, Athens developed a navy under the initiative of Themistocles, and 31 Greek states joined a Hellenic League under the leadership of Sparta. After massive preparations, King Xerxes of Persia began a combined military and naval attack on Greece. At the Battle of Thermopylae, the Greeks under the Spartan King Leonidas were defeated and central Greece lay open to the invaders. Athens was evacuated and then destroyed by the Persians, but at the naval Battle of Salamis and the Battles of Plataea and Mycale in the following year (479), the Persians were defeated.

The Persian Wars revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the Greek city-state system, and laid the basis for the dominance of Athens over the next 50 years, first as leader of a voluntary league of sea states (Delian League) and then as the leader of a fully-fledged Athenian empire comprising allies and subject

INQUIRY QUESTION

What part did the navy play in defending Greece during the Persian wars and in Athens' growth to power?

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states. During this time, the two key developments were the further growth of democracy in Athens and the change in Athens' relations with its allies and its willingness to use force against them.

Tension between Sparta and Athens began developing in the immediate post-Persian war period when Sparta withdrew from wider Greek affairs and Athens assumed the leadership of its Greek allies. At this time, the conservative Athenian, Cimon, was pro-Sparta and believed in a dual hegemony in Greece (military leadership of Sparta and naval leadership of Athens). However, from the mid 460s radical democrats came to power, Athens developed a blatant imperial policy and the relationship between Athens and Sparta deteriorated into open rivalry. Under the leadership of Pericles, Athens' growing political and economic power inspired fear and resentment in Sparta and other Peloponnesian states.

TABLE 12.1 A summary of major developments in the Greek world between 500–440 BCE

DATES	MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS
499–93	The Ionian Revolt
490	First Invasion of Greece by the Persians
487	Democratic changes in Athens
482	Development of the Athenian navy under the guidance of Themistocles
480–79	Second Invasion of Greece
478	Formation of a naval league of Aegean states under the leadership of Athens (Delian League)
470–69	First secession from the League. Naxos reduced to subject status
468	League forces defeated the Persians at the Battle of Eurymedon
465	Thasos seceded and reduced to subject status
464	Revolt of the helots in Sparta
463–61	Democratic reforms in Athens and suspicion of Sparta. Athenian leader, Cimon, ostracised
460–55	Leadership of Pericles in Athens, which gained control of Megara, Aegina, Troizen and Achaea
454	Removal of the Treasury of the Delian League from Delos to Athens. Military expedition sent by Athens into the Corinthian Gulf
453	Restrictions placed on members of the Delian League (Erythrae Decree)
451	Five-Year Truce signed between the Athenians and the Peloponnesians. Citizenship decree passed in Athens
449–48	Peace negotiated with Persia – Peace of Callias
446–45	Revolt of Megara and Euboea against Athens. Harsh Chalcis Decree
445	Thirty-Year Peace between the Athenian and Peloponnesian Leagues
441	Pericles supreme in Athens
440	Samos, an independent member of the Delian League/Athenian empire, revolts against Athens. A fleet sent by Pericles to overthrow Samos' oligarchic government.

12.1 The chronological and geographical context

The nature of Hellas

Hellas was the name by which Greece was known in ancient times and its people were known as Hellenes. However, they rarely thought of themselves as Greeks, rather they identified with their cities or *poleis* (city-states) as Athenians, Spartans, Thebans, Corinthians and so on. In fact, Greece did not exist as a country

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in the modern sense, and its history was rather that of small political units, with first one predominating for a time, and then another. Rarely did they unite to fight a common enemy; they were so busy fighting each other.

This characteristic of separate, **autonomous** city-states, each with its own form of government, institutions and community life, led to strong feelings of independence, commercial jealousies, shifting alliances and inter-state wars.

autonomous independent, self-governing

A COMMENT ON...

The nature of a Greek *polis*

There is no equivalent word for *polis* in English. It is often translated as 'city-state' but it was neither a city nor a state in the modern sense. The closest we can come to it is 'a community of people'. A *polis* was a self-governing community which included an **acropolis** (stronghold of the community); the town or city with an **agora** (place of meeting/marketplace) built around the stronghold; the villages and the countryside; the people of the city and countryside; and the political, cultural, religious and economic way of life. The ideal size of a city-state according to Aristotle was such that its citizens should know one another by sight.

acropolis ('high town') a high rocky outcrop, usually fortified; the stronghold of a community

agora marketplace

The landform of Greece

The presence of many small city-states was the result of Greece's particular landform.

1 Rugged limestone mountains ran north to south, dividing central Greece. In the west these ranges bordered the sea, and in the east, they cut laterally, separating the plains of Thessaly, Boeotia and Attica from each other. In the Peloponnese, they again ran north to south, extending out into capes and promontories, but they did not stop there, for their peaks and ridges formed the islands of the Aegean. Narrow valleys and long gulfs separated these high mountains.

2 There were few large plains, but many small fertile ones: some coastal, others totally cut off from the sea by a ring of mountains like Laconia, the homeland of the Spartans.

3 The mountain barriers and high infrequent passes made communications and transportation difficult and so movement of people and goods was usually by sea. The highly indented coastline provided many safe harbours and anchorages, especially along the east coast, and meant that the sea penetrated far inland.

FIGURE 12.5 The landform of Hellas and its territorial divisions

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4 Although armies did sometimes cross these rugged barriers, the mountains provided some defence for city-states (for example, Sparta), and the narrow mountain passes were important in that they allowed large armies to be contained by smaller forces.

5 The narrow Isthmus produced by the indentations of the Corinthian and Saronic Gulfs was important for the defence of the Peloponnesian states as it could be easily defended while the cities on the Isthmus, such as Corinth and Megara, had access to trade of both western and eastern seas and controlled traffic along the main north–south route into central Greece. Light ships were often dragged on carts along a stone-paved way (***dioklos***) built across the Isthmus to save the long haul around the Peloponnese.

dioklos a paved roadway across the Isthmus on which to drag ships

FIGURE 12.6 A satellite view of the Peloponnese

FIGURE 12.7 A satellite view of Isthmus of Corinth

Despite their lack of unity, Greek city-states shared a language, a literature such as the epic poems of Homer, a pantheon of gods, the Panhellenic Games and the Oracle of Delphi through which the Greeks sought to learn the will of the gods for practical guidance about specific matters in everyday life.

A COMMENT ON...

The Oracle of Delphi

- There were a number of oracles in the Greek world but the most renowned was the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi in central Greece. People came from all over the Greek world to consult it. They made their enquiries in writing and presented them to the priests of Apollo. However, the medium through whom Apollo spoke was a woman known as the **Pythia**. According to tradition, she had to be over the age of 50, having passed the change of life and have lived a blameless life. Once she was selected, she observed certain taboos and lived in a residence of her own in the sacred enclosure.

Pythia a prophetess, female mouthpiece of the god Apollo at Delphi

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- There is no straightforward version of how she prepared herself to be inspired by the god, although there are various tales about her waving a laurel branch, chewing on laurel leaves, drinking sacred water from an underground spring and breathing in vapours from a fissure in the earth. All of these have been dismissed in favour of the theory that it was her own suggestions as she took up her position on an upturned tripod, which put her into a trance. Her supposed frenzied mutterings in answer to the questions put to her by the priests from the enquirers were always ambiguous.
- It was the priests, who had an extensive knowledge of the Greek world, who interpreted the ambiguous prophecies of the Pythia. She was simply a messenger of sorts and had no influence on the interpretation of the message.

FIGURE 12.8 Temple of Apollo

The major cities of the Greek mainland

TABLE 12.2 The city-states of Athens and Sparta, the two most powerful at the beginning of the 5th century

Sparta	Athens
• The Spartans were Dorians who moved into Greece around 1200–1100 BC and settled in the fertile valleys of the Peloponnese. • By the 6th century, Sparta was known for its militaristic way of life in which all citizens were full-time soldiers (Spartiates). • It governed a huge population of subject people (state-owned serfs known as helots) who were likely to revolt at any time. • Its form of government was predominantly **oligarchic** in which power was in the hands of the dominant Spartiate class.	• The Athenians were Ionians who were part of the pre-Dorian population of Greece, many of whom had migrated to the islands of the Aegean and the coast of Asia Minor. • During the 6th century, the Athenians had experimented with different forms of government until they finally produced a blueprint for **democracy**, which gave its citizens the chance to vote, make laws and stand for office, although there were still many undemocratic features.

oligarchy rule by the few
democracy rule by the people (*demos* – the people, *kratis* – rule of strength)

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TABLE 12.2 *(continued)*

Sparta	Athens
• Spartans tended to be suspicious of democratic trends. • The main aim of their foreign policy was to keep Messenia (home of the majority of helots) in check, and to isolate its traditional enemy, Argos. They achieved this by allying themselves in separate defensive alliances with most of the other city-states in the Peloponnese in what was called the Peloponnesian League. • The Spartans were rather inward looking, foreigners were not always welcome and they tended to be uneasy moving too far away from Sparta for any length of time.	• Unlike Sparta, Athens had a more open society and foreigners were encouraged to live and work there. • During the 6th century it had become a great city with a prosperous economy and a rich cultural life. • The Athenians looked outward and benefited from an exchange of ideas with the Greeks in Asia Minor, and with others beyond Hellas.

The Greeks of Asia Minor and the kingdom of Lydia

Greeks (Ionians, Aeolians and others) from mainland Greece had migrated across the Aegean Sea and settled in the isolated valleys and on the islands along the coast of Asia Minor (modern Turkey). For several centuries (7th and 6th BC), the cities along that part of the coast, known as Ionia, sent out colonies under the pressure of an increasing population. Miletus, one of the greatest of the Ionian cities, sent out 90 colonies around the fertile Black Sea area alone. Although the cities of Asia Minor were cultural and intellectual centres, their freedom was always precarious, since – like the mainland Greeks – they lacked unity.

1 Initially, they came under the influence of the adjacent Lydian Kingdom ruled by the legendary King Croesus from Sardis. In 560, Croesus subjugated all the Greeks along the coast, except for those of Miletus. Although Croesus was more oriental than Greek, he appreciated the Greek culture and its language, which spread throughout his kingdom. He honoured the Greek gods, gave generously to Greek sanctuaries and consulted the Delphic Oracle. The Lydians allowed the Greeks a large amount of freedom and they benefited from the introduction by Lydia of the first coinage of electrum (an alloy of gold and silver), which facilitated trade.

2 It was not long before their lives changed considerably. In the mid 550s, the Persian king, Cyrus the Great, emerged on the scene. In 446 he took Sardis, having already sent a message inviting the Ionians in the Lydian army to change sides. They refused and Cyrus not only brought the Lydian kingdom to a sudden end, but he also conquered the Greek cities along the coast. Despite Cyrus' usual preference to use local elites to administer his conquered territories, he was forced to appoint Greek pro-Persian 'puppet tyrants', answerable to the local Persian satrap (governor) because the Greeks were difficult to rule: disunited and factional in nature. They were forced to pay tribute to Persia and contribute military and naval forces when requested. This left a legacy of hostility among the Asian Greeks, particularly those in Ionia, which would have severe consequences for the future.

The Persian Empire continued to increase in size under Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius I who, sometime around 512–510, crossed into Europe and embarked on what is referred to as his Scythian/Danube expedition.

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ACTIVITY 12.1

1 What was a Greek *polis*?
2 Explain what is meant by the statement: 'Greece (Hellas) was not a country as we know it'.
3 Identify three major landform features of Greece and explain how they impacted on the:
   - the growth of city-states
   - defence
   - communications and transport.
4 Discuss the significance of the Delphic Oracle in the Greek world.
5 Describe the ways in which the major city-states of Sparta and Athens differed at the beginning of this period.
6 Write half a page about the Greeks of Asia Minor at the beginning of this period.
7 Identify the Persian King at the beginning of the 5th century.

Contemporary written sources for the Persian Wars

Although 'contemporary' means 'living at the same time', with regards to the Persian War it is reasonable to include those who had written within 50 years of the period. Unfortunately, these sources are all Greek, and therefore must be treated with a considerable amount of caution. Two of these are:

1 Herodotus, *Histories*
2 Aeschylus, *Persae* ('The Persians')

> The ancient Persians themselves wrote almost nothing – at least nothing that has survived – in the way of narrative history. As with many ancient peoples, records were kept alive through oral tradition. These 'records' manifest themselves in the written sources in a number of compelling, but often puzzling ways.

SOURCE 12.2 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia*, p. 11

> Our image of Achaemenid Persia is usually one of a tyrannical enemy that unleashed an overwhelming onslaught against the freedom-loving Greeks, who because of their society's values and virtues, were able to defeat them. This is the stereotypical view, one that is indebted to the modern recasting of that historical sequence as it is to the Greek tradition itself. Herodotus wrote roughly two generations after the invasion and his first six books build towards the cataclysmic confrontation. His account is suffused with cautionary tales of hubris and imperial overreach.

SOURCE 12.3 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia*, p. 120

ACTIVITY 12.2

Discuss what Sources 12.2 and 12.3 reveal about the lack and bias of the sources for this period.

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Herodotus' *Histories*

Historians rely chiefly on Herodotus' *Histories* or *Researches* for information about the conflicts between the Greeks and the Persians and he is often referred to as the 'father of history', but in the ancient world 'history was the creation of the historian … a mental construct that the historian put in permanent literary form'.[1] Herodotus was a great storyteller whose work was originally meant to be read in public. He has often been criticised for being gullible: inclined to accept what people believed in ancient religions, mythology and oracle's dreams, prophecies, and presented this information without critical analysis.

Herodotus' background and aims

Herodotus was born in Halicarnassus in Caria (southern Asia Minor) about 484 BC, four years prior to the Second Persian Invasion of Greece in 480. He travelled extensively, after which he migrated to Athens. It was during this period that he developed his pro-Athenian attitude and composed his *Histories*.

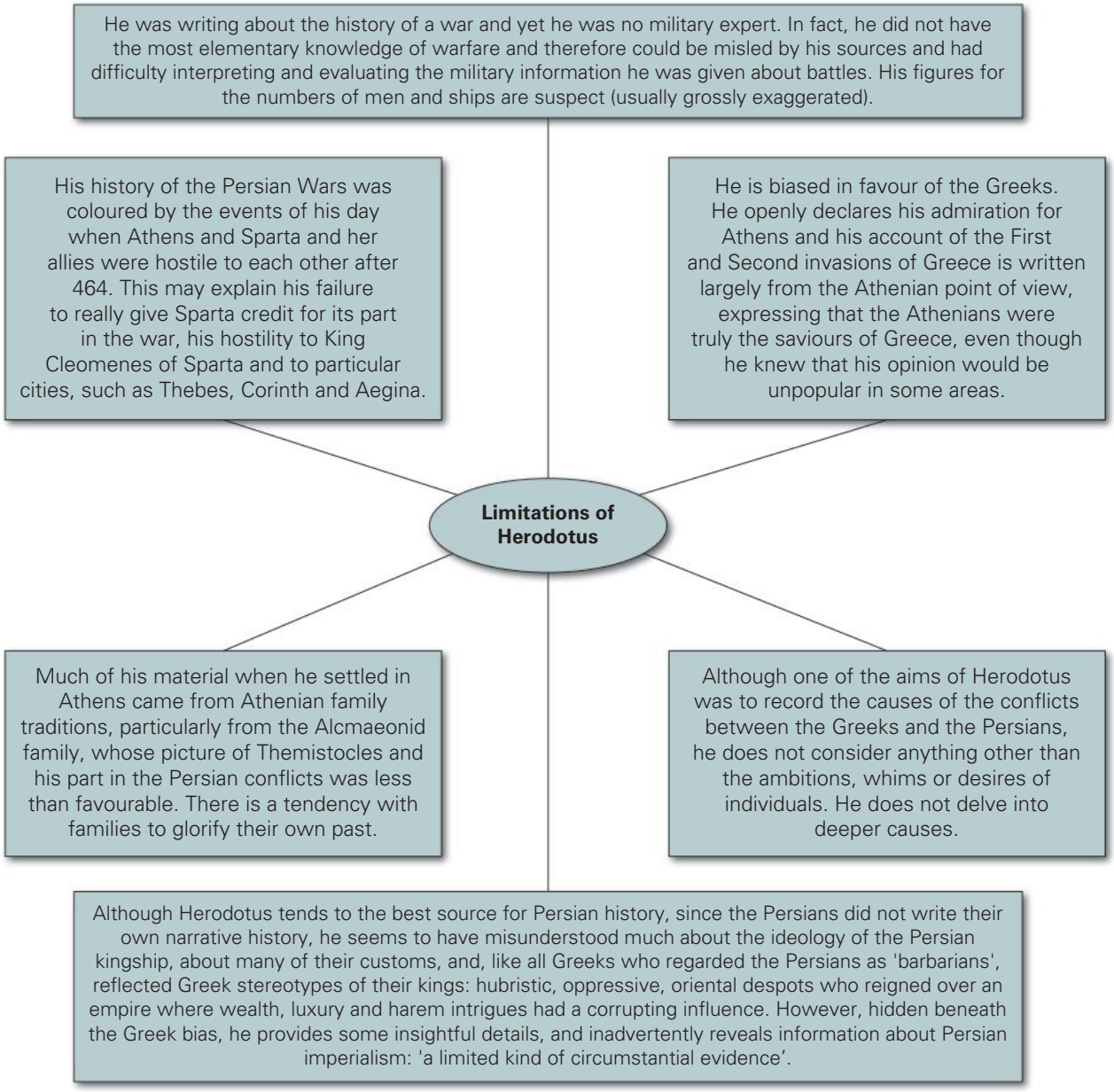

FIGURE 12.9 The limitations of Herodotus' *Histories*

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He explains clearly that his aim 'was to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and other peoples',[2] and he particularly wanted to show how and why the Greeks and the Persians came into conflict. He says that 'my business is to record what people say, but I am no means bound to believe them –and this may be taken to apply to this book as a whole'.[3] Much of his material came from oral sources as he collected material from wherever he could, speaking to people of all kinds: he was informed of Athenian and Spartan family traditions, appears to have had some Persian sources and consulted inscribed monuments.

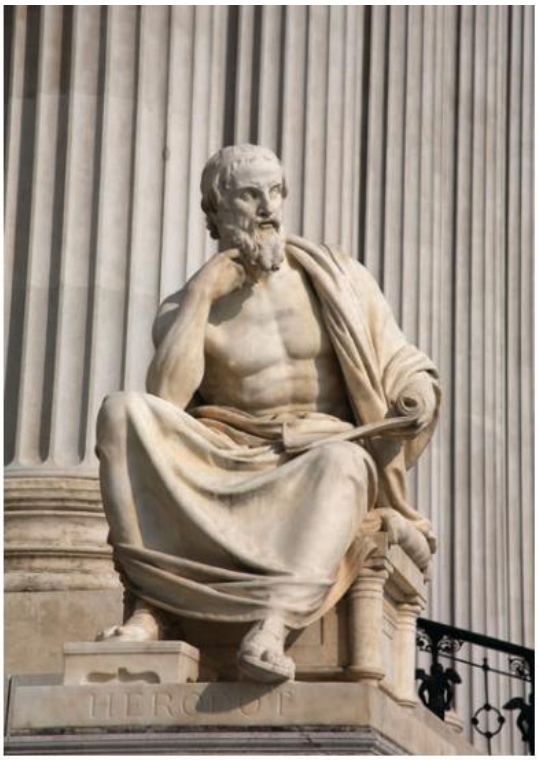

FIGURE 12.10 Statue of Herodotus

Aeschylus

Apart from Herodotus, the other contemporary source is Aeschylus' historical tragedy, *Persae* ('The Persians'), first performed in front of an Athenian audience in 472, only eight years after the destruction of the Persian forces at the Battle of Salamis, which is the focus of the play.

- It is believed that Aeschylus may have taken part in the Battle of Marathon in 490, and was either an eyewitness or participant in the Battle of Salamis in 480. His account in his play is the earliest record of that battle.
- However, Aeschylus streamlined his account of the Battle of Salamis for dramatic purposes and, as was the way with poets, he was expected to teach a moral or religious lesson. In this case, it was that arrogant pride or hubris is punished severely by the gods.
- To focus on this issue, Aeschylus deliberately omitted certain facts and included information that was inaccurate.
- Also, to make it more tragic he wrote it from the Persian perspective.

Other useful sources for this period

Although Thucydides wrote his *History of the Peloponnesian War* towards the end of the 5th century, he provides some useful observations of Athens and individuals during the Persian War period. There are also useful contemporary **epigraphic** sources such as the Troezin Decree dealing with the evacuation of Athens, commemorative inscriptions from Marathon, the gold Serpent tripod recording the names of the 31 Greek cities that contributed to the Battle of Plataea in 479 and the hundreds of **ostraca** that record the names of those exiled from Athens.

epigraphic referring to inscriptions on monuments, stelae, and stone and clay tablets

ostraca (sing. ostracon) pieces of broken pottery often used for writing on

ACTIVITY 12.3

Assess the reliability of each of the following as a source of information for an understanding of the Persian conflicts with Greece:

- Herodotus' *Histories*
- Aeschylus' *Persae.*

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12.2 The Persian wars

The nature of Persian imperialism

It seems appropriate to look at some aspects of Persian imperialism before starting to analyse the various conflicts between the Greeks and Persians.

There were several strands to Persian imperialism:

1 Specifically-targeted revenge that was used as a deterrent and to restore a king's reputation

2 Desire for expansion to enhance the glory of the king.

Although Herodotus tends to blur these imperialistic features (Bk 7. 5–11), there is some evidence for the ideology of revenge and punishment in the Persian inscriptions. For example: 'Who does harm, him according to the damage, this I punish'[4] and 'In these countries, the man who was loyal, him I treated well; him who was disloyal, I punished severely';[5] Persians did not just seek revenge for disloyalty to the king alone, but for disloyalty to the Persian people. However, revenge was targeted and proportional to the crime.

It appears that Persians did not have clear aims for far-flung conquests, but rather an ideology of 'pride in conquest for its own sake'.[6]

> ... If now you shall think that 'How many are the countries which King Darius held?' Look at the sculptures [of those] who bear the throne, then shall you know, then shall it become known to you: the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far: then shall it become known to you: a Persian man has delivered battle far indeed from Persia.

SOURCE 12.4 Inscription at Naqsh-I Rustam, DNa 15–47

> When I became king of Persia, I began to wonder how to avoid being left behind by those who preceded me in this position of honour and how I might increase the Persian empire just as much as they did.

SOURCE 12.5 Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.8.2

Another aspect of Persian imperialism was the strategy of gaining select support to win over opposition. This was the basis of their demands for earth and water.

They also believed that if a king's general was successful, the credit was given to the king; if he lost, although it might be a disaster, it didn't matter as long as the king and household survived.

Keep all of these things in mind when studying the various conflicts on the following pages.

A COMMENT ON...

Tokens of submission

To the Persians, an offer of earth and water by foreign cities or states signified submission to the king, and if help was requested from the Persians, these tokens had to be offered. It was seen by the Persians as 'both a diplomatic agreement, and a solemn oath, and those Greek states that complied were acknowledging the king's superiority in return for his protection and patronage. Breaking the bond, therefore, was an insult, and it required the king to respond'.[7]

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ACTIVITY 12.4

1 Describe the main features of Persian imperialism.
2 What are our best sources for this?

Darius' first incursion into Europe in 512

In 512, King Darius I, with an army and navy manned by Ionians and other Greeks from the coast of Asia Minor, crossed the Bosphorus – the narrow body of water that separates Asia and Europe – via a pontoon bridge. While his navy sailed from the Black Sea up the Danube River (Ister River) to build another bridge, he and his army marched overland through Thrace (today's Bulgaria, north-eastern Greece and part of European Turkey), subduing all the tribes along the way. His ultimate aim seems to have been to engage the Scythians who lived on the far side of the Danube. However, the details of his campaign are sketchy and there is no clear motivation for Darius' actions: perhaps conquest, to show his power in a foreign land or, as Herodotus records, to wreak vengeance on the Scythians on the far side of the Danube for some past deed. Although he crossed the river and moved deep into Scythian territory, he was unable to deal with the Scythian style of fighting and their refusal to engage in direct military contact. Eventually he withdrew. Herodotus claims that the expedition was a failure, but for any 'Greeks paying attention, Persian expansion in the northern Aegean must have created some unease'.[8]

While Darius returned to Asia, he left his general Magabazus with an army:

- to subdue Thrace, subjugate its peoples and establish forts and supply depots
- that sent envoys to Macedonia, where they received earth and water as tokens of submission, making Macedonia a vassal of Persia.

FIGURE 12.11 Relief of King Darius of Persia

The Ionian Revolt 499–493

Between 499 and 493 the Ionian Greeks along the coast of Asia Minor revolted against Persian control, causing Darius to invade Greece in 490. Of course, it is possible that Darius' imperial ambitions, like those of his predecessors, would have eventually led him to make a move on Greece, but the Ionian Revolt made this a certainty.

Causes

Underlying causes

These have already been touched on. The Ionian Greeks:

- had lost their independence to decide their own lifestyle, something that was precious to all Greeks
- were subjects of an oriental 'barbarian' king to whom they paid a heavy tribute, most of which was not returned into local circulation
- were ruled by Greek tyrants who were puppets of the Great King and who held their position through the support of the local satrap or provincial governor to whom they were responsible; tyranny, which had once been a common form of government in Greece, was no longer acceptable to the Greeks
- had their trade restricted by the Persian takeover of Thrace, the Bosphorus and Dardanelles.

Herodotus maintains that the Ionians had long been contemplating a revolt, but lacked leadership and unity.

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Direct cause

A particular incident instigated by Miletus, one of the wealthiest cities along the coast, sparked the revolt, or series of revolts, but in his usual fashion, Herodotus lays the blame ultimately at the feet of one man.

According to Herodotus:

- Histiaeus, tyrant of Miletus and a successful commander under Darius, was summoned to the Persian capital of Susa and detained there indefinitely by the king, who suspected his ambitions.
- He left his son-in-law, Aristagoras, to rule Miletus in his absence.
- When a group of exiles from Miletus' commercial rival, the island of Naxos, asked Aristagoras to help them recover their position, he saw an opportunity to make himself governor of Naxos.
- Needing help with his plan, he proposed to the Persian satrap, Artaphernes (the half-brother of Darius) that if he helped in returning the Naxian exiles, Persia might gain control of Naxos and the other islands of the Cyclades. The King could then use these islands as stepping stones to extend his empire across the Aegean. Artaphernes submitted the plan to Darius and gained his consent.
- The Naxians got word of the attack and prepared for a long siege. After four months, the costly expedition had failed to gain anything and was called off. Aristagoras, fearful of Artaphernes' reaction at his failure to keep his promise, was in a dilemma as to what to do.
- According to Herodotus, 'these various causes of alarm were already making Aristagoras contemplate rebellion'[9] when Histiaeus sent a message to him, tattooed into the head of a slave, urging him to revolt. Histiaeus hoped that Darius would send him back down to the coast to restore order.
- Aristagoras renounced his own tyranny and urged other Greek leaders to do the same. However, Aristagoras needed support from mainland Greece.
- He went first to Sparta and tried everything, including bribery, to gain the support of King Cleomenes, but according to Herodotus, the king sent Aristagoras away on the advice of his daughter, before Cleomenes could be corrupted.
- Aristagoras had more success in Eretria and Athens.
- Eretria agreed to send five ships as repayment of a debt. In a previous war with their neighbour, Chalcis, Miletus had sent help.
- Athens agreed to contribute 20 ships because:
  - it was already on bad terms with Persia; their ex-tyrant Hippias, residing at the court of the satrap Artaphernes, was moving heaven and earth 'to procure the subjection of Athens to himself and Darius'[10]
  - there was a close link between Athens and Ionia: 'Miletus had been founded by Athenian settlers so it was only natural that the Athenians, powerful as they were, would help her in her need'[11]
  - the new democracy of Athens was opposed to tyranny
  - the Greeks generally were becoming alarmed at Darius' movements into Europe (Thrace).

The course of the war

Herodotus commented on the significance of the decision by Athens and Eretria to help the Ionians in the following way: 'The sailing of this fleet was the beginning of trouble not only for Greece but for other peoples'.[12]

The Athenians and Eretrians sailed across the Aegean, landed at Ephesus, were joined by Ionian troops and marched inland. They took Sardis – the capital of the province – and in the attack set fire to several thatched houses. The fires spread rapidly until the whole lower town, including the temple of the goddess Cybele, was destroyed. The Ionians, Athenians and Eretrians withdrew to the coast pursued by the Persians and were forced into battle near Ephesus, where they lost many men. The mainland Greeks sailed home and took no more part in the revolt. However, despite their limited participation, they were to suffer at the hands of the Persians in the years to come.

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FIGURE 12.12 Map showing the main events of the Ionian Revolt against Persia

Between 499 and 493, revolt spread up and down the coast, even as far as the large island of Cyprus. The Ionians had 353 ships, including some from the powerful islands in the Aegean such as Samos (49) and Lesbos (70). The rebels took control of the Hellespont, the vital sea route for shipping between the Black Sea and the Aegean

Despite their initial spectacular results, the revolt began to fall apart due to:

- sustained Persian opposition and resources
- the lack of unity and discipline on the part of the Ionians
- the desertion of Aristagoras, who fled to Thrace
- ultimately, the withdrawal by Samos and Lesbos.

By 494, only six cities on the coast fought on and the revolt came to an end following the Battle of Lade off the coast of Miletus.

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Results and their significance

The great city of Miletus was totally destroyed, its temple burned and plundered, and its inhabitants killed or taken into captivity to Susa. It ceased to be a force in history and its economic supremacy passed to the mainland of Greece.

> The Persians invaded Miletus by land and sea. They dug saps under the wall, brought up rams of all kinds, and five years after the revolt of Aristagoras, overwhelmed it. So, Miletus was reduced to slavery ... most of the men were killed by the Persians, the women and children made slaves, and the temple at Didyma, both shrine and oracle, was plundered and burnt: the men of the city whose lives were spared were sent as prisoners to Susa; Darius did them no harm, and settled them on the Persian Gulf, near the mouth of the Tigris.

SOURCE 12.6 Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.16

FIGURE 12.13 The remains of the stoa at the harbour of Miletus

Generally, the Persians treated the Ionians with tolerance but they were still under Persian control. Miltiades, a Greek tyrant of Athenian background, fled to Athens during the revolt where his vast knowledge of the customs of the Persians and their military tactics were put to great use several years later.

Darius was determined to punish Athens and Eretria for their assistance in the revolt and, according to Herodotus, he prayed: 'Grant O gods that I may punish the Athenians' and had one of his servants repeat three times whenever he sat down to dinner 'Master remember the Athenians'.[13]

The Ionian Revolt was the first round in the struggle between Greece and Persia.

ACTIVITY 12.5

1. Explain what is meant by the statement 'for any Greeks paying attention, Persian expansion in the northern Aegean must have created some unease'.
2. Give two reasons why the Greeks of Ionia in Asia Minor were discontented with Persian rule.
3. Why did Athens and Eretria send help to them?
4. Discuss the repercussions of the rebellion for:
   - Miletus
   - the rest of the rebellious cities.
5. Explain what is meant by Herodotus' statement: 'The Athenian and Eretrian show of friendship and support for the Greeks of Asia Minor was the beginning of trouble, not only for Greece but for other peoples.'
6. Analyse how the Persian response to the rebellion reflected the features of Persian imperialism described on p. 431.

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FIGURE 12.14 The routes of the Persian expedition under Mardonius in 492 and the Persian invasions of Greece in 490 and 480–479

The expedition of Mardonius 492 BC

Darius set in motion a joint military and naval expedition against Greece under the command of his son-in-law, Mardonius.

According to Herodotus, his aim was to march through Europe with Eretria and Athens as his main objective, but with instructions to regain control of the areas in the northern Aegean, lost during the revolt, and to subjugate as many towns as he could on the way. Matt Waters maintains that Herodotus' claim that Athens and Eretria were Mardonius' main targets 'is suspect' and that 'this campaign, should probably be viewed only as the reassertion of Persian power in Thrace and Macedonia'.[14]

Mardonius had ordered the Ionians to contribute ships to ferry the troops across the Hellespont and to accompany the army along the coast. Thrace and Macedonia submitted without resistance and the large island of Thasos, just off the coast, also came under Persian control. However, the forces suffered several disasters.

A violent storm drove the fleet onto the rocky promontory of Athos with much loss of life: some being taken by 'monsters' and others dying from exposure. This was followed by an attack on the army by a Thracian tribe during which Mardonius was wounded.

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From Thasos the fleet … proceeded along the coast to Acanthus, and from there attempted to double Athos; but before they were around this promontory, they were caught by a violent northerly gale, which proved too much for the ships to cope with. A great many were driven ashore and wrecked on Athos – indeed, report says that something like 300 were lost with over 20 000 men.

SOURCE 12.7 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk VI. 44

While the expedition was aborted, Herodotus probably exaggerated the disastrous nature of the campaign. It was hardly the failure he suggested. Persian prestige did not suffer, nor did it deter Darius. Preparations were immediately put into effect for a new attempt at revenge and conquest.

The first invasion of Greece and the Battle of Marathon 490 BC

A sequel to Mardonius' expedition was already underway that involved a planned direct naval strike from Samos, via the islands of the Aegean, to Eretria and Athens.

1 Darius tested the attitude of the Greeks to find out whether they would resist him or surrender. He sent heralds to the various Greek states to demand earth and water for the King …[15] Most of the islands of the Aegean, as well as the island of Aegina, a long-time commercial rival of Athens and just off its coast, indicated their submission. Although Athens and Sparta refused, the submission of Aegina presented a particular threat to the Athenians, who took some of their leading citizens as hostages to prevent Aegina from helping the Persians.

2 The Persian king then sent orders to the Asiatic coastal towns that were already tributary to him for the provision of ships (200) to carry the invasion force plus its cavalry. The force would not have been much more than 25 000.

3 Darius relieved Mardonius of his command and appointed an experienced general, Datis, and his nephew, Artaphernes, to lead the invasion.

Although Herodotus says that 'their orders were to reduce Athens and Eretria to slavery, and bring the slaves before the king', it is highly unlikely that Darius would have wanted to totally destroy Athens. Also, the ex-tyrant of Athens, Hippias, accompanying the Persians on their invasion, was apparently to be installed as a puppet ruler.

The situation in Greece

medism the imitation of, sympathising with, collaboration with or siding with Persians in Ancient Greece

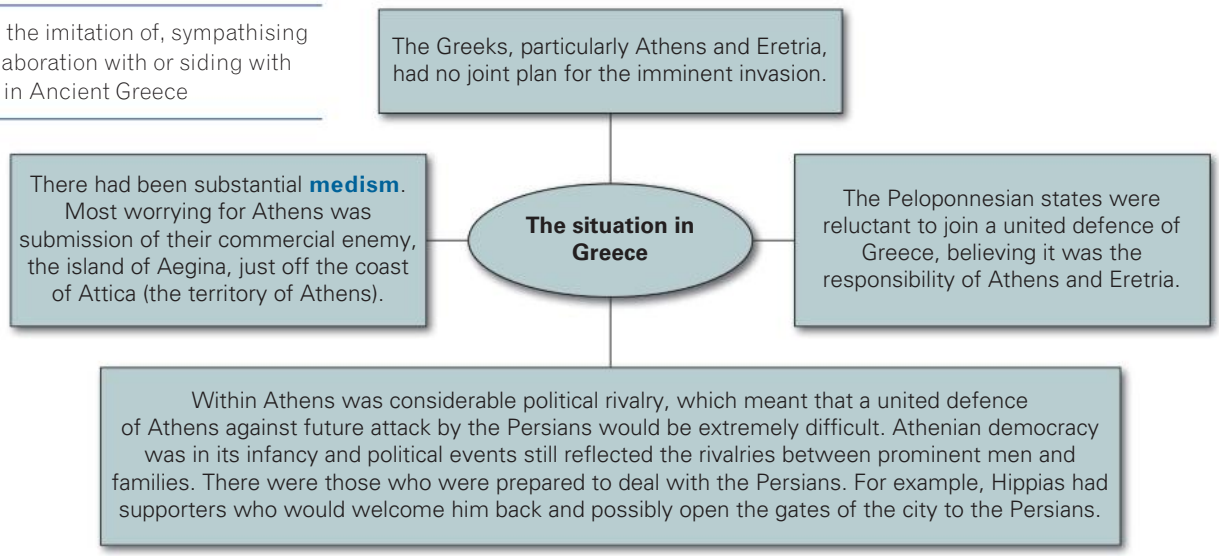

FIGURE 12.15 Diagram of the situation in Greece

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The route through the Aegean islands and attack on Eretria

The Persian fleet sailed from Samos to Naxos, which it took and plundered, then moved on to Delos (sacred to Apollo and Artemis) where the Persians made offerings to the gods and 'repatriated a statue of Apollo'.[16] They moved on to the large island of Euboea, ravaged the lands of the city of Carystus (Karystos) and then moved on to Eretria.

> The Eretrians had no intention of leaving their defences to meet the coming attack in the open; their one concern was to defend their walls ... The assault soon came and for six days, fighting continued with many killed on both sides; then on the seventh, two well-known Eretrians ... betrayed the town ... The Persians entered, and ... stripped the temples bare and burnt them in revenge for the burnt temples of Sardis, and carried off all the inhabitants as prisoners. Having mastered Eretria, the Persians waited a few days and then sailed to Attica flushed with victory and confident that they would treat Athens the same way.

SOURCE 12.8 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 6. 101

Athens in peril

Hippias guided the Persians across the Straits of Euboea to the Bay of Marathon about 40 kilometres on the coast north-east of Athens. He knew that:

- it provided good anchorage for their ships behind the 'Dog's Tail' promontory, was close to their base of supplies in Euboea and had suitable areas to graze their horses on the edge of the marsh in the north
- it would enable them to take Athens by surprise and also give his supporters in Athens time to organise themselves
- if the Athenians chose to fight at Marathon, there would be room for the Persian cavalry to manoeuvre.

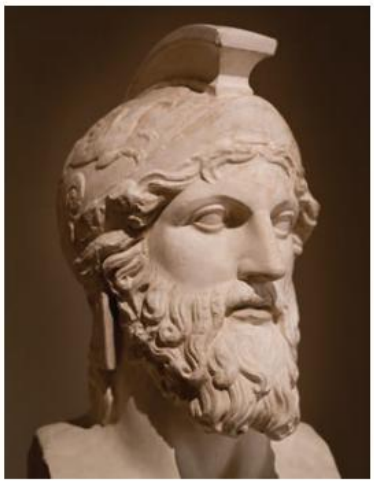

FIGURE 12.16 A bust of Miltiades

The Athenians argued over whether to stay in the city and defend the walls or march out and meet the enemy. Miltiades, who was one of the 10 tribal generals (*strategoi*) elected in 490, urged the Athenians to choose the latter for he feared his enemies might open the gates of the city to the Persians. He also knew the enemy's skill at siege warfare. Eventually, Miltiades' view prevailed.

Before marching out, they sent word to the Spartans who, when informed of Athens' peril, replied that they were unable to come to help defend Greece as they were celebrating the Karneian Festival of Apollo. (See the comment box.) There were approximately 10 000 Athenians and a force of 600–1000 from Plataea, north of Athens, to face the Persian troops.

A COMMENT ON...

The Spartan reaction to Athens' call for help

The Spartans took their religion very seriously and obeyed the gods strictly. There were at least nine festivals on the Spartan calendar that brought the community together, defined the Spartan identity and reinforced the values of Spartan society. The Karneian was one of the three most important, beginning at the first new moon after the mid-summer solstice and culminating at the full moon. The week leading up to the full moon was the most sacred part of this sacred month. It was a month in which the Spartans did not engage in warfare, and their religious principles were sincere. They could not leave Sparta until the moon was full.

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FIGURE 12.17 The plain of Marathon today

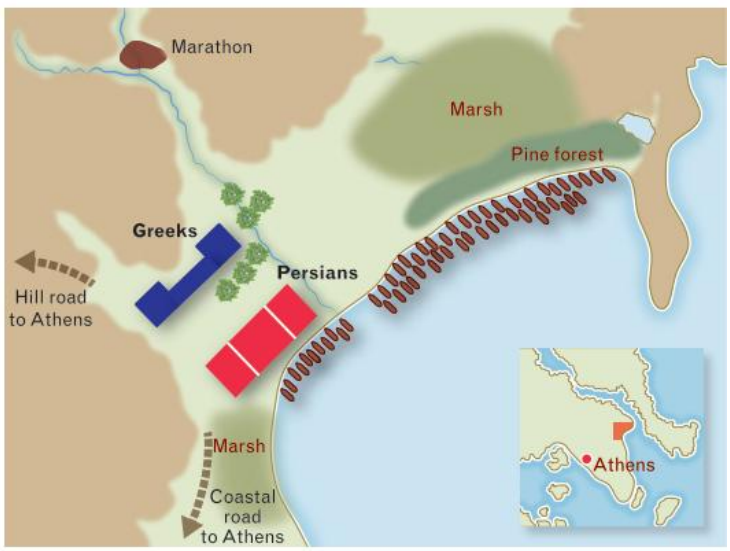

FIGURE 12.18 The deployment of troops

Prior to and during the battle

'There are no Persian sources to offer insight on the Battle of Marathon, so Persian goals and perspective must be extrapolated from the Greek accounts'.[17]

The Greek troops, weak in cavalry but strong in heavily-armed infantry (**hoplites**) on arriving at Marathon, took up a safe defensive position in the foothills of Mt Pentelicus where they could wait, perhaps for the Spartans to arrive, or for the Persians to attack. Their site was well watered and protected by an area of scattered trees that would provide obstacles for an attack by the enemy cavalry; and, if necessary, trees could be cut down to further impede the horses. From this position they could cover both the coastal road and hill path to Athens, gain reinforcements or retire quickly if necessary.

The bulk of the Persian forces left their camp and took up a position within 1.5 kilometres of the Greeks. For several days both armies waited. Perhaps Datis' aim was to keep the Greek army where it was while he embarked some troops including the cavalry and moved against an undefended Athens. Or he may have been waiting for Hippias' friends to signal that the time was right to swoop on Athens.

The Athenians were divided on how to proceed. Five of the generals, including Miltiades, were for giving immediate battle. The other five preferred to wait because their numbers were too small. According to Herodotus, Miltiades appealed to Callimachus, the **polemarch**, to vote for fighting, with the words: 'It is now in your hands Callimachus either to enslave Athens, or to make her free.'[18] Callimachus was finally convinced to vote Miltiades' way.

hoplite a heavily armed infantry soldier

polemarch magistrate in charge of military matters; commander-in-chief

Herodotus does not mention the Persian cavalry taking part in the battle that followed, but a Byzantine source (the *Suda*) recorded that on the day of Miltiades' command (the 10 generals supposedly took it in turns to be in command), the Ionians came up to the trees and indicated to Miltiades that the cavalry was away. Perhaps the Persians were already embarking some of their troops for an attack on Athens by sea, or the horses might have been grazing in the northern part of the plain. Whatever the case, Miltiades understood their message and ordered the attack.

According to Herodotus' account of the Battle of Marathon in Bk VI. 106–16, Miltiades used unconventional tactics both before and during the battle.

1 At dawn, the Greeks 'charged at a run'[19] towards the surprised Persians. Miltiades' aim was to get so close that the Persian archers were ineffective.

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2 He also realised that the usual eight-deep **phalanx** of the Greeks would be out-flanked by the more numerous Persians. He weakened his centre and strengthened his wings, hoping they would converge on his centre.

3 The 'elite' Persians broke through the centre but were surrounded by the Greek wings.

FIGURE 12.19 A reconstruction of beached Persian ships at Marathon

While the Greek casualties were light (192), it is believed that 6400 Persians died. Many Persians fled to the north-east where they were cut down in the narrow area between the sea and the marsh. Others fled towards the sea and were taken aboard the waiting ships, of which the Greeks captured seven. The Persians collected the Eretrian prisoners and sailed for Athens.

phalanx a massed body of heavily armed infantry

The Athenian generals, realising the danger to Athens from Hippias' friends and a possible landing of Persian troops, left Aristides and his regiment to guard the prisoners and spoil and rushed back the 26 miles (the origin of the modern marathon) to defend the city. They were just in time to prevent the Persians making a landing at Phalerum (Phaleron) – the port of Athens at the time and within sight of Athens. Having missed the opportunity to punish Athens, the Persians sailed for Asia, and Athens was saved from the fate of Eretria.

> After the full moon, two thousand Spartans set off for Athens [220 kilometres]. They were so anxious not to be late that they were in Attica on the third day after leaving Sparta. They had, of course, missed the battle; but such was their passion to see the Persians, that they went to Marathon to look at the bodies. That done, they complimented the Athenians on their good work, and returned home.

SOURCE 12.9 Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.123

The Athenian and Plataean dead were cremated and their ashes buried under a mound (*soros*), originally 12 metres high. Inscribed marble slabs were placed on the mound commemorating those who fell. One **epigram** dedicated to the Athenians read: *Fighting at the forefront of the Greeks, the Athenians at Marathon laid low the army of the gilded Medes.*

epigram a short poem or pithy saying

When the mound was first excavated in 1890, a flat pavement was found covered in bones and ashes, as well as a pit for sacrificial animals and a large number of funerary vessels. Today the mound is still nine metres high.

Reasons for the Athenian and Plataean victory at Marathon

The following are some of the suggested reasons for Greek victory.

- The political leadership of Callimachus and Miltiades in convincing the Athenian Assembly that they should send an army to Marathon prevented Miltiades' enemies and Hippias' friends from giving aid to the Persians.

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- Callimachus, as elected commander-in-chief, listened to the advice of Miltiades who had firsthand knowledge and experience of Persian methods of fighting and arms.
- Marathon proved suitable for the Athenians, as its strategic position – on the heights commanding both roads to Athens – allowed them to wait in safety until the right moment to attack.
- Miltiades grasped the right time to engage the Persians, when he was informed that the Persian cavalry was absent. The fact that the expert Persian cavalry took no part in the battle was one of the significant reasons for the Greek victory.

FIGURE 12.20 The mound of Marathon today

- Miltiades knew the Persians would position their best troops in the centre, and the disposition of his infantry allowed the wings to encircle the stronger Persian centre. The charge (on the run) of the Greek hoplites created surprise and confusion among the Persians, as well as allowing the Greeks to get close to the Persian bowmen before the latter could release their barrage of arrows.
- The Persians were confined between the sea and the hills and their only chances of escape were to flee to the north where many perished on the edge of the great marsh, or to reach their ships, which were positioned offshore.
- Although only citizen soldiers, the Greek hoplites were far more disciplined than their Persian counterparts.
- The Greeks were better protected with their bronze-visor helmets, breastplates, greaves (protection of lower legs), bronze shields and javelins. The Persians were generally lightly clad, with wicker shields and bows and arrows, although sometimes they had body armour of scales sewn onto leather vests.
- The Greeks, defending their homeland, were more motivated and the Athenians proved more solid and united than Hippias' friends had hoped.
- Fear of Sparta's arrival is a factor often overlooked, according to J. Burn in *Persia and the Greeks*. The possibility of the Spartans marching to Marathon had a real influence on the campaign by forcing the Persians to hurry their operations.

Significance of Marathon

Significance for the Greeks

- The moral victory for Athens was far greater than the military victory. They believed the gods had been with them and would continue to help them in any future confrontation. For many of them Marathon was a victory for democracy and this led to further democratic changes.
- Athens gained in prestige; it was the beginning of its emergence as the leading state in Greece, although it was forced to accept Spartan military and naval leadership until 479.
- The Greeks no longer believed that the Persians were unbeatable and they would be more inclined to join a common cause if the Persians attacked again. By their examination of the battlefield, the Spartans had learnt something of the conditions under which the Persians could be defeated.
- However, their 'belief that Persian superior power was not invincible created a false idea of the enemy …',[20] and in their optimism, the Greeks underestimated the future danger to them and continued their quarrelling. They made no plans to defend themselves despite adequate warnings of Persian activities.

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The exception to this was the Athenian statesman, Themistocles, who Plutarch says believed that Marathon 'was only the prelude to a far greater struggle'.[21]

- Marathon almost immediately acquired a mystique, and the image of the 'men of Marathon' took on heroic proportions.

> For the Persians it was a minor set-back at the end of an otherwise successful campaign Conversely, it is hard to overstate the importance that this battle had for the Athenian mindset and civic pride.

SOURCE 12.10 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia*, p. 89

Significance for the Persians

- For the Persians, their defeat at Marathon was not a great disaster. In the context of the power of their empire, it was probably seen as no more than an irritating trivial skirmish.
- However, Darius was more determined than ever on revenge against Athens.
- The Persians had learnt a great deal about the Greeks and realised the mistake in their strategy. In any future invasion they would return to the plan of Mardonius' aborted campaign in 492; that is, a combined military and naval advance around the northern Aegean. They believed that far greater forces and more careful preparations would be needed next time.

FIGURE 12.21 A Corinthian-type bronze helmet inscribed with the words, 'Miltiades dedicated me'. It was probably worn at the Battle of Marathon.

ACTIVITY 12.6

1. Describe the problems facing the Greeks, particularly Athens, on the eve of the first invasion in 490.
2. Who led Persia's attack on Greece? Who accompanied the Persians? Why?
3. Describe the fate of Eretria.
4. Explain why the Spartans could not send help to Athens for the defence of Greece.
5. Justify why Marathon was chosen as the landing place in Greece for the Persians in 490 BC.
6. Explain how Miltiades contributed to the Greek victory at Marathon.
7. Suggest reasons why the Persians did not use their cavalry during the Battle of Marathon.
8. Identify the most significant result of Marathon for the Athenians.
9. Analyse, according to Source 12.10, the difference in attitude of the Persian and Greeks to the result of the Battle of Marathon.
10. Summarise the lessons the Persians learned from this first invasion of Greece.

The interwar period: developments and preparations in Greece and Persia

Ten years elapsed before Persia made another attempt to invade Greece because:

1. Darius died in 486, and his son, Xerxes, was preoccupied with rebellions in his empire.
2. The preparations, already begun by Darius, for a joint military and naval assault on Greece were massive.

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The Greeks during the interwar period

Athens during this period was:

- faced with intense power struggles for leadership
- engaged in a war with her commercial rival, Aegina
- involved in building a navy under the influence of Themistocles.

Power struggles and ostracisms

In the decade after Marathon, the struggle between members of the leading Athenian families to influence the Assembly continued, but new leaders like Themistocles and Aristides, without powerful connections, came to dominate the political scene. Themistocles was 'seized with the desire to win the leading place in the state, and so he accepted without hesitation the hostility of those who were already established at the head of affairs'.[22] This power struggle was reflected in the number of cases of **ostracism** carried out between 488 and 482. Ostracism became an integral part of the political campaigns waged by Themistocles and his opponents.

ostracism the temporary banishment for ten years of any powerful citizen who threatened the stability of the state

A COMMENT ON...

The nature and use of ostracism in the interwar period

- During the 6th month of the year, the people of Athens were asked in their assembly if they wanted an ostracism to be held.
- A quorum of 6000 citizens had to be present for an ostracism to be valid.
- The votes for an individual to be ostracised were scratched on a piece of broken pottery (ostracon).
- The person voted to be exiled had to leave Athens for 10 years but his property and family were untouched.
- Numerous ostraca were found scratched with the name of Themistocles, dated to the period 488–482. One hundred and ninety-one ostraca bearing his name were found in a disused well. The similarity of material, spelling and writing indicates that they may have been prepared beforehand and distributed to his enemies' supporters.
- The fact that he was not exiled during this period is evidence of his ability to organise supporters to concentrate their votes against first one member, then another of the leading families.

War between Athens and Aegina

The hostility between Athens and Aegina continued, and when Athens supported a proposed rebellion in Aegina, war broke out. While Aegina had the most powerful navy in Greece, Athens was forced to borrow 20 warships from Corinth and the war continued for years. It was this conflict that accelerated the transformation of Athens into a naval power under Themistocles. As Herodotus comments, 'the outbreak of this war at that moment saved Greece by forcing Athens to become a maritime power'.[23]

FIGURE 12.22 An ostracon from 487 BC

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Themistocles and the Athenian navy

FIGURE 12.23 The Athenian statesman Themistocles

- Although Themistocles had no political backing from any faction, he was elected in 493 as archon (the highest office in Athens). Plutarch says he was an astute politician who gained the support of the ordinary people and 'was always introducing sweeping reforms'.[24]
- He had a vision for Athens, which was to unite the city to the sea and make Athens into a great naval power. Before Marathon he had already begun to establish a naval base and commercial harbour at Piraeus, 8 kilometres from Athens, by fortifying its rocky bays to replace the unprotected beaches of Phalerum. His project was interrupted by the first Persian invasion.
- He served at Marathon and realised that, despite Athens' victory, the danger from Persia was not past. He believed that when the Persians came in greater force, the only way to defeat them would be to cut off their supply lines by defeating them at sea.
- After 490, Themistocles completed the fortification of Piraeus and set about developing a powerful navy. To achieve this, he had to:
  - convince the people of the need to build 100 triremes (warships)
  - overcome the opposition of the conservative landholding class who provided the hoplites for the army. They were led by Aristides, who was afraid of the influence a navy would give to the lower class of ***thetes*** from whom the rowers for the ships would come
  - find the finances for building the hulls. Once the ships were built, it would be up to individuals from the wealthy classes to provide funds to equip, maintain and often command a warship.

thetes in Ancient Greece, these were the lowest social class of citizens

- When a new vein of silver was discovered at Laurium near Athens, Themistocles saw this as a way to fund a fleet, but Aristides proposed that the surplus from the mines should be shared out among the people at a rate of 10 drachmas a man. However, by very clever use of propaganda, Themistocles was able to convince the people to ostracise Aristides in 483–482 and to agree to build the 100 triremes, by playing on the people's anger against the Aeginetans.
- The navy, which ultimately was not used against Aegina, was at the disposal of Greece by the time the Persians next invaded Greece in 480. Athens now had a navy manned by thousands of peasants and agricultural labourers whom Themistocles had turned into efficient rowers.

FIGURE 12.24 A marble plaque of a trireme

The Hellenic League

In 481 and 480, Athens and Sparta called congresses at the Isthmus of Corinth to decide the best way to defend Greece. Thirty-one states responded and formed the Hellenic League. Those from the northern states did not join as they knew they would bear the brunt of the initial Persian attack and wanted to make sure first that the other states would march north.

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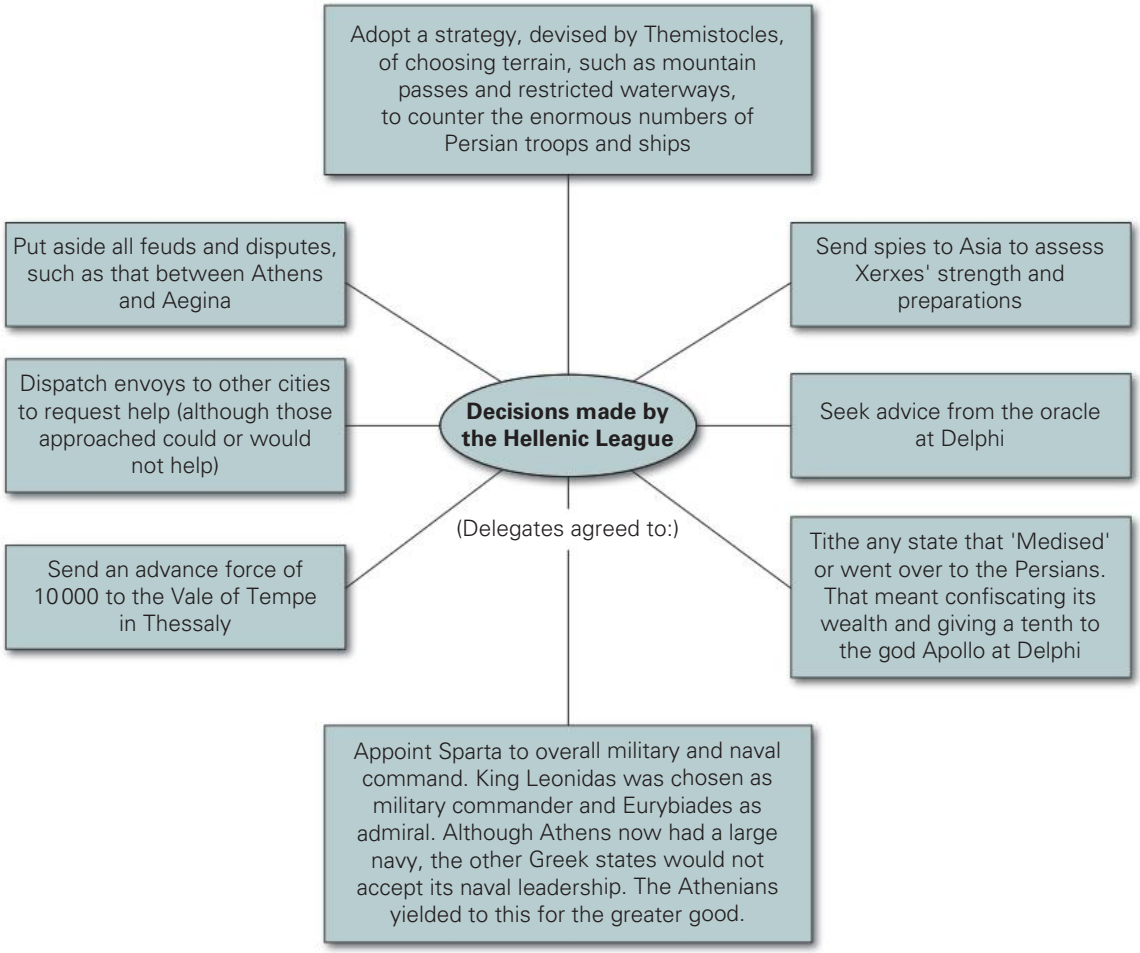

FIGURE 12.25 Decisions made by the Hellenic League

A COMMENT ON...

Why 'Medise' and not 'Persianise'?

- The expression 'to Medise', referring to those who went over to the Persians, and used throughout Herodotus, is rather strange.
- Scholars have not really come up with a reason for the adoption of this term, although there are a number of suggestions:
  - That the Greeks did not 'differentiate between the culturally and linguistically related Medes and Persians'.[25]
  - That when Cyrus captured Lydia, he left two Median generals to organise Asia Minor and deal with the Greeks along the coast, leading to the Ionians believing that it was the Medes who conquered them.

Advice from the Delphic Oracle

Review the information on the Delphic Oracle on p. 426.

When Sparta and Athens consulted the oracle, they both received depressing prophecies, described in Herodotus in Bk VII. 220 and 140–3. The Spartans were told that their city would be sacked or a Spartan king would be killed. The original prophecy to Athens told them to 'fly to the world's end, leaving home

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and height, … 'all is ruined, for fire and the headlong God of War, speeding in a Syrian chariot, will bring you low',[26] and the city totally destroyed. Were the priests of Apollo being cunning here, already believing that the Persians would win in any contest with the Greeks?

However, the Athenian *theopropoi* or oracle-seekers would not return home until they received a second, less menacing prophecy.

… Zeus the all-seeing grants to Athene's prayer
That the wooden wall only shall not fall,
but help you and your children.
But await not the host of horse and foot coming from Asia,
Nor be still, but turn your back and withdraw from the foe.
Truly a day will come when you will meet him face to face.
Divine Salamis, you will bring death to women's sons
When the corn is scattered, or the harvest gathered in.

SOURCE 12.11 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7.140

FIGURE 12.26 A depiction of the Pythia making a prophecy on a Greek vase

This prophecy created an intense debate in the Athenian assembly. Some believed the 'wooden walls' referred to the walls around the Acropolis, but Themistocles argued that the 'wooden walls' referred to their ships and that they should make a stand against the Persians at sea near the island of Salamis. He was able to get his view accepted. Children, women and old men were to be evacuated if the Persians succeeded in breaking through central Greece.

At the same time, the Athenians buried their internal enmities and recalled all ostracised men of ability from exile, including Aristides and Xanthippus, so that Athens could face Persia in unity.

Persian motives, plans and preparations

Xerxes continued with the preparations begun by his father Darius. His motivation, according to Herodotus, was deduced from the council meeting between Xerxes, Mardonius and Artabanes in 7.3–13. His motives appear to have been:

1 revenge against Athens. 'My intent is to throw a bridge over the Hellespont and march an army through Europe against Greece and thereby I may obtain vengeance from the Athenians for the wrongs committed against the Persians and against my father'.[27]

2 the need to surpass his predecessors in adding both territory and resources to the empire and thereby gaining glory. 'We shall so extend the empire of Persia that its boundaries will be God's own sky, so the sun will not look down upon any land beyond the boundaries of what is ours'.[28]

You know well enough the famous deeds of Cyrus, Cambyses, and my father Darius, and their additions to our empire. Now I myself, ever since my accession, have been thinking how not to fall short of the kings who have sat upon this throne before me, and how to add as much power as they did to the Persian Empire. And now, at last, I have found a way to win for Persia not glory only but a country as large as our own … and at the same time to get satisfaction and revenge.

SOURCE 12.12 Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.82

FIGURE 12.27 King Xerxes

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The Persians had already decided to revert to the route taken in 492, and Xerxes was encouraged in his plans by the arrival of envoys from the ruling family of Thessaly, the Aleuadae, offering the Persians assistance if they invaded.

However, the massive physical preparations between the Hellespont and Mount Athos had to be completed and Xerxes had to raise an army and navy.

TABLE 12.3 Persian preparations

Type	Description and comments	Reference
Bridging the Hellespont	This was the greatest of Xerxes' engineering feats. There were two floating bridges, in two places, constructed across the Hellespont from Asia to Europe. These were approximately 1.4 kilometres long, one made by the Phoenicians with flax cables and another by the Egyptians using papyrus cables. After a violent storm smashed the bridges and carried them away, two more had to be built.	Hdt. 7.30–36
Establishing supply depots	Carefully selected sites along the coast of Thrace and Macedonia were used as provision 'dumps' for enormous quantities of grain and salt meat. These were not only meant to feed the army and animals in transit, but to draw on, as the army moved further and further into hostile country. Some of these already existed from previous campaigns.	Hdt 7.23
Bridging the Strymon River	The great Strymon River was bridged near its mouth, a task Xerxes entrusted to the Phoenicians and Egyptians.	Hdt. 7.23
Digging a canal through Mt Athos	This was undertaken in view of the previous disaster to the fleet off Mt Athos and preparations had been underway for the previous three years. The canal through the rocky promontory was 4 kilometres long and was dug by men from the various nations who were sent over in shifts and put to work under the lash. Herodotus believed it was not really necessary and that it was mere ostentation that made Xerxes build it, as he wanted to leave something by which to be remembered.	Hdt. 7.23
Recruiting an army and navy	Xerxes, in the process of assembling his armies, had every corner of the continent ransacked. This continued for four years, and there was not a nation in Asia that he did not take with him against the Greeks. The coastal provinces provided horse transports, crews, warships, boats for floating bridges and other naval craft. Herodotus, in his usual manner, exaggerated the numbers. He believed that the forces were in the vicinity of 3 million, but modern estimates range from 50 000–200 000, 75 000 animals, and 500–800 warships, plus horse transports, supply ships and boats to act as floating bridges. Unlike Darius, Xerxes led the forces himself and the Persians, Medes and Cissians made up the core of the infantry, of which 10 000 were the famous Persian Immortals, referred to as such because their number was always maintained at 10 000. The royal family and court nobles featured in the expedition, with five of Xerxes' own sons among the 30 generals.	Hdt. 7.18–23, 41–42, 54–98

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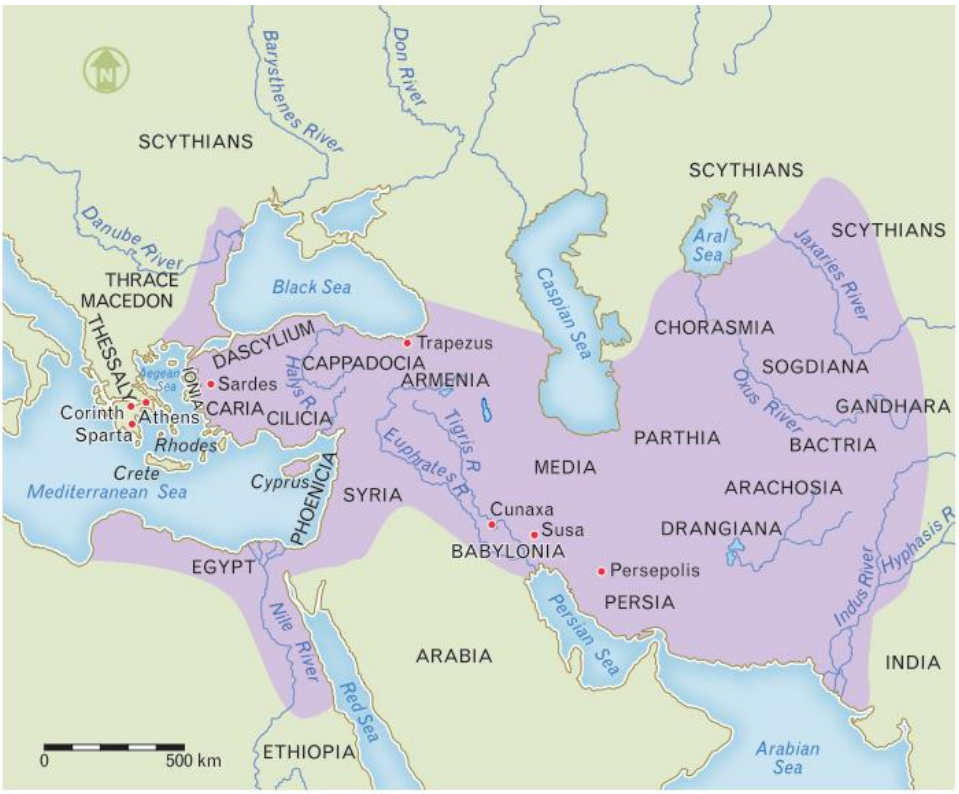

FIGURE 12.28 The nations of the Persian Empire from which Xerxes recruited his army and navy

The size of the army and navy, and the fact that Xerxes himself accompanied the invasion force, indicates how important it was for him not only to defeat the Greeks, but to prove that he was the equal of Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius.

When the army reached Sardis, on the way to the Hellespont, 'Xerxes first act was to send representatives to every place in Greece except Athens and Sparta with a demand for earth and water and a further order to prepare entertainment for him against his coming'.[29]

The passage of this massive army was so memorable that Herodotus provides endless details of the order and magnificence of the march, and the outfits and weaponry of the national contingents. However, throughout, he describes omens of doom for the expedition and stresses the King's hubris in 'violating the natural order of things'.

A COMMENT ON...

Herodotus' perspective on the Persian army

It is hard to estimate the effectiveness of the Persian forces from Herodotus' insistence on the inferiority and inexperience of the Persian infantry compared to the Greeks (in his description of the second invasion by Xerxes). There is no doubt that the Persians were confronted by Greek heavily armed hoplites fighting in tight phalanx formation and that they faced the greatest army (the Spartans) in the known world. It is also true that the conscripts from all parts of the Persian Empire did not have the armour and weaponry of the core of the Persian forces or of the Greeks. However, we must remember Herodotus' bias and Greek stereotypes of the Persians, as well as the fact that had the Persian army not been effective it could not have conquered and retained such a large empire for so long.

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ACTIVITY 12.7

1. Define ostracism and explain how it was used in Athens in the decade between the Persian invasions of 490–480 BC.
2. Explain how Themistocles' plans for Athens, and the Athenian conflict with Aegina, were of great significance for Athens and Greece in the conflict with the Persians in 480.
3. Describe the Hellenic League and its significance.
4. Compare the two prophecies for Athens from the Delphic Oracle.
5. Evaluate how Themistocles used the prophecy to pursue his policy.
6. What does Herodotus reveal about the Persians' motives for the 480 invasion?
7. Refer to Table 12.3 and Herodotus' references to draw a detailed mind map of Xerxes' preparations.
8. Take notes as you read Herodotus' account of:
   - the Persian march from Sardis to the Hellespont (Bk VII. 41–42)
   - the crossing of the bridge of boats at the Hellespont (Bk VII. 54)
   - the advice given to Xerxes about the Spartans by the ex-Spartan king, Demaratus, who was travelling with Xerxes (Bk VII. 103–107).

The Persian invasion 480–479 BC

In line with Themistocles' strategy of choosing restricted terrain and waterways to counter the difference in numbers between the Greeks and the Persians, the Spartan king, Leonidas, initially led an advance force of 7000 to 8000 hoplites (300 Spartans, 2000 helots and others from the Peloponnese and central Greece including 1000 Phocians) north to the Vale of Tempe in Thessaly. However, when the king of Macedonia warned them that Tempe could be bypassed, Leonidas ordered his troops to retreat further south where they took up a position at Thermopylae.

The defence of Greece at Thermopylae and Artemisium – 480 BC

At Thermopylae, the road south wound its way through a narrow pass, about 1.5 kilometres long and in places barely the width of a cart track, between the mountains and the sea. Midway along the pass was an ancient wall that could be used as protection if rebuilt. Leonidas and his troops could advance and retire through this pass, while its narrowness would restrict the numerically superior Persian force and the use of its cavalry. Leonidas hoped to delay the Persians' southward march until reinforcements arrived.

It was believed that the position could not be reached by any detour, but when Leonidas arrived he was informed of a mountain path. He sent the 1000 Phocians to guard it as they knew the country well.

FIGURE 12.29 The site of Thermopylae today. The present road is where the original shoreline ran in the 5th century BC.

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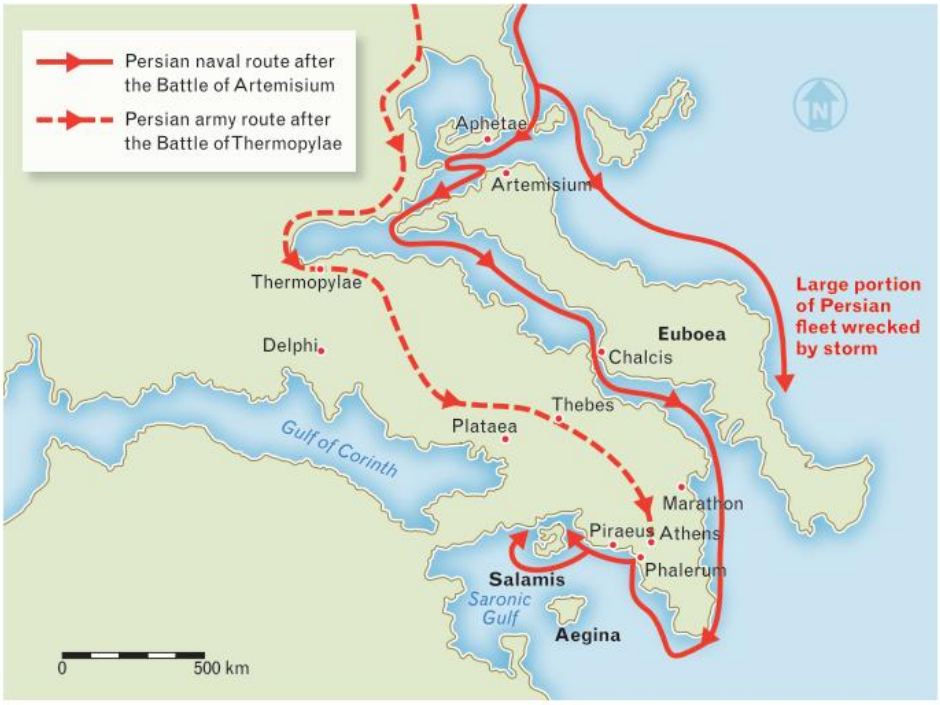

FIGURE 12.30 The sites of the battles of Artemisium and Thermopylae

In the meantime, the Greek fleet of 271 triremes under the command of Eurybiades, the Spartan admiral, and Themistocles, the Athenian commander, chose Artemisium, close to Thermopylae, as its anchorage. This was ideal as it covered the entrance to the channel between Euboea and the mainland. It also gave the Greeks a sheltered line of retreat if necessary. The narrows would restrict the larger Persian navy and the Greeks could stop them making contact with their army. In order to cut the Greeks off, the Persians would have to circumnavigate Euboea, losing contact with its army.

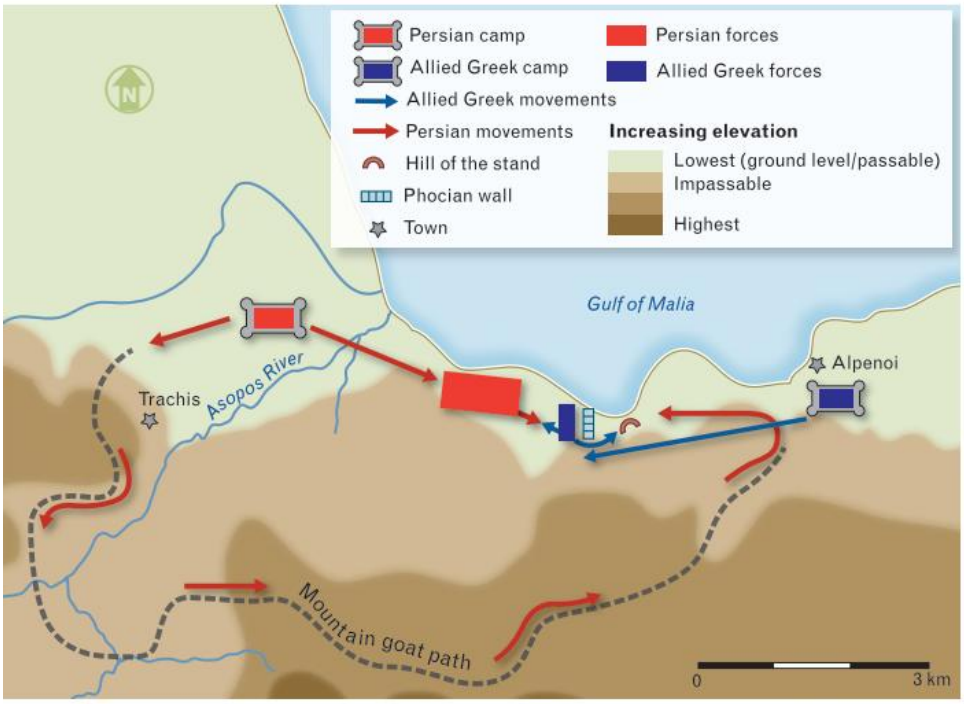

FIGURE 12.31 Site and deployment of troops at Thermopylae

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The Battle of Thermopylae

When the Persian forces arrived, they made camp, but waited several days before attacking, then for two days Xerxes sent his infantry unsuccessfully against the Greeks. Finally, he ordered his famed Immortals under the command of Hydarnes into battle.

> … they advanced to the attack in full confidence of bringing the business to a quick and easy end. But, once engaged, they were no better than the Medes had been; all went as before, the two armies fighting in a confined space, the Persians using shorter spears than the Greeks, and having no advantage from their numbers. On the Spartan side it was a memorable fight; they were men who understood war pitted against an inexperienced enemy, and amongst the feints they employed was to turn their backs on a body and pretend to be retreating in confusion, whereupon the enemy would pursue them with a great clatter and roar; but the Spartans would wheel and face them and inflict in the new struggle innumerable casualties … At last the Persians, finding that their assaults upon the pass … were all useless, broke off the engagement and withdrew.

SOURCE 12.13 Herodotus, *The Histories*, Bk 7. 209–13

Unfortunately for the Greeks, Ephialtes, a local, betrayed the Greeks and guided Hydarnes and the Immortals across the mountain by night. The Phocians guarding the pass were prepared to fight, but the Persians moved quickly on.

Leonidas, informed of this attempt to encircle him, sent most of his troops away, keeping only his 300 Spartans, the Thebans (as hostages) and the Thespians who volunteered to remain. Leonidas led his men out into the wider part of the pass where they fought with great courage, inflicting further heavy losses, but Leonidas was killed and a battle ensued over his body.

By the time the Immortals arrived, the Greeks had retired to the narrow part of the pass and taken up a position on a mound. There they were completely surrounded, defending themselves with anything at hand. The Spartans and Thespians died fighting; the Thebans surrendered.

> Xerxes went over the battlefield to see the bodies and having been told that Leonidas was king of Sparta, and commander of the Spartan forces, ordered his head to be cut off and fixed on a stake. This in my opinion … that King Xerxes, while Leonidas was still alive, felt fiercer anger against him than against any other man; had that not been so, he would never have committed this outrage upon his body; for normally the Persians, more than any other nation I know of, honour men who distinguish themselves in war.

SOURCE 12.14 Herodotus, the *Histories,* Bk 7. 238

The dead were buried where they fell, and 'there is a special Spartan epitaph: Go tell the Spartans, you who read, We took our orders, and are dead'.[30]

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This is one of the most celebrated battles in the western tradition, one that became equated with self-sacrifice and heroism, the stand of free men against tyranny. It has been told and retold countless times. And all retellings are indebted to Herodotus. Some take more liberties than others and add to an already weighty legend with the result that the truth becomes even harder to discern. The symbolism and significance attached to the battle make it easy to forget that the pass was indeed forced. From the Persian perspective, Thermopylae was a victory.

SOURCE 12.15 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia*, p. 127

FIGURE 12.32 An artistic reconstruction of the Spartans' last stand at Thermopylae

The naval battle of Artemisium – 480 BC

The Persian fleet, hoping to keep in touch with the army, had waited near Cape Sepias for the army to reach Thermopylae. However, a storm raged for three days and the exposed Persian fleet suffered great losses, with wreckage spread along the coast for 80 kilometres. The Greeks, however, rode out the storm in the lee of Euboea but left lookouts on the headlands.

The Persian fleet moved to Aphetae and sent 200 ships south, to round Euboea, but these were destroyed on the rugged south coast. The Athenians made two raids on the greatly diminished Persian fleet, inflicting heavy losses, but then the Persian naval commanders received a message from Xerxes to break through, as the army was running out of food.

FIGURE 12.33 A bronze statue of the Spartan king, Leonidas

The two fleets faced each other in the straits. The Persian ships crowded and fouled each other and the Greeks suffered severely. The battle was indecisive and when the Greeks received news of the loss at Thermopylae, they took the decision to withdraw under cover of night.

Results and significance of Thermopylae and Artemisium

- Despite the Greek loss at Thermopylae, Leonidas and his small force deserve an honoured place among military heroes, for their rearguard action prevented the Persians overtaking the rest of the retreating force. Although for a Spartan king there was no other choice of action and Leonidas died according to Spartan law, his courage and sacrifice was an inspiration to the Greeks and boosted their morale.
- It has been suggested that the Greeks lost approximately 4000 men to the Persians' 20 000, but these figures could be exaggerated.
- Themistocles' plan to hold the Persian fleet at Artemisium played a decisive role in the outcome of the war. The Persian naval losses were considerable, possibly half the fleet. This meant that they would not be able to divide their fleet and make raids against the Peloponnesian coastline for the purpose of creating

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diversions and seizing strategic points. They could not afford to risk the defeat of the fleet, so were forced to concentrate at one point only. The Persian fleet took its time sailing south, sacking and burning villages.

- The loss of Thermopylae, the strongest position for defence north of the Isthmus of Corinth, forced the submission of most of central Greece. Rather than submit, the Thespians and Plataeans fled to the Peloponnese. Their cities were burnt to the ground. The Spartans could be partly to blame for this situation as they were too slow to mobilise the Peloponnesian reinforcements for Leonidas. Many of the Peloponnesian states did not approve of Themistocles' northern strategy and believed that Greece should have been defended at the Isthmus from the beginning. They retired to the Isthmus, where they supposedly built a wall against possible Persian attack, but there is no archaeological evidence for it.
- Themistocles ordered a general evacuation of Athens. It is not known whether the Athenians agreed to this before Artemisium and put it into effect hurriedly when they realised that the Peloponnesian army had no intention of confronting the Persians in central Greece, or whether a partial evacuation had already been carried out before Artemisium. Whatever the case, Themistocles had six days in which to supervise such a massive population move. Women, children and those unable to fight were transported by the warships to places of safety such as Aegina, Salamis and Troizen. The Athenian navy then joined the rest of the Greek fleets off the island of Salamis to await the Persian navy, which eventually appeared off Phalerum.
- The Persian army marched into Attica, set fire to the countryside, and entered an almost empty Athens – there were a few priests, priestesses and old men taking refuge on the Acropolis. The Persians took the Acropolis, slaughtered those remaining there, stripped the temple of its treasures and burnt everything. Xerxes was now the absolute master of Athens.

ACTIVITY 12.8

1. Explain the reason behind the stand made by Leonidas and his small Greek force at the Vale of Tempe in northern Greece.
2. Analyse the advantages of Thermopylae and Artemisium as defensive positions for the Greeks.
3. Describe the Battle of Thermopylae in your own words.
4. Use Source 12.15 to explain why the Greek loss at Thermopylae was a 'glorious defeat'. What was the Persian perspective?
5. Describe the effect of Artemisium on Persian naval strategy.
6. Describe the fate of Athens and explain how this was associated with one of the features of Persian imperialism.

The Battle of Salamis – 480 BC

Themistocles had argued for a naval stance at Salamis because he believed:

- the narrow, restricted waterway off Salamis would favour the smaller number of Greek ships, which were more manoeuvrable than the Persian ships
- Salamis, crowded with Athenian refugees, as well as Aegina and Megara, would be defended and hopefully saved
- if the Greeks were successful at Salamis, the Persians would not advance to attack the Greeks in the Peloponnese.

FIGURE 12.34 The island and Straits of Salamis from the air

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Twenty-one Greek states contributed 370 warships under the command of the Spartan, Eurybiades, for their next encounter with the Persians in the Straits of Salamis. Athens was the largest contributor of ships (180 under the command of Themistocles), followed by Corinth (40) and Aegina (30).

A series of war councils were held to decide whether to keep the fleet at Salamis to protect Athens or to move it closer to the army defending the Isthmus at Corinth. With news of the destruction of Athens, the Peloponnesians were all for sailing away towards the Peloponnese immediately.

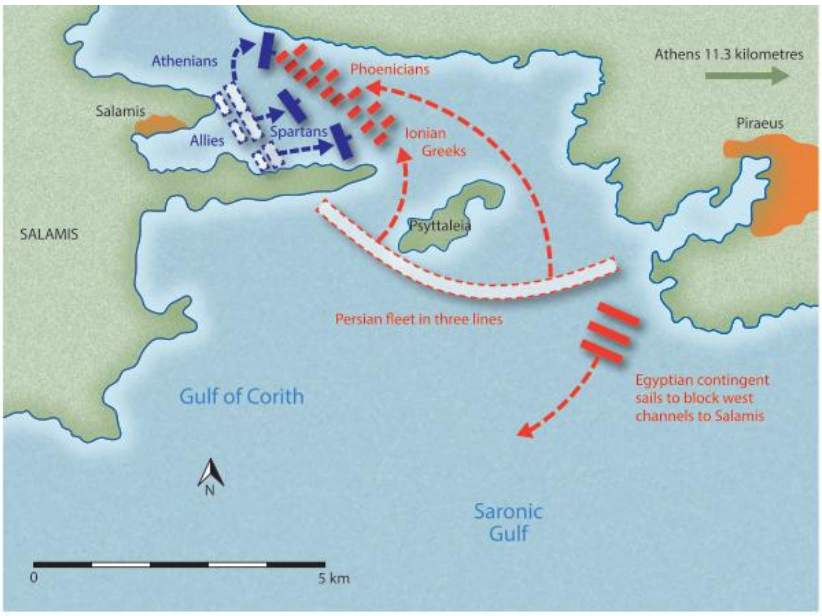

FIGURE 12.35 The deployment of naval forces on the eve of the Battle of Salamis

Themistocles' strategem

1 Because the Greeks from the Peloponnese were in a state of acute alarm, Themistocles was forced to threaten Eurybiades, the Spartan naval leader, that if they did not stay and defend at Salamis he would withdraw the Athenian ships from the Greek navy, embark the Athenians and sail away to Siris in Italy. Whether this is true or not, Eurybiades must have known that without an Athenian contingent he would not have enough strength to go into battle. He accepted Themistocles' argument.

2 Just to be sure the Peloponnesian naval forces had no chance to slip away, Themistocles put into effect a plan to deceive the Persians and force the Greeks to stay at Salamis. This involved dividing the Persian fleet and drawing the Persians into a trap.

He sent a secret message to the Persians, via a personal slave, indicating that the Greeks were disunited and were retreating towards the Peloponnesian coast. This is described in Aeschylus' play *Persae* where a messenger informs Atossa, Xerxes' mother, what happened.

> Some evil god, or an avenging spirit
> Began the fray. From the Athenian fleet
> There came a Greek, and thus thy son bespoke:
> 'Soon as the gloom of night shall fall, the Greeks
> No more will wait, but, rushing to their oars. Each man will seek his safety where he may
> By secret flight.

SOURCE 12.16 Aeschylus, *Persae*, Lines 209–13

Xerxes reacted to this deception by dividing his naval force and dispatching the strong Egyptian squadron to sail around Salamis to block the western exit and prevent the Greeks from escaping. He then stationed Persian troops to land on the islet of Psyttaleia, and ordered the Ionians and Phoenicians to advance into the straits. The Greek squadrons were already in position, hidden behind two promontories. Although Xerxes' fleet was significantly reduced, it still substantially outnumbered the Greeks.

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TABLE 12.4 Two descriptions of the battle

Aeschylus, *Persae*		Herodotus, *Histories*, 8. 85–97
Nor more delay, but straight		… the greater part of the Persian fleet suffered severely in the battle, the Athenians and Aeginetans accounting for a great many of their ships. Since the Greek fleet worked together as a whole, while the Persians had lost formation and were no longer fighting for any plan … When the Persian rout began and they were trying to get back to Phalerum, the Aeginetan squadron, which was waiting to catch them in the narrows, did memorable service. The enemy was in hopeless confusion; such ships as offered resistance or tried to escape were cut to pieces by the Athenians, while the Aeginetans caught those which attempted to get clear, so that any ship which escaped the one enemy promptly fell amongst the others … During the confused struggle a valuable service was performed by the Athenian Aristides … he took a number of the Athenian heavy infantry, who were posted along the coast of Salamis, across to Psyttaleia, where they killed every one of the Persian soldiers who had landed there.
Trireme on trireme, brazen beak on beak,	*50*	
Dashed furious. A Greek ship led on the attack,		
And from the prow of a Phœnician struck		
The figure-head; and now the grapple closed		
Of each ship with his adverse desperate.		
At first the main line of the Persian fleet	*55*	
Stood the harsh shock: but soon their multitude		
Became their ruin: in the narrow firth		
They might not use their strength, and, jammed together,		
Their ships with brazen beaks did bite each other,		
And shattered their own oars. Meanwhile the Greeks	*60*	
Stroke after stroke dealt dexterous all around,		
Till our ships showed their keels, and the blue sea		
Was seen no more, with multitude of ships		
And corpses covered. All the shores were strewn,		
And the rough rocks, with dead: till, in the end,	*65*	
Each ship in the barbaric host, that yet		
Had oars, in most disordered flight rowed off.		
As men that fish for tunnies, so the Greeks,		
With broken booms, and fragments of the wreck,		
Struck our snared men, and hacked them, that the sea	*70*	
With wail and moaning was possessed around …		

The results of Salamis

Herodotus suggests that Xerxes was faced with a dilemma: to depart Greece altogether, or leave a substantial military force to continue the fight. According to Mardonius, the infantry still had a desire to continue the conflict against the Peloponnese. Xerxes consulted Artemisia, queen of Caria, who had previously given him good advice.

> My Lord … circumstances being what they are, I think you should quit this country and leave Mardonius behind with the force he asks for … If his design prospers and success attends his arms, it will be *your* work, master for your slaves performed it. And even if things go wrong with him, it will be no great matter, so long as you yourself are safe and no danger threatens anything that concerns your house.

SOURCE 12.17 Herodotus, The *Histories*, Bk 8.101

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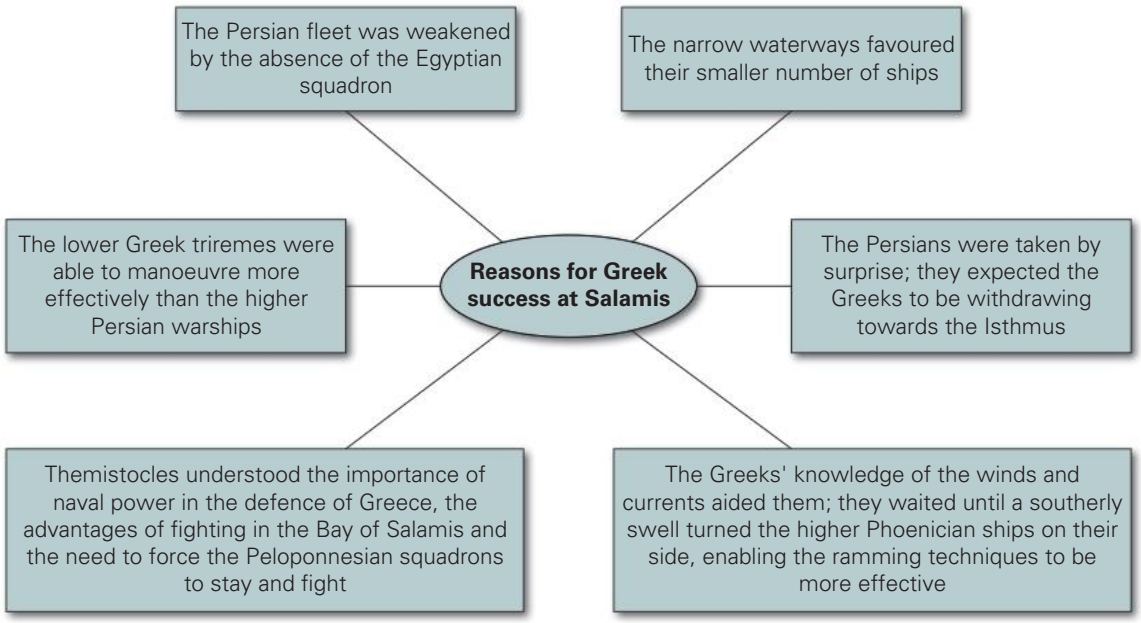

FIGURE 12.36 Reasons for Greek success at Salamis

1 Xerxes, with a large military escort of 60 000 troops led by Artabazus, marched to the Hellespont, leaving Mardonius and an army in central Greece. Artabazus and his troops later returned to join Mardonius. Xerxes did not – as the Greek sources suggest – leave Greece in fear as a desperate and humiliated fugitive. He had achieved one of his major objectives (the destruction of Athens), the Persian army still remained undefeated on Greek soil, and was in control of central and northern Greece. It is believed that Xerxes was concerned that the Ionians might revolt and there was an expectation that he would return to Persia to perform his New Year religious duties.

2 The Persian fleet sailed for Asia Minor where it made its headquarters at the island of Samos. The loss of so many ships left the Persian army in Greece without a supply line. The Greek navy pursued the Persians as far as the island of Andros.

3 Mardonius, with a picked force of infantry and cavalry, wintered in Thessaly, intending to attack the Peloponnese in the following spring. The war was not yet over.

4 The Greeks made dedications to the gods and awarded the prize for valour to the Aeginitans, and the second prize to the Athenians. Even though Themistocles should have received the individual prize, it was not awarded because he was the subject of great envy. However, 'Themistocles' name was on everyone's lips, and he acquired the reputation of being by far the most able man in the country'.[31] Immediately after this, he went to Sparta where he was given a splendid welcome and treated with the highest respect. He was presented with an olive wreath, a chariot and received high praise.

The significance of Salamis for the Greeks

There is no doubt that the Battle of Salamis was a turning point in the war.

1 It totally justified Themistocles' policy of developing Athens into a naval power, which played the major role in the future rise to power of Athens.

2 The Greek victory at Salamis saved the Peloponnese. If the Persians had won, no Greek army could have defended the Peloponnesian coastline. Thucydides says that the result at Salamis 'proved that the fate of Hellas depended on her navy'.[32]

3 The victory of Salamis had an important bearing on the future of democracy in Athens. The opinions and needs of the class of *thetes,* who manned the ships as rowers, would need to be considered in the future.

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ACTIVITY 12.9

1. Describe the actions that Themistocles took to ensure the Peloponnesian naval contingents fought at Salamis as well as their reasons for this.
2. Relate how Aeschylus in Source 12.16 described Themistocles' ploy.
3. Rewrite, in your own words, Aeschylus' account of the battle in Table 12.4. Use this, plus Herodotus' account, to make a list of the main features of the battle.
4. Explain what Thucydides meant when he said that Salamis 'proved that the fate of Hellas depended on her navy'.
5. How does Artemisia's advice in Source 12.17 illustrate one aspect of the Persian attitude to military losses?

The Battle of Plataea – 479 BC

Threats to Greek unity

- Mardonius made diplomatic moves to detach Athens from the Hellenic League using Alexander of Macedonia as an intermediary. He promised the Athenians their independence, any land they wanted and the rebuilding of their temples if they joined the Persians. If not, the Persians would once again occupy and devastate their city.
- The Persians sent gold to Sparta's enemies in the Peloponnese – notably Argos – in the hope of undermining Sparta's resistance.
- The Athenians refused Mardonius' offer, once again they evacuated their city, retreated to Salamis and Athens was destroyed for the second time.
- The Athenians demanded the Peloponnesians march north immediately to support them or they would withdraw from the Hellenic League and take their fleet away.

The Spartans eventually gave the orders, and Pausanius, the nephew of Leonidas and regent for Leonidas' son, moved north to face the Persians with a force of Peloponnesians. The Athenian military contingent, led by Aristides, joined them.

The battle

Mardonius had taken up a position on the Plain of Plataea in central Greece because it was cavalry country. He built a huge stockade on the north side of the Asopus River in case of defeat in the field and placed his troops along the river facing the passes by which the Greeks would emerge from the south.

The Greeks descended from the Cithaeron ranges, spread out along the lower slopes and would go no further. Mardonius used his cavalry under Masistius to harass them but they refused to move into the plain. Eventually they moved westward to an area where they had more room, access to water supplies and could unload food supply wagons safely.

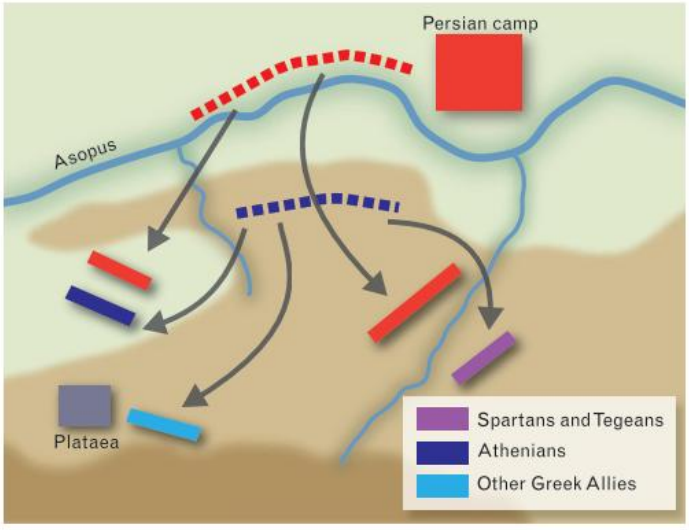

FIGURE 12.37 The deployment of Greek and Persian forces during the Battle of Plataea

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Mardonius used his cavalry to prevent the Greeks getting water from the river, poisoned a spring and waylaid the Greek food supplies, slaughtering 500 animals and their escorts, but still did not move his forces across the river to engage the Greeks.

After a council of war, Pausanius decided to move during the night. The centre moved closer to Plataea, the Spartans kept to higher ground and the Athenians moved along the low ground.

Mardonius, thinking the Greeks were fleeing, ordered his troops to cross the Asopus River and attack. His Greek allies, the Thebans and other Boeotians fought the Athenians on the Greek left wing, where they were defeated. The Spartans and Tegeans fought on the right against the Persian infantry in a long, hard-fought and disciplined battle. Eventually, Pausanius charged. Mardonius was killed and his troops fled in disarray to the stockade.

Artabazus, the other Persian commander, retreated with his troops, and eventually returned to Asia. The Persian stockade was taken and all within slaughtered.

The results and significance of Plataea

- This was a decisive battle which put an end to the Persian invasion of the mainland.
- It showed that the Greeks could work together when their freedom was threatened. For three weeks at Plataea over 100 000 men from 24 Greek states (40 000 hoplites of which 5000 were Spartan, and 69 000 light armed troops) under the overall command of the Spartan regent Pausanius defended Hellas. Herodotus says, 'Pausanius … won the most splendid victory which history records'.[33]
- This victory also encouraged many of the Greeks of Asia Minor to consider rebellion against Persia.

For 10 days after the battle, the Greek troops camped on the battlefield. They buried their dead outside the city of Plataea and collected enormous quantities of spoils, one-10th of which was dedicated to Apollo at Delphi. The Greek survivors then marched on Thebes, besieged it and demanded that the leaders be handed over to be punished for 'Medising'. They were taken back to the Isthmus and put to death.

The symbol of the alliance against the Persians was a gold tripod resting on the bronze coils of a three-headed serpent inscribed with the names of the 31 cities that had contributed to victory both at Salamis and Plataea.

FIGURE 12.38 The Serpent Column, now in Istanbul

The Battle of Mycale – 479 BC

While the Greeks under Pausanius faced the Persians at Plataea, the Greek fleet under the command of the other Spartan king, Leotychides, sailed for Ionia and a showdown with the Persian fleet, stationed at Samos.

Refugees from Samos informed the Greeks that the Persian navy was in a bad way and that the mere sight of their fleet would encourage the Ionians to revolt. When they reached Samos, they found the Persians had retreated to the mainland, beaching their ships along the narrow coastal area of the Mycale promontory.

The troops aboard the Persian boats built a stockade on shore and guarded the paths inland. Leotychides sailed his flagship close to shore, proclaiming freedom to the Ionian Greeks if they mutinied against the Persians, then landed his troops further down the coast. The Athenians under Xanthippus attacked the stockade and the Spartans marched inland to take the Persians from the rear.

The Ionians among the Persian forces changed sides and the Milesians 'joined in the slaughter and proved their [Persians] bitterest enemies. Thus this day saw the second Ionian revolt from Persian domination'.[34] The Greeks then burnt the Persian ships and the fort, and retired to Samos to debate the future of Ionia.

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This battle eventually:

- led to the enrolment of Ionians in the Hellenic League
- ushered in a new phase in Greek history based on the supremacy of Athens.

ACTIVITY 12.10

1. Discuss the reasons why the Persian commander, Mardonius, took up a position at Plataea.
2. Describe how he used his cavalry.
3. Read Herodotus and summarise the part played by the Spartans under the regent, King Pausanius.
4. Discuss the significance of the Battles of Plataea and Mycale in 479 to the future of Greece.

Contribution of Themistocles, Leonidas, Eurybiades and Pausanius during the Persian Wars

The following table is a summary of the roles, achievements and influence of Themistocles, Leonidas, Eurybiades and Pausanius. The later careers of Themistocles and Pausanius are discussed in the next section on the development of Athens and its empire.

TABLE 12.5 Roles, achievements and influence of Themistocles, Leonidas, Eurybiades and Pausanius

Themistocles: Athenian statesman	
• Persuaded the Athenians to pursue a naval policy, which was critical in the war; fortified the harbour at Piraeus and convinced people to spend silver from Laurium on building a fleet of triremes. • Played a crucial part in calling the Congress of Corinth and keeping the independent 31 states of the Hellenic League together. • Convinced the Athenians to interpret the Delphic Oracle's second prophecy about 'the wooden walls' as Athenian ships and the need to take to the sea to escape the Persians. • Contributed to the Greeks' strategy of confronting Persians in narrow places where the navy and army could use their smaller forces to greater effect and was a key player in the Battle of Artemisium. • Organised for Athenian women, children and those unable to fight to be evacuated while the men took to the triremes.	Themistocles was a man who showed unmistakable natural genius; in this respect he was quite exceptional, and beyond all others deserves our admiration. Without studying a subject in advance or deliberating over it later, but simply using the intelligence that was his by nature, he had the power to reach the right conclusion in matters that have to be settled on the spur of the moment and do not admit of long discussions and in estimating what was likely to happen, his forecasts for the future were always more reliable than those of others … To sum him up in a few words, it may be said that through force of genius and by rapidity of action this man was supreme at doing precisely the right thing at precisely the right moment. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk 1. 138 Themistocles' name was on everyone's lips, and he acquired the reputation of being by far the most able man in the country. The Spartans granted Themistocles a wreath of honour 'for his ability and skill. He was also presented with a chariot, the finest in Sparta and received high praise'. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8.124

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TABLE 12.5 *(continued)*

Themistocles: Athenian statesman (*cont.*)	
• Worked hard at preventing disunity among the Greeks and was responsible for the decision to fight at Salamis rather than at the Isthmus. He convinced Eurybiades to stay at Salamis and ensured the Persian fleet also did by his secret message to the Persians. • Contributed to the growth of Athenian democracy by giving more power to the lower classes of Athens, who were the rowers in the fleet.	But the greatest of all his achievements was to put an end to all the fighting within Greece, to reconcile the various cities with one another and persuade them to lay aside their differences because of the war with Persia. Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Themistocles*, 6
Leonidas: Spartan king	
• Led a small advance force, including 300 Spartans, north to the Vale of Tempe to stall the Persian advance. • Realised Tempe could not be held and moved south to defend Greece at the pass of Thermopylae to await reinforcements. • Employed tactics at Thermopylae that confused and kept the Persians at bay for crucial days, allowing other Greeks to organise. • Sent the bulk of his force away when he knew that Ephialtes betrayed the Greeks by leading the Persian Immortals over a mountain pass, allowing them to surround the Greeks. • Exhibited courage, skill and determination when encircled by the Persians and died doing what was expected of a Spartan king. • Inspired, by his example, other Greeks to persist in their fight against the invader.	The Persian army was now close to the pass and the Greeks suddenly doubting their power to resist, held a conference to consider the advisability of retreat … Leonidas gave his voice for staying where they were and sending, at the same time an appeal for reinforcements to the various states of the confederacy, as their numbers were inadequate to cope with the Persians. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7. 208 It is said that Leonidas himself dismissed them to spare their lives, but thought it unbecoming for the Spartans under his command to desert the post for which they had originally come to guard. I myself am inclined to think that he dismissed them when he realised they had no heart for the fight and were unwilling to take their share of the danger. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7. 220
Eurybiades: Spartan general in charge of the Greek fleet	
• Given charge of the Greek fleet by the Hellenic League despite Athens' pre-eminence. Commanded at Artemisium and Salamis. • Paid a bribe by Themistocles from the Euboeans to stay and defend at Artemisium. • Convinced finally by Themistocles to stay and fight at Salamis despite opposition from other Peloponnesian states. • Spoke out against Themistocles' desire, after Salamis, to immediately sail north and destroy the bridges over the Hellespont.	The Athenians waived their claim in the interest of national survival, knowing that a quarrel about the command would certainly mean the destruction of Greece. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8. 2 This was enough to secure Eurybiades' consent. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8. 5 Eurybiades objected on the grounds that to destroy the bridges would be to do Greece the worst possible service. If, he argued, Xerxes were cut off in Greece, he would hardly be likely to be inactive. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8. 108

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TABLE 12.5 *(continued)*

Pausanius: Spartan regent for the son of Leonidas	
• Commanded a combined force of 24 independent Greek city-states against the Persian army in central Greece at the Battle of Plataea. • Kept disunity among the Greeks in check and overcame many difficulties prior to battle: harassment by Persian cavalry, difficulties of getting drinking water and the logistics of supplying an army of 100 000 (hoplites and light-armed troops). • Fought in an area that suited the Persian cavalry, but confused Mardonius by repositioning his troops during the night. • Led the Spartan contingent who, with the Tegeans, made a disciplined stand against the Persian infantry led by Mardonius. • Changed the circumstances of the war by putting an end to the Persian invasion of the mainland.	While Mardonius was alive they continued to resist and to defend themselves, and struck down many Lacedaemonians; but after his death and the destruction of his personal guard – the finest of the Persian troops – the remainder yielded to the Lacedaemonians and took to flight … thus Mardonius rendered satisfaction to the Spartans for the killing of Leonidas; and Pausanius … won the most splendid victory which history records. Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 9. 61 Leader of the Hellenes in war, victorious over the Persians, Pausanius to the god Phoebus erected the trophy. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk 1.132 (Concerning the Original Inscription On The Serpent Column)

Reasons for Greek victory and Persian defeat 480–479 BC

Ancient and modern writers point to numerous specific factors that played a part in the Greek victory and Persian defeat during the invasion of 480–479.

The role of geography and the weather

- The distance of the march from Sardis to Athens and the strain this put on supply lines and the difficulties for the Persians in living off the land as they moved through mountainous terrain.
- The problems presented by the necessity of keeping the Persian army and navy in close contact.
- The disastrous storms off Cape Sepias and southern Euboea that considerably reduced the Persian fleet.
- The Greek knowledge of their own coastlines and weather.
- The restricted mountain pass at Thermopylae and the use the Greeks made of this in delaying the Persian march south, overcoming the larger Persian forces and preventing the use of their cavalry.
- The tightness of the Straits of Salamis in restricting movement of the larger Persian navy and the local swells that turned the larger Persian ships broadside, making them more easily rammed by the Greeks.

FIGURE 12.39 A statue of Themistocles at Piraeus

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Leadership on both sides

- Xerxes has been accused of hubris that led to impulsive and over-confident behaviour, while Mardonius revealed early on that he was ambitious for glory.
- Themistocles showed foresight in developing Athens into a naval power; revealed his understanding of the greater good of Greece by bowing to Greek demands for Spartan leadership of the navy; contributed to the strategy of the Greeks; and was determined to do whatever was needed to force the Greeks to fight at Salamis.
- Leonidas' leadership was shown in his decision to abort their stand at Tempe; to take up a position at Thermopylae; to employ delaying tactics against the Persians; and to send away most Greeks when he knew that he would be forced to make a last stand to the death against the Persians once they had been betrayed. His courage also had a positive impact on the morale of the Greeks.
- Eurybiades' leadership was displayed in his ability to work with Themistocles, follow the Athenian's advice, and his refusal to destroy the bridges over the Hellespont immediately after Salamis.
- Pausanius displayed his leadership in his ability to lead and hold together the forces of 24 Greek states in a battle at a site of the Persians' choosing (the Plain of Plataea) and one that benefited the Persian cavalry. By overcoming the difficulties facing the Greeks and defeating the Persians, he changed the course of the war.

The question of Greek unity/disunity

Despite the fact that some Greeks remained neutral (Argos) and others 'Medised' (Thebes), the examples of Greek cohesion were remarkable considering the selfishness and jealousies that normally marked the relationships between Greek city-states, such as that between Athens and Aegina.

The Greeks united in a Hellenic League of 31 states, accepted Spartan leadership of the overall forces and agreed on the punishment for 'Medising' and on a general strategy. The Athenians contributed to Greek unity by agreeing to Sparta's leadership of the navy.

Despite some minor instances of disunity at Plataea, 24 states put themselves under the command of Pausanius.

However, Greek unity was not without its problems: for example, the initial reluctance of the Spartans and Peloponnesians to fight north of the Isthmus, and their desire to leave Salamis and retreat closer to the Peloponnesian coast.

The difference in Greek and Persian arms, equipment and tactics

According to R. Sealey, 'In the fighting of 480 and 479 the Greek hoplites were better equipped than any of the various infantry contingents which the Persians could put into the field: in particular their defensive armour was more comprehensive'.[35] They wore bronze helmets, bronze greaves and breastplates reinforced with metal scales, and carried large bronze and leather shields, a 2–3-metre-long spear with bronze shaft and iron head, and an iron sword.

The Persians, according to Herodotus, wore no protective head covering: instead they used either a floppy felt hat or the soft cloth covering of the Immortals that could be drawn across the face to keep out the dust. They wore a corselet of fish-like iron scales under a loose embroidered tunic, and trousers. Their main weapons were large bows, short spears and daggers, and a wicker shield that may have protected them from arrows but was no match for the thrusting Greek spear. Their arrows were largely negated by the Greek hoplite armour. The way the Immortals appeared on the battlefield was different from the way they are usually depicted in Persian reliefs.

The strength of the heavily armed Greek hoplite and phalanx was their ability to fight in close quarters and move in a disciplined pack, which made it difficult for the lighter-armed Persian troops, whose strengths were fighting from a distance (bowmen). Their cavalry had few opportunities to use their skills.

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FIGURE 12.40 A Persian Immortal

FIGURE 12.41 A Greek hoplite

ACTIVITY 12.11

1. Assess the role of Themistocles in the war between the Persians and Greeks in 480.
2. Compare the roles that Leonidas, Eurybiades and Pausanius played in the conflicts of 480–479.
3. Explain the reasons for the Greek victories in 480–479.

12.3 The development of Athens and the Athenian Empire 478–440 BC

The three threads running through this period – the growth and nature of Athenian imperial power, the development of Athenian democracy and the deteriorating relations between Athens and Sparta – are often impossible to disentangle. It is a controversial subject of study because:

- Thucydides, who provides some of the only material available for this period, lived at a time when Athens already had a powerful empire and his theme in his *Peloponnesian War* was Athenian imperialism. He was selective in his material, choosing only those events that illustrated that theme
- the epigraphic material is fragmentary
- there is a long-held traditional view that idealised Athens, overlooking 'the odious implications of its imperial rule'.[36]

The Delian League 478–468 BC

The Hellenic League, led by Sparta during the Persian Wars, was replaced in 478–7 by a league of sea states, led by Athens, commonly known as the Delian League or the Confederacy of Delos. These are modern terms: in the 5th century, it was described as 'The Athenians and their Allies'.

Reasons for change of leadership

When the Spartan king, Pausanius, was set out in charge of an allied fleet after Mycale to free those Greek states still under Persian control, his 'officiousness and absurd pretensions' upset the Greeks of Asia Minor, where he scattered 'insults far and wide'.[37] The Greeks had initially respected Pausanius because of his achievement at Plataea, but he revealed an arrogance and ambition that upset the Spartans and offended the other Greeks. Apart from his arrogant attitude towards the eastern Greeks, he communicated with the Persian king and adopted Persian dress and ways of behaviour. The Ionians made overtures to the Athenians,

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suggesting they take over the leadership. The Spartan government recalled Pausanius, and replaced him with another commanding officer, Dorcis, but he too was rejected.

Because Sparta was reluctant to continue the war against Persia in the east, preferring to return to its isolationist policy and concentrate on keeping its helot population under control, it did not protest when Athens took over the leadership of a league of sea states. Besides, Sparta was a military power and its rigid system made it unsuitable as a leader of other Greeks. Spartans preferred 'to have their citizens behave with moderation and abide by their traditional customs instead of lording it over the rest of Greece'.[38]

Athens had a large and experienced navy and was held in high regard after the Battle of Salamis. The Athenians also shared a common racial descent with the Ionians.

The Ionians wanted the Athenian, Aristides, to organise the League. He had already proven himself as a general at Marathon, Salamis and Plataea, and he was known as 'a sturdy champion of justice', 'a steadfast character'[39] and one not motivated by greed or trickery.

> ... What was particularly admirable about him was his strength of purpose amid the ebb and flow of political fortunes. He was never unduly elated by any honours that were paid him, while he bore his reverses with composure and he believed it his duty to give his services to his country at all times freely and without reward, not merely in terms of money, but also of reputation.

SOURCE 12.18 Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Aristides*, 3

> We did not use force in acquiring [the hegemony]. But you [Lacedaemonians – Spartans] did not wish to remain by our side for what was left to accomplish against the barbarian, and the allies approached us and by their own pleading caused us to become hegemon.

SOURCE 12.19 Thucydides on Athenian leadership (47 years later); Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.75.2–4

TABLE 12.6 Organisation of the League

Aims	The aims of the League appear to have been both offensive and defensive: • to compensate the Greeks 'for their losses by ravaging the territory of the king of Persia'.[40] This aim of an aggressive, offensive war against Persia might have attracted the states initially • to liberate those states of Asia that were still under the control of the Persian king • to maintain the freedom of the Greeks. As well as the stated motives of the League, there would certainly have been economic motives for Athens, such as safeguarding trade and gaining valuable resources. Thucydides suggests that Athens had a hidden agenda when it first organised the Delian League. Their real reason (pretext) for accepting leadership of the League, he says, was to bring the allies under its control.
Finances	To maintain a permanent league and carry out its aims, adequate funds were needed. • Because the allies wanted each city to be fairly assessed, they appointed Aristides 'to survey the various territories and their revenues, and to fix their contributions according to each member's worth and ability to pay'.[41] The total assessment of contribution amounted to 460 talents. A talent was a weight and a unit of currency. One talent equalled 6000 drachmas. A skilled worker in Athens at the time earned approximately 1 drachma a day.

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TABLE 12.6 (*continued*)

	• Aristides 'drew up the assessments with scrupulous integrity and justice, but also in such a way that all the states felt they had been appropriately and satisfactorily dealt with'.[42] The contributions took two forms: a money payment (*phoros*) and ships. The money payment was collected and supervised by 10 Athenian officials called *Hellenotamiae* (stewards of the Greeks), and went straight into the League's treasury at Delos. • Those who contributed ships, such as the large Aegean islands of Chios, Lesbos, Samos, Naxos and Thasos, retained control of them but were expected to serve the League fleet for a portion of each year.
Headquarters	The island of Delos was chosen as the League's headquarters and site of its treasury and meetings of allies because it: • was the ancient centre of Ionian culture and religion based on the cult of Apollo • was midway between Athens and the coast of Asia Minor • had a good harbour • was politically neutral.
Voting in the synod or council	The allies were initially independent states with their own particular forms of government and willing participants in the League. It is not known if all states had equal voting rights in the League's council, but it is probable that Athens, as the leader and most influential state, could control the vote by its patronage and intimidation of smaller states who would follow its lead. Athenian officials carried out the League policy and strategy. Cimon, the Athenian, was commander of the League's fleet and forces.
The oath of loyalty	The oath of allegiance supposedly taken by all allies implied that they would have the same foreign policy. To confirm their loyalty, they were supposed to have thrown lumps of iron into the sea, suggesting permanency of the League or continuance of it until the Persians were no longer a threat. If this was the meaning of the symbolism, then **secession** would have been seen as rebellion and other members would be justified in forcing these members back into the League.

secession breaking away or withdrawing from an alliance

After taking the hegemony over allies who desired it because of their hatred of Pausanius, the Athenians made an assessment of those cities that were required to provide ships. Their professed purpose [*proschema*] was to avenge themselves for what they had suffered by ravaging the land of the king. The treasurers of the Hellenes [*hellenotamiae*] were first established at that time as an Athenian magistracy to receive the tribute [phoros]. ...The first tribute assessed was four hundred and sixty talents. Delos was its treasury and the revenues accrued in the temple. Though at first the Athenians commanded allies who were autonomous and who made decisions that arose from common meetings, they accomplished the following things by wars and the management of affairs.

SOURCE 12.20 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, 1.96–97.1; this is the earliest and best account of the foundation of the Delian League.

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From the beginning Athens had the potential to enhance its own best interests, as it:

- was the permanent leader
- contributed the largest number of ships and men
- presided over the League council and could influence policy
- provided the man who assessed the tribute (Aristides), the fleet commander (Cimon) and the 10 officials who collected the tribute.

FIGURE 12.42 The island of Delos, headquarters of the League

ACTIVITY 12.12

1. Describe how the Delian League originally came into existence.
2. Give three reasons why Sparta did not protest when it was replaced by Athens as leader of the Greeks.
3. What was Thucydides' view of Athenian leadership expressed in Source 12.19?
4. Describe the qualities of Aristides that made him the best choice of person to organise the league.
5. Make a list of the features of the Delian League according to Thucydides in Source 12.20.
6. Describe the two types of members in the original League.
7. Analyse what the oaths of allegiance indicate about the League.
8. Explain how and where decisions were made, and who led the League's forces.
9. What potential did Athens have from the beginning to change the League into an Athenian empire if it wished?

Activities of the League under Cimon until the Battle of Eurymedon in 468

The number of original members is not known, but the extremities of the area of the League covered in the first year were Byzantium in the Propontis, the Aineum promontory in the north-west, Rhodes in the south-east and Siphnos in the south-west.

Cimon, the son of Miltiades, was chosen to lead the League forces because, while serving under Pausanius in Asia Minor in 478, he had gained a reputation for dealing with the Ionians sympathetically. Also, his own soldiers 'were a byword for their discipline' and he had 'skill in handling men'.[43]

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FIGURE 12.43 The League's main area of operations until the revolt of Thasos in 465

The League's main actions directed against the Persians

478 Byzantium was captured, giving the Greeks access once again to the valuable trade of the Black Sea.

476–475 Eion on the Strymon River. This was of great economic and strategic significance as it dominated the main east–west land route and was a natural centre for the resource-rich hinterland. Cimon removed the Persians living there and, because the surrounding country was fertile, handed the region to the Athenians, who established a colony there.

476–475 Southern Asia Minor (Caria and Lycia). Cimon 'sacked or destroyed some cities and induced others to revolt or annexed them, until not a single Persian soldier was left on the mainland of Asia Minor from Ionia to Pamphylia'.[44]

FIGURE 12.44 A statue of Cimon, commander of the League forces

The League's most revealing activities

474 Skyrus (a pirate stronghold) was on one of the main Aegean trade routes. Athens established a **cleruchy** there as a means of getting rid of its excess population and to act as a watchdog for its own interests in the area. Cimon also returned to Athens the bones of their legendary king Theseus, who was buried on Skyrus. According to Plutarch, 'this affair did more than any other achievement of Cimon's to endear him to the people'.[45]

cleruchy a settlement of Athenian citizens overseas

472 Carystus, a neutral state, was deprived of its independence and enrolled in the League.

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470–469 Naxos, one of the large ship-contributing members, tired of having to man the ships of the fleet, attempted to secede from the League. It lost its independence and was forced to pay tribute, rather than ships. This action created a third type of League member (tribute-paying subjects) and was the first example of what was to become a recurring pattern.

Thucydides maintained that these early activities of the League – Eion, Skyrus, Carystus and Naxos – were stepping stones to Athenian power, as an increasing number of member states became tribute-paying subjects and the League's fleet was increasingly manned by Athenians.

The Battle of Eurymedon in 468 and its significance

In 468, the Persian king Xerxes assembled another military and naval force at the mouth of the Eurymedon River in Pamphylia in southern Asia Minor, 'waiting for 80 Phoenician ships to arrive from Cyprus'.[46]

> Cimon planned to attack before this contingent could reach him and to put to sea prepared to bring the enemy to battle if they tried to avoid it. At first the Persians retired up the river to avoid being forced into action, but when the Athenians bore down on them, they sailed out to meet Cimon ... in the naval battle they certainly achieved nothing worthy of such a strong force, in fact, they immediately turned tail and ran for the shore. The leading crews abandoned their ships and took refuge with the land forces ... while the rest were overtaken and killed and their ships destroyed ... he landed his hoplites, still hot from fighting in the naval battle, and they charged the enemy at a run ... after a fierce battle, they threw back the barbarians with great slaughter and captured the army and the camp which was full of all kinds of spoil ... in this way Cimon carried off two victories in a single day.

SOURCE 12.21 Plutarch, *The Rise and Fall of Athens: Cimon*, 13

Cimon then sailed south and took the Phoenician fleet by surprise, and destroyed all their ships and crews. This dashed Xerxes' hopes and he accepted the 'terms of a peace', by which he agreed to stay a day's sail from the coast of Asia Minor.

> The Eurymedon campaign ... secured the removal of the Persian navy from the Aegean and eliminated pressure from the east on the allied city-states. ... Though it should not be inferred that a formal peace resulted from Cimon's victory at Eurymedon ... This victory marked an epoch such that it was legitimate for contemporaries as well as posterity to regard the Persian menace in the Aegean as ended once and for all, and to consider that the league, having vindicated itself superbly, was now redundant.

SOURCE 12.22 C.W. Fornara and L.J. Samons II, *Athens from Cleisthenes to Pericles*, p. 85

What now for the League?

ACTIVITY 12.13

1. To what extent can the League's activities against Skyrus (474), the neutral state of Carystus (472: note its location) and Naxos, one of its own members (470–469), be justified?
2. Consider Thucydides' view of these actions.
3. Use Source 12.22 to describe the Battle of Eurymedon in your own words.
4. Explain the significance of the Battle of Eurymedon for the future of the League.

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Transformation of the Delian League into the Athenian Empire

After Eurymedon, the League continued as a naval entity but its interests increasingly identified with those of Athens. Although this transformation is often regarded as having been gradual, 'Thucydides' case for the rapidity of the transformation of Athens from hegemon to imperial mistress is unambiguous', and 'he leaves no doubt of the critical importance of the series Naxos–Eurymedon–Thasos'.[47]

If there was any doubt up to this point of Athens' future intentions, her treatment of the rich, ship-contributing member, Thasos, cannot be ignored.

The revolt of Thasos 465

Thasos was the richest island in the northern Aegean, with extensive mining and trading interests on the adjacent mainland of Thrace. When Athens claimed a share in the trade and mining of gold in the area, a dispute broke out and Thasos seceded from the League. This revolt was significant for three reasons:

1 Even though the Battle of Eurymedon, three years earlier, had removed any further threat from the Persians, Athens showed it had no intention of allowing members to leave the League.

2 It was the first time (for which there is evidence) that Athens used the League forces against a member state in a private quarrel.

3 For the first time a conflict between League members involved a Peloponnesian state, namely Sparta (questionable).

The League fleet under Cimon laid siege to Thasos, which appealed to Sparta for help. Although the Spartans are supposed to have secretly offered help by promising to attack Athens, they were unable to fulfil their promise due to a disastrous earthquake and widespread helot revolt. This record of a so-called Spartan promise to help is open to debate.

The siege of Thasos lasted two years. The Athenians:

- confiscated the Thasians' navy
- demolished their walls
- closed their mint
- annexed their possessions on the mainland
- forced them to pay a fine immediately
- took away their independence
- reduced them to a tribute-paying subject state dependent on the will of Athens.

Athens' treatment of Thasos gave fair warning to other members of its future intentions.

Changes in the internal politics of Athens and the beginning of an imperial strategy 465–445

This period is marked by the:

1 appearance of radical democrats on the scene in Athens and the souring of Athens' relationship with Sparta, which had been reasonably 'friendly' due to the conservative influence of the pro-Spartan Cimon

2 ostracism of Cimon from 461–451

3 aggressive imperial policy of Pericles, which had a significant impact on Sparta and its Peloponnesian allies and which started with Athens making an alliance with Argos, Sparta's traditional enemy.

A COMMENT ON...

The ostracism of Cimon

- When Sparta suffered a disastrous earthquake in Laconia in 464 and a subsequent helot revolt, a public debate was held in Athens over whether to send help to the Spartans. Cimon, with his policy

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of conservative politics at home and cooperation with Sparta, was opposed by Ephialtes, a radical democrat, who believed Sparta was Athens' natural enemy. While the radical democrats, including the young Pericles, had been gaining in power and popularity, the fact that Cimon was able to persuade the Assembly to send him, with a force of 4000 troops to help Sparta, indicates that the majority of Athenians still supported a policy of friendship and cooperation with Sparta.

- However, during Cimon's absence in the Peloponnese, radical democratic changes were taking place in Athens and, according to Plato, reported in Plutarch, 'Ephialtes poured out neat a full draught of freedom for the people and made them unmanageable'.[48]
- Due to Sparta's fear of the bold and revolutionary ideas of the Athenians, the Spartans refused Cimon's aid and ordered him and his troops to leave Sparta and return home. This deeply offended the Athenians, as they considered 'this was not the sort of treatment they deserved from Sparta'.[49]
- The rebuff of Cimon's expeditionary force brought a humiliating end to his career and to his policy of joint leadership of Greece. Despite all his former successes, he was ostracised in 461 and during his 10-year absence, the radical democrats under Pericles implemented an aggressive imperial policy.

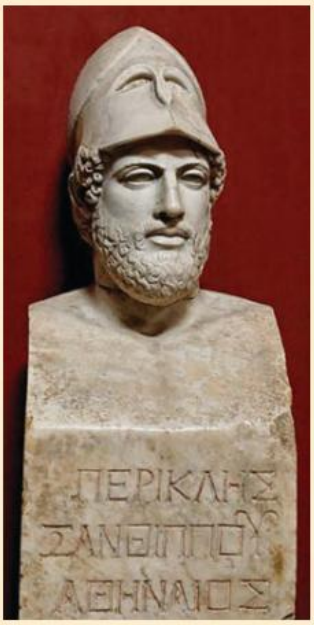

FIGURE 12.45 A bust of Pericles, bearing the inscription 'Pericles, son of Xanthippus, Athenian'

The imperial policy of Pericles

The imperial policy of Pericles between 460–445 involved:

- a commitment to the continuing existence and expansion of the Delian League, which saw Athens becoming more ruthless in its treatment of its allies and following a policy more in its own interests than in theirs
- an attempt to build up a land empire and undermine the Spartan-led Peloponnesian League by enrolling some of its members into the Delian League (Megara and Aegina), blocking access to central Greece, gaining control of the western trade routes to Sicily via the Corinthian Gulf and crippling the commercial giants of Corinth and Aegina. The member of the Peloponnesian League that had the most to fear from Athens was Corinth. According to Fornara and Samons, 'Athens had become predatory in Greece, openly challenging the members of the Peloponnesian League and intending to use the same principles by which she had imposed her rule in the Aegean'.[50]

It was about this time that Pericles began building the Athenian Long Walls down to the sea: one to Phalerum and one to Piraeus.

> At this time Megara also joined the Athenian alliance, abandoning her alliance with Sparta because the Corinthians were attacking her in a war concerning the frontier boundaries. Thus the Athenians held Megara and Pegae, and built for the Megarians their long walls from the city of Nisaea, garrisoning them with Athenian troops. It was chiefly because of this that the Corinthians began to conceive such a bitter hatred of Athens ... After this war broke out between Athens and Aegina, there was a big battle at sea between the Athenians and the Aeginetans, with the support of allies on both sides. The battle was won by the Athenians who captured 70 enemy ships. They then landed on Aegina and started to besiege the place ... At

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the same time the Corinthians and their allies … moved down into the Megarid believing that it would be impossible for the Athenians to come to the relief of Megara, since they had two large forces already serving abroad in Aegina and Egypt … At about this time the Athenians began to build their two long walls down to the sea, one to Phalerum and one to Piraeus.

SOURCE 12.23 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk I. 103–106

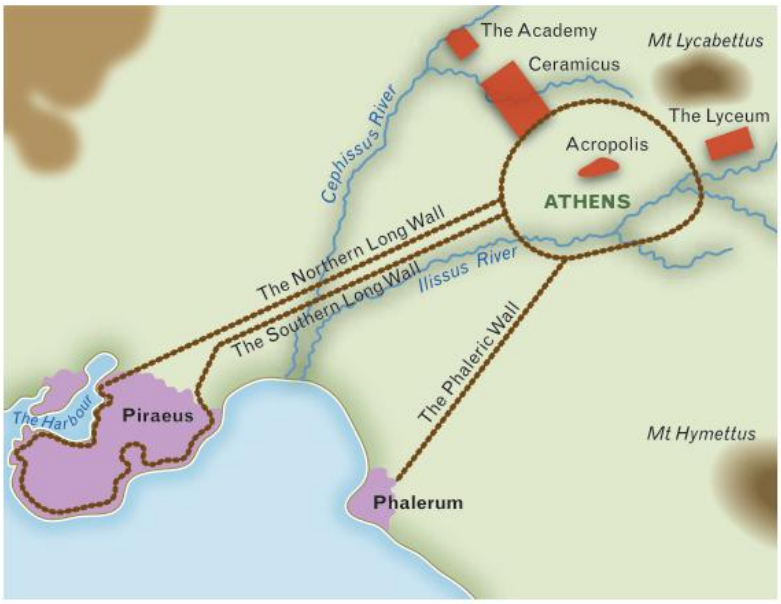

FIGURE 12.46 The Long Walls of Athens

A COMMENT ON…

The nature and significance of Athens' Long Walls

The approximate 6-kilometre Long Walls at Athens that joined the ports of Phalerum and Piraeus to the city in the 450s were part of a wider version of a naval strategy originally devised by Themistocles. This naval strategy continued at the time of the Delian League and expanded as part of Pericles' imperialistic policy. Pericles' purpose in linking the city and ports into a fortification complex was to maintain a permanent link to the sea, to make sure they would never be cut off from supplies during a land siege as long as they remained a naval power. With the building of the Long Walls, Athens became like an island on the mainland, creating a major point of contention with Sparta.

FIGURE 12.47 A tribute list

Removal of the League treasury from Delos to Athens 454

Between 459 and 454, Athens and its allies suffered a disastrous defeat in Egypt at the hands of a Persian army and a Phoenician fleet, with great losses in both ships and men.

Without consulting the allies, Pericles used this disaster as a pretext for moving the League treasury from Delos to Athens. Although reasons of safety could be justified, the move was a significant step in Athens' imperial policy,

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although it could be said that by 455, the League had already 'atrophied and its charter was not even worth lip-service'.[51] The Council of the League ceased to meet at Delos and the League's revenue became part of Athens' own treasury. The Athenian Assembly decided without consulting the allies how the funds were to be used, and the Athenian Council supervised and checked the annual income and assessed the amount of tribute that was due from each state.

One-60th of the tribute was paid into the sacred treasury of Athena, and Pericles proposed the diversion of 5000 talents into a building fund. The League funds, now regarded as imperial tribute, were used to:

- cover the costs of further military and naval expansion
- glorify and beautify Athens by implementing a building program
- take the final steps to full democracy.

The fragments of the Quota Lists (Tribute Lists) date from this period.

TABLE 12.7 Summary of the imperial policy of Pericles 460–445 BC

Actions against Sparta
War between Athens and Aegina. Athens forces Aegina to join the Delian League as a tribute-paying subject member.
Athens takes control of Boeotia and most of the northern side of the Corinthian Gulf.
Athens settles rebellious Messenian helots at Naupactus, a strategic site at the mouth of the Corinthian Gulf.
Athens gains the south side of the Corinthian Gulf by the addition of Achaea to the Athenian alliance.
The League forces suffer a disastrous defeat by Persia in Egypt.
Cimon returns from exile in 451 and brokers the Five-Year Truce with Sparta and resumes war against Persia.
Athens loses control of Boeotia, Phocis and Locris (448–447).
Megara and Euboea revolt from the Athenian alliance in 447–446. Athens loses Megara but crushes Euboea.
Relations with allies in the Delian League
New members enrol, for example, Megara.
More members choose to contribute money instead of ships, increasing Athens' naval strength at their own expense.
The allied council at Delos is dominated by Athens.
More members are reduced to the status of a subject, tribute-paying state, for example, Aegina.
Allied contingents are involved in the Battle of Tanagra in Boeotia against Sparta (nothing to do with the original objectives of the League).
Athens moves the allied treasury from Delos to Athens. League finances are now in Athens' hands.
At some point the allied council at Delos ceases to meet, and Athens no longer consults its allies, who have little control over their foreign affairs.
Athens' degree of control over allies increases and decrees affecting Athens' changing relations with allies and subjects are issued between 453 and 446. See pp. 475–77.

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ACTIVITY 12.14

Discuss what part each of the following events played in the transformation of the Delian League into an Athenian empire:

- the revolt of Thasos
- the humiliation of Cimon and Athenian forces in Sparta
- the frontier dispute between Megara and Corinth
- the war between Aegina and Athens
- the building of Athens' Long Walls
- the Athenian actions along the Corinthian Gulf and around the coast of the Peloponnese
- the defeat of League forces in Egypt and the removal of the League treasury from Delos to Athens.

The nature of Athenian imperialism

Once Athens ventured on to its imperialistic path there was no turning back, particularly under the leadership of Pericles, who was intensely patriotic and believed in Athens' greatness. For this reason, he knew that the Athenian empire had to be maintained and any threats to it quickly addressed. His attitude is reflected in Source 12.24.

> We did nothing extraordinary in accepting an empire when it was offered to us and then in refusing to give it up. Three very powerful motives prevent us from doing so: security, honour and self-interest.

SOURCE 12.24 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk 1.76

For some time, there had been three types of members: a few large ship-contributing states, those who paid a money contribution and an ever-increasing number of tribute-paying subject states. As a result, Athens had control of the allied fleet and had shown that it was willing to use it forcefully if necessary.

> For this position it was the allies themselves who were to blame. Because of this reluctance of theirs to face military service, most of them, to avoid serving abroad, had assessments made by which, instead of producing ships, they were to pay a corresponding sum of money. The result was that the Athenian navy grew at their expense, and when they revolted they always found themselves inadequately armed and inexperienced in war.

SOURCE 12.25 Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, Bk I. 99

From 451, there was discontent within the League. It appears that at least two states (Miletus and Erythrae), possibly more, revolted from the League at this time. The tribute list for 448 indicates hostility to Athens over payment of tribute, as many important members such as Miletus and Aegina were missing from the list, and others like Thasos paid only part of what they owed. Then in 447–446, the island of Euboea revolted and Megara destroyed its Athenian garrison.

Pericles subdued the island of Euboea and issued a decree relating to the city of Chalcis. This decree left no doubt that the original members of the League were now subjects of an imperial power.

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Methods used by Athens to control its 'allies'

FIGURE 12.48 Summary of Athenian methods of control

Garrisons

Athens stationed garrisons in rebellious cities and those cities suspected of opposition. They served not only a military purpose, to ensure loyalty for the future, but also to protect the Athenian inspectors or commissioners sent out to collect tribute and install 'puppet' governments, or at least governments favourable to Athens.

Democratic governments

In most cases, Athens set up a democratic form of government closely modelled on its own. They usually replaced oligarchic or Persian-inspired tyrannies, and although the imposition of an altered constitution favourable to Athens was imperialistic, generally the majority of the people in the state favoured a democracy.

The establishment of cleruchies

Between 450 and 446 Athens inaugurated a system of cleruchies – settlements of Athenian settlers abroad – to strengthen its hold on its empire. There had been some Athenian cleruchies established before the formation of the League: at Ennea Hodoi in Thrace, Chalcis and Salamis, and after it at Skyrus and Karystos, but this was the first time that Athens planted settlements on the territory of its allies, although they might have planted an unrecorded one on Naxos earlier. Cleruchies were located at strategic points in the Aegean. This policy was associated with Pericles and – although popular with the Athenians – it caused more bitterness and resentment than any other aspect of Athenian policy.

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The bitterness was greatest in the islands where the best land, which was limited, was given to the Athenian cleruchs. The dispossessed locals, often three or four times as numerous as the newcomers, often became quite destitute.

The Athenian cleruchs were drawn from the two lowest classes, and not only did this system relieve 'the city of a large number of idlers and agitators and raised the standards of the poorer classes', but at the same time it implanted among the allies 'a healthy fear of rebellion'.[52] These settlements became the watchdogs of the empire and provided safe ports of call for the fleet, as well as being an important part of Pericles' social policy to relieve unemployment.

Cleruchies were established on the islands of Andros, Naxos and Euboea and in the Chalcidic, Dardanelles and Chersonese areas. Pericles personally led 1000 cleruchs to re-establish Athenian control of the Chersonese. This was vital for control of the corn trade from the Black Sea.

Oaths sworn in support of Athens

As time went on, the oaths of loyalty required of allies implied increasing subservience to Athens, as can be seen in the different wording of the Erythrae and Chalcis Decrees.

> I will perform my duties as councillor to the best of my ability and faithfully to the people of Erythrae and of Athens and the allies. I will not revolt from the people of Athens nor will I permit another to do so ...

SOURCE 12.26 The Erythrae Decree 453–452

Seven years later, the citizens of Chalcis were required to make promises solely to Athens, not to the other members of the alliance. The oaths were:

- 'I will not revolt against the Athenian people by any art or device, either in word or in deed.'
- 'I will pay the tribute to the Athenians.'
- 'I will aid and succour the Athenian people if any one wrongs the Athenian people.'
- 'I will be obedient to the Athenian people'.[53]

Anyone who refused to sign this oath lost his citizenship and had his property confiscated.

Athenian judicial control

Interference in the legal affairs of the allies was another form of control. In the Erythrae Decree (453–452) legal involvement concerned only political matters, but seven years later, with the issuing of the Chalcis Decree (446–445), the autonomy of the local courts was severely restricted as Athens demanded that more and more trials concerning allies be heard in the Athenian law courts. Despite being treated fairly in the Athenian courts, the allies became discontented with this further loss of independence.

Control of allies' finances: the Cleinias Decree

In 447, the Cleinias Decree informed the cities of the League of Athens' decisions to continue exacting contributions, and outlined details for their annual collection. Those who refused to pay or reduced their payments would have to plead their cases in the Athenian courts. The tribute was reassessed every four years and published at the Great Panathenaic Festival attended by delegates from each state. These contributions were used to further Pericles' building program, develop democracy and maintain Athenian forces over a wide area.

There were critics within Athens, and Plutarch records that when Pericles' policy was denounced as 'bare-faced tyranny', he replied 'that the Athenians were not obliged to give the allies any account of how their money was spent provided that they carried on the war for them and kept the Persians away'.[54] Athens could use the surplus any way it wished.

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Economic dominance

Apart from control of the allies' contributions, Athens rigorously enforced, by means of the Coinage Decree, the uniformity of weights, measures and coinage throughout the empire. Athenian silver coins were to be used throughout the area under Athens' control, local mints were closed down and all local currencies had to be taken to Athens to be melted down and reminted. Although these measures undoubtedly made trade easier, the 'allies' resented the loss of their city or state's independence and individuality.

Control of allies' foreign policy

It was obvious that the members of the League had no control over their own foreign policy. They were:

- forbidden to leave the 'alliance'
- unable to have any contact with Persia or Sparta unless sanctioned by Athens
- unable to engage in war with another member.

In 440, Samos, one of the few independent, reliable and ship-contributing members, stood up for its rights to go to war with Mytilene – another member of the empire – over a dispute. When Samos refused to abide by Athens' demands to cease fighting and accept Athenian arbitration, Pericles, with 40 ships, attempted to reassert Athenian control. He seized hostages, established a garrison and set up a democratic government. When the Samian leaders overthrew the newly established democracy, it was a test of Athens' power. It was crucial that Samos be subdued before the Persians intervened or other allies followed its example. It took a siege of nine months to end Samos' independent existence: it was forced to pull down its walls, surrender its fleet, pay a sum of 1276 talents and swear an oath of loyalty.

According to Thucydides, Pericles said 'that although it might have been wrong to take it [empire]; it was certainly dangerous to let it go'.[55]

Advantages of membership in the Athenian empire

Allies of Athens received:

- peace
- protection
- democratic governments
- prosperity through increased trade.

However, the loss of independence in domestic and foreign affairs, economic dependence on Athens and its high-handed actions far outweighed any advantages gained. Members saw Athens becoming a tyrant state.

Benefits to Athens

Athens gained great benefits from its empire. It received not only tribute, but also court fees, mine rents, market and harbour dues, rents and confiscations. The funds collected were used for:

- the payment of state officials and jurors in the courts
- payment of rowers and soldiers
- maintenance of the fleet
- building of temples
- subsidising festivals.

For 15 years after 447 the Athenians did not have to pay any direct taxes to the state.

FIGURE 12.49 An artistic 19th-century reconstruction of the Acropolis

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ACTIVITY 12.15

1. Explain what Thucydides (Bk I. 99) meant by 'for this position it was the allies themselves who were to blame'.
2. Discuss the ways in which Athens restricted the autonomy and rights of the members of its alliance.
3. State the benefits that Athens gained from its increasing control over the members of its alliance.

Key democratic developments in Athens

TABLE 12.8 Athenian democracy prior to 461

By 500 BC	From 500–461
In 500, the government of Athens had some important democratic features. • The People's Assembly (*ecclesia*) was open to all citizens, including the lowest class (*thetes*), who voted on laws, elected magistrates and decided issues of war and peace. • The *heliaea* comprised all those who sat in the Assembly, called together to act as a court. The *heliaea* could appeal against a magistrate's decision and try a magistrate for mismanagement. • The *strategoi* (sing. *strategos*) were 10 generals elected by the people. However, there were still undemocratic aspects of the constitution: • The chief magistrates (**archons**) were elected from only the top socio-economic class. • The Areopagus, which made the key decisions within the state, was a conservative council made up of the ex-archons who came from the old aristocratic families. • The Council of 500 (*boule*), which considered proposals for laws and then passed them on to the *ecclesia* to be voted on, was recruited from the top two classes only. This was only an infant democracy and Athens was really still governed by the conservative aristocratic factions in society.	After Marathon in 490, which many saw as a victory for the infant democracy, there were further democratic developments. These occurred over a period of about 40 years, and were the result of: • Athens' increasing involvement in military affairs against Persia and Sparta, and the role of the generals (*strategoi*) • the importance of the Athenian navy and the rowers in the fleet, who came from the lowest social class (*thetes*) and whose demands had to be acknowledged. The key democratic changes that occurred in the first half of the 5th century were: • the use of ostracism (refer back to p. 443). • changes to the archonship – in 487 the Assembly opened up to the archonship to the second highest socio-economic class as well, and the archons were no longer elected but chosen by **lot**. • the use of lot, which was regarded as a more democratic method as it prevented undue influence being imposed by factions, but it tended to produce more mediocre officials. • the weakening of the conservative, aristocratic Areopagus. Since this comprised ex-archons, the use of lot changed the composition and status of this aristocratic body. • the military power of the archon polemarch was taken over by the generals (*strategoi*), who continued to be elected from the men best suited for the job.

archon chief Athenian magistrate

lot random or chance selection, as of drawing a name out of a receptacle

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From 458, the archons' position was further weakened by opening it up to all classes and making it a paid position.

Changes to Athenian democracy from 461

The weakening of the Areopagus

As radical democrats such as Ephialtes and Pericles increased their influence with the people, the power of the conservative Areopagus was no longer compatible with their policies. In the 460s, when the conservative Cimon was absent helping the Spartans with their helot revolt, the reformer Ephialtes began an all-out attack on the Areopagus.

> First, he removed many of the Areopagites by laying charges against them for their mismanagement of affairs. Then … [462–461] he took away all their additional powers through which they were 'guard of the state' and gave some to the council of 500, others to the *demos* [people] and the law courts.

SOURCE 12.27 Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, 25, 1–2

Ephialtes' laws took away the Areopagus' right to punish public officials if they broke the law, and their right to supervise government administration and make sure laws were obeyed. All they were left with were predominantly sacred duties. The result of Ephialtes' reform 'leaves no room for doubt that its purpose was to convey power to the **demos** and to eviscerate the aristocratic establishment'.[56]

demos 'the people'

Payment for public service

When Ephialtes was murdered in 461, Pericles introduced 'a sweeping policy allowing Athenians to participate in all aspects of their government at state expense'.[57] Since the use of lot had already been introduced, what was needed now was payment for service. Pericles introduced:

- payment of 2 obals a day for jury duty. The courts dealt with civil cases of citizens, resident foreign craftsmen, allies and subjects. There were often as many as 10 courts sitting each day and juries tended to be large, ranging from 201 to 501 jurors. The amount of judicial business involving allies had increased so much that it would have been difficult to find enough jurors without some form of compensation. The payment of 2 obals, although not quite enough to live on, attracted the city's poor and aged who became obsessive full-time jurors. These men were the subjects of Aristophanes' comic play *Wasps*.
- payments of 4 obals a day for the archonship. This meant there was no need to restrict it to the two richest classes. Members of the third property class were admitted at this time.
- payment of 1 drachma for members of the Council of 500 and other officials, except generals.

Aristotle, an opponent of radical democracy, says that some people alleged that it was 'as a result of this that courts deteriorated, since it was always the ordinary people rather than the better sort who were eager to be picked for jury service'.[58]

> The extension of democracy under Pericles by means of state payment for public service required a deliberate decision to rely on the permanent availability of imperial treasure … thus it presumes the strict interdependence of the Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire.

SOURCE 12.28 C. Fornara and L. Samons, *Athens from Cleisthenes to Pericles*, p. xvi

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Citizenship law

The growth of the Athenian empire provided wealth and slaves, which allowed for citizens to participate in government. However, because citizens were now paid to serve the state, it was in the interest of Athens that the number of citizens be restricted.

In 451, Pericles introduced a decree into the Assembly that tightened up the qualifications for citizenship, controlling the numbers who might enjoy the benefits of Athenian democracy. So strict were these qualifications that several prominent men, such as Themistocles, would not have been classified as a citizen had they still been alive. To be a citizen in 451:

- both parents of a candidate had to be Athenian citizens, and legally married
- the members of the *deme* (local territorial unit) had to be satisfied that a candidate had reached the age of 18 and was freeborn
- the candidate had to be registered on the *deme* roll and was scrutinised by the councillors
- the candidate had to spend two years in the army as a cadet before becoming a member of the Assembly.

> Possession of the citizenship entailed tremendous and hitherto undreamed of economic advantages. Athenian public policy became a mirror-image of Athens' reduction of its allies to subjects, thus generating the paradox that the perfect democracy of the ancient world required the subservience of others [subjects and slaves] in order to succeed.

SOURCE 12.29 C. Fornara and L. Samons, *Athens from Cleisthenes to Pericles*, p. 75

ACTIVITY 12.16

1. Define the archons and explain what changes occurred in their selection and status from 490 to 458.
2. Define the Areopagus and explain why it was undemocratic.
3. Describe the changes that the radical democrat, Ephialtes, brought about in the power of the Areopagus.
4. Discuss how the position of *strategos* became more important in the state.
5. The selection process of lot, for choosing many officials, was not effective until payment for service was introduced. Describe what reforms Pericles introduced in this respect.
6. How does Source 12.28 show the relationship between Pericles' citizenship law and the development of an Athenian empire?

12.4 Athens and Sparta

At the beginning of the 5th century, Sparta and Athens were the leading states in Greece, but their development in the previous centuries had taken them down different roads. The Persian Wars revealed these fundamental differences, as did the events of the next 50 years, until it was almost inevitable – or so Thucydides believed – that these two great states would face each other in a major war (the Peloponnesian War) in the last quarter of the 5th century.

Impact of the Persian Wars

Both Athens and Sparta emerged from the Persian Wars with increased respect and admiration, and were still in alliance with each other in 478. Their relationship seemed cordial enough, even when the Ionians refused to carry on the war against Persia under Spartan leadership due to the behaviour of Pausanius.

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The Spartans:

- realised the danger posed by Persian wealth and luxury to their kings and citizens.
- had already seen the possibility of corrupt and arrogant behaviour of its leaders once they were away from their highly structured society. There was a tightening up of the Spartan system to prevent any liberalising effect on the people.
- feared the possibility of revolts by their helots if they remained for too long outside the Peloponnese and a worsening of their relationship with their Peloponnesian allies.

For these reasons they accepted Athenian leadership of the continuing war against the Persians in Asia Minor. Thucydides said, 'this was a time when Sparta was particularly friendly to Athens because of the courage displayed by Athens against the Persians'.[59] However, this may have been going a bit too far as there were already hints of ill-will and jealousy between 478 and 472.

Themistocles' anti-Spartan policy 478–472 BC

The rebuilding of Athens' walls

After the expulsion of the Persians, Themistocles supervised the rebuilding and fortification of Athens. This alarmed the Spartans and their allies, who suggested that the Athenians should refrain from rebuilding their walls and join with Sparta 'in pulling down all fortifications which still existed in cities outside the Peloponnese'.[60] They concealed their real fear, which was the sudden growth of Athenian sea power, and used the pretext that a fortified Athens could be a base for the Persians if they came again.

Themistocles went to Sparta, denied that the walls were being built and suggested that envoys be sent to see for themselves. In this he completely outwitted the Spartans, because the envoys were held as hostages until the walls were high enough. He then announced that the walls were finished and that in the future Athens was capable of making up its own mind about what was in its interests.

The issue of the Amphictyonic Council

Immediately after the Persian Wars, the Greek states met at the Amphictyonic Council (a religious organisation which controlled Delphi). The Spartans suggested that all those Greek states that had remained neutral or sided with Persia should be expelled from the Council. Themistocles realised that if all these states were removed, the members of the Peloponnesian League would dominate the Council. He said it would be intolerable if the Council was controlled by two or three large states.

Plutarch says that this 'gave particular offense to the Spartans and made them try to strengthen Cimon's position by showing him favours and thus establish him as a political rival to Themistocles'.[61]

The ostracism of Themistocles

In 472, Themistocles was ostracised, as he had made many enemies due to his radical policies, his outspokenness, his vanity and his continued opposition to Sparta. Many envied him his success and wished to bring him down. He moved to Argos, Sparta's traditional enemy, and from there he spread anti-Spartan propaganda throughout the Peloponnese.

The Spartans wanted him removed, and when he became implicated in the intrigues of Pausanius (of which there was no proof), he was accused of high treason and pursued by both Spartan and Athenian officials. It is hardly likely that he was communicating with Persia as was charged, but he may well have been plotting against the Spartan constitution. All the same, he fled to the court of the Persian king Artaxerxes, even becoming a governor of Magnesia in Asia Minor. He died in 460 BC.

The pro-Spartan policy of Cimon 471–462 BC

After the ostracism of Themistocles, the Spartans showed goodwill towards Athens because of Cimon, to whom they gave honours and favours. Some people described him as more of a Peloponnesian than an Athenian. He aimed at maintaining good relations with Sparta by emphasising the dual hegemony of Greece through Spartan military leadership and Athenian naval leadership.

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This policy helped postpone a rift between Athens and Sparta, although it is possible that Sparta may have had some dormant fear of Athens' early aggressive actions against Skyrus, Carystus and Naxos, and jealousy of the great success of Cimon and the League forces at Eurymedon.

If these feelings were not openly expressed, the more radical democratic changes happening in Athens in the late 460s could not be overlooked by Sparta. It was unlikely that Cimon would remain influential for much longer, or that Sparta would not respond to the changes occurring in Athens.

When Sparta suffered a disastrous earthquake in Laconia in 464 and a subsequent helot revolt, a public debate was held in Athens over whether to send help to the Spartans. Cimon, with his policy of conservative politics at home and cooperation with Sparta, was opposed by Ephialtes, a radical democrat, who believed Sparta was Athens' natural enemy. The radical democrats, including the young Pericles, had been gaining in power and popularity, but the fact that Cimon was able to persuade the Assembly to send him with a force of 4000 troops to help Sparta indicates that the majority of Athenians still supported a policy of friendship and cooperation with Sparta.

While Cimon was away in Sparta, the radical democrats in Athens (including the young Pericles) were introducing democratic reforms. Thucydides recorded that the Spartans, 'fearing the daring and revolutionary spirit of the Athenians, worried that if they remained at hand they might be persuaded by the helots at home to cause trouble'.[62] So the Athenians were dismissed and ordered home.

This deeply offended the Athenians as they considered 'this was not the sort of treatment they deserved from Sparta',[63] and the Spartan rebuff brought a humiliating end to Cimon's policy of joint leadership of Greece. Despite all his former successes, he was ostracised in 461 and during his 10-year absence, the radical democrats led by Pericles (after the murder of Ephialtes in 461) broke the Athenian alliance with Sparta (which still existed), formed a new alliance with its enemies, Argos and Thessaly, and initiated an expansionist foreign policy aimed at weakening the Peloponnesian League. This opened a 'new chapter in Athenian-Spartan relations, one of open-enmity'.[64]

Pericles' policy against the Peloponnesian League

A COMMENT ON...

The Peloponnesian League or 'Lacedaemonians and the Allies'

- This was formed at the end of the 6th century to create a strong military cordon in the Peloponnese, as well as provide insulation for Sparta and security for its neighbours.
- This loose confederation of Peloponnesian states (except Argos and Achaea) was strictly speaking a league for its members who were not allied with one another but only with Sparta.
- It recognised the autonomy of its members, and generally favoured oligarchies.
- It was restricted in purpose to questions of war and when military issues arose, a Council of Allies met. This consisted of two independent bodies:
  - Assembly of Spartiates
  - Congress of Allies, in which each state had one vote and a majority vote was binding on all members.

If both of these bodies voted alike on matters of policy, then the whole alliance was committed to the policy.

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- No tribute was levied except in times of war, when two-thirds of the allies' military forces were required for a certain number of months.
- Sparta had to take into account the sentiments and interests of its allies, particularly Corinth which could, and did, sometimes sway the majority of the Congress against Sparta.
- The allies did not always agree with everything Sparta did, but they were generally loyal and the League was a very stable organisation; it formed the basis of the Hellenic League that fought the Persians.

Between 460–450, the Peloponnesian League was undermined as:

- Megara, Corinth's neighbour, deserted the Peloponnesian League and became an ally of Athens
- Athens gained control of the valuable western trade routes via the Corinthian Gulf at the expense of Corinth
- Athens engaged in conflicts with Corinth and Aegina, in both of which it was successful
- Mantinea and several other states in the Peloponnese introduced democracy
- Achaea, in the Peloponnese, was encouraged to join the Athenian alliance.

In 457, Sparta, concerned at Athens' expansion into central Greece, attempted to strengthen Thebes and enrol some Boeotian cities in the Peloponnesian League. As the Spartan forces returned home they encountered an Athenian force at Tanagra near the Attic border and a bloody battle ensued, with a victory to the Spartans.

The Five Years Truce, major Athenian setbacks and a Thirty Years Peace

In 451, Cimon returned from exile and secured a Five Years Truce with Sparta, but in 447, Athens lost its land empire in Boeotia, and was faced with anti-Athenian revolts in Euboea and Megara. Pericles subdued the Euboean revolt but was forced to accept that Boeotia and Megara were lost to Athens.

In 445, Athens and the Peloponnesians signed a Thirty Years Peace whereby:

- Athens surrendered the Peloponnesian territories of Nisaea, Pagae, Achaea and Troizen
- they agreed not to interfere with one another's allies or accept them into their alliance
- they permitted neutral states to join either alliance
- they ensured Aegina's independence.

This peace established a balance of power between two great rival systems of alliance, involving the states of mainland Greece, the Aegean and Asia Minor. In this situation neither side could tolerate any action that would threaten the stability of its alliance, and so any minor conflict involving members of one alliance or the other could lead to war.

The Thirty Years Peace lasted only 15 years before the Peloponnesian War broke out between Athens and Sparta in 431.

Thucydides believed war was inevitable because of 'the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta'.[65] He believed that:

- since 479 Athens had been growing more powerful and had given offence to many states
- from 460 a noticeable rift had occurred between Athens and Sparta
- between 456 and 446 Athens had incurred the hostility of Sparta's most influential ally, Corinth.

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ACTIVITY 12.17

1 Describe the effect on the Athenian/Spartan relationship of:
   - Themistocles' anti-Spartan policy
   - Cimons' pro-Spartan policy
   - Pericles' imperialistic policy.

2 Compare the features of the organisations known as 'The Lacedaemonians and their allies' and the 'Athenians and their allies'. Consider such things as:
   - aims
   - permanency
   - independence of allies
   - decision-making bodies
   - contributions.

CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

12.1 THE CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- The rugged landform of Greece – with only a few large plains – contributed to the emergence of many small independent city-states (*poleis*) with their own form of government and way of life. Due to jealousies, economic rivalries and destructive quarrels, they found it hard to unite against a common enemy. Also, they did not identify as Hellenes, but were known by their city-states, for example: Athenians, Spartans, Thebans, Corinthians. Athens and Sparta were the two most powerful states at the beginning of the 5th century BC.
- Greek city-states existed on the mainland, all around the Mediterranean, across the Aegean, along the coast of Asia Minor and around the edge of the Black Sea. Those in the east came in contact with, and were impacted by, the Kingdom of Lydia, and subsequently the extensive Persian Empire of Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and Xerxes, under whom they were subjects.

12.2 THE PERSIAN WARS

- Persian imperialism comprised territorial expansion to enhance the glory of the king, and specifically targeted revenge as a deterrent and to restore a king's reputation. Along with this, they demanded tokens of submission: earth and water.
- Between 499–493, the Greek subjects of Persia along the coast of Asia Minor revolted (initiated by the Ionian city of Miletus) against Persia. In this they were helped by Athens and Eretria. The revolt, eventually quelled by Persians who destroyed Miletus, was the catalyst that brought about the first Persian invasion against Greece in 490, its aim to punish Athens and Eretria.

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- Darius launched a seaborne attack across the Aegean to Eretria (destroyed) and onto the Plain of Marathon, hoping to take Athens by surprise. Miltiades led a predominantly Athenian defence (including a force of Plataeans) and by innovative tactics defeated the Persians. The Spartans were unable to arrive in time due to the celebration of an important festival. This was seen as a victory for the young democracy and a myth developed around the 'Men of Marathon'.
- Between this invasion and the next carried out by Xerxes in 480, the Athenians were faced with internal power struggles and the development of a navy, and the League of Greeks met at the Isthmus of Corinth to decide how to react to the danger of another threat from Persia. In the meantime, Xerxes was making massive preparations for a combined land and sea assault via northern Greece.
- The Greeks and Persians faced each other at sea at Artemisium and on land at Themopylae, where the courageous last stand of Leonidas failed to stop the march of the Persians on Athens. Although the city had been evacuated, it was destroyed by the Persians. The next defence was the famous sea battle at Salamis (a Greek victory owing to the part played by Themistocles) and in 479, a united Greek force under the command of the Spartan, Pausanius, at Plataea put an end to the Persian invasion of the mainland. The Greek fleet destroyed the Persains at Mycale in Asia Minor that same year and the Ionians enrolled in the Greek League.

12.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ATHENS AND THE ATHENIAN EMPIRE 478–440 BC

- The Hellenic League led by Sparta during the Persian wars was replaced in 478–7 by a league of sea states led by Athens, known as the Delian League after the island of Delos. The league was organised (aims, finances, contributions, oath of loyalty) by Aristides and its navy led by Cimon. From early on it became apparent that there was the potential for Athens to enhance its own position at the expense of the allies and therefore some members chose to secede. From 465 Athens began to show its true intentions and over the next 20 years gradually gained an empire with previous allies becoming subjects. The empire reached its peak under Pericles, who began an aggressive imperialistic policy that created suspicion and hostility from Sparta and the members of the Peloponnesian League.
- By 500, Athens was an infant democracy, but from 487–460 more democratic changes were made and in 461, when radical democrats came to power, pay for public service was introduced, and in 451 Pericles restricted citizenship and participation in the democracy.

12.4 ATHENS AND SPARTA

- The Persian Wars, and the events of the following 50 years, revealed the fundamental differences between Sparta and Athens and the differences in their respective Leagues.
- Athens' growth to power and radical democracy created suspicion and fear in oligarchic Sparta, and Pericles' aggressive imperialism threatened the economies of many of the large members of the Peloponnesian League such as Corinth. Despite attempts at establishing truces between the two blocs, there was an inevitable drift to civil war.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- cleruchy
- Delphic Oracle
- medism
- ostracism
- *phoros*
- *polis*
- secession
- *strategoi*
- trireme

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) Discuss the causes of the Ionian Revolt in 499–493 BC.

2) List the changes that occurred in :
- the Delian League from 478–454
- Athenian democracy from 500–451.

3) Explain the significance of:
- the Greek defeat in the Ionian revolt
- the part played by Miltiades in the Athenian and Plataean victory at Marathon
- Aegina's submission to Persia
- the discovery of a vein of silver at Laurium near Athens
- the prophecy of the Delphic Oracle to the Athenians
- the role of Leonidas at Thermopylae.

4) Evaluate the significance of the following for the Athenian allies:
- the Battle of Eurymedon
- the Revolt of Thasos.

5) Summarise the perspectives of Thucydides on:
- the contribution of Athens to the defence of Greece in 480
- the reasons for Athenian leadership of the Delian League in 477
- the growth of the Athenian empire.

Historical skills

1) Assess the degree of unity among the Greeks between 490–479.

2) Evaluate the significance of naval battles in the course of the second Persian invasion in 480–479.

3) Explain the reasons for Greek victories over the Persians in 490 and 480–479.

4) Analyse to what extent the Persians were responsible for their own defeat during the Persian Wars.

5) Assess the careers of Aristides and Cimon in the decade after the Persian expulsion from Greece.

6) Explain the transformation of the Delian League into the Athenian empire.

7) Explain what the following source indicates about Athenian democracy under Pericles.

> 'The extension of democracy under Pericles by means of state payment for public service required a deliberate decision to rely on the permanent availability of imperial treasure … thus it presumes the strict interdependence of the Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire'.[66]

8) Discuss how the Spartans reacted to Athens' growing power between 479–445.

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CHAPTER 13
The Augustan age 44 BC–14 AD

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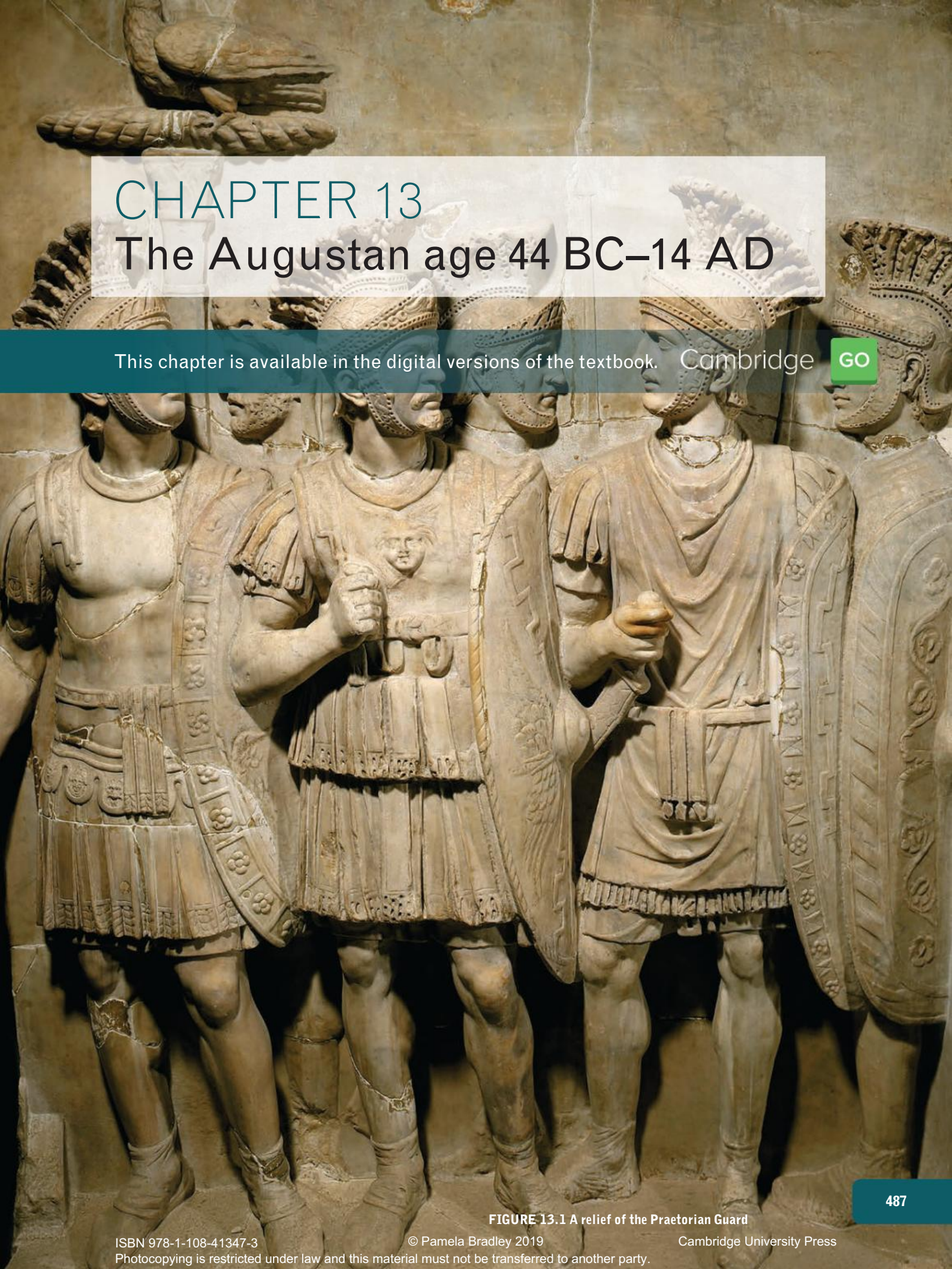

FIGURE 13.1 A relief of the Praetorian Guard

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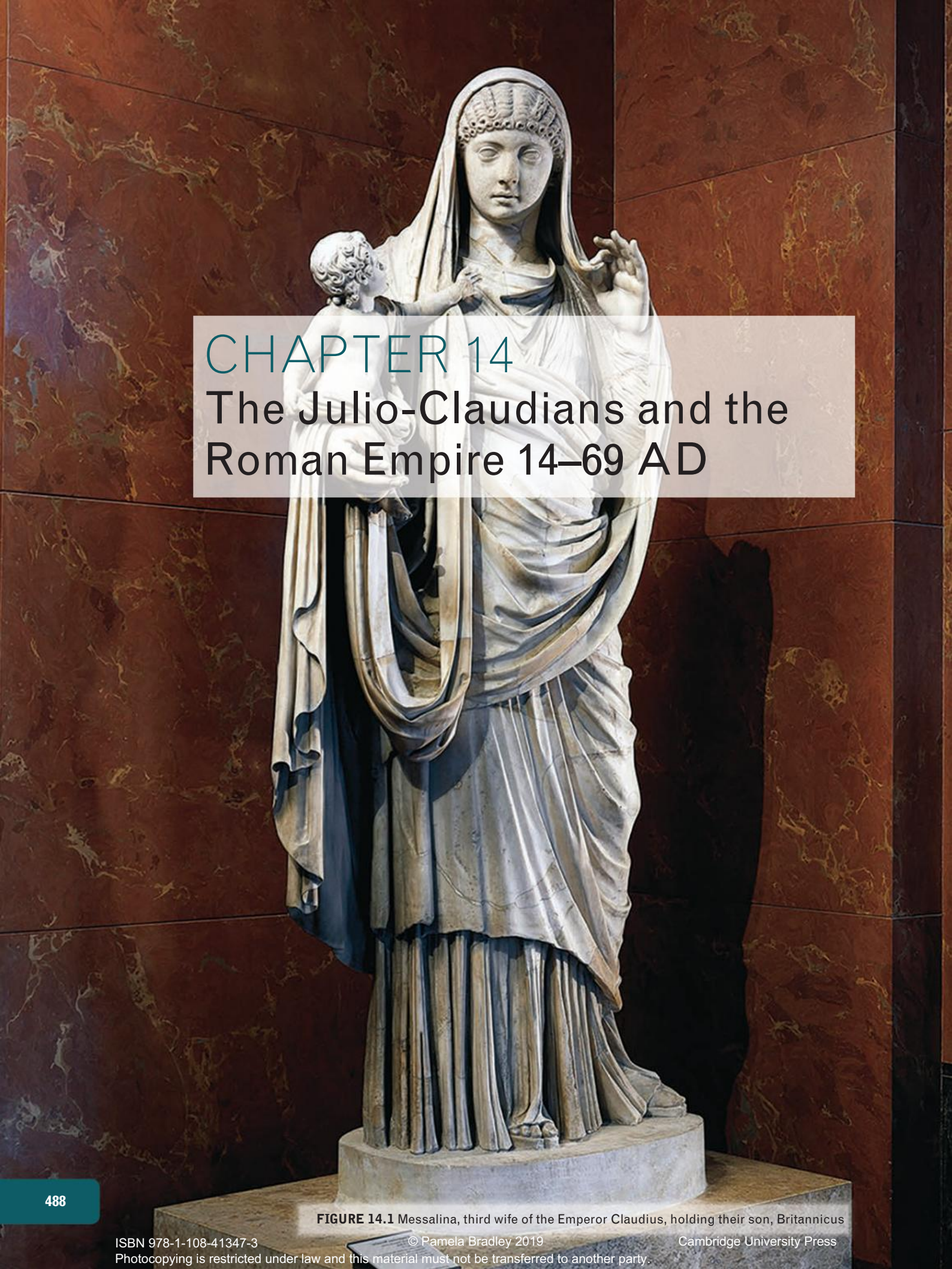

CHAPTER 14
The Julio-Claudians and the Roman Empire 14–69 AD

FIGURE 14.1 Messalina, third wife of the Emperor Claudius, holding their son, Britannicus

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FIGURE 14.2 The Roman Empire at the end of the Julio-Claudian era (68 AD)

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of the Julio-Claudians and the Roman Empire 14–69 AD through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The chronological and geographical context • The principate of the Julio-Claudians • The empire

The histories of Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, and Nero were described during their lifetimes in fictitious terms, for fear of the consequences; whereas the accounts written after their deaths were influenced by still raging animosities.

SOURCE 14.1 Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, Bk I. 1

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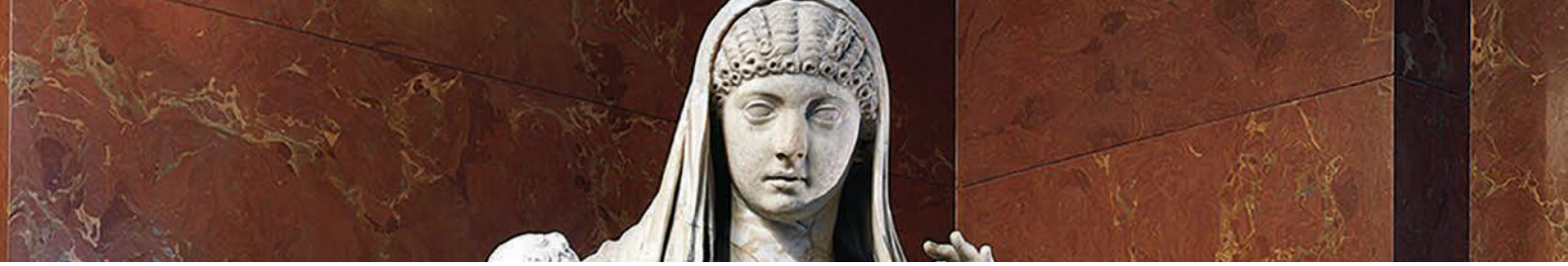

CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 14.3 A painting showing a critical event in the life of Claudius

Study Figure 14.3 carefully and note everything you can see in it. What do you think is happening here? Consider this event and think about what it might indicate about the period during which Julio-Claudians ruled Rome.

CHAPTER 14 Overview

KEY IDEA

The success of the principate set up by Augustus depended to a large extent on the character and ability of the individual who became princeps, but the Julio-Claudian successors of Augustus suffered from unfortunate character traits. They were also faced with a servile Senate, ambitious women who intrigued on behalf of their sons, powerful freedmen who ran the bureaucracy and interference by the powerful Praetorian Guard. The imperial court was a hot-bed of intrigue, conspiracies, gratuitous brutality, the ruthless removal of any opponents and even murder. Despite these difficulties, two of the Julio-Claudian emperors, Tiberius and Claudius, did prove to be effective administrators. However, it is hard to get an accurate picture of these rulers as the literary sources are consistently hostile.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Politics these days doesn't really differ very much from imperial Rome. Those who ruled either succeeded or failed depending on their character. There are those desperate for power; abominations like Gaius and Nero; those who allow themselves to be manipulated; the servile, who are more concerned with retaining their positions; the scandal mongers; those who go to great lengths to remove their opponents, and resort to back-stabbing. Some might say that nothing much has changed.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- augury
- *Campus Martius*
- Capitol
- client-kingdoms
- *delatores*
- Druidism
- *Imperium*
- *maiestas*
- *pomerium*
- Praetorian Guard
- *princeps iuventutis*
- principate

Painting the picture

The term 'Julio-Claudians' refers to the direct descendants of Augustus (Julians) and Livia (Claudians). The Julio-Claudian rulers who followed Augustus between 14–68 AD were: Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius and Nero.

INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did the Julio-Claudians administer in the interests of the people of Rome and its empire?

principate a form of government led by a princeps or 'first man/citizen'. The term was used to describe Roman rulers from the time of Augustus

When Augustus defeated Mark Antony in a civil war for control of the Roman world, he established a new form of government known as the **principate** in 27–23 BC, whereby the empire was ruled by 'the first man' or princeps. Although his position in the state could not be legally inherited, he hoped that his authority as princeps would ensure the public succession of his private heir. For 40 years he ruthlessly engineered situations: political marriages, adoptions and divorces to provide a possible Julian heir, via his daughter Julia, his only child from his previous wife, Scribonia. However, eventually he was forced to adopt his stepson, Tiberius, the eldest son of his wife Livia. Tiberius was a Claudian. The question of succession was a complex one because there was no accepted rule governing this issue and it was a problem that continued throughout the reign of each Julio-Claudian, often leading to intrigue and bloodshed.

At the beginning of his rule, Augustus had recorded the basic formula for the principate, and he would have hoped that his successors followed it. However, the future success of the principate depended to a large extent on the characters of those who became princeps, and these varied dramatically from one to the other: the dour Tiberius who had a firm sense of the duty of the ruler and respected tradition; Caligula with his natural brutality; the scholarly but easily-influenced Claudius; and Nero, noted for his wild improprieties and matricide.

TABLE 14.1 Timeline of the Julio-Claudians 14–68 AD

YEAR	EMPEROR
	Tiberius
14	Succeeds Augustus as princeps and orders the death of Agrippa Postumus. Mutinies break out among the troops in Lower Germany and Pannonia
15	Germanicus' campaigns against the Germans
16	Germanicus is recalled by Tiberius and sent on a diplomatic mission to the East
18	Conflict between Germanicus and Piso in the East
19	Death of Germanicus in the East; Agrippina the Elder blames Tiberius
21	Tacfarinas causes trouble in the province of Africa
22	Sejanus, the Praetorian Prefect, begins his rise to power
23	Murder of Drusus (Tiberius' son) by Sejanus
24	Opposition of Agrippina the Elder and her supporters to Tiberius continues to grow
26	Tiberius retires to Capri from where he administers the empire by corresponding daily with the Senate
27	Sejanus now virtually in charge
29	Death of Livia. Agrippina and her two eldest sons imprisoned
31	Execution of Sejanus after Tiberius becomes aware of his ambitions and treachery. Tiberius keeps Germanicus' youngest son Gaius (Caligula) with him on Capri and rules the empire from there
37	Tiberius' death and the succession of Gaius (Caligula)
	Gaius/Caligula
37	Becomes ruler on the death of Tiberius with the help of Macro, the Praetorian Prefect. Declares Tiberius' will invalid. Suffers a serious illness: personality changes

TABLE 14.1 *(continued)*

YEAR	EMPEROR
38	Tiberius' grandson (Tiberius Gemellus) killed on the orders of Caligula
39	Goes to the Rhine frontier. A suspected conspiracy involving members of his own family
40	Troops refuse to invade Britain, Caligula returns to Rome. Provocative attitude towards the Jews
41	Assassination by a group of Praetorian Guardsmen
	Claudius
41	The Praetorian Guard proclaims Claudius as emperor. He is already married to his third wife, Messalina
42	Suppresses a revolt in Mauretania and begins his conquest of Britain
43	Extends the empire: annexation of Britain and Lycia
44	Annexes Judaea
46	Annexes Thrace
48	Aedui Gauls admitted to the Senate. The execution of the sexually depraved Messalina on Claudius' orders
49	Marries Agrippina the Younger, the mother of Nero from her former marriage. Nero is betrothed to Claudius' daughter, Octavia
50	Claudius adopts Nero, who becomes a rival to Claudius' real son, Britannicus
51	Nero named *princeps iuventutis*
52	Marriage of Nero and Octavia
54	Death of Claudius, possibly at the hands of Agrippina the Younger
	Nero
54	Agrippina conspires to have all possible rivals killed
55	Britannicus killed by Nero (poisoned)
56	Agrippina's influence wanes, Burrus and Seneca guide Nero; the next five years generally marked by good government
58	The Parthian War
59	Agrippina murdered by Nero's men
60	Rebellion by Boudicca of the Iceni and other British tribes
62	Death of Burrus and murder of Octavia
64	The Great Fire of Rome
65	The so-called conspiracy of Piso to kill Nero. The death of Seneca
66	Nero sees himself as a god; visits Greece and enters athletic and artistic competitions
67	Nero grants Greece its 'freedom'. The Jewish War continues
68	The revolt of Vindex in Gaul and Galba in Spain. Nero flees Rome and commits suicide

Sometimes the success or otherwise of the individual princeps in running the state depended on those who surrounded him: the Praetorian Guards, powerful bureaucrats (freedmen), tutors and advisors, and interfering imperial women and mistresses. The increasing servility of the members of the Senate, who were originally intended to participate alongside the princeps in governing the empire, did not help. Although Tiberius wished to involve the Senate and other Roman nobles in the government, it eventually proved impossible.

One of the major difficulties in understanding this period is that the major source is Tacitus' *Annals* (see p. 497). Tacitus' aim was to expose the evils of the Julio-Claudians and to show the dynasty's degeneration into tyranny. A general reading of Tacitus would give the impression that this period was marked solely by conspiracy, treason trials, the machinations of those obsessed with gaining power, promiscuity, brutality, the permanent removal of opponents and even murders of emperors and their heirs.

However, a more careful reading of Tacitus and other sources will show another side to some of the princeps (e.g. Tiberius and Claudius) and their achievements.

A COMMENT ON...

Princeps or emperor?

Although Augustus' successors, the Julio-Claudians, were not called 'emperor' in their own day, most modern sources refer to them in this way, and in this study 'princeps' and 'emperor' are used synonymously.

14.1 The chronological and geographical context

The part played by Julius Caesar and Augustus in the decline of the republic in the late 1st century BC

There is no doubt that both Julius Caesar and Augustus played a major part in the destruction of the Roman republic in the late 1st century BC.

- Caesar, like most Roman nobles, was ambitious for political power, status and prestige (*dignitas*), and revealed in the early part of his career that he was prepared to disregard constitutional restrictions to achieve his aims if his ambitions were thwarted. There were certainly those who wanted to make sure that he did not reach his goals, and the political circumstances of the day 'drove him from minor illegalities to major ones'.[1] He knew 'that the Republic was nothing – a mere name without form or substance',[2] and when he returned to Rome as the victor of the Civil War 49–45 BC, he accepted the extravagant powers and honours bestowed on him by a subservient Senate, including dictator for life. However, his position and perceived autocratic behaviour of arrogantly bypassing traditional practices caused offense to some members of the senatorial class, who believed he wanted to make himself king. In 44 BC, 60 senatorial conspirators assassinated him in the Senate house. Caesar's assassination was the death knell for the republic.
- Caesar's adopted son and heir, Octavian, avenged his death by defeating the conspirators Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi; was involved in a civil war with Mark Antony for supremacy within the Roman world; defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium; and in 27 BC brought in a new era of one-man rule by the 'princeps' ('first citizen'), and a new form of government called the principate. Octavian also adopted the name 'Augustus' ('one to be revered').

Augustus saw that the only way to prevent ambitious commanders and their armies from continually plunging the empire into civil war was to keep control of the armed forces himself and to wield ***maius imperium*** ('greater power to command') than anyone else. However, unlike Caesar, Augustus was by nature a conservative, preferred constitutional government and wanted it to appear that he was sharing power in running the empire, even though the ultimate power was his by virtue of his control of the army.

maius imperium the power to command, including an army, but outranking all others with *imperium*: supreme power

Despite his contribution to the breakdown of the Roman republic, Augustus established a model for success in maintaining the future of 'one-man rule'.

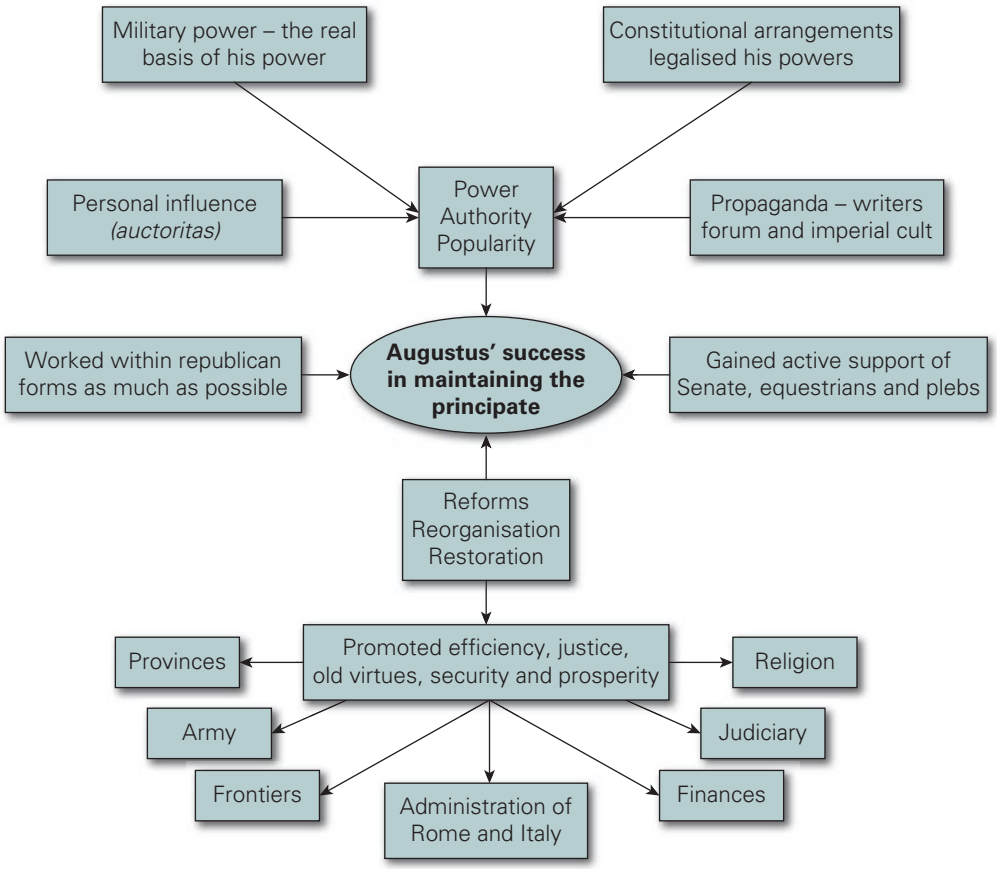

FIGURE 14.4 Augustus' model for success in maintaining the principate

The Roman Empire prior to the Julio-Claudians

By the time of the Julio-Claudian emperors – Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius and Nero – the empire had been substantially extended and provinces pacified and consolidated.

- By his conquest of Gaul, Julius Caesar left an empire much larger than when he first came to power. He increased Rome's strength by adding Gallia Comata, an area twice the size of Italy, which had a greater population than Spain and offered vast resources. The new province promised future peace and hopefully protection for Rome from the Germanic tribes north of the Rhine. He also added Africa Nova, and extended Further Spain and Cilicia. He settled trouble spots in Nearer Spain, Narbonese and Cisalpine Gaul, Bithynia-Pontus and Asia. He made the first invasion of Britain, which was not attempted again until the reign of the Julio-Claudian Emperor Claudius.

- Although Augustus was not an outstanding general like Caesar, he was responsible for adding a great deal of territory, particularly the annexation of the strategically significant province of Egypt, which became the princeps' own domain. In the north, the acquisition of territory was due to the campaigns of his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus. However, in the later years of his principate he attempted to consolidate those areas within the empire that were not yet pacified or organised, and attempted to settle the empire's boundaries at natural features such as mountains and rivers (the Rhine and the Danube) where its territory was easily defensible. He took greater care with the selection and supervision of governors, imposed quicker recall and punishment of those who were corrupt and the institution of a fairer provincial taxation system.

Major threats from outside the empire

There were two major forces during the reign of Augustus and his successors that 'pressed in upon the empire on its two most vulnerable frontiers':[3] the Parthians beyond the Euphrates, whose empire was almost as powerful as that of Rome; and the warlike peoples beyond the Rhine and Danube known collectively as Germans. Refer back to Figure 14.2 and note the location of Parthia and Germania in relationship to the empire.

Parthia

Relations between Rome and Parthia went back to the late republic and in the record of Roman-Parthian warfare during the 1st century BC, 'the balance of advantage lay distinctly with Parthia'.[4] In 53 BC at Carrhae, 42 000 Romans were cut to pieces by 12 000 Parthian horsemen, the legionary standards were lost and the Roman general Crassus was captured and killed. His mutilated body and his hands and head were sent to the Parthian king.

> Here was a stigma to be erased, and for long after the duty of fighting a Great Parthian War lay on each Roman wielder of power. Julius Caesar had assembled 16 legions and 1000 cavalry for this purpose, but was assassinated before he could take them to the East. The task then fell to Antony, and was aggravated by a Parthian invasion of Syria. Antony is said to have commanded nearly 100 000 troops, but his Parthian campaign was a fiasco, and he withdrew with the loss of 30 000 men. For nearly a decade Augustus allowed it to be supposed that he would take up the unfinished task that lay before him. In the end, and wisely, the Parthian problem was solved by diplomacy.

SOURCE 14.2 Donald. R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, pp. 202–3

However, in the end, Augustus avoided war with Parthia by securing the province of Syria from attack; using diplomacy in the east; promoting rivalries within Parthia; spreading propaganda within neighbouring kingdoms; creating a buffer zone by setting up a Roman nominee on the throne of neighbouring Armenia; developing a chain of **client-kingdoms** along Rome's eastern frontier; and negotiating with the new king of Parthia.

client-kingdoms those who aligned themselves with the Roman Empire

Germania

In the judgment of Tacitus, the greatest threat to Rome and its provinces came from Germania, an area that extended from the Danube in the south to the Baltic in the north, and from the Rhine in the west to the Vistula in the east. It was inhabited by many different Germanic tribes. Julius Caesar's army was the first to cross the Rhine River (twice) during his Gallic campaigns, and in 57 BC, he annihilated several tribes who were possibly of mixed Germanic/Celtic origin.

Not the Samnites, nor the Carthaginians, neither the Spaniards nor the Gauls – no, not even the Parthians – have taught us harsher lessons. Indeed, the freedom of the Germans strikes with a sharper edge than the despotism of the Parthian king.

SOURCE 14.3 Tacitus, *Annals*, II.63

The Germans again posed a serious problem during the reign of Augustus and the Julio-Claudians. Although Augustus' armies campaigned and subdued the Germanic tribes beyond the Rhine as far as the Elbe River, in 9 AD, a Roman army, comprising three Roman legions under the command P. Quinctilius Varus, was ambushed and wiped out. Eventually the Romans withdrew to the original frontier at the Rhine and secured its fortifications.

ACTIVITY 14.1

1. In what way did Julius Caesar and Octavian (Augustus) contribute to the downfall of the Roman republic?
2. What was the new form of government set up by Augustus, Caesar's heir?
3. How did Augustus succeed in maintaining control of Rome and the empire during his principate?
4. How did the Germanic tribes and the Parthians influence Augustus' foreign policy?

Tacitus on the Julio-Claudians

Tacitus' *Annals of Imperial Rome* is the most important written source for this period. It traces the history of the Julio-Claudian emperors from Augustus (only the very last part of his reign) to the death of Nero. However, not all of it has survived: the missing parts include two years of Tiberius' reign, the whole of the four-year reign of Caligula, half the reign of Claudius and the last two years of the life of Nero.

Tacitus lived under the tyrannical Emperor Domitian (81–96 AD), and the aim of his *Annals* was to expose the evils of the principate under the Julio-Claudians and to show its degeneration into tyranny. He hoped that his readers would learn a lesson from the experiences of those of the past.

Like all ancient historians, Tacitus claimed to tell the truth, but did not need to cite his sources; he always claimed to be impartial, but was selective in his material. Tacitus does not live up to his claim to be free of bias. Although his facts are generally believed to be accurate, his interpretation of them is often invidious. In order to persuade his readers to support his own convictions, he uses a number of devices such as:

1. the 'damning aside'
2. creating prejudice by making sinister innuendoes
3. attributing false motives to actions
4. giving two points of view but allowing more space to the one that verifies his convictions
5. using rumours to good effect even when discounting them as untrue.

Tacitus chose his material carefully in order to emphasise the negative and oppressive aspects of the principate such as the:

- intrigues of Livia
- sinister nature and frequency of the treason trials under Tiberius
- evil influence of Sejanus and the persecution of Agrippina the Elder
- weakness of Claudius under the influence of his wives and freedmen

- murder of Nero's mother, Agrippina the Younger
- depraved behaviour of Nero and Tigellinus
- conspiracies against Nero
- assassinations of the nobility
- utter servility of the Senate throughout the Julio-Claudian period.

When he does mention some positive or favourable aspect, the reader is so conditioned by the prejudice he has already created that the constructive features of each of the reigns are almost overlooked.

Although Tacitus can be criticised for some of his judgements, his facts – where they can be verified by other written and archaeological sources – are accurate. The *Annals* is the only full and relatively connected history of this period, and most of our understanding of the Julio-Claudians comes from it.

> Tacitus' Tiberius is composed of layers. At the core is the Tiberius of history, and the narrative is frequently in touch with him. Then there is the Tiberius of the (hostile) senatorial tradition, also found in Suetonius and Dio. This composite has itself been endowed by Tacitus with some of the features and colouring of Domitian. As a further refinement, it has been modelled on those archetypal tyrants to be found in the philosophers and tragic poets. ... The Tacitean Tiberius is raised above the level of mere history to that of tragedy and philosophy ...

SOURCE 14.4 The Tacitean Tiberius, Donald R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, pp. 82 & 83

FIGURE 14.5 A modern statue of Tacitus

ACTIVITY 14.2

1. Assess the reliability and value of Tacitus as a source for the Julio-Claudians.
2. What does Dudley say in Source 14.4 about the way Tacitus 'created' Tiberius?

14.2 The principate of the Julio-Claudians

The question of succession

As Augustus had no male heir of his own and wanted to secure a Julian succession, he had to arrange political marriages for his daughter, Julia, from his first wife, Scribonia, as well as for the daughters of his sister Octavia with Mark Antony. The question of succession during the Augustan principate was a story of political marriages, forced divorces, adoptions and early deaths. Later, under the Julio-Claudians, it was also marked by murder and interference by Praetorians and imperial women.

TABLE 14.2 Augustus' potential successors

Name	Relationship to Augustus	Outcome
Marcellus	Nephew, married to Julia in 25 BC	• Died 23 BC
Agrippa	Loyal friend, forced to marry the widowed Julia in 21 BC	• Intended as regent for his sons Gaius and Lucius adopted by Augustus in 17 BC • Died 12 BC
Tiberius	Stepson (elder son of Livia) who was forced to divorce Vipsania and marry Julia, whom he hated, in 11 BC	• Intended as regent for Agrippa's sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar • Retired to Rhodes in 6 BC until 2 AD
Gaius and Lucius Caesar	Grandsons of Augustus, adopted as his sons in 17 BC	• Gaius went to the East in 1 BC; died in 4 AD in Lycia from a wound suffered in a campaign. He was 24 • Lucius: died at 19 of an illness in Gaul in 2 AD. Tacitus suggests foul play by Livia
Tiberius	Adopted as Augustus' son in 4 AD (at the same time as Augustus' other grandson, Agrippa Postumus who was exiled in 7 AD)	• Although having a son of his own, he was made to adopt Germanicus, son of his dead brother, Drusus

Julia's first husband was Marcellus, his sister Octavia's son, then hardly more than a child; and when he died, Augustus persuaded Octavia to let [Julia] become Marcus Agrippa's wife even though Agrippa was now married to one of Marcellus' sisters and had fathered children on her ... Julia bore Agrippa three sons – Gaius, Lucius, and Agrippa Postumus; and two daughters – Julia the Younger, and Agrippina the Elder. Augustus married ... Agrippina to Germanicus – the grandson of his sister [Octavia]. He then adopted Gaius and Lucius, and brought them up at the Palace: after buying them from Agrippa by a token sale. He trained his new sons in the business of government while they were still young ...

SOURCE 14.5 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Augustus*, 63–4

Tiberius married Vipsania Agrippina, daughter of Augustus' admiral Marcus Agrippa ... it was a happy marriage; but when Vipsania had already borne him a son, Drusus ... and found herself pregnant again, he was required to divorce her and hurriedly marry Augustus' daughter Julia. Tiberius took this very ill. He loved Vipsania and strongly disapproved of Julia ...

SOURCE 14.6 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Tiberius*, 7

After the early deaths of his grandsons, Augustus finally adopted Tiberius Claudius Nero, the eldest son of Livia, as his son and heir. Although a Claudian, he became an adopted member of the Julii and took the name of Tiberius Caesar Augustus. Time and time again, Tiberius had been manipulated by Augustus and knew he was only the fourth choice as successor. However, during Augustus' reign he had been an outstanding military commander and was the only member of the family with the experience and maturity to rule. Even Tacitus, who has few positive things to say about Tiberius, says, 'While he was a private citizen or holding commands under Augustus, his life was blameless; and so was his reputation'.[5]

My belief is that Augustus weighed Tiberius' good qualities against the bad, and decided that the good tipped the scale: he had after all, publicly sworn that his adoption was in the national interest, and had often referred to him as an outstanding general and the only one capable of defending Rome against its enemies.

SOURCE 14.7 Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 21

FIGURE 14.6 Augustus as *imperator*

FIGURE 14.7 Livia, wife of Augustus

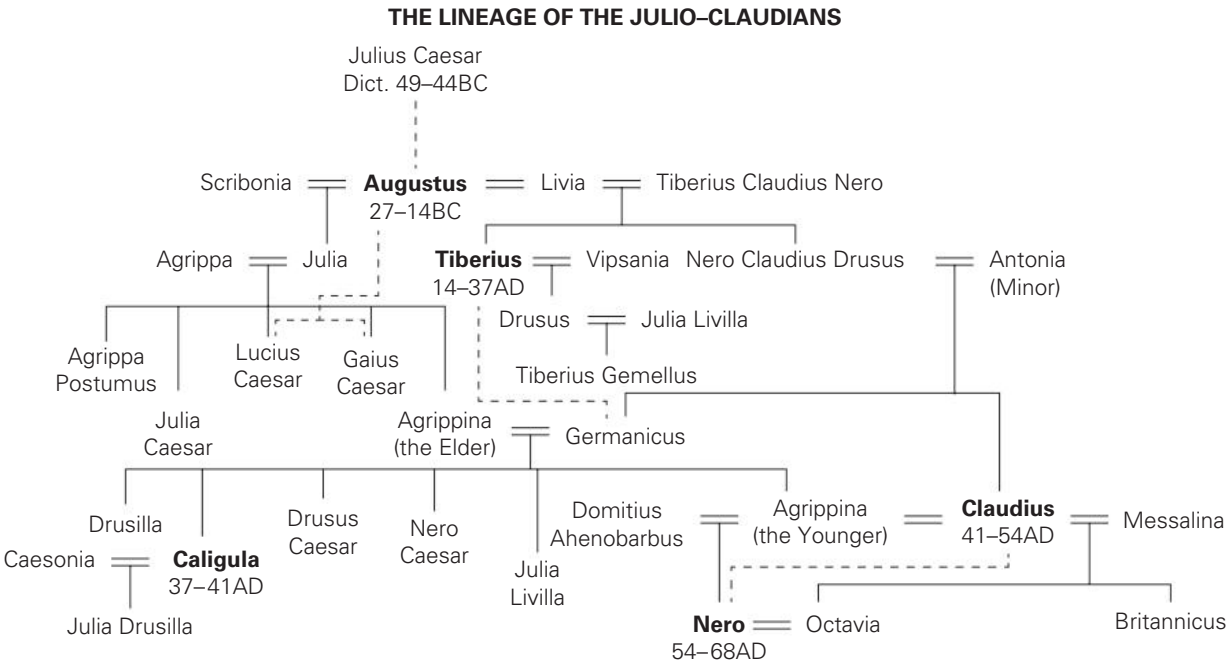

FIGURE 14.8 The lineage of the Julio-Claudians

A gallery of Julio-Claudians:

FIGURE 14.9 Tiberius

FIGURE 14.10 Caligula

FIGURE 14.11 Claudius

FIGURE 14.12 Nero

ACTIVITY 14.3

1. Describe Augustus' obsession with gaining a Julian successor.
2. Why was Augustus eventually forced to accept Tiberius, his stepson and a Claudian?
3. What does Suetonius say about Augustus' decision?
4. Why was Tiberius the only surviving member of Augustus' family with the experience and maturity to rule?

The impact of the death of Augustus

Tiberius was 55 when Augustus died in 14 AD after 41 years as princeps.

After the reading of Augustus' will, the consuls, followed by the Commander of the Praetorian Guard, the Senate, army and public, conferred the principate on Tiberius.

He appeared to be genuinely reluctant to assume the position and 'showed signs of hesitation when he addressed the Senate',[6] but Tacitus says that he was being hypocritical and was just testing the attitudes of the leading men as he did not want to appear to have been chosen by having 'wormed his way in by an old man's adoption, and the intrigues of the old man's wife'.[7]

At no time does Tacitus consider that Tiberius' motives were sincere. It is possible that Tiberius might:

- have wanted to give the Senate the freedom to set a precedent for transferring power in the future as there was no generally recognised rule of succession within the imperial family
- have been, as E.T. Salmon suggests, that 'in this as in so much else, he was simply following Augustus' example as the scene in 14 AD is strikingly reminiscent of the scene in 27 BC'[8]
- have known 'what hazardous work it was to rule the empire'[9] and doubted his own ability to handle the Senate with the same tact as Augustus, or to rule an empire, as he was already 55 and reserved by nature.

However, he eventually accepted the powers of princeps, exhausted by senators imploring him to change his mind, but, according to Suetonius, even when he accepted the position, he hinted that he might resign at a later date.

> Finally, with a great show of reluctance, and complaints that they were forcing him to become a miserable and overworked slave, Tiberius accepted the title of Emperor: but hinted that he might later resign it. His actual words were: 'Until I grow so old that you may be good enough to grant me a respite'.

SOURCE 14.8 Suetonius, *Tiberius*, 24

Suetonius maintains that 'Tiberius revealed Augustus' death only after getting rid of Agrippa Postumus'[10] who was the grandson of Augustus and adopted at the same time as Tiberius, but who was banished to a prison island by Augustus for his brutal and vulgar behaviour. He was murdered by the staff officer who guarded him, supposedly on written instructions from Tiberius, although there is a possibility that it was instigated by Livia who 'through stepmotherly malevolence, loathed and distrusted the young Agrippa Postumus'.[11] Tacitus describes his death as 'the new reign's first crime',[12] but according to E.T. Salmon, 'in view of the circumstances, the decision to execute Agrippa Postumus, while cruel and unjust, was certainly prudent'.[13]

Immediately after Tiberius' accession, two serious mutinies occurred among the troops in Pannonia (on the Danube) and in Lower Germany (on the Rhine). Although these were not personal protests against Tiberius, a change of ruler gave the troops the opportunity to show their dissatisfaction with existing conditions in the army and their concerns about future terms of service.

Tiberius delegated responsibility for addressing these mutinies to his son Drusus and his adopted son Germanicus.

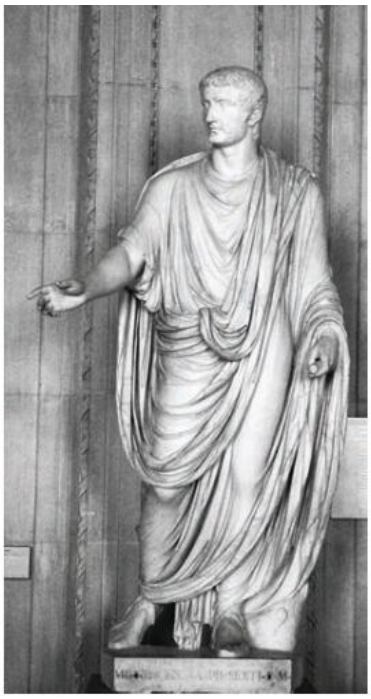

FIGURE 14.13 Tiberius

ACTIVITY 14.4

1. Knowing what you do about Tacitus, what do you make of the statement that 'Tiberius wormed his way in by an old man's adoption, and the intrigues of the old man's wife'?
2. Discuss Tiberius' hesitation to take control of the state, and his decision to kill Agrippa Postumus. Can these actions be justified?

The princeps under the Julio-Claudians

Augustus set the model for the principate, which he probably hoped would be followed by his successors. Although his power came from his unlimited control of the army and provinces, he claimed not to have accepted any exceptional or non-republican powers. His natural preference was to retain republican forms of government and to share the administration of the empire to avoid offending the upper classes. He maintained traditional and conservative activities and made massive personal expenditure on behalf of the people. Augustus promoted the idea that he had restored the republic and was simply 'first man' in the state but even during his time, the Senate began revealing an increasingly slavish behaviour, 'combining speed with hypocrisy joined the headlong rush to slavery'.[14]

The main weakness of the Julio-Claudian principates was that its success depended on the character and behaviour of the individual princeps. Also, the nature of each reign was influenced by the:

- increasing servility of senators
- the ambition of individual Praetorian Prefects and the interference of the Praetorian Guard
- role granted to freedmen in administration and their increasing influence
- manipulation of imperial women.

ACTIVITY 14.5

1. As you analyse each of the Julio-Claudian principates, note how each princeps:
   - attempted to follow Augustus' example or deviated from it
   - was affected by other factors.
2. Be aware of the so-called turning points in the careers of Tiberius, Gaius Caligula, Claudius and Nero.
3. Also, keep in mind that the ancient sources are hostile to all of them.

Changes in the principate

Tiberius

Tiberius was already 55 and had been a highly successful military commander, not a politician, when he became a reluctant princeps. He was an old-fashioned and proud aristocrat from the Claudii, with a strong sense of duty, respect for tradition and courteous. He was generally reserved and aloof by nature, with an ability to behave stoically in the face of personal hurts and abuse and to hide his true feelings. He hated

servility and flattery and preferred those who spoke their minds. He has been described by Tacitus as grim and dissembling (deliberately misleading). If he harboured secret resentments, this is not surprising considering the way he had suffered the various dynastic arrangements made by Augustus: constantly overlooked as heir; expected to serve Augustus' Julian grandsons until their deaths; forced to divorce his much-loved wife, Vipsania, to marry the adulterous Julia, daughter of Augustus, which led him to take a temporary retirement to Rhodes to get away from her; and eventually accepted as a last resort by Augustus as his heir. Even then, he was made joint heir with the brutish Agrippa Postumus and forced to adopt his nephew Germanicus over his own son.

However, once he took on the massive task of princeps, he wisely tried to follow the policies and practices of Augustus, which gave the Roman world peace and prosperity for another 20 years. His reign was marked by:

- control of the army
- attempted cooperation with the Senate
- restraint in the exercise of power and the early wish to show himself a citizen on equal terms
- advancement for merit
- careful and efficient administration of Rome and the empire.

He also rejected divine honours for his mother Livia and provincial requests to build temples to himself.

> Compelled to honour the precedents set by Augustus everywhere, Tiberius was hampered in thought and deed by his own past, and by the oppressive memory of Augustus ... Tiberius was the victim of Augustus.

SOURCE 14.9 R. Syme, *Tacitus*, vol. 1, p. 428

> He [Tacitus] acknowledges the scope allowed the senate for free discussion and the handling of public business, the careful choice of candidates for high office, the sound administration of the laws – apart from the law of treason. Taxation was fairly administered, the provinces were not burdened by few imposts: the emperor had few estates in Italy: only a few freedmen were employed on his staff; disputes between the imperial treasury and private persons were decided in the public courts.

SOURCE 14.10 Some rare acknowledgment of Tiberius by Tacitus, in Donald. R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 80

Despite following Augustus' example, Tiberius was feared and hated by most of the senators, partly due to his character, contempt of their servility and flattery, his refusal to accept additional honours and his expectation that they speak their minds. Also, some of his policies, like his cutback in public expenditures (buildings and games), did not endear him to the urban mob, and his concentration of the Praetorian Guard on the outskirts of Rome aroused suspicion.

If he appeared morose before, it would only get worse as he suffered the rivalries of the imperial women, the hostility of Agrippina the Elder and her friends, the poisoning of his own son Drusus and the treachery of his most trusted advisor, the Praetorian Guard, Sejanus; after which Tiberius permanently left Rome and retired to Capri. Tacitus maintains that the death of his son in 23 AD was a turning point after which his reign changed sharply for the worse.

The factors that contributed most to the general condemnation of him were the supposed increase in treason trials in the latter part of his reign. These are treated on p. 511.

When Tiberius died at age 78 in 37 AD, his joint heirs were his own grandson, Tiberius Gemellus (still a child), and his grandnephew, Gaius who was in the prime of early manhood. Gaius is supposed to have hastened his death, by ordering that he be smothered.

FIGURE 14.14 A painting of the death of Tiberius

Gaius Caligula

Since the books on Gaius in Tacitus are missing it is hard to judge his character, although it was obvious that Tiberius was aware of his evil nature, natural brutality and tendency to criminality very early on. He was described by Suetonius one year after his accession to the principate as 'Gaius the monster' whose cruelty knew no bounds. It is hard to know what affected his character.

> With characteristic shrewdness the old Emperor had exactly gauged the young man's vicious inclinations and would often remark that Caligula's advent portended his own death and the ruin of everyone else, 'I am nursing a viper to Rome's bosom,' he once said.

SOURCE 14.11 Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*, 11

He was the youngest and only surviving son of Agrippina the Elder (granddaughter of Augustus) and the popular Germanicus, and had spent time as a small child with the army in the provinces, where he was a much-loved mascot. The army gave him the nickname of Caligula ('little caliga') after the small hobnailed sandal boots (*caligae*) he wore. He would certainly have been affected by the toxic atmosphere of his mother's hostility towards Tiberius, who she blamed (unproved) for her husband Germanicus' death, and by the deaths of his mother and two brothers at the hands of Sejanus. At 19, he was taken to Capri to live with Tiberius, away from the political life of Rome, but appears to have been given no training by Tiberius to assume greater responsibility, and while there he won the support of Macro, the Praetorian Prefect who had succeeded the ambitious Sejanus. When it appeared that Tiberius was dying, Macro organised the sending of messages to provincial governors and generals, and was supposed to have helped finish off Tiberius.

When Macro declared him as princeps, Suetonius says, 'Gaius' accession seemed to the Roman people – one might even say, to the whole world – like a dream come true',[15] since he was the son of the popular Germanicus. When he arrived in the Senate, it was unanimous in its conferment on him of absolute power, and it also declared Tiberius' will – in which he had made his grandson joint heir with Gaius Caligula – invalid.

Unlike Augustus and Tiberius, who gained their powers gradually and for limited periods, Gaius Caligula gained his all at once and for life.

Except for the first few months of his reign when he wisely attempted to conciliate the senatorial nobility, he made no effort to disguise his power and moved further towards despotism.

Shortly after he became princeps, he became ill and after his recovery he appeared to be a changed person. Is it possible that he suffered a mental breakdown which exacerbated his natural tendencies? He became more reckless, less restrained and carried out numerous acts of cruelty, tyranny and extravagance. His cruelty extended to senators, *equites* and the people, as well as to members of his own family. He had Tiberius Gemellus killed, as well as his father-in-law Silanus, his brother-in-law Lepidus and even Macro the Praetorian Prefect who had helped him gain the throne. His unkind treatment of his grandmother,

Antonia, is supposed to have speeded up her death, and he 'preserved his uncle Claudius mainly as the butt of practical jokes'.[16]

According to the sources, Caligula enjoyed organising lingering ways to make people die, devised methods of provoking the people at gladiatorial games, which he reinstated, and closed the granaries so they would go hungry. He focused particularly on 'devising wickedly ingenious ways of raising funds by false accusations, auctions and taxes'[17] when he found himself bankrupt due to his extravagant lifestyle.

He began calling himself 'the Best and Greatest of the Caesars'[18] and insisted on being treated as a god. He replaced the heads on many Greek statues with those of his own likeness, established a priesthood to supervise the worship of himself, and connected his Palace to the **Capitol** by a bridge, in order to share the home of the Capitoline Jupiter. Despite his erratic and autocratic behaviour, and in doing away with the pretence of working in partnership with the Senate, the frontiers remained secure, the provinces were well administered and the magistrates still carried out their roles.

However, his alienation of most groups in society led to several plots to assassinate him. He lost the support of the Praetorian Guard and in 41, at the age of 29, he was murdered at the Palatine Games by a tribune of the Guard. The conspirators had no particular person in mind to succeed him, but most senators were determined to restore the republic.

Capitol the southern summit of the Capitoline Hill, the symbolic centre of the Roman world and home to the city's three most important temples

Claudius

Claudius was the grandson of Augustus and Livia, and the son of Antonia, all of whom appear to have had little time for him as a child because of his physical disabilities due to some childhood illness (perhaps polio) or birth defects. According to Suetonius, 'nearly the whole of his childhood was so troubled by various diseases that he grew dull-witted and had little physical strength' and his mother, often called him 'a man whom Mother Nature had begun to work upon but then flung aside.'[19] Augustus wondered if he had 'full command of his five senses'.[20] He is supposed to have been awkward and unsteady on his feet, had a stammer and a nervous tic of the head. Although he was not the bumbling idiot of tradition, he was made aware early on of his inferiority, especially compared with his brother Germanicus. He kept out of the limelight, is believed to have played the fool to survive the court intrigues and devoted himself to his studies. He was a prolific scholar: he spoke and read Greek, studied history under Livy and started a *History of Rome* when he was still a boy. Augustus had been concerned for his future, but when Claudius was given several official positions, he surprised Augustus with his ability.

He was 51 when he was dragged from hiding by the Praetorian Guard after Caligula's murder, and taken to the barracks where he was pressed to accept imperial power from them. The senators, unaware what had happened, were discussing a successor to replace Caligula when the Guards appeared with Claudius. After some resistance, they conferred the imperial title on him.

FIGURE 14.15 A painting of the Praetorian Guard choosing Claudius as future emperor

Despite being hesitant to assume the position of princeps, Claudius, on assuming power, made every effort to appeal to all groups in society:

- He gained the continuing support of the Praetorian Guard by making an annual donative of 15 000 sesterces each, and the army by choosing capable generals.
- He appealed to the urban plebs by giving plenty of gladiatorial shows and celebrating the Secular Games, 64 years after Augustus. He made great attempts to follow Augustus' policy to restore some of the old religious colleges.
- Initially he gained the support of the nobility by paying them respect, breaking off treason trials and promising immunity to those who had hoped for a return to republicanism and any involved in the conspiracy of Caligula's murder.

Claudius was aware early on that the principate needed to be modified since the definition of imperial and senatorial authority was very vague, and the business of running the empire had become even more complex; however, he – like Augustus – was conservative and knew that he would have to move slowly towards a centralised autocracy.

Claudius has been condemned by the sources for being easily manipulated by his freedmen (ex-slaves) and wives. He developed an imperial bureaucracy in which able and efficient freedmen owed their loyalty to him rather than to the Roman state. Not only did these freedmen become extremely wealthy, but they were also beyond the Senate's jurisdiction. Claudius was also criticised for going against convention by allowing his domineering and self-seeking fourth wife, Agrippina the Younger, to behave as though she were a partner in his rule. Tacitus says at this point 'the country was transformed', into a 'rigorous, almost masculine despotism'.[21]

Once Agrippina had secured the future for her son (Nero), she is believed to have had Claudius poisoned.

> Claudius fell so deeply under the influence of these freedmen and wives that he seemed to be their servant rather than their emperor; and distributed titles, army commands, indulgences or punishments according to their wishes, however capricious, seldom even aware of what he was about.

SOURCE 14.12 Suetonius, *Claudius*, 29

Despite his lack of training for the position, and the negative emphasis on his reign in the sources, he showed sound political judgement and a capacity for serious and sustained work, and he developed into an efficient administrator.

Nero

Nero was the only child of Agrippina the Younger by Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus. As a small boy he was put in the care of his aunt Domitia Lepida as his mother was sent into exile for her supposed involvement in a conspiracy to kill Caligula. From an early age he showed an obsession for artistic activities – for which he craved applause and adulation – and an interest in all things Greek. After his mother was recalled from exile, he became a pawn in her ambitions and intrigues. In 50 AD, she had convinced Claudius to adopt her son, whereby he became a rival to Claudius' real son, Britannicus. In 51, Nero was named *princeps iuventutis* and by 52 he was married to Octavia, Claudius' daughter. On the sudden death of Claudius, he acceded to the throne at the age of 16, facilitated by his mother with the support of Burrus, her appointee as Praetorian Prefect. He was hailed as *imperator* at the Praetorian barracks, then appeared in the Senate House to receive the appropriate honours and powers. In his early years as princeps, guided by his tutor, the philosopher Seneca, his reign was generally marked by peace, prosperity and internal order. The welfare of the people was considered: for example, he provided sufficient grain supplies; twice distributed 400 sesterces

each to the people; made provisions for better accommodation and greater order at the games; replenished the bankrupt treasury with 400 000 000 sesterces of his own money; checked the depopulation of Italy by providing colonies for the army; and saw to the economic welfare of the provinces.

> These two men [Burrus and Seneca] with an equanimity rare among partners in power, were by different methods, equally influential. Burrus' strength lay in soldierly efficiency and seriousness of character, Seneca's in amiable high principles ... They collaborated in controlling the emperor's perilous adolescence; their policy was to direct his deviations from virtue into licensed channels of indulgence.

SOURCE 14.13 Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.1

Princeps iuventutis

However, by 55, Seneca, Burrus and Nero were finding his overbearing mother intolerable. His friends 'urged him to beware of the tricks of this terrible and now insincere woman'.[22] Although 'everyone longed for the mother's domination to end no one believed that her son's hatred would go so far as murder'.[23] After her murder, Nero sent a letter, written by Seneca, justifying her death and accusing her of many fictitious crimes. From this time, Nero 'plunged into the wildest improprieties, which vestiges of respect for his mother had hitherto not indeed repressed, but at least impeded'.[24]

Between 62 and 68, reasonable government was replaced with a tyranny as Seneca and Burrus lost control over him and he came under the influence of Poppaea, first as his lover and then as his wife. When Burrus died, Seneca lost his influence and the vicious Tigellinus replaced Burrus as prefect of the Praetorian Guard. He encouraged Nero in his cruelty and debauchery and even participated in them. He alienated all groups within society.

- His artistic interests and passion for all things Greek were given free rein. He was no longer content to perform in private, but was eager to display his talents in public, so degrading the principate.
- To finance his every whim, he forced the people of Italy and the provinces to pay more taxes, sold off many of the works of art from Greece, and put wealthy people to death in order to confiscate their property and to debase the coinage.
- He employed a large number of Greek and Oriental freedmen in positions of power.
- He continued the killing of members of the imperial family: Tiberius' grandson Rubellius Plautus, Claudius' son-in-law Sulla and a descendent of Augustus, Junius Silenus.
- After the Great Fire that destroyed a large part of Rome in 64, he embarked on such a ferocious attack on the Christians, whom he used as scapegoats, that the Roman citizens were eventually sickened by his brutality.
- Tigellinus carried out a savage reprisal against the ranks of the old nobility after an attempted plot on Nero's life in 65.

FIGURE 14.16 A 19th-century painting of Nero inspecting his mother's body

- He had never bothered too much about the army, and the troops began to hate him, especially when he ordered the famous general Corbulo and the commanders of Upper and Lower Germany to commit suicide.

Opposition to Nero began building up in Rome and the western provinces. He had alienated the upper class, neglected the army and then lost the support of the Praetorian Guard, all of which had formed the support for the principate.

Nero was declared a public enemy and committed suicide at the age of 31, bringing to an end the Julio-Claudian dynasty.

ACTIVITY 14.6

1 Know the following about Tiberius:
- List the personality traits that might have helped and hindered Tiberius as princeps. Explain what Syme is suggesting about Tiberius in Source 14.9.
- List the things that Tacitus grudgingly acknowledges about Tiberius in Source 14.10. In what way do they follow the example of Augustus' principate?
- What does the senators' hostility towards Tiberius reveal about them?
- Why did he not endear himself particularly to the urban plebs?
- What has been suggested as a turning point in Tiberius' rule?
- What was the significance of Sejanus in the reign of Tiberius?

2 Know the following about Gaius Caligula:
- What does Source 14.11 reveal about Caligula's character?
- List the things in his childhood and youth that might have affected his character and behaviour as princeps.
- Who helped him gain power?
- What was the turning point in his life that impacted his rule?
- How did he move away from the republican image of the principate after his first year?
- List the forms of behaviour that alienated most groups in society.
- How did he die and by whose hands?

3 Know the following about Claudius:
- What experiences within the imperial court had an effect on Claudius' life.
- What character traits did he bring to the principate?
- Who helped him come to power at age 51, and how was this achieved?
- How did he attempt to keep the Praetorian Guard, senators and urban plebs on side?
- What radical change did he make to improve the efficiency of the principate in administration?
- What do the sources indicate was a turning point in Claudius' principate?
- What criticisms does Suetonius level at Claudius in Source 14.12?
- How is it believed he died?

4 Know the following about Nero:
- What youthful experiences might have had an influence on Nero's personality?
- How old was he when he came to power, and who, apart from his mother, helped his transition to princeps?

- How does Tacitus, in Source 14.13, reveal the influences of Seneca and Burrus on Nero?
- Find several examples that point to a reasonably administered state in Nero's early years.
- What do the sources claim was the turning point in Nero's principate?
- Which two people had a negative influence on Nero after the death of Agrippina?
- List examples of Nero's behaviour that point to the deterioration of the principate.
- Why, and how, did he die?

5 Use the answers to the questions above to assess the impact on the principate of each Julio-Claudian ruler.

The Senate: its changing role and responsibilities

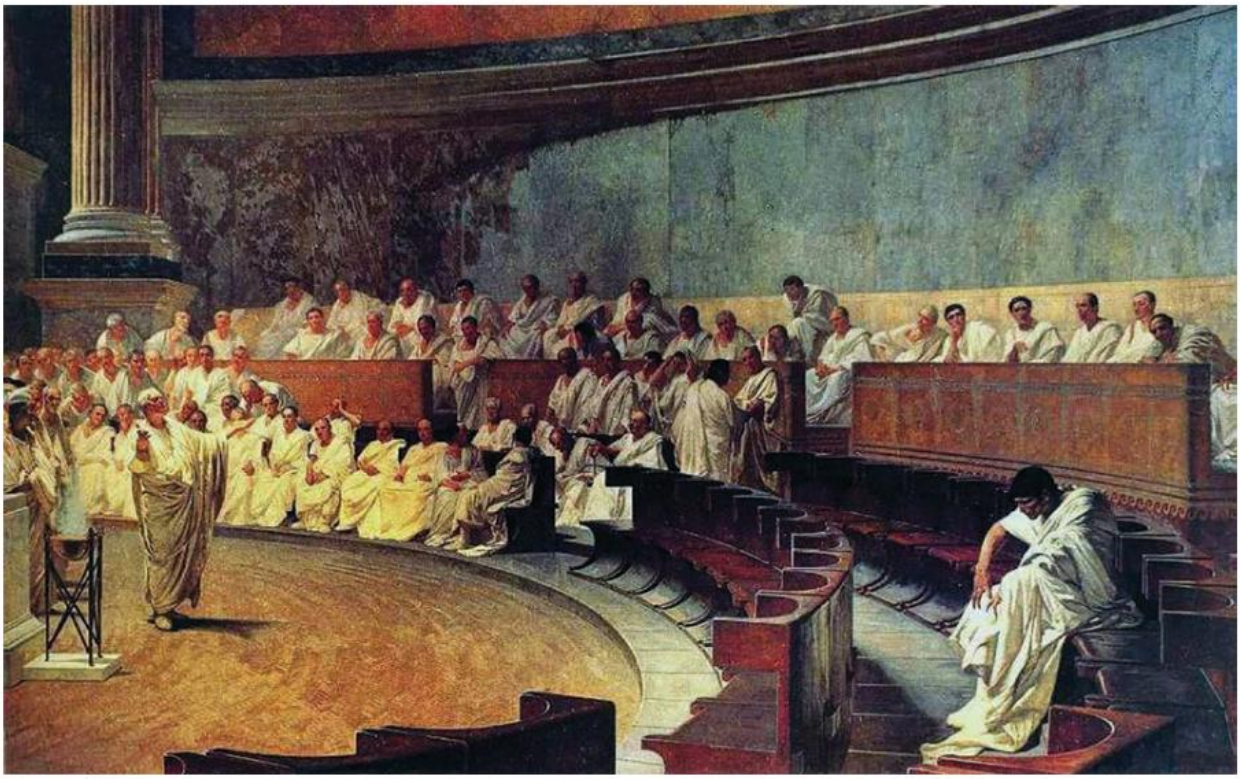

FIGURE 14.17 A representation of the Roman Senate

Tiberius and the Senate

If Augustus' principate was to continue to appear legitimate, it was necessary for Tiberius to rule with the full cooperation of the Senate. R. Syme maintains that Tiberius was genuine when he professed, at the beginning of his reign, his intention to govern as a true princeps.

Tiberius needed the Senate's help. Running the empire was an enormous task: it was not until the time of Claudius that a centralised bureaucracy handled most of the business of empire. Also, Tiberius preferred to have an independent body helping him, since he appears to have been genuinely hesitant about the responsibility.

Like Augustus, Tiberius attempted to uphold the traditional rights of the Senate as well as treat it with dignity and as a partner in running the empire. Even Tacitus admits that this was the case before the death of Tiberius' son Drusus in 23 AD.

In the first place, public business – and the most important private business – was transacted in the Senate. Among its chief men, there was freedom of discussion; their lapses into servility were arrested by the emperor himself. His conferments of office took into consideration birth, military distinction, and civilian eminence … The consuls and praetors maintained their prestige. The lesser offices too, each exercised their proper authority. Moreover, the treason court excepted, the laws were duly enforced.

SOURCE 14.14 Tacitus, *Annals,* 4.16

Tiberius:

- genuinely sought the Senate's aid, sometimes on matters that were not its concern
- showed courtesy and respect when addressing not only individual senators but the House as a whole, and stood in the presence of the consuls: 'Tiberius made a habit of always allowing the consuls the initiative, as though the Republic still existed'[25]
- avoided any titles which the nobility might find offensive such as 'father of his country' and refused to have a month called after him or any temples constructed in his honour. 'Such was his hatred of flatterers that he refused to let senators approach his litter whether in greeting or on business … and if anyone spoke of him in too fulsome terms, Tiberius would interrupt and sternly correct the phrase'[26]
- enlarged and developed some of the Senate's duties. Under him, the Senate became practically the only legislative body after 14, as he transferred the election of magistrates to it from the people's assembly. Although he followed Augustus' example of commending candidates for election, he did it on a smaller scale, and competition in the Senate for official positions became a real contest. Tiberius never overrode the normal electoral system
- extended the administrative and legal functions of the Senate by transferring the election of magistrates from the popular assemblies to the Senate, and making the Senate the chief criminal court for crimes involving senators and equestrians
- upheld the Senate's traditional rights
- helped retain worthy men in the Senate if they had fallen on hard times by supporting them financially
- invited the Senate to discuss provincial petitions from delegations and encouraged it to be independent. On a few occasions it did overrule him and 'if decrees were passed in defiance of his wishes, he abstained from complaint'.[27]

… a fine sight it was, on that day, to see the Senate engaged on the investigation of privileges granted by our ancestors, treaties made with allies, charters conferred by monarchs who lived before the days of Roman power … moreover, the Senate was at liberty, as in former times, to confirm or revoke.

SOURCE 14.15 A request by delegates from the Asian cities to Tiberius remitted to the Senate, Tacitus, *Annals*, 3, 60

Despite Tiberius' efforts, however, the senators were generally subservient. This servility, which began under Augustus, increased under Tiberius, and according to Tacitus, 'all consuls, most ex-praetors, even many junior senators competed with each other's offensively sycophantic proposals'.[28] Tiberius complained each time he left the Senate that the senators 'were men fit to be slaves'.[29] Syme maintains that Tiberius was 30 years out of touch in his expectations of an independent Senate and 'forgot (or tried to forget) how far that body had been corrupted and debased by Caesar Augustus'.[30]

Reasons for the Senate's increasing subservience under Tiberius

1 It is possible that in the early part of his reign Tiberius' reserved temperament and hesitant attitude unnerved the senators, who never really knew what he was thinking; Tacitus refers often to the cryptic way in which Tiberius spoke. Senators apparently preferred not to take chances by speaking their minds, although Tiberius generally respected those who spoke openly and frankly. Unfortunately, he was unable to impart this to the Senate because of his manner.

2 Also, because there was no clear definition of the crime of treason (***maiestas***) the distinction between free speech and treason was unclear. 'An especial object of fear and loathing to the entire senatorial class was the operation of the law of treason and the opening it gave to the detested class of informers or ***delatores***.[31]

3 Senators also feared the power wielded by Sejanus, Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and his influence over Tiberius, especially when Tiberius retired to Capri. Sejanus interfered in public affairs, influencing the decisions of both Tiberius and the Senate. He also began a series of prosecutions and senators, afraid for their own safety, 'sought relief in flattery'.[32] See p. 520 for the role of the Praetorian Guard.

maiestas treason
delatores informers

A COMMENT ON...

The crime of treason

- During the republic, the law of treason was confined to 'official misconduct damaging the Roman state'.[33]
- Once the Roman state was focused on one man in the person of the princeps, Augustus reinterpreted the law to any offence or insult offered to the princeps in deed, writing or speech.
- Tiberius, following in Augustus' footsteps, maintained 'the laws must be enforced'.[34]

A curious feature of Roman law was that Rome had no public prosecutor; information was brought to the authorities, the Senate or princeps by individuals. If charges – many trivial and preposterous – were upheld, the informers were awarded at least one-quarter of the property confiscated from the guilty person. The remaining three-quarters went into the treasury. It has been described as 'an odious system, destructive of the very fabric of society'.[35]

- Since assassinations and plots against the princeps 'were an occupational hazard'[36] in the 1st century AD, it was natural that these should be punished with the greatest severity. However, starting with the reign of Tiberius, treason trials, often for trivial matters, seem to have become more frequent as informers (*delatores*) lied, bribed and manufactured evidence in order to secure a conviction of wealthy men and to eliminate their rivals. So senators were not prepared to take up contentious issues.

> The great *delatores* built up their own staff of private detectives, and indeed, it need not be doubted, of *agents provocateurs* as well ... armed with the information they had gathered, would attack their private enemies, or sometimes, simply people of wealth or prominence, hoping to secure reward on their conviction.

SOURCE 14.16 Donald. R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 114.

It was, indeed, a horrible feature of the period that leading senators became informers even on trivial matters – some openly, many secretly. Friends and relatives were as suspect as strangers, old stories as damaging as new.

SOURCE 14.17 Tacitus, *Annals*, 6, 7

Tacitus attempted to create in the minds of his readers the impression that the number and frequency of treason trials increased as Tiberius' reign progressed. He builds up a picture of a 'continuous massacre',[37] culminating in the so-called Reign of Terror (after the death of Sejanus), during which many innocent men perished.

However, in the first part of his reign, Tiberius dismissed many cases which he considered ridiculous and intervened in others to pardon the accused or to lessen the sentence. He made it clear that he did not consider insulting remarks about himself or his mother as treasonable, but that disrespectful comments about the divine Augustus should be punished. He did try at first to check the abuse of the law of treason by insisting that trials be fair and technically legal; later in his reign, as actual conspiracies against him increased and Sejanus played on his suspicions, the number of treason cases grew. After the death of Sejanus, prosecutions against his friends continued for a year, but the statement by Tacitus of a continuous massacre is exaggerated.

A careful study of Tacitus' account reveals that during Tiberius' reign of almost 23 years, no more than 52 people were charged with treason, and of these 30 were never executed. Of the 12 who were put to death, Tiberius is supposed to have ordered the execution of eight; an overzealous Senate was responsible for the four apparently innocent victims. Many of those charged with treason and other offences chose to commit suicide rather than wait for the Senate's verdict. Other deaths recorded in Tacitus were from natural sources.

ACTIVITY 14.7

1. Draw a diagram illustrating the ways Tiberius improved the status and dignity of the Senate.
2. What is meant by the following statements:
   - 'men fit to be slaves' (Tiberius)
   - 'Tiberius was 30 years out of touch' (R. Syme)?
3. Using text, the comment box and Sources 14.18 and 14.19, describe in one page why the Law of Treason (*maiestas*) inspired so much fear in the Roman senators.
4. Why is Tacitus' claim that the end of Tiberius' rule was a 'continuous reign of terror' inaccurate?

Gaius/Caligula and the Senate

Unfortunately, the books in the *Annals* that dealt with the reign of Gaius/Caligula, and the first years of Claudius' rule, no longer exist.

They will have contained much of interest on the topic of the Senate – the brief honeymoon period with Gaius, followed by a new and lurid terror, his assassination, and the debate in the Senate when the consuls Sentius Saturninus and Pomponius Secundus proposed the restoration of the Republic.

SOURCE 14.18 Donald. R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 120

The Senate had grown increasingly servile and dependent on Tiberius, but during the reign of Caligula it was treated with absolute contempt.

For a brief period after his accession, he wisely attempted to conciliate the senatorial nobility; this apparently was on the advice of his grandmother, Antonia. He put an end to the activities of informers and the treason trials, honoured his uncle Claudius by choosing him as his colleague in the consulship and recalled those senators exiled under Tiberius.

However, sometime in 37, after a serious illness, he:

- dispensed with the Senate's services generally, ended its right to mint coinage in Rome and handed back the election of magistrates to the People's Assemblies.
- made no effort to hide his contempt for the Senate, executed any senator who offered him advice and publicly humiliated others. Suetonius maintains that he 'made some of the highest officials run for miles beside his chariot, dressed in their togas; or wait in short linen tunics at the head or foot of his dining couch'.[38]
- renewed the laws of treason and encouraged informers so that he could use the condemnations to confiscate the property of wealthy senators.

ACTIVITY 14.8

List examples of Caligula's contempt for the Senate.

Claudius and the Senate

Like Augustus and Tiberius, Claudius showed great respect for the Senate and attempted to increase its prestige by:

- encouraging the senators to debate and vote seriously, and in his own speeches he argued with moderation and recognised the Senate's point of view.
- revising the membership of the Senate to recruit the best political talent, strengthening it by adding new patrician families and by extending senatorial privileges to the Aedui (Gauls). This latter measure aroused the Senate's anger, but Claudius' argument in favour of it revealed his statesmanlike attitude.
- expelling notoriously bad senators and became censor to carry this out, but rather than use the old severe method, he gave those concerned the opportunity to voluntarily renounce senatorial rank and so avoid humiliation.
- returning the provinces of Achaea and Macedonia, as well as the election of magistrates, to the Senate.
- recognising the Senate's right to mint copper coins.

> If these proposals are approved by you, show your assent at once plainly and sincerely. If, however, you do not approve them then find some other remedies, but here in this temple now, or if you wish to take a longer time for consideration, take it so long as you recollect that wherever you meet, you should produce an opinion of your own. For it is extremely unfitting ... to the high dignity of this order that one man only ... should make a speech ... and the rest utter one word only, 'Agreed', and then after leaving the House remark, 'There we've given our opinion'.

SOURCE 14.19 N. Lewis & M. Rhinehold, *Roman Civilisation, Sourcebook II: The Empire*, p. 119

Senators, however ancient any institution seems, once upon a time it was new! First plebeians joined patricians in office. Next, Latins were added. Then came men from other Italian peoples. The innovation now proposed will, in its turn, one day be old: what we seek to justify by precedents today will itself become a precedent.

SOURCE 14.20 Tacitus, *Annals*, 11.24

The weakening of the Senate

Despite Claudius' show of respect and his desire for the Senate's cooperation, he weakened the Senate as a partner in the government by gradually encroaching on its rights, and by the apparent power wielded by his freedmen.

Claudius:

1 took almost total control of the treasury (*Aerarium*), and transferred jurisdiction of financial cases in the senatorial provinces from the governors to his own personal procurators. He also expanded his own court of justice at the expense of the Senate so that senators could not be forced to condemn its own members if they were charged with criminal offences. Claudius is supposed to have executed 35 senators during his reign, causing great bitterness.

2 established an imperial civil service, staffed by well-educated freedmen, mostly Greek or Asiatic. This centralised bureaucracy, dominated by Claudius, was set up to 'obtain administrative efficiency, not to humble the Senate and the urban magistrates',[39] or to increase his own autocratic power. However, the proud senatorial aristocracy became embittered as they watched Claudius entrust confidential tasks to a group of freedmen belonging to his household. A new governing class was being created from men who stood outside the Roman tradition and represented the interests of Claudius.

The men who led the specialised departments were Narcissus, Pallas, Callistus and Polybius and though capable and loyal advisors, their excessive wealth, power and influence angered the senatorial and equestrian orders from whom Augustus and Tiberius had sought their advisers. See pp. 517 and 543–44 for Claudius' civil service in the administration of Rome and the empire. However, both Tacitus and Pliny record with disgust the decree of the Senate – later described on a monument – honouring Pallas, 'For his fidelity and loyalty towards his patrons' whereby he was awarded 'the insignia of praetorian rank together with 15 000 000 sesterces, of which he accepted the honour alone'.[40] Tacitus adds further that he was thanked by the Senate for letting himself 'be regarded as one of the emperor's servants although he came from a long line of Arcadian (Greek) kings'.[41] Tacitus was particularly critical of the Senate for loading 'praises of old-world frugality on a man who had once been a slave and was now worth 300 million sesterces'.[42] Pliny believed that these senators behaved like slaves.

... Claudius had an even higher regard for Polybius, his literary mentor, who often walked between the two consuls. But his firmest devotion was reserved for Narcissus, his secretary, and Pallas, his treasurer, who he encouraged the Senate to honour with large gifts of money and the insignia of quaestors and praetors as well.

SOURCE 14.21 Suetonius, *Claudius*, 28

Claudius' freedmen also became involved in the intrigues of the imperial court: conspiracies, executions (they were able to secure the condemnation of anyone on the flimsiest of evidence), the removal of Claudius' third wife, the notorious Messalina, and the choice of Claudius' fourth wife Agrippina the Younger (his niece).

ACTIVITY 14.9

1. Draw a diagram illustrating Claudius' respect for the Senate.
2. Explain the purpose of the speeches given by Claudius in Sources 14.19 and 14.20, and what they reveal about him as a princeps.
3. How did Claudius, despite his desire for cooperation, contribute to the weakening of the Senate?
4. Why were senators so hostile to imperial freedmen?

Nero and the Senate

With the high-minded guidance of Seneca (his tutor/advisor), Nero's early relationship with the Senate was reasonable. In a speech to the Senate on his accession, the young Nero outlined his future policy. He promised to put an end to further encroachment on the Senate's authority, and criminal cases concerning Italy and the provinces were to be tried once again in the senatorial court and there was to be an end to the interference of freedmen in state affairs. Any charges brought by *delatores* were dismissed. He rejected the title of 'Father of his country', as well as exempting his colleagues in the consulship from swearing allegiance, like other officials, to the Emperor's acts. He also showed leniency in readmitting to the Senate those previously expelled, and there were times when the Senate was independent enough to block proposals put forward by the emperor.

> 'I will not judge every kind of case myself ', he said, 'and give too free rein to the influence of a few individuals by hearing prosecutors and defendants behind closed doors. From my house, bribery and favouritism will be excluded. I will keep personal and State affairs separate. The Senate is to preserve its ancient functions. By applying to the consuls, people from Italy and the senatorial provinces may have access to its tribunals. I myself will look after the armies under my control.

SOURCE 14.22 An early pronouncement by Nero almost certainly written by his tutor Seneca, Tacitus, *Annals*, 13, 4.

However, things changed with the death of Burrus (Praetorian Prefect) and the retirement of Seneca, when Nero came under the influence of Poppaea, his mistress, and the hated Praetorian Prefect, Tigellinus.

An increasingly servile and fearful Senate

- When false charges were brought against Nero's wife, Octavia (daughter of Claudius), she was banished, later killed in an atrociously barbaric way and her head brought to Poppaea. The servile Senate celebrated the murder with a decree of thanksgiving.
- The Senate deified Poppaea, when two years after Nero's marriage to her she died while pregnant.
- Senatorial decrees continued to reach 'new depths of sycophancy or abasement'.[43]
- The artistic activities of Nero and his extravagances required massive funds, but he had already depleted the treasury. He therefore took advantage of any opportunity to confiscate the property of senators.

FIGURE 14.18 Poppaea Sabina, the mistress and then wife of Nero

- Nero's activities, encouraged by Tigellinus, offended all dignified Romans, and dissatisfaction with Nero among the senators increased, culminating in a serious conspiracy to assassinate him in 65. It involved 41 senators, Faenius Rufus, one of the Praetorian Prefects, a number of the Guards and the consul-designate Plautius Lateranus. Their plan was to kill Nero and replace him with C. Cornelius Piso, from one of the remaining republican families. Individual motives for joining the conspiracy varied from disgust at Nero's criminal record to the abolition of the Senate's rights and the way he had lowered the tone of the imperial position.
- The discovery of the plot led to the execution or forced suicide of many distinguished senators, guilty or not. Among those killed were Seneca (with no proof of complicity), his nephew, the poet Lucan, a consul and the consul-designate. In all, there was a massacre of 19 men and others were sent into exile.
- In the remaining years of his reign, Nero's informers were everywhere, and wealthy and prominent senators were not safe from Tigellinus, on whose authority leading Romans could be destroyed without even the pretence of a trial. Some years of this tyrannical power almost annihilated the senatorial class, which Suetonius says was Nero's avowed purpose.

> Often he [Nero] hinted broadly that it was not his intention to spare the remaining senators, but would one day wipe out the entire Senatorial Order, and let knights and freedmen govern the provinces and command the armies, instead.

SOURCE 14.23 Suetonius, *Nero*, 37

ACTIVITY 14.10

1. What does Source 14.22 reveal about the reasonableness of Nero's early principate? Illustrate the statement 'senatorial decrees reached new depths of sycophancy or abasement'.
2. If Suetonius' claim in Source 14.23 is accurate, would you say that Nero had become deranged by this time?

ACTIVITY 14.11

Choose one of the following to write an extended answer.

1. Evaluate Tiberius and Claudius' relationships with the Senate.
2. How and why did the relationship between the Senate and princeps change between 14–68 AD?

Administrative, judicial and religious reforms and policies

Tiberius was noted for his excellent civil administration, with his main efforts focused on improving the welfare of the people in Rome and the provinces; Gauis Caligula introduced no significant reforms; Claudius showed a capacity for serious and sustained work. Despite no training for the position, he developed into an efficient administrator in Rome, Italy and the provinces. His social legislation illustrates his belief that it was his duty to look after the welfare of the people and to protect the weaker members of society. Nero's early policy was concerned with the problems facing the Roman population, but his late policies were generally destructive, excessive and cruel.

TABLE 14.3 Administration under each emperor

Tiberius	• maintained law and order in the city by expanding the role of the City Prefect to include jurisdiction in criminal cases • provided large subsidies to lower the price of grain and spent huge amounts of money to combat bad harvests and improve transportation of grain supplies • provided an interest-free loan fund of 100 million sesterces to alleviate a financial crisis in 33 AD and reduced an unpopular sales tax from 1% to 0.5% • gave substantial relief to help victims of fires, an amphitheatre tragedy and natural disasters such as the earthquake that hit 12 cities in the province of Asia in 17 AD • protected provincials from extortion and misgovernment by choosing officials carefully • cut down on public expenses by erecting fewer buildings and discouraging games and spectacles (he restricted the numbers of gladiators). His control of the public finances left a large surplus in the treasury when he died • took measures to safeguard the Italian countryside from robbers • expelled actors from Italy • created the Augustales, a priesthood to maintain the cult of Augustus • expelled Jews and astrologers from Rome
Gaius Caligula	• introduced no significant reforms, but reversed several of the austere policies of Tiberius, such as resuming games and providing other lavish forms of entertainment for the people • demanded to be treated like a god • aimed at finding new ways to raise revenue and enrich himself: raising taxes, fines and extorting money by forced legacies, confiscations and even murder
Claudius	• improved public utilities and carried out great engineering feats (see p. 528 for building activities) • helped in securing food supply by encouraging non-Romans to build ships and by insuring ships and cargoes against storm damage • reorganised a college of ancient Etruscan **augury** • expelled astrologers from Rome, suppressed **Druidism** in Gaul and attempted to curb the practice in Rome of some foreign cults. Jews were denied the right to worship in synagogues • extended the ***pomerium*** to include the ***Campus Martius*** • prohibited the worship of himself in provincial temples • concentrated more control of finances into his own hands • removed many legal abuses and speeded up legal business • introduced minor legislation against: unruly behaviour in the theatre; harsh treatment of debtors; purchase and demolition of buildings for profit; and loans being made to a son in the expectation of his father's death

augury a practice where a special group of priests known as augurs sought the will of the gods by interpreting significant signs

Druidism a Celtic pagan cult led by a priestly class of Druids

pomerium sacred boundary around Rome which no Roman in arms was permitted to cross except for the purpose of a triumph

Campus Martius Latin for 'Field of Mars'; a 2-square-kilometre area of publicly owned open ground surrounded by public buildings during the time of Augustus

TABLE 14.3 (*continued*)

Nero	In the early part of his reign Nero: • made an effort to secure the grain supply by appointing an excellent Prefect of the Grain Supply, Faenius Rufus, and by attempting to exempt provincial grain importers from harbour dues • twice distributed 400 sesterces to each of the urban plebs • replenished the bankrupt treasury with 40 000 000 sesterces of his own money, and replaced the *quaestors* who administered the treasury with two imperial prefects from the ranks of the older and more experienced senators • retained the structure of the imperial bureaucracy, although he replaced Claudius' freedmen, Pallas and Narcissus • provided a range of theatrical and gladiatorial games • checked the serious depopulation of Italy, and provided for the army by establishing colonies at Capua, Puteoli and Nuceria • promoted the economic welfare of the provinces (see p. 537) After the murder of his mother, the death of Burrus and the retirement of Seneca, he: • forced the people of Italy and the provinces to pay more taxes for his excessive spending, and debased the currency • introduced the Juvenalia or Youth Games in 59 AD and the Neronia or Neronian Games in 60. These were popular with the urban plebs, but when Nero insisted that men of senatorial and equestrian rank should enter and perform, like himself, they were shocked, offended and repelled by his undignified behaviour in public • provided temporary relief measures after the Great Fire in 64 which raged through the city for over a week. (See p. 527.) These measures included opening public buildings and his own gardens for the homeless, bringing in food supplies from surrounding towns and reducing the price of corn • reversed his previous policy of tolerance towards Christians and made them the scapegoats for the Great Fire, as he desperately needed someone to blame.

ACTIVITY 14.12

Use Table 14.3 to explain how each Julio-Claudian princeps contributed to the welfare of the people of Rome and Italy.

The career, role and fate of Seneca

Lucius Annaeus Seneca was a Roman Stoic philosopher, politician and dramatist who first became tutor to Nero and then one of his advisers.

Early years in Rome

Seneca was thought to have been born into a wealthy equestrian family sometime between 4 BC and 1 BC in Cordoba in Spain. His father was a well-known rhetorician and his older brother a pro-consular governor of the Roman province of Achaea.

He came to Rome about 5 AD where he was later trained in rhetoric and stoic philosophy; however, due to ill health it appears

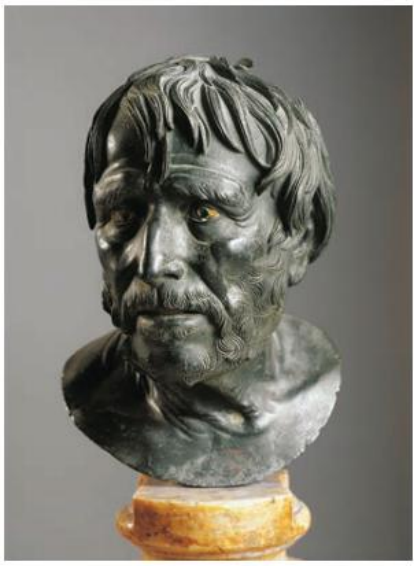

FIGURE 14.19 A bronze head of Seneca

that he spent some time in Egypt with his aunt who was there between 16 and 31 AD. When he returned to Rome in 31 AD, he entered politics, became a *quaestor* and senator, and came into conflict with Gaius Caligula, whose jealousy of the philosopher's abilities as an orator led him to say that Seneca was nothing but a text-book orator.

Career under Claudius and Nero

In 41 AD, Claudius exiled Seneca to Corsica for eight years on the charge of adultery with Germanicus' daughter, Julia Livilla (sister of Caligula). He spent his exile in study and writing, but in 49, Agrippina the Younger, fourth wife of Claudius, hoping to gain popularity with the people, convinced her husband to recall Seneca from exile in order to tutor her 12-year-old son Nero in public speaking. Not only was Seneca brought into the heart of the imperial household but he was made *praetor* as well.

From 54 to 62, Seneca (along with Burrus the Praetorian Prefect) became Nero's advisers and, supposedly under their guidance, his early years were generally competent. 'They collaborated in controlling the emperor's perilous adolescence; their policy was to direct his deviations from virtue into licensed channels of indulgence'.[44]

Seneca was known as *amicus principis*, or friend of the princeps. He drafted most of Nero's speeches including the one to the Senate on his accession in which Nero pledged to remove the influence of bribery and favouritism from the imperial household and bring to an end the decisions made in the palace behind closed doors. This was a reference to the behind-the-scenes power play of Agrippina.

He became concerned at the unbridled ambition of Agrippina, and her attempts to rule through her son. He was unhappy about her highly visible role, such as her attempt to sit on the dais with Nero during the visit of an Armenian delegation, and prevented an embarrassing scene.

FIGURE 14.20 Nero and Seneca, by Eduardo Barrón (1904)

> When an Armenian delegation was pleading before Nero, [Agrippina] was just about to mount the emperor's dais and sit beside him. Everyone was stupefied. But Seneca instructed Nero to advance to meet his mother. This show of filial dutifulness averted the scandal.

SOURCE 14.24 Tacitus, *Annals*, 13.4

In 58, Seneca was accused publicly in the Senate by Publius Suillius Rufus, who said he had been rightly exiled for 'seducing imperial princesses' and asking 'what branch of learning, what philosophical school, won Seneca 300 million sesterces during four years of imperial friendship?' He accused him of 'understanding only academic activities and immature youths' and of 'sucking Italy and the provinces dry'.[45] According to Tacitus, Suillius' accusations did not stand up to careful scrutiny although someone of Seneca's influence, like others at that time, would make him vulnerable to trumped-up charges.

Together with Burrus, Seneca prevented many murders planned by Agrippina and when Nero became 'openly disobedient to his mother' he turned to Seneca. In 59, he and Burrus agreed with the necessity to murder Agrippina, although they were not directly involved.

When Nero eventually succeeded in having his mother murdered, it was Seneca who is supposed to have penned a letter to the Senate, full of lies, in which Nero:

- blamed his mother's friend for trying to murder him
- appealed to the senators' age-old prejudices about powerful and ambitious women: 'She [Agrippina] had wanted to be co-ruler, to receive oaths of allegiance from the guard and to subject Senate and public to the same humiliation'.[46]
- added that with great difficulty he had prevented her from breaking into the Senate-house and delivering verdicts to foreign envoys.
- blamed her for all the scandals during the reign of Claudius.
- declared her death as a 'national blessing'.

However, condemnation fell not on Nero, but 'on Seneca who had composed his self-incriminating speech'.[47]

Seneca lost control of Nero when Burrus died in 62, and was attacked for his excessive wealth (with accusations of embezzlement), 'the grandeur of his mansions and his alleged bids for popularity … Nero increasingly avoided his company'.[48]

Seneca requested that Nero allow him to retire to enjoy his prosperity after 14 years of service and even offered to give up his excessive wealth if he would be allowed to retire to his estate and write. However, Nero refused with the words: 'If youth's slippery paths lead me astray, be at hand to call me back! You equipped my manhood; devote even greater care to guiding it'.[49] However, Tacitus infers that Nero hid a treacherous hatred behind his words.

In 65, Seneca was caught up in the aftermath of the Pisonian conspiracy to kill and replace Nero, although the emperor had no proof of Seneca's complicity and it is doubtful that he was involved.

After an earlier failed attempt to poison Seneca, Nero 'was glad to use arms against him' and 'forced him to commit suicide'.[50]

> Unperturbed, Seneca asked for his will. But the officer refused. Then Seneca turned to his friends. 'Being forbidden', he said, 'to show gratitude for your services, I leave you my one remaining possession, and my best: the pattern of my life. … As he talked … he checked their tears and sought to revive their courage. Where had their philosophy gone, he asked … 'Surely no one was unaware that Nero was cruel!' he added. 'After murdering his mother and brother, it only remained for him to kill his teacher and tutor.

SOURCE 14.25 Tacitus, *Annals*, 15, 62

ACTIVITY 14.13

1. Who was Lucius Annaeus Seneca, and what part did he play in the principates of Claudius and Nero?
2. How did he meet his end?

Political roles of the Praetorian Guard and its prefect

The Praetorian Guard – an elite unit in the Roman army – and its prefects became a vital force in the power politics of Rome between 14 and 69 AD. They played a significant role, not only in the succession of three out of four of the Julio-Claudian emperors, but were involved in a number of plots to overthrow them, and were probably involved in the murder of several. Over time, the Praetorian Guard evolved into an influential branch of the government involved in public security, civil administration and political interference.

A COMMENT ON...

The evolution of the Praetorian Guard

- During the republican era, the Praetorians were a small escort which protected an army commander, general or governor. The name derives from the commander's tent, a *praetorium*. Their number increased during Rome's civil wars.
- Augustus went a step further in 27 BC. He created a permanent bodyguard of nine cohorts of 500 with two Praetorian Prefects of equestrian rank to act as a protective force for him and the royal family. However, because he wanted to uphold the republican image of the principate, only three were on duty at any given time in the capital. The rest remained in towns around the city. This, and the avoidance of a full uniform (but those in Rome still carrying weapons), was probably because the republican tradition did not allow a commander and his army to enter the city. At this time those in Rome were housed across the city inconspicuously.
- They were a constant reminder to the Senate and people of Rome of the armed force which was the basis of the princeps' power.
- The number of cohorts was increased to 12, each with 1000 men, and in 23 AD, under Sejanus, sole Praetorian Prefect of Tiberius, further changes occurred. He convinced Tiberius to permit the whole Guard to camp as a single unit in a camp – the *Castra Praetoria* in the northeastern suburbs of Rome. See below for Sejanus' motivations.

Sejanus and Tiberius

In 14 AD, Lucius Aelius Sejanus – an equestrian by birth who had spent time in the army – became joint Praetorian Prefect with his father Strabo, who had performed dutifully throughout Augustus' reign. In 15 AD, after Tiberius' accession, Strabo was assigned to the governorship of Egypt and Sejanus became sole Prefect of the Guard.

Tiberius felt free to talk openly with Sejanus. He praised him in conversation and he became Tiberius' trusted advisor, describing him as 'the partner in my labours'.[51] However, Sejanus 'concealed behind a carefully modest exterior an unbounded lust for power', and had already taken some steps to realise his ambitions.

In 23, he convinced Tiberius to have the Praetorian Fort (*Castra Praetoria*) built just outside the city walls where he concentrated the normally scattered battalions of the Guard. His pretext was that this arrangement would minimise discipline problems and be more effective in an emergency. His real reasons, according to Tacitus, were to increase the Guards' power and to intimidate the citizens.

FIGURE 14.21 An early Praetorian Guardsman with no uniform but a weapon

After the death of the popular Germanicus (Tiberius' heir) in Syria in 19 AD, Tiberius planned to promote the accession to the principate of his own son Drusus. This not only embittered the faction loyal to Germanicus, but also did not suit the plans of Sejanus.

It appears that Drusus suspected Sejanus' ambitious designs and resented his influence over his father. Sejanus decided that Drusus must be removed. However, even if Sejanus achieved this, it would not ensure his rise to power as there was 'a well-stocked imperial house',[52] including grown-up grandchildren.

The sources claim that Sejanus seduced Livilla, Drusus' unprincipled wife, with promises of marriage and the throne if she poisoned her husband. Whether she did in fact poison him, Drusus died suddenly in 23, and Tiberius never really recovered from his grief at his son's death. According to Tacitus, this was a turning point in the reign of Tiberius, as he became more morose and depended on Sejanus to an even greater extent.

Sejanus was now at the centre of court intrigue due to the jealousies of the imperial women: Livia (widow of Augustus), Livilla (widow of Drusus) and Agrippina the Elder (widow of Germanicus). Livia sided with Livilla against the outspoken Agrippina the Elder who did not hide her hatred for Tiberius, blaming him for Germanicus' death. She also tried to promote the interests of her children, Nero and Drusus Caesar.

When it became apparent that these great-grandchildren of Augustus were in line to succeed Tiberius, Sejanus planned to undermine the influence of their mother by playing Livia and Livilla against her. They notified Tiberius that Agrippina, 'proud of her large family and relying on her popularity', had designs on the throne. To this end, Sejanus employed 'skilful slanders'.[53]

Eventually, tired of Agrippina's outspokenness, and urged on by Sejanus, Tiberius was determined to crush Agrippina's 'party' and there were many charges brought by informers against her friends and supporters.

Tacitus says that Sejanus, under pressure from Livilla, now applied to Tiberius for permission to marry her, but Tiberius was not in favour of this proposal because it would intensify Agrippina's ill feeling and would split the imperial family in two. He also pointed out that it would create jealousy among the more distinguished men in the Senate. However, he later allowed Sejanus to become betrothed to Livilla's daughter.

Tiberius now made a serious mistake. Weary of the plotting factions and the hostility at court, he retired to the island of Capri. Tacitus says that this was done on the urging of Sejanus who 'foresaw many advantages in this. He himself would control access to the emperor – as well as most of his correspondence, since it would be transmitted by the Guardsmen' and he felt that the ageing ruler 'would soon be readier to delegate governmental functions'.[54] He therefore encouraged Tiberius to leave Rome and settle in the Villa Jovis on Capri (see p. 528). His government from Capri was just as efficient as ever, although his removal from Rome did allow Sejanus free rein with his intrigues.

It was a time of great tension for members of the Senate and for anybody with links to the family of Germanicus. Sejanus played Agrippina's sons off against each other: he encouraged the ambition and jealousy of Drusus Caesar against his elder brother Nero Caesar, but it was not until the death of Livia that he was able to remove Agrippina because, according to Tacitus, Livia had a moderating influence on Tiberius. However, soon after his mother's death, Tiberius, under the influence of Sejanus, sent a letter to the Senate charging Agrippina with 'insubordinate language and a disobedient spirit', and Nero Caesar with 'homosexual indecency'.[55] They were banished to barren prison islands and Drusus Caesar was imprisoned in Rome. Nero is believed to have been driven to suicide, and Drusus was apparently executed in 33, the year of Agrippina's death.

The position of Sejanus now seemed secure. He had control of the Praetorian Guard and the Senate, was engaged to the granddaughter of Tiberius, and despite his equestrian rank was granted pro-consular *imperium* with Tiberius *in absentia*, as well as being honoured with statues and games. His position seemed unassailable.

FIGURE 14.22 Agrippina the Elder

Sejanus was so great a person by reason of his haughtiness and of his vast power, that to put it briefly, he himself seemed to be the emperor and Tiberius a kind of potentate, inasmuch as the latter spent his time on the island of Capreae.

SOURCE 14.26 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LVIII.5

However, when it became apparent that Tiberius was promoting Caligula, the youngest son of Agrippina, to succeed him, Sejanus plotted to kill him. Tiberius is believed to have been warned by Antonia (the mother of Germanicus) of Sejanus' plans and the extent to which he had already usurped the princeps' authority in Rome. He carefully arranged for his downfall, while continuing to make promises of further honours to him.

When he saw that the support for Sejanus was not as strong as he believed it might be, he chose Naevius Sutorius Macro, the Prefect of the *Vigiles* (Roman police and fire department), to replace Sejanus, to take charge of the Praetorian Guard and to take a letter from Tiberius to be read in the Senate denouncing Sejanus as a traitor. He was arrested, taken to prison, summarily executed by strangulation and his body cast down the Gemonian stairs (a flight of stairs that served as a place of execution) where the crowd supposedly tore it to pieces.

For over a year, his supporters and anyone who could be tied to Sejanus' schemes were prosecuted, and when Sejanus' ex-wife informed Tiberius that Livilla and Sejanus had been responsible for his son's death, Tiberius became even more embittered and suspicious, taking a much harder attitude to accusations of treason. The accusations concerning Livilla having administered poison to Drusus were corroborated by her slaves under torture.

The arrest and executions that followed were carried out by the new praetorian Prefect, Macro, and the political turmoil continued while Tiberius remained in Capri. Tacitus refers to it as a 'Reign of Terror' but this evaluation by Tacitus is undoubtedly exaggerated and has been challenged by a number of modern scholars.

ACTIVITY 14.14

1. Make a list of the steps taken by Sejanus to fulfil his ambitions to succeed Tiberius.
2. What were the repercussions of Tiberius' discovery of Sejanus' betrayal?

Macro, the Praetorian Guard and Gaius Caligula

Naevius Sutorius Macro, appointed by Tiberius as Praetorian Prefect after Sejanus, was active in discrediting Sejanus and carrying out the subsequent purges of his family and supporters. Also, he furthered his ambitions by befriending Gaius Caligula, one of Tiberius' heirs, while he stayed on Capri with his grand-uncle.

Macro:

- turned a blind eye to the fact that his wife Ennia was seduced by Caligula, who swore to marry her if he became emperor, 'putting the oath in writing'.[56] Suetonius records that Caligula is supposed to have poisoned Tiberius, but whether this is true or not, Tacitus maintains that Macro ordered 'the old man to be smothered with a heap of bed-clothes and left alone'.[57]
- declared Gaius Caligula the new princeps and accompanied him back to Rome. Caligula showed his appreciation to the Guards by doubling the bequest that Tiberius had given them and by issuing a commemorative coin.
- was confident of a rapid promotion, but his pre-eminence was short-lived. He was removed as prefect and later forced to commit suicide. Suetonius says, 'Their [Macro and his wife] very nearness and services to him [Caligula] earned them cruel deaths'.[58]

Caligula increased the number of Praetorian cohorts from 9 to 12, and once again appointed two prefects.

During a conspiracy against him by a popular commander on the Rhine (Gaetulicus), Caligula took a detachment of Praetorians to put down the rebellion and to supervise the execution of Gaetulicus.

In 41 AD, Caligula's 'frantic and reckless behaviour roused murderous thoughts in certain minds and one or two plots for his assassination were discovered; others were still maturing'.[59]

> ... two Guards colonels put their heads together and succeeded in killing him, thanks to the co-operation of his most powerful freedmen and some other Guards officers. Both these colonels had been accused of being implicated in a previous plot, and although innocent, realized that Caligula hated and feared them. Once, in fact he had subjected them to pubic shame and suspicion ... after this he accused them again and again, each to the other and tried to make bad blood between them. At last they decided to kill him about noon at the conclusion of the Palatine Games ... the principal part by the Guards' colonel Cassius Chaerea.

SOURCE 14.27 Suetonius, *Gaius Caligula*, 56

The Praetorians and Claudius

The Praetorians were crucial in the accession of Claudius. They apparently found him hiding in the palace, carried him off to their barracks and pressed him to accept imperial power, daring the Senate to oppose their decision. Refer back to Figures 14.3 and 14.15.

Claudius not only acknowledged their support in gold and silver coins, as a constant reminder to the Senate and people, but also bound himself to them with a donative of 15 000 sesterces. He never forgot his debt to them by repeating this payment annually.

However, he did execute those Guardsmen implicated in Caligula's murder.

During the crisis involving Messalina (Claudius' third wife) – that is, her bigamous marriage to Gaius Silius and their attempt to overthrow Claudius – his advisers, lacking confidence in the Praetorian Prefect (Geta), had him removed temporarily from his post. However, Claudius continued to have confidence in Geta and maintained him as joint prefect with Rufrius Crispinus until 51.

When Claudius' fourth wife, Agrippina the Younger, feared that Geta and Crispinus favoured Messalina's son and heir Britannicus over her own son Nero, she had the pair replaced by Sextus Afranius Burrus.

According to the ancient sources, Agrippina positioned Burrus as Prefect of the Guard to ensure Nero's smooth accession to the throne.

FIGURE 14.23 Messalina and Claudius' son, Britannicus

Burrus, Tigellinus and Nero

On the sudden death of Claudius, Burrus took Nero to the Praetorian barracks to be declared emperor, and over subsequent years became one of the two stabilising and moderating influences on Nero, tempering Agrippina's dominance over her son.

Eventually, Burrus, like everyone, longed for Agrippina's control to end, but the Praetorians did not participate in her death because 'the Guard were devoted to the whole imperial house and to Germanicus' memory' and 'would commit no violence against his offspring'.[60] Nero, however, thanked the Praetorians for not intervening.

The death of Burrus [in 62] caused great public distress. His merits were dwelt on – also the inferiority of his successors, one harmless but ineffective, and the other a notorious criminal. For the emperor now appointed two commanders of the Guard – Faenius Rufus because he was popular ... and Gaius Olfonius Tigellinus because Nero found his unending immoralities and evil reputation fascinating. Each commander acted as expected. Tigellinus was the more influential with the emperor, in whose private debaucheries he participated. Rufus was liked by the guardsmen and civilians: which went against him with Nero.

SOURCE 14.28 Tacitus, *Annals* 14, 49

In 65 AD, a conspiracy was hatched against Nero with the intention of replacing the hated emperor with the aristocratic and popular Gaius Calpurnius Piso. The conspiracy included a wide-ranging group of people, among whom were a number of Guards, colonels and company commanders. 'But the mainstay was felt to be Faenius Rufus, commander of the Guard. His respectability and good reputation had made less impression on Nero than the depravity of his colleague Tigellinus – who persecuted Faenius with slanders …'[61]

With the discovery of Piso's conspiracy (refer back to p. 516), Nero rewarded those Praetorians who had helped avert his assassination with 2000 sesterces each and free grain for life. However, revolt was brewing among the armies in the western provinces, and Sulpicius Galba, the governor of Spain, declared himself 'Legate of the Senate and Roman People'.

Following the practice of Claudius, Galba offered the Praetorian Guard 30 000 sesterces per man for their support, and together with the Senate declared Nero a public enemy.

ACTIVITY 14.15

Write at least a half a page on each explaining the significance of the Praetorian Guard in the reigns of:

1. Gaius/Caligula
2. Claudius
3. Nero.

The Julio-Claudian building programs

Many of the buildings constructed under the Julio-Claudians were practical measures to address the needs and welfare of the people of Rome, and as a response to natural disasters such as floods, fires and earthquakes. Some buildings were a form of propaganda, a symbol of power, a way to maintain loyalty in the provinces and as commemorations of a particular triumph. Others were repairs and completions of ones left unfinished, and some were private imperial structures. All these building projects provided employment for labourers and artisans.

A COMMENT ON...

Adequate water and food supplies and building projects

- A reliable supply of water, carried by aqueducts, had become an absolute necessity for Roman life (and in most urban parts of the Roman Empire).
- The water provided by these massive engineering feats was used for drinking (as the water from the Tiber River that ran through the city was polluted and carried waterborne diseases); for public fountains and *thermae* (public baths); for flushing out latrines and scouring the city's sewers and drains; and for watering domestic and market gardens.

- At the time of Augustus, it is believed that Rome's water supply served a population of around one million.
- During the summer sailing season, about half a million tonnes of food arrived from overseas and had to be stored somewhere, and then distributed to the populace over the course of the year. Colossal warehouses (*horrea*) were constructed at Ostia (port at the mouth of the Tiber River) and on the left bank of the Tiber downstream from Rome to hold these vast quantities of grain and other goods.

On the occasion of a severe famine he considered the problem of providing an abundant food supply, not only for that particular crisis but for all time ... all the grain used by the Romans was imported, and yet the region near the mouth of the Tiber had no safe landing places or suitable harbours ... except for the cargoes brought in during the summer season and stores in warehouses. They had no supplies for the winter ... Claudius undertook to construct a harbour, and ... he brought it to accomplishment.

SOURCE 14.29 Claudius' construction of a harbour and warehouses at Ostia, Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, vol. 7, pp. 381–3

FIGURE 14.24 The Aqua Claudia

Floods, fires, earthquakes and building programs

While the remains of the great aqueducts are still visible in and around Rome there are no physical reminders of the great floods that were a part of life in ancient Rome 'where proximity to the Tiber left a substantial part of the city vulnerable to the river's occasional transgressions'[62] particularly the great warehouses. Water damage to grain during these floods often led to widespread famine.

Fires were also common in ancient Rome (sometimes a daily occurrence) due to the city's crowded, narrow winding alleys and streets, and closely set, unsubstantial houses and tenements constructed in easily inflammable materials, but there were also disastrous fires which devastated vast areas and involved the destruction not only of houses and tenements, but markets, granaries, warehouses and splendid public buildings.

Rome suffered again and again from conflagrations ... that laid in ashes entire districts of the city. Fire as a destroying agent was in fact more potent in Rome than the dismantling and disintegrating forces of time and the elements, than the barbarity and wanton violence of man. Indeed, it may well be doubted whether any city has ever been so often and so thoroughly devastated by fire as was ancient Rome.

SOURCE 14.30 H. V. Canter, *Conflagrations in Ancient Rome*, p. 272

TABLE 14.4 Major fires in Rome from 27 BC–64 AD

Augustus	Nine fires
Tiberius	Five recorded, one of extraordinary fury in 27 AD which ravaged the Caelian Hill and another in 36 that destroyed one side of the Circus Maximus and the Aventine Hill
Caligula	One recorded in 38
Claudius	One major fire in 54. This changed the whole nature of the Caelian Hill 'from that of a tenement district to one covered principally in the palaces of the wealthy, with their beautiful gardens'. Some of the public buildings destroyed in this fire were never rebuilt.
Nero	The terrible fire of 64 which 'in extent and destructiveness, it is to be numbered among the great conflagrations of history'.[63] Information is lacking on the historic monuments that were lost in this fire.

The fire began among the flammable material stored in the shops on the outer face of the Circus on it north-east side. But it is indeed clear that the Circus Maximus as a whole was a major fire-risk, with its two upper storeys and much of the seating of wood to say nothing of the accretions on its outer face. Once it was well alight, its sheer size – 600 metres long, 150 metres wide – made it a gigantic firebomb in the heart of Rome. That night in July there was a high wind which spread the flames so quickly as to nullify all efforts to contain them … on the 6th day the Fire was brought to a halt at the foot of the Esqualine by the most effect methods known to the fire-brigades of antiquity – an artificial fire break made by the widespread destruction of buildings in its path … The respite was short. A second fire broke out in suspicious circumstances in the Circus Maximus among the slum property owned by Tigellinus.

SOURCE 14.31 The Great Fire of 64 AD, Donald R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, pp. 162–3

In 17 AD during the reign of Tiberius, a massive earthquake struck the Roman province of Asia during which 12–15 cities and towns were destroyed, including the previous capital of Sardis, which never completely recovered. Tacitus recorded this in the *Annals*, 2.45. Tiberius waved taxes from the cities for five years, sent 10 million sesterces for rebuilding and an ex-praetor to assess their needs. Statues to honour his generosity were raised both in Rome and Sardis with inscriptions such as 'founder of the city' and 'Cities of Asia' restored.

FIGURE 14.25 A painting of the Great Fire at Rome in 64 AD by Robert Hubert

TABLE 14.5 Building programs of the Julio-Claudians

Tiberius	The sources claim Tiberius was careful with the state's finances and that he erected few magnificent public buildings, comparing him unfavourably with Augustus. According to Tacitus, Tiberius was 'far from extravagant in buildings on his own behalf and even on the public account'.[64] Unlike his Julio-Claudian successors he did not aim for personal glorification. In the last years of Augustus' reign, Tiberius was responsible for the restoration of the ancient Temple of Concord, and during his own reign he is believed to have: • started the rebuilding of Pompey's Theatre • constructed a Temple to Augustus (incomplete) • finished many of Augustus' buildings • constructed an arch commemorating Roman victory over the Germans • rebuilt or adorned many public works, even providing money for individuals to assist in this • replaced buildings destroyed by fires in 26 AD and 36 AD • contributed to the rebuilding of the cities destroyed in the earthquake in the province of Asia in 17 AD. Tiberius also built the Villa Jovis (completed in 27 AD) high on a secluded headland (334 metres above the sea) on the island of Capri from where he ruled until his death 10 years later. It was built over a series of terraces, covered 7000 square metres and comprised living, administrative and reception areas, as well as a watchtower from which to communicate messages to the mainland.
Gaius Caligula	Caligula's short-lived reign (three years, 10 months) did not give him much time to embark on major building projects. He completed the building of Tiberius' Temple of Augustus and the rebuilding of Pompey's Theatre, and he began the construction of an aqueduct and an amphitheatre.
Claudius	Claudius' public works included great engineering feats: • He engaged in extensive road-building in Italy and the provinces such as the Via Claudia Augusta from Altinum (a Roman city on the coastal lowlands of Northern Italy) to the Danube. • He completed two aqueducts, including the Aqua Claudia, a huge double-arched aqueduct that carried the waters from 'the cool and abundant springs called the Caerulean and the Curtian' to 'a number of ornamental reservoirs'.[65] • He constructed a new harbour and lighthouse at Ostia, north of the Tiber mouth, which had silted up. He built 'curved breakwaters on either side of the harbour and built a deep-water mole by its entrance'[66] on which he constructed the lighthouse. High walls surrounded the harbour and inside the new port city were enormous *horrea*, or warehouses, one or two storeys high and capable of holding tonnes of wares. The Great Horrea was majestic in size and had spaces under the floors to prevent the humidity from spoiling the grain. • He undertook the excavation of a 4.8-kilometre tunnel to drain the flood waters from the Fucine Lake and reclaim agricultural land. Although this project took 30 000 men 11 years, it was not completely successful.

TABLE 14.5 *(continued)*

Nero	• The Great Fire of 64 AD, which blazed for a period of 6 days, was followed immediately by another that lasted three days, destroyed 10 of the 14 districts of the city and completely devastated three. Although the Forum, the Capitol and part of the Palatine were not damaged, many ancient shrines, public buildings, palaces, temples, mansions and tenements were burnt to the ground. 'Among the losses too were … Greek artistic masterpieces, and authentic records of old Roman genius.'[67] • The destruction gave Nero the opportunity not only to rebuild Rome but also to construct an enormous and lavish palace for himself called the *Domus Aurea* (Golden House). See Source 14.32. In rebuilding the burnt section of the city, he combined practicality with beauty: – A proportion of each newly constructed house had to be of fireproof stone. – Streets were broadened and frontages were aligned. – No semi-detached houses were allowed. – Heights were restricted. – Houses were built around courtyards with protective colonnades in the front. – Fire-fighting equipment had to be kept in an accessible place. – A better water supply was provided. • His new Golden House (*domus aurea*) was so large that it extended from the Palatine to the Esquiline Hill. His architects and engineers, Severus and Celer, created effects 'which Nature herself had ruled out as impossible'.[68] • According to Suetonius, Nero also had other extravagant but unsuccessful projects in mind: – 'A covered bath surrounded by colonnades and stretching from Misenum to lake Avernus; all the hot springs of the Baiae district would be canalised to feed it'.[69] – A ship canal 256-kilometre-long connecting Lake Avernus with Ostia. 'Prisoners from all parts of the empire were ordered to be transported to Italy for this task'.[70] • For his building projects, he ransacked Italy and the empire, 'unprivileged and privileged communities alike' and even the 'gods were included in his looting'[71] as temples were robbed of their treasures.

The entrance hall was large enough to contain a large statue of himself, 120 feet high; and the pillared arcade ran for a whole mile. An enormous pool, like a sea was surrounded by buildings made to resemble cities, and by a landscape gardening consisting of ploughed fields, vineyards, pastures and woodlands where every variety of domestic and wild animal roamed about. Parts of the house were overlaid with gold and studded with precious stones and mother-of-pearl. All the dining rooms had ceilings of fretted ivory, the panels of which could slide back and allow a rain of flowers, or of perfumed showers from hidden sprinklers shower upon his guests. The main dining room was circular, and its roof revolved, day and night in time with the sky. Sea water or sulphur water was always on tap in the baths.

FIGURE 14.26 A Triumphal arch in south-eastern France constructed by Tiberius

SOURCE 14.32 Nero's Domus Aurea, in Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Nero*, 31

ACTIVITY 14.16

1 Explain what is meant by Claudius' 'public buildings included great engineering feats that benefited the welfare of the people'.
2 Describe the:
   - Aqua Claudia
   - the Harbour at Ostia with its enormous *horrea.*
3 Explain the effects of natural disasters on Julio-Claudian building projects.
4 Describe the Great Fire of Nero's reign. Include:
   - its place of origin and cause
   - its extent and duration
   - the amount of damage
   - the rebuilding that occurred afterwards. Explain the meaning of the statement that 'Nero combined practicality with beauty'.
5 What was the:
   - Villa Jovis? List its main features.
   - The Domus Aurea? List its main features.

FIGURE 14.27 Decoration in one of the rooms of the Domus Aurea

The imperial family and problems of the succession

Many of the problems within the Julio-Claudian dynasty were due to there being no established practice of succession of the principate. This was exacerbated by:

- the preference for a direct descendant of Augustus
- the early deaths of designated or potential heirs by natural causes, accidents or murder
- the part played by the women of the imperial court such as Livia, Julia, Agrippina the Elder, Messalina, Agrippina the Younger and Poppaea
- the part played by the Praetorian Guard and its prefects as well as the army.

As a result of these factors, no Julio-Claudian emperor was succeeded by his natural son.

Tiberius, Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder

Livia, the wife of Augustus, had schemed to get her own son Tiberius chosen by Augustus as his heir. Tacitus refers to her schemes as her 'secret machinations',[72] but by the time Tiberius succeeded Augustus, his nephew Germanicus had been designated as his heir ahead of Tiberius' own son, Drusus.

There is no doubt that Germanicus was immensely popular with the Roman people and the army, a loyal commander and a good diplomat. His popularity was probably due to his lineage: he was partly Julian, and his wife was the granddaughter of Augustus.

However, the excessive praise heaped on him by the ancient sources is exaggerated. His German campaigns in 14 and 16 were not major successes and were costly in manpower.

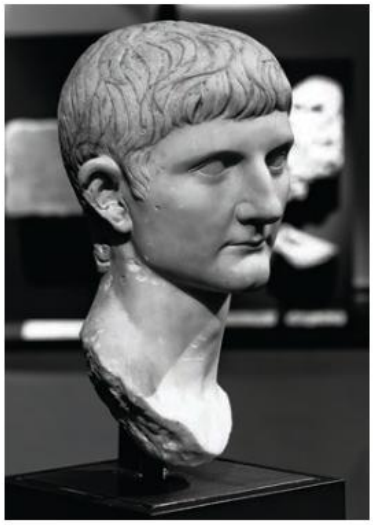

FIGURE 14.28 A bust of Germanicus

Also, at times he showed an arrogance, a certain amount of irresponsibility and a desire for personal glory. When Tiberius sent him to the East, there were times when he breached protocol, but his most serious mistake was in flouting the imperial edict regarding Egypt: no senator was permitted to enter Egypt without the emperor's express approval.

Tiberius had appointed Calpurnius Piso to the governorship of Syria to keep a watch over Germanicus, even though his heir had control over all governors and commanders in the East, but his selection of Piso showed a lack of judgement on Tiberius' part. The relationship between Piso and Germanicus deteriorated and was not helped by the animosity of their respective wives, Agrippina and Plancina.

Germanicus ordered Piso out of his province and not long after his departure, Germanicus became ill and died. Tacitus, whose aim was to blacken Tiberius' character in contrast with his heir, says that on his deathbed Germanicus accused Piso and Plancina of poisoning him. He also warned Agrippina 'to forget her pride, submit to cruel fortune, and, back in Rome, to avoid provoking those stronger than herself by competing for their power'.[73] So it was said, he warned her of the danger from Tiberius.

There is no evidence for believing that either Piso or Tiberius had anything to do with Germanicus' death, and Tacitus says that it was 'uncertain if the body showed signs of poisoning'.[74]

After Germanicus' funeral, the people called Agrippina 'the only true descendant of Augustus',[75] and she, intolerant of rivalry and thirsting for power began verbally attacking Tiberius with: 'I, born of his sacred blood [Augustus] am his incarnation'.[76]

Although Piso was acquitted by the Senate on the charge of poisoning, Agrippina continued to believe that Tiberius had been responsible in some way for her husband's death, and for nine years she was openly hostile towards him, building up a party of supporters to help her gain the succession for one of her sons. Tiberius planned to promote his own son Drusus to succeed him, but due to the intrigues of Sejanus, Drusus was poisoned and Agrippina the Elder's oldest sons died in prison.

After the execution of Sejanus for treason, Caligula, the youngest of Germanicus and Agrippina's sons, was joint heir with Tiberius' teenage grandson Tiberius Gemellus. Once again, the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard interfered in the succession. He is supposed to have killed the ailing Tiberius, hailed Caligula as princeps and soon after killed Tiberius Gemellus.

Caligula

Caligula had no male offspring, and after his own assassination, 'his wife Caesonia was murdered by a centurion and their daughter's [Julia Drusilla] brains were dashed out against a wall'.[77] She was only one year old. His nearest male relatives were his uncle Claudius (brother of Germanicus) and his nephew Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus/Nero (the infant son of his sister Agrippina the Younger).

After his death, the Praetorians declared Claudius as princeps and the Senate accepted their choice as he was more likely to maintain the support of the army than someone outside the imperial family.

Claudius and Agrippina the Younger

Claudius had a son, Britannicus, to his third wife, the promiscuous and debauched Messalina, but after her execution and his marriage to Agrippina the Younger, he adopted her son Nero and made Britannicus and Nero joint heirs. However, like Tiberius, he appears to have given his adopted son precedence over his natural son, perhaps because Britannicus was only nine, his mother was the disgraced Messalina and Nero was a direct descendent of Augustus.

Once Nero's appointment as heir was achieved, Agrippina with the help of the freedman Pallas began removing any potential rivals and, according to Tacitus, then poisoned Claudius.

Burrus and the Praetorian Guard swore loyalty to Nero, and the Senate accepted their choice of the 16-year-old. Later, Britannicus and his sister Octavia were killed.

Nero

Nero had no male offspring and only one child, Claudia Augusta, the daughter of Nero's second wife, Poppaea Sabina. However, the child died three months after her birth from illness and Poppaea died during her second pregnancy to Nero in 65. He had already removed most of his family. In 64 he had forced the nobleman, Decimus Junius Silanus Torquatus, to commit suicide because he was descended from Augustus and because he had once been engaged to Claudius' daughter, Octavia, and been promoted by Claudius as a future son-in-law.

FIGURE 14.29 Agrippina the Younger

> For enforced death now came Decimus Junius Silanus Torquatus. This was because, in addition to the nobility of his Junian house, he could claim the divine Augustus as a great-great-grandfather. The accusers were instructed to charge Torquatus with generosity so extravagant that revolution had become his only hope.

SOURCE 14.33 Tacitus, *Annals*, 15, 37

ACTIVITY 14.17

1. Explain why no natural son succeeded his father as princeps.
2. What role did imperial women play in the appointments of Julio-Claudian rulers?

Events leading up to the death of Nero and its impact

After the failure of the Pisonian conspiracy in 65 AD to overthrow Nero and re-establish the Republic and the executions that followed, Nero was universally loathed, and left with few supporters in the Senate and western provinces.

> At last, after nearly fourteen years of Nero's rule the earth rid herself of him. The first move was made by the Gauls under Julius Vindex, their pro-praetor.

SOURCE 14.34 Suetonius, *Nero*, 40

Vindex, the governor of Gallia Tarraconensis, rebelled against Nero's tax policy. He hoped to substitute Nero with Galba, the governor of Gallia Lugdunensis. However, the loyal Roman legions on the Rhine frontier marched to confront Vindex in battle. After his defeat, Vindex committed suicide and Galba was declared a public enemy until the ambitious prefect of the Praetorian Guard, Sabinus, urged his men to transfer their loyalty from Nero to Galba.

This enabled the Senate to declare Nero a public enemy. He fled from Rome and eventually committed suicide by stabbing himself to death. He was only 32.

With his death, the Julio-Claudian dynasty – the line of the Caesars – came to an end.

The senators were happy and at once used their new freedom of speech more freely since they had an emperor who was still absent; the most important of the knights were next to the senators in feeling satisfaction; the respectable part of the people, attached to the powerful families, and the clients and the freedmen of the condemned and exiled, were full of hope. But the base plebs, addicted to the circus and the theatre, and the worst of the slaves, and those who had wasted their money and were maintained by the emperor, to his own disgrace, were resentful and open to rumour. The Praetorians, long accustomed to their oath to the Caesars, had been led to depose Nero by diplomacy and pressure rather than their own wish.

FIGURE 14.30 A detail from *Nero's Death* by Vasily Smirnov (1888)

SOURCE 14.35 Tacitus, *Histories,* I. 5

The Year of the Four Emperors

Following the death of Nero, Rome endured a tumultuous 12-month period during which three emperors (Galba, Otho and Vitellius) were named and deposed, before Vespasian finally restored stability. With the initial elevation of Galba to the throne, it became apparent that the armies of the Roman state became 'the arbiter of its political destinies'.[78]

The power, the appetites, and the venality shown by the armies in the Civil Wars of 69 were henceforward among the permanent factors of Roman politics.

SOURCE 14.36 Donald R. Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 132

FIGURE 14.31 Galba

TABLE 14.6 The four emperors

June 68	Galba, at 71, was recognised as emperor but quickly became unpopular due to his excessive discipline. He executed senators and *equites* without trial and refused to pay the Praetorians the rewards promised to them. Aulus Vitellius became governor and commander of the German legions who had remained loyal to Nero and the Rhine legions refused to swear loyalty to Galba and declared their own leader, Vitellius, as emperor.
January 69	Otho, an ambitious man who wanted the position for himself, bribed the Praetorian Guard to kill Galba and declare him emperor. He pardoned Galba's supporters and gave his rivals a role in his government. He was expected to be a fair ruler but Vitellius, with the backing of the finest Roman legions, was already marching on Italy. Otho tried a compromise but it was too late. Otho was defeated at the Battle of Cremona and two days later committed suicide. He had been emperor for little more than three months.

TABLE 14.6 *(continued)*

April 69	Vitellius was recognised as emperor by the Senate and his forces occupied Rome. However, he soon revealed his true colours by plundering Italian towns, engaging in endless festivities and triumphal parades, accruing exorbitant debts, torturing those who demanded to be repaid and brutally removing any possible rivals. Meanwhile in the East, the legions of Egypt, Syria and Judaea chose Vespasian as emperor. Part of his force marched on Rome and he went to Egypt to take control of the grain supplies, leaving his son Titus in charge of Judaea.
July 69	Vespasian was proclaimed emperor by the Egyptian legions.
August and September 69	The legions along the Danube announced their support of Vespasian and invaded Italy on his behalf. The Danube legions defeated Vitellius. He tried winning over the city with bribes and promise, but the Danube army were at the gates of Rome. Vitellius was found in the palace by Vespasian's supporters and killed.
December 69	The Senate recognised Vespasian as emperor. He had the support of the legions in both the east and west, and for the first time in many years, Rome experienced political stability under the Flavian dynasty.

ACTIVITY 14.18

Assess the impact of Nero's reign on Rome and the empire.

Images of the Julio-Claudian rulers

Tiberius

The ancient sources have generally depicted Tiberius in a hostile fashion. The lasting image of him is a Tacitean-based version. Tacitus aimed to blacken Tiberius' character to fit his agenda of showing the evils of one-man rule. He wrote six books attempting to build up a picture of Tiberius as a cruel, grim and terrifying tyrant. At various times, he describes him as cryptic, secretive, keeping his true motives hidden, repressing his feelings, deceptive, dissembling, hypocritical, insincere, crafty, resentful, arrogant, morose, hesitant and secretly sensual.

However, a careful reading of the sources, and particularly Tacitus, discloses that 'certain features of the Tacitean Tiberius … carried praise not blame'.[79] He was an admired military commander, an excellent administrator with a firm sense of duty, and he had a respect for tradition and the policies laid down by Augustus.

FIGURE 14.32 A cameo of Tiberius

The images of Tiberius produced during his reign reveal something of what he hoped to show about himself. His busts tend to resemble Augustus, although he probably looked nothing like him, and the images on his coins show his loyalty to Augustus, his military achievements and the honours and powers that formed the basis of his position as princeps.

Caligula

Caligula has been depicted as a mad, debauched, cruel despot who thought of himself as a god. There is no surviving account from Tacitus of Caligula to assess this view, but Suetonius referred to him as a 'monster'. Of course, Suetonius recorded court gossip and his view is probably exaggerated.

Caligula's coins tend to emphasise his lineage from Augustus via his mother Agrippina the Elder, and feature Germanicus and his sisters. He does not recognise his grandfather Agrippa or his predecessor, Tiberius.

FIGURE 14.33 Coins of Caligula and his three sisters

Claudius

Claudius seems to be remembered as a bumbling, dribbling, stammering idiot who was totally manipulated by his wives and freedmen. In fact, he was highly intelligent and an efficient administrator with a concern for the social welfare of the people.

The themes on his coins and cameos feature links with his father Drusus and brother Germanicus and their military achievements, his relationship with the Praetorians, his concern for the grain supply, and fourth wife Agrippina and her lineage.

FIGURE 14.34 Gemma Claudia showing two couples: Claudius and Agrippina and Germanicus and Agrippina the Elder

Nero

Nero is often depicted as cruel and depraved; a mother-killer; and an artistic philhellene who drove in chariot contests, was recklessly extravagant, who 'fiddled while Rome burned' and persecuted the Christians. His earlier coins show his relationship with his mother, and links with Augustus and the Praetorian Guard, while later coins reveal his artistic endeavours, his successful concert tour of Greece and his identification as Helios the sun-god.

FIGURE 14.35 A coin showing Nero with his mother, Agrippina the Younger

14.3 The empire

Expansion and consolidation of the empire

Tiberius

Tiberius followed Augustus' advice to avoid extension of the empire beyond its present frontiers except where it was necessary for security.

- The northern frontier was maintained at the Rhine after Germanicus' attempts to extend it to the Elbe were curtailed by Tiberius. His belief that the rebellious tribes beyond the Rhine could be 'left to their own internal disturbances'[80] was justified when some years later, after the Romans had gone, national rivalries turned the German tribes led by Maroboduus and Arminius against each other.
- Tiberius used a number of methods to secure the Danube frontier. He:
  - hired a native leader to use the Suebi and Marcommani to keep watch on the Upper Danube.
  - strengthened the Middle Danube region by combining the previous senatorial provinces of Achaea and Macedonia with Moesia under the competent imperial legate Poppaeus Sabinus, who was left in charge of this large province for 20 years.

  - changed Augustus' arrangement of the Lower Danube, which was a division between two Thracian kings. When trouble between them erupted, Tiberius replaced them and appointed a Roman resident to supervise the new kings. There was intermittent trouble in this area until 46 when it was finally organised as a province.
- He strengthened the eastern frontiers by 'astute diplomacy without warfare'.[81] He:
  - sent Germanicus to the East in 17 AD to settle the question of the kingship of Armenia, where he appointed Ataxias III to the throne
  - annexed the client-kingdoms of Cappadocia and Commagene
  - added Cilicia to Syria
  - installed a new king in Parthia.
- The only serious frontier problem for Tiberius was in Africa. Tacfarinas, a Numidian and once a member of the Roman army, carried out successful guerrilla raids on the province of Africa for years (17–23). In 21, Junius Blaesus was put in command and succeeded in breaking the back of the insurrection, and within two years peace returned to the province.

Caligula

Caligula reversed Augustus' foreign policy and, instead, was autocratic, provocative and erratic.

- He went to the Rhine frontier himself, since he needed the support of the army. He used the pretext that he wished to strengthen the frontiers, but in fact was concerned that one of the Rhine commanders, Aemilius Lepidus, was in league with two of his sisters in a conspiracy. He ordered the death of Lepidus.
- Sulpicius Galba, the future Roman emperor, was given command of the Upper Rhine, although Caligula's objectives in Germany were unclear.
- Whether Caligula seriously considered invading Britain or not, his army refused to make the crossing. He announced its annexation even though no military action was taken.
- His actions in Africa were very provocative. He deposed Mauretania's client-king (Ptolemy) and ordered him to commit suicide in preparation for its annexation, but its people resisted. The senatorial governor in Africa was reduced to the status of a civil authority, and handed over the troops to an imperial legate.
- In the East, he:
  - restored some friendly kings and princes to their former thrones, hoping to bind them to him personally, and found kingdoms for others he favoured
  - he restored the Commagene to Antiochus and gave to his friend Herod Agrippa the territories belonging to Herod's uncles, creating major disorders in that part of the world
  - weakened Rome's position in the East by reversing Augustus' policy of strengthening the frontiers against Parthia. By removing the King of Armenia from his throne, he gave Parthia the opportunity to regain influence in Armenia.

Claudius

Claudius' foreign policy of expansion and assimilation tended to follow that of Julius Caesar rather than of Augustus. His reign was one of military achievements, since he desired to be known as 'extender of the empire'.

He extended the frontiers if he thought it appropriate, and believed that direct Roman rule was preferable to client-kingdoms. He added five provinces.

- Although Claudius did not basically change Tiberius' policy towards the Rhine and Germany, he did extend the Roman frontier to the mouth of the Rhine; Corbulo carried this out for him.
- Claudius believed that Gaul would never be completely Romanised while Britain remained independent, and this was one of the reasons for its annexation. He also believed that a successful British conquest would strengthen his regime and increase his popularity. In this he read the Roman people accurately.

- Fifty thousand troops crossed the Channel in 43, and Claudius followed with reinforcements. When Camulodunum (Colchester) was taken, he returned to Rome, leaving the legions to subdue further territory.
- Caratacus, a king of the Catuvellauni tribe, led the Britons' resistance to the Romans, and although other tribes submitted, Caratacus continued the fight for the independence of his people. He was eventually captured and sent to Rome. Caractacus and his family were pardoned by Claudius, who had been impressed by his dignity and strength.
- By 54, most of England south of a line drawn south to west from Lindum (Lincoln) was under Roman control.
- A number of client-kingdoms, including the Regni and Iceni, continued to exist.
- Although the city of Camulodunum became a Roman veteran colony and the centre of Caesar worship, it was the growing port city of Londinium (London) which became the headquarters of the imperial governor.

- At the beginning of his reign, Claudius had to deal with the rebellion in Mauretania, which was a legacy of Caligula. He annexed it and divided it into two provinces: Tingitana and Caesariensis.
- Claudius returned control of Achaea and Macedonia once more to the Senate's control, while Noricum, on the northern Danube frontier, was governed by an equestrian procurator.
- In the East, Claudius:
  - annexed and organised new provinces (Lycia in 43 and Thrace in 46)
  - reversed Caligula's arrangements for Judaea (44)
  - returned Commagene to its former ruler
  - enlarged Syria with the addition of Ituraea
  - spread Roman influence around the Black Sea
  - dealt with Caligula's weak policy towards Parthia by strengthening Armenia after 49 when a Roman nominee, Mithridates, was placed on the throne
  - promoted internal strife in Parthia in order to keep the Parthians occupied.

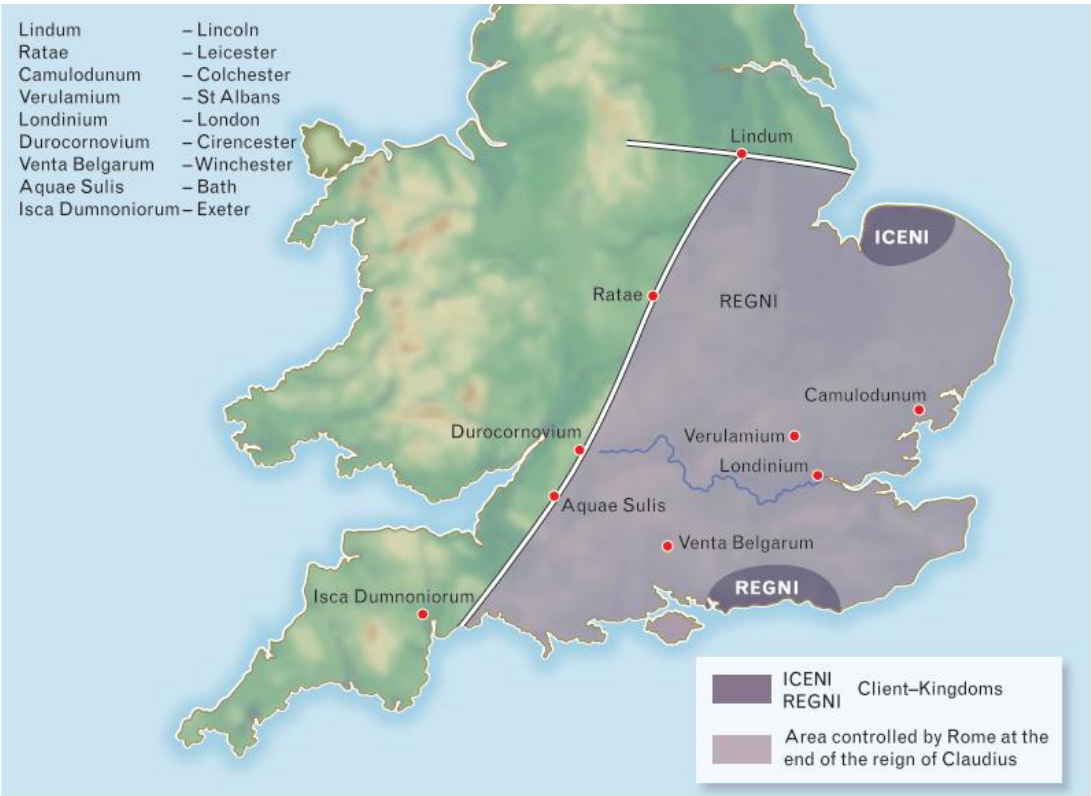

FIGURE 14.36 The extent of Roman control in Britain at the end of the reign of Claudius, 54 AD

Nero

It appears that Nero had very little interest in the provinces apart from Greece, for which he had a passion because of the artistic accomplishments of its people.

- In 67, Nero responded to a flattering delegation from Greece (Achaea) by freeing the province from the authority of the governor of Macedonia and granting it immunity from taxation. To compensate for the loss of the province, Nero gave the Senate control of Sardinia.
- There appear to have been no problems along the Rhine frontier, but although nothing was recorded of events in the western provinces, it was from this area that the movement to eliminate Nero came in 68–69.
- A dangerous situation arose in Britain with the uprising of Boudicca of the Iceni. See p. 541 for the Julio-Claudians and the army.
- The Danube frontier caused no trouble at this time.
- There is very little information on affairs in Africa during Nero's reign.
- Nero faced his greatest dangers in the East.
  - The Roman nominee on the throne of Armenia was replaced with the Parthian king's brother. Nero was advised to use force in Armenia and the Roman commander Corbulo crossed the Euphrates in 57, captured its capital and placed Tigranes on the throne, provoking the Parthians.
  - Corbulo began negotiations, and the Parthians and Romans reached a compromise: the Parthian king's brother was reinstated in Armenia but was installed by the Romans and was crowned in a ceremony in Rome. This marked the beginning of 50 years of peace between Parthia and Rome.
- The province of Judaea was another trouble spot.
  - The Jewish desire for independence, the mismanagement of Roman officials between 62 and 64 and the Roman preoccupation with Armenia and Parthia led to rebellion in 66.
  - In the following year, Jerusalem was heavily fortified by the Jews and Josephus raised a force of 60 000 with which to defend Galilee. The future Roman emperor, Vespasian, was given the command, and in 67 and 68 gradually overran the country.
  - The death of Nero interrupted his task and it was not until the following year that Jerusalem was finally captured. Vespasian's son Titus totally destroyed the city.

ACTIVITY 14.19

1 In what way:
- did Tiberius follow Augustus' example with regard to the empire
- was Caligula provocative in his treatment of the empire
- did Claudius follow the example of Julius Caesar in his frontier policy?

2 How and why did Nero make a special case of Greece?

The relationship of the princeps and the army

When Augustus established the principate, he understood the need for keeping control over the army, and this remained the basis of the princeps' power throughout the Julio-Claudian period; the troops took a personal oath of allegiance to the princeps. The army was no longer a weapon used by individual generals but was dependent on the state in the form of the princeps for its pay, general welfare and pensions of land or cash on retirement.

It became important for each new emperor to maintain the support of the legions and it helped if he happened to have played some role in the army. Unfortunately:

- only Tiberius had a long and distinguished military career before he became ruler, as did his brother Drusus, and his son, Drusus
- Caligula, despite being the son of the great general Germanicus and having been brought up among the Rhine army, had no military experience although he attempted to create an image of a commander when he went to Gaul, even though he fought no battles
- Claudius had no personal relationship with the army, but knew he had to address this and so personally led his troops to subdue Britain in 43
- Nero made no attempt to create a military image as he was interested in artistic pursuits, and his emphasis on these, to the detriment of the troops, upset the army.

FIGURE 14.37 Modern interpretation of a 1st-century AD legionary

Tiberius and the army

Tiberius, who had always had a good relationship with the legions, had been hailed *imperator* several times and celebrated military triumphs. Unfortunately, however, Augustus' regulations concerning pay and years of service had encountered some difficulties.

Mutinies in Pannonia and Lower Germany in 14 AD

In the year Tiberius became ruler (14 AD), two mutinies broke out among the troops in Pannonia (on the Danube) and in Lower Germany (on the Rhine). Although these outbreaks were not personal protests against Tiberius, a change of ruler gave the troops the opportunity to show their dissatisfaction with existing conditions in the army, their pay and concern about future terms of service. Their grievances included the following:

1 The usual term of service (20 years) was often prolonged, so that 'old men, mutilated by wounds' were 'serving their 30th and 40th year',[82] and even after discharge many soldiers were kept on as reserves.

2 The pay of two and a half sesterces a day was not considered enough for the soldiers since one-third of it was deducted for clothes, weapons and equipment.

3 They complained about the savagery of the company commanders, the floggings, the drudgery of service, the severe winters and being 'dragged off to some remote country and settled in some waterlogged swamps or untilled mountainside'.[83]

Tiberius sent his son Drusus to Pannonia, accompanied by two battalions of the Praetorian Guard, plus the pick of his own German bodyguard, directing him 'to act as the circumstances required'.[84] Drusus addressed the mutineers and read them a letter from Tiberius who referred to them as his comrades and promised them that as soon as he was over the shock of Augustus' death he would put their claims to the Senate. Drusus addressed the men, and though not 'a practiced orator, he spoke with natural dignity'.[85] He promised them a fair and merciful hearing from his father if discipline was restored. They pleaded for his pardon and a delegation was sent to Tiberius in Rome.

The mutiny of the army in Lower Germany was far more serious as the numbers involved were much larger and there was the possibility of the revolt spreading to the troops in Upper Germany and the frontier being abandoned.

Tiberius directed Germanicus, who was in Gaul, to deal with the rebellion. When he arrived at the camp, the mutinous troops 'assailed him with all manner of complaints'[86] and demanded that he end their

crushing service and to pay them the legacies left by Augustus. Germanicus did not show evidence of great leadership by 'making hastily improvised' concessions: 'releases and payments and mild measures'[87] in the name of the emperor. Tiberius 'was not pleased that Germanicus had courted the army's goodwill by money payments and accelerated discharges'.[88] However, he granted the troops in Pannonia the same concessions as those awarded to the troops in Germany.

After the 14 AD mutinies, Tiberius paid particular attention to improving the discipline and efficiency of the troops on the frontiers and to maintaining economy of the forces, as well as delegating military campaigns to the best men – such as Junius Blaesus – wherever possible.

For the remainder of his reign there were only minor difficulties with the army as Tiberius' long years as a successful military commander had created a bonus of loyalty among the legions. He avoided aggressive action unless it was necessary and always preferred to use diplomacy rather than force: 'Tiberius was happier to have secured peace by prudent negotiation than if he had fought a victorious war.'[89]

Caligula

Caligula was 'born in the camp and brought up with the troops as his comrades'.[90] His relationship with the army and the Praetorian Guard was based on the respect the troops had for his father Germanicus, and grandfather Drusus (Tiberius' brother).

However, although he retained their loyalty, once he became emperor, his behaviour towards the army was marked with the same irrationality as with everything else.

Needing to emulate his ancestors, he planned two military campaigns, one to Germany and another to Britain, but the details in Suetonius are rather confused and reveal no major military action.

> After reaching his headquarters, Gaius showed how keen and severe a commander-in-chief he intended to be by ignominiously dismissing any general who was late in bringing along from various places the auxiliaries he required. Then, when he reviewed the legions, he discharged many veteran leading centurions on the grounds of age and incapacity, though some had only a few days of their service to run; and calling the remainder a pack of greedy fellows, scaled down their retirement bonus to sixty gold pieces each.

SOURCE 14.37 Suetonius, *Gaius*, 44

So desperate was he to develop a military image that, according to Suetonius, he:

- sent a letter to the Senate claiming to have captured the son of the British King Cunobelinus who, in fact, had been banished and had come over to the Romans voluntarily
- arranged a number of melodramatic ruses when it appeared there would be no military action. In these he galloped out several times to chase a non-existent enemy proclaiming his success and bravery
- drew up his troops and artillery in battle formation facing the Channel separating Gaul and Britain. 'No one had the least notion what was in his mind, when suddenly, he gave the order: "gather sea-shells!" … and made the troops fill their helmets and tunic-laps with them; commemorating this victory with the building of a tall lighthouse … then he promised every soldier a bounty of four gold pieces'[91]
- prepared for a lavish forthcoming triumph by supplementing 'the few prisoners and the deserters who had come over from the barbarians'[92] by choosing the tallest and most imposing Gauls to disguise themselves as German tribesmen
- planned before leaving Gaul to 'massacre the legionaries who long ago … had mutinously besieged the headquarters of his father Germanicus'. Although his friends stopped him from doing this, he still ordered 'the execution of every 10th man'.[93]

The Praetorians had raised him up as emperor, but it was two tribunes of the Guard who played the leading role in assassinating him.

Claudius

Claudius, who had no military background, made it a platform of his policy to cultivate both the Praetorian Guard and the army throughout his reign.

He chose capable generals such as Galba, Corbulo, Vespasian and Suetonius Paulinus, and rewarded:

- his troops with titles. He gave those who refused to follow the Governor of Dalmatia in a planned revolt in 41 the title 'Claudius' own loyal and true'
- soldiers with grants of citizenship, certificates for honourable discharges and the right to leave legacies to their children.

He also cared for the morale of those troops serving on the frontiers, and set up veteran colonies throughout the empire.

In return, his troops saluted him as *imperator* 27 times and remained relatively disciplined and loyal throughout his reign.

> ... he decided that Britain was the country where a real triumph could be most readily earned. Its conquest had not been attempted since Julius Caesar's day; and the Britons were now threatening vengeance because the Senate refused to extradite certain deserters who had landed in Gaul during Caligula's reign. ... He marched north through Gaul, crossed the Channel without incident and was back in Rome in six months. He had fought no battles, and suffered no casualties, but reduced a large part of the island to submission.

SOURCE 14.38 Suetonius, *Claudius*, 17

Roman legions occupied Britain and the town of Camulodunum (modern Colchester) became a Roman veteran colony which helped in the Romanisation of Britain. Also, a number of tribal groups chose to become allies of Rome (client-kingdoms). The Iceni was one such tribe.

Nero

Like his immediate predecessors – Caligula and Claudius – Nero owed his position to the Praetorians, and until his last years they continued to support him. However, he made no attempt to visit the troops stationed in the provinces where his capable generals – Corbulo, Suetonius Paulinus and Vespasian, who had served under Claudius – dealt with the problems in Parthia, Britain and Judaea.

During the governorship of Suetonius Paulinus in Britain, the Iceni (clients of Rome) rebelled against Roman control and treatment. The ancient sources, Tacitus and Dio Cassius, give conflicting views as to the cause of the widespread rebellion supposedly led by the Iceni queen Boudicca. Tacitus focuses on a personal attack by Roman troops on Boudicca (and her daughters) after the death of her husband, King Prasutagus, while Dio emphasises the demands of the Romans that the Iceni should pay back sums of money loaned to them by Claudius.

> His dominions were ravaged by the centurions; slaves pillaged his house, and his effects were seized as lawful plunder. His wife, Boudicca was disgraced with cruel stripes, her daughters were ravished, and the most illustrious of the Icenians, were by force, deprived of the positions which had been transmitted to them by their ancestors. The whole country was considered as a legacy bequeathed to the plunderers. The relations of the deceased king were reduced to slavery.

SOURCE 14.39 After the death of the client-king Prasutagus, in Tacitus, *Annals*, 14, 31

Boudicca gained the support of other discontented tribes and a serious revolt spread through the south-east. Despite the efforts of the Roman governor, Suetonius Paulinus, the towns of Colchester, St Albans and London were destroyed and according to Tacitus – probably inaccurate – over 70 000 people were killed. Reinforcements from Rome eventually enabled Suetonius to put down this serious threat to Roman control of Britain.

Nero cared little that some of his policies, such as the depreciation of currency, adversely affected army pay, or that his autocratic and humiliating behaviour was losing him the support of the troops.

In the latter part of his reign, senators and military leaders were involved in a number of conspiracies against him. After two failed attempts, he became suspicious of the support Corbulo (his general in the East at the time) had among the army and masses, and summoned him, plus the governors of Upper and Lower Germany, to Greece where they were ordered to commit suicide.

It was the military leaders in the western provinces who led the revolt in the overthrow of Nero.

ACTIVITY 14.20

1. What was Tiberius' relationship with the army?
2. Identify the grievances of the troops in Panonnia (on the Danube) and in Lower Germany (on the Rhine) that led to mutinies when Tiberius became emperor.
3. What was the significance of the timing of these mutinies?
4. How did Tiberius maintain the loyalty of the troops for the remainder of his reign?
5. How did Gaius Caligula and Claudius attempt to develop a military images?
6. How did Nero lose support of the army?

Administration of the empire

The Julio-Claudians generally maintained the administrative system adopted by Augustus

Tiberius

Tiberius' government of the empire was carried out with real statesmanship. He 'ensured also that the provinces were not harassed by new impositions and were not aggravated through official acquisitiveness or brutality'.[94] He:

- paid special attention to his choice of governors and retained as many of them as he could (Gaius Poppaeus Sabinus and Quintus Junius Blaesus) at their posts for extended periods to increase efficiency
- maintained strict discipline of troops in the provinces as well as strict supervision of imperial legates to avoid oppression
- sought to maintain justice not only for provincials but also for Roman citizens in the provinces
- checked the plundering of equestrian tax companies and protected Egypt from excessive taxation
- avoided interfering in senatorial provinces but kept a close eye on their administration
- gave provincial assemblies a greater degree of autonomy
- initiated road and bridge building and established new settlements in Syria, Spain, Moesia, Dalmatia and Pannonia
- gave generously to provincial cities during disasters.

Tiberius wrote to the Senate reporting that an incursion by Tacfarinas had again broken the peace in Africa. He requested them to choose a governor who was an experienced commander and physically fit for service.

SOURCE 14.40 Tacitus, *Annals*, 3. 29

Gaius Junius Silanus, accused of extortion by the people of Asia of which he had been governor ... was unquestionably guilty of brutality and extortion and was outlawed and banished to an island.

SOURCE 14.41 Tacitus, *Annals* 3. 64

In the same year [AD 17] 12 famous cities in the province of Asia were overwhelmed by an earthquake ... Sardis suffered worst and attracted most sympathy. Tiberius promised it 10 million sesterces and remitted all taxation by the treasury or its imperially controlled branches for five years ... it was decided to send a senatorial inspector to rehabilitate the sufferers.

SOURCE 14.42 Tacitus, *Annals*, 2, 45

ACTIVITY 14.21

1. Draw a diagram illustrating the statesman-like approach of Tiberius to the government of the empire.
2. How do Sources 14.40–14.42 reflect this approach?

Caligula

He was autocratic, provocative, erratic and inept, and his treatment of Jews in particular 'revealed the havoc an irresponsible ruler might create'.[95]

Caligula was anti-Semitic and his policy towards the Jews was to lead to future discontent. The Greeks and Jews in the Egyptian city of Alexandria were hostile towards one another. The Greeks were angry that the Romans had granted the Jews a large degree of autonomy. They not only refused them local citizenship but also sent a deputation to Caligula to demand that the Jews be forced to display statues of the emperor in the synagogues in Alexandria and Jerusalem.

Caligula supported their request but died before it could be carried out.

Claudius

Claudius was interested in raising the status of the provincials by encouraging Romanisation and extending Roman citizenship or Latin rights to both individuals and groups. He was responsible for founding many colonies, was always interested in good provincial administration and made it possible for more provincials to enter the Senate. He also attempted to curb the anti-Semitism of the Greeks of Alexandria and to insist that the Jews refrain from making demands for local citizenship.

The part played by Claudius' freedmen in improving provincial administration

Due to the growth of the empire and the increasing amount of provincial administration, Claudius was aided by a centralised bureaucracy made up of departments led by freedmen (ex-slaves), originally from

Greece or Asia. Although they were intelligent, capable and loyal advisors, they inspired hostility because of the power they wielded in the imperial household and in the empire, their great wealth and the honours bestowed on them by a servile Senate.

The four most influential heads of departments were:

- Narcissus, a kind of secretary-general (*ab epistulis*) to Claudius, who handled the huge amount of correspondence (letters, resolutions and reports) in Greek and Latin that passed between the emperor, the Roman provincial officials and provincials in all parts of the empire. He also granted Roman citizenship, and awarded commissions and promotions in the army.
- Pallas, head of the financial department (*a rationibus*), who supervised all revenues that flowed into the imperial provincial treasuries and money from Claudius' personal estates. He also controlled the grain supply, payment of the army and public works.
- Callistus, the legal secretary (*a libellis*), who dealt with all petitions and requests to Claudius from individuals and communities and with all judicial enquiries. He prepared all papers on investigations and cases that came before the emperor.
- Polybius, the privy seal and librarian (*a studiis*), who provided Claudius with material for speeches and edicts, as well as acting as literary advisor.

Although numerous other freedmen were employed in the imperial bureaucracy, these men were the chief officers of the state.

Due to the influence of Pallas, Felix, his younger brother (also a Greek freedman) became the governor of Judaea. This was unprecedented as this position should have been held by someone of high equestrian rank. His rule was marked by internal disturbances, feuds, cruelty, bribery and the arrest and imprisonment of Paul the Apostle. When Felix returned to Rome he was accused of killing and plundering the inhabitants of Caesarea, but escaped punishment due to his brother's influence with Nero.

ACTIVITY 14.22

Explain the role played in the administration of the empire under Claudius by the heads of the bureaucratic departments he set up:

- Narcissus
- Pallas
- Callistus
- Polybius.

Nero

In the early part of Nero's reign, the economic welfare of the provinces was promoted.

- Governors charged with extortion were punished more readily. Of the 12 governors tried for maladministration during the first seven years of his reign, over half were condemned.
- An edict of 57 AD prevented governors from organising wild-beast and gladiatorial displays in their provinces.
- The activities of the local tax collectors were curbed even further.
- Substantial aid was given to the Campanian cities, including Pompeii, which suffered an earthquake in 63 AD.
- An attempt to stimulate trade throughout the empire by abolishing harbour dues (establishing free trade) was a good scheme, but was blocked by the Senate because of practical difficulties.

In the latter part of his reign he showed little interest in provincial administration, except for Greece which he exempted from taxation.

A COMMENT ON...

The importance of Syria and Egypt within the empire

> Egypt was of vital importance for the *annona* or corn supply of Rome, the bulk of which was carried in huge 'freighters' that plied between Alexandria and Ostia. The holder of Egypt could hold Rome to ransom ... hence the alarm of Tiberius at the visit of Germanicus to Egypt in 19... Germanicus was far too important a person to be at large in that country, and his professed interests in its Antiquities was regarded with suspicion. Rebellious and unsettled Egypt certainly was, and all Roman emperors dreaded the insolence of the mob of Alexandria.

SOURCE 14.43 Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 189

> The Roman governor of Syria held one of the most exacting posts in the empire, peace or war. He confronted Parthia, with all that that implied. His was the prime responsibility for dealing with the client kingdoms – Commagene, Ituraea, Judaea and the rest. His own province was wealthy and populous with some 10 million inhabitants. The centre of commerce by land and sea, it was also famous for its own products. It was a melting pot of Hellenic and oriental cultures and religions. Antioch, the capital, was in size the third city of the empire ... Some of the ablest imperial administrators held this key post.

SOURCE 14.44 Dudley, *The World of Tacitus*, p. 191

Development of the imperial cult throughout the empire

After 12 BC there was a growth of Caesar worship which took the form of the cults of 'Rome and Augustus' and 'Rome and the Deified Julius'.

Augustus could see the need for a common practice that would unite all the provinces in loyalty to Rome, but Eastern customs, such as the worship of a ruler, would never be accepted in Rome and Italy. Neither could he officially encourage personal worship of himself, particularly by Roman citizens in the provinces. However, he could adopt a compromise by:

1 linking the fortunes of his family with those of the state. In this way he could legitimately allow the worship of 'Rome and Augustus' in the provinces
2 combining the Roman reverence for dead ancestors with the Eastern practice of ruler worship. This would allow the worship of 'Rome and the Deified Julius' by Roman citizens in the provinces.

After he died and was officially deified, a new college of priests called 'Augustales', drawn from freedmen, was established.

During the Julio-Claudian dynasty, the worship of Augustus continued alongside members of his family in cult centres throughout the empire, providing an opportunity for provincials to identify with Rome and its rulers, and to express their loyalty. The imperial cult had a wider appeal than local cults.

FIGURE 14.38 The cult sanctuary of the Augustales in Herculaneum

Tiberius

Although Tiberius and his mother Livia financed the building of a temple and priesthood to the deified Augustus, Tiberius did not encourage an imperial cult for himself and urged people to see him as mortal. He also refused to allow his mother's deification when she died. This did not occur until the reign of Claudius. Tiberius reluctantly allowed a temple to be built to 'Tiberius, Livia and the Senate' in Smyrna on the Aegean coast in the province of Asia, in gratitude for Tiberius' support after the devastating earthquake in 17 AD.

Tacitus records what Tiberius said when rejecting a Spanish request to build a temple to him.

> To have my statue worshipped among the gods in every province would be presumptuous and arrogant. Besides the honour to Augustus would be meaningless, if it is debased by indiscriminate flattery. As for myself senators, I emphasise to you that I am human, performing human tasks and am content to occupy the first place among men.

SOURCE 14.45 Tacitus, *Annals*, 4, 34–8

The Sebasteion, a cult complex in Aphrodisias in modern Turkey, dedicated to Aphrodite and the Julio-Claudians, was started during the reign of Tiberius in 20 AD. It took two generations to complete, which occurred in the rein of Nero.

A COMMENT ON

The Sebasteion in ancient Aphrodisia

- The Sebasteion, excavated in 1979–81, was a grandiose temple complex comprising a monumental gateway (*propylon*) and two long, three-storey-high porticoes, originally with 180 sculpted panels including figures of the imperial family.
- An inscription on the gateway records 'To Aphrodite, the Divine Augusti and the People'. The connection between Aphrodite, the goddess, and the imperial house was particularly symbolic as the Julii (the family of Caesar, Augustus and his immediate successors) claimed divine descent from Venus (Aphrodite), who is referred to as the 'ancestral mother'.

Caligula

According to the ancient sources, Caligula – unlike Tiberius – saw himself as a god almost immediately and demanded that others treat him as such. He not only demanded divine status for himself from the Senate, but also the title of 'Augusta' for his grandmother Antonia, and the status of Vestal Virgins for his three sisters. When his sister Drusilla died, she was made a goddess and Caligula gave orders that she be given divine honours throughout the cities of the empire. He went to great lengths to see that his directions were carried out.

FIGURE 14.39 The remains of the Sebasteion in ancient Aphrodisias

According to Suetonius he also:

- introduced the Eastern ritual of obeisance
- sent for 'the most revered or artistically famous statues of the Greek deities including that of Jupiter at Olympia'[96] and replaced their heads with his own
- established a shrine to himself and a priesthood who made sacrifices to him as a god
- set up a statue to himself as Jupiter in the temple in Jerusalem.

Claudius

Like Tiberius, Claudius refused divine honours for himself, although he permitted them for his grandmother Livia, who became Livia Augusta. He was restrained when it came to the imperial cult in the provinces, but although he refused to allow the people of Alexandria to dedicate a temple to him as a god, he was worshipped in the eastern provinces and in Britain.

FIGURE 14.40 A model of the temple to Claudius in Camulodunum

The Temple of Claudius in Camulodunum (Colchester in Britain) was the centre of the imperial cult; however, unlike in other areas of the empire, to the British this temple more than anything else summed up Roman rule and 'represented the arrogant excesses of a Roman culture that had stolen their lands, taken their wealth and insulted their own gods'.[97] Their feelings were expressed during the reign of Nero when it was burnt to the ground during the rebellion of Boudicca.

There is also a statue in the Vatican Museum of Claudius as the god Jupiter. On his death Claudius was voted divine honours.

FIGURE 14.41 Nero and Agrippina as the goddess Fortuna from the Sebasteion

Nero

At first, Nero rejected statues of himself in Rome; however, in the East he was represented as Apollo and Jupiter, and it appears that he liked the adulation he received in the provinces. He and his mother are represented in the Sebasteion, but it is likely that many other representations of him as part of an imperial cult would have been destroyed after his death.

ACTIVITY 14.23

1. What were the main benefits of the imperial cult to:
   - Rome
   - the provincials?
2. What was the attitude of each Julio-Claudian princeps to being worshipped in the provinces and in Rome?

CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

14.1 THE CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- The first century BC marked the decline of the Roman republic due to ambitious generals, illegal appointments, factional conflicts, power groupings and civil wars. Julius Caesar knew that the republic was a name only without form or substance. He accepted the powers and honours granted him, such as dictator for life, but his perceived arrogance and bypassing of traditional practices caused offense to some who believed he wanted to become king. His assassination by 60 conspirators in 44 was a turning point in the republic. After his adopted son and heir Octavian organised the deification of Caesar, avenged his death and secured control of the Roman world – after the deaths of Antony and Cleopatra – he brought in the era of one-man rule by establishing the principate (rule by the princeps or 'first citizen') and adopting the name 'Augustus'. Conservative by nature, he aimed to keep up the pretence that he had restored the republic, but he knew that peace could only be maintained if he kept control of the armed forces and provinces, which he was able to do with *maius imperium* (greater than all others with *imperium*). His reign as princeps brought peace and prosperity, he appeared to share the running of the empire with the senatorial and equestrian classes, and initiated reforms that increased efficiency, restored traditional values and looked after the welfare of the people.
- Under Julius Caesar and Augustus' two stepsons, Tiberius and Drusus, the empire was extended but by the end of Augustus' reign the provinces were pacified and consolidated, and the frontiers were set as much as possible at defensible points (e.g. rivers). The two areas outside the empire that still needed to be watched were Germania and Parthia.

14.2 THE PRINCIPATE OF THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS

- Augustus' death was followed by a series of Julio-Claudian rulers. Instead of a Julian successor, Augustus had to finally settle for the Claudian, Tiberius, his stepson by Livia. During the next 54 years the principates of Tiberius, Gaius (Caligula), Claudius and Nero changed due to the character of each princeps, the growing servility of the Senate, the interference of imperial women and the part played by imperial freedmen and the Praetorian Guard. Tiberius and Claudius attempted to follow Augustus' example, but the rule of Gaius Caligula and Nero deviated dramatically, bringing the principate into disrepute.
- A satisfactory relationship with the Senate (seen as essential by Augustus in running the empire) became more and more difficult, even for Tiberius who genuinely sought the Senate's aid. They had become more servile, would not speak their minds, became suspicious of his motives and fearful of the laws of treason. Gaius Caligula dispensed with the Senate's services, made no attempt to hide his contempt and humiliated them. Like Tiberius, Claudius showed the senators great respect and attempted to increase their prestige, but he weakened the Senate as a partner in the government and established an imperial bureaucracy manned by freedmen. Nero's relationship with the Senate was reasonable while he was under the influence of Seneca, but later the Senators reached new lows in sycophancy.
- Tiberius was noted for his excellent administration with his main efforts focused on improving the welfare of the people of Rome and particularly those in the provinces; Gaius Caligula introduced no significant reforms; Claudius developed into an efficient administrator in Rome, Italy and the provinces;

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Nero's early policy showed a concern with the problems facing the Roman people, but his later policies were generally destructive, excessive and cruel.

- The Praetorian Guard – an elite unit in the Roman army employed to maintain the security of Rome and the imperial family – and its Praetorian Prefects such as Sejanus (Tiberius), Macro (Gaius Caligula), Burrus and Tigellinus (Nero), became a vital force in the power politics of Rome between 14–69 AD. They played a significant role not only in the succession of three out of four of the Julio-Claudians, were involved in a number of plots to overthrow them and were certainly involved in the murder of one, possibly two.
- Many of the buildings constructed under the Julio-Claudians were practical measures to address the needs and welfare of the people of Rome and as a response to natural disasters such as floods, fires and earthquakes. Some were a form of propaganda, some symbols of power, some completions of previous unfinished buildings and others, private imperial structures. All these building projects provided employment for labourers and artisans.
- Seneca, a philosopher and politician, was brought back from exile by Agrippina the Younger, fourth wife of Claudius, to act as tutor and advisor to her son Nero. From 54 to 62 AD he directed Nero's adolescence, drafted most of Nero's speeches, tried to reduce the undue political influence of Agrippina on her son, prevented scandalous behaviours and possible murders. He knew of Nero's wish to murder his mother and did nothing to stop it. He lost control over Nero after the death of Burrus and the murder of Agrippina the Younger. Nero forced Seneca to commit suicide.
- Imperial women, such as Livia, Agrippina the Elder, Messalina and Agrippina the Younger, interfered in the continuing problem of the succession.
- A conspiracy against Nero to-re-establish the republic, and the executions that followed, revealed how universally loathed he was. He had no support in the Senate, and lost the support of the army of the western provinces. He fled from Rome and committed suicide at age 32. The death of Nero was followed by a tumultuous year when four emperors ruled (Galba, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian).

14.3 THE EMPIRE

- Tiberius followed Augustus' advice to avoid extension of the empire beyond its present frontiers except where it was necessary for security; Gaius Caligula reversed Augustus' foreign policy and was autocratic, provocative and erratic; Claudius tended to follow the policy of expansion and assimilation of Julius Caesar rather than Augustus, and added five provinces including the annexation of Britannia; Nero appears to have had little interest in the provinces except for Greece. He was faced with three trouble spots: Armenian and Parthia, Britain and Judaea.
- Augustus understood the need for keeping control of the army and maintaining a good relationship with it. Tiberius had a long and distinguished military career, and always had a good relationship with the legions, had been hailed *imperator* several times and celebrated military triumphs. Tiberius faced two mutinies in Lower Germany and Pannonia the year he came to the throne due to grievances over pay and length of service. However, due to his handling of these mutinies, the remainder of his reign was untroubled. Caligula, despite being the son of Germanicus, had no military experience and his behaviour towards the army was marked with the same irrationality as with everything else. Claudius, who had no military background, made it a platform of his policy to cultivate the army throughout his reign: he chose capable generals, rewarded his troops, cared for their morale and set up veteran colonies. Nero made no attempt to visit the troops in the provinces, leaving problems to his capable generals, cared little if his policies affected the army and forced some of his generals to commit suicide.

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- Tiberius' government of the empire was carried out with real statesmanship; Caligula was autocratic, erratic, inept and anti-Semitic; Claudius encouraged Romanisation, extended Roman citizenship, tried to curb anti-Semitism and established an efficient bureaucracy in Rome (under the freedmen Narcissus, Pallas, Callistus and Polybius) to increase the efficiency of provincial administration; Nero, under the control of Seneca, promoted the economic welfare of the provinces, but in the latter part of his reign showed little interest in provincial administration.
- Augustus had seen the importance of an imperial cult in the provinces to help provincials express their loyalty to Rome and its rulers. Tiberius did not encourage a cult for himself and urged people to see him as a mortal, although he did allow a temple to be built in the province of Asia to 'Tiberius, Livia and the Senate' in gratitude for his support after an earthquake; Caligula saw himself as a god almost immediately and gave orders that he be accorded divine honours throughout the empire, even setting up a statue to himself as Jupiter in the temple in Jerusalem; Claudius was restrained when it came to an imperial cult in the provinces, but although he refused to allow the people of Alexandria to dedicate a temple to him as a god, he was worshipped in the eastern provinces and had a temple dedicated to the imperial cult built in Camulodunum in Britain. He, Agrippina and Nero were represented in the Sebasteion in Aphrodisias. Nero was represented as Apollo and Jupiter in the East.

Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- *Campus Martius*
- *delatores*
- *horrea*
- Imperial cult
- *maiestas*
- Praetorian Guard
- principate

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What was the cause of the recurring problem with the issue of succession during the principate of Augustus and his Julio-Claudian successors?

2) What changes occurred in the relationship between the army and princeps?

3) What was the significance of the personality/character of each Julio-Claudian on the nature of their principate?

4) How significant was the role of:
- Livia and Agrippina the Elder in the reign of Tiberius
- Macro in the reign of Gaius Caligula
- Agrippina the Younger and Burrus in the reign of Claudius
- Seneca, Poppaea and Tigellinus in the reign of Nero?

5) What is the perspective expressed in Tacitus of:
- the Julio-Claudians in general
- Tiberius in particular?

6) What is the perspective of Gaius Caligula expressed in Suetonius?

Historical skills

1) What do the following material remains reveal about Tiberius, Claudius and Nero?
- the Villa Jovis
- the *Aqua Claudia* and *horrea* at Ostia
- the *Domus Aurea*

2) Evaluate Tiberius' relationship with the Senate.

3) How and why did the relationship between the Senate and princeps change between 14–68 AD?

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4) Explain the part played by imperial women and the Praetorian Guard in the appointment of the Julio-Claudian rulers.

5) To what extent did the Julio-Claudians rule for the benefit of Rome?

6) How effectively was the empire governed during the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius?

7) To what extent did Claudius depart from the example of Augustus and Tiberius with regard to the empire's expansion?

8) Assess the impact of Nero's reign on Rome and the empire.

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Glossary

acropolis ('high-town') a high rocky outcrop, usually fortified; the stronghold of the community

adoratrice quasi-royal priestess in Ancient Egypt

aediles Roman magistrates responsible for public works, markets and festivals

agoge a 'raising' or 'upbringing' referring to Spartan education

agora marketplace

agrimia a type of goat with long horns that curl back, native to Crete

akinakes a type of double-edged dagger or short sword (originally Scythian), worn on the right side usually in an elaborate scabbard, the wearing of which was a sign of royal favour

alchemy a seemingly magical process of transformation, particularly in regard to the transmutation of matter

almanacs annual calendars that contained important dates and statistical information such as astronomical data

angaroi a Babylonian word referring to royal messengers

ankh the hieroglyph for life: the key or breath of life

anthropomorphic giving human features to something that is not human

antimony a mineral used by Egyptians as an eye cosmetic (kohl)

apadana refers to the audience hall of a Persian palace, often featuring rows of tall columns

Apiru 'dusty, dirty', a term used in texts throughout the Fertile Crescent for people variously described as rebels, outlaws and raiders

aquifers underground layers of permeable rock, sand or gravel that contain groundwater

archon chief Athenian magistrate

arstibara 'spear bearer', an important royal official

ashlar masonry masonry made of sawn, dressed, tooled or quarry-faced stone with proper bond

augury a practice where a special group of priests known as augurs who sought the will of the gods by interpreting significant signs

Augusta a title of religious and social significance associated with reverence and veneration

autocracy a system of government by one person with absolute power

autonomous independent, self-governing

auxilia non-Roman provincial auxiliary contingents that fought alongside the Roman legions

ba the soul represented as a human-headed bird that could revisit the tomb whenever it wanted

baldachin a ceremonial canopy of stone or fabric over a throne or altar

barque a ceremonial boat for carrying the statue of a god in a procession, carried on the shoulders of priests

barter exchanging one product for another

bastinado a form of punishment or torture that involved caning the soles of someone's feet

bier a moveable stand on which a body or coffin was carried to the tomb

blazon an identifying decoration on a shield

Boeotia the state of which Thebes was the predominant city

booty objects (spoils) taken from an enemy in war

bureaucracy a body of officials administering government departments

Cadmeia the ancient Theban citadel, or fortified core of the city

Campus Martius Latin for 'Field of Mars'; a 2-square-kilometre area of publicly owned open ground surrounded by public buildings during the time of Augustus

canopic jars pottery or stone jars with animal and human heads that contained the embalmed stomach, liver, lungs and intestines

capital in architecture is the topmost part of a column which supports the load of a beam or roof

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Capitol the southern summit of the Capitoline Hill, the symbolic centre of the Roman world and home to the city's three most important temples

capping an ancient Chinese manhood ceremony

carpentum a two-wheeled carriage with an arched covering

cataract rocky interruptions to the flow of a river, causing rapids

censorship the office of a censor who was elected every 5 years, for 18 months, and who controlled the list of citizens

cenotaph a monument erected in honour of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere

chthonic relating to the underground or underworld

Circus Maximus the venue for many forms of entertainment, such as chariot racing and gladiator contests

cists ancient coffins or burial chambers made from stone

cleruchy a settlement of Athenian citizens overseas

clientela a body of supportive attendants

client-kingdoms those who aligned themselves with the Roman Empire

codpieces genital guards

concubine a woman who lives with a man and has a sexual relationship with him but is not his wife

conjecture the expression of an opinion without sufficient evidence for proof

consul chief magistrate elected annually with the power and authority to command an army

co-regency joint rule

corvée forced recruitment of farmers to work on buildings and community tasks such as major water and land management schemes

cult temple temples in Ancient Egypt featuring images of deities, who were the recipients of daily worship

cuneiform one of the earliest systems of writing used in the Near East, distinguished by wedge-shaped marks made by a stylus on clay tablets

cursus honorum the sequential order of public offices held by aspiring politicians; a type of ladder of office

deification the act of regarding someone as a god

deified treated like a god or goddess

delatores informers

democracy rule by the people (*demos* – the people, *kratis* – rule of strength)

demos 'the people'

denarii (or denarius) was the standard Roman silver coin from 211 BC to 238–244 AD

dioklos a paved roadway across the Isthmus on which to drag ships

disarticulated bones separation of the bones of a skeleton

dowager queen a title given to the widow of a previous king to distinguish her from the wife of the present king

Druidism a Celtic pagan cult led by a priestly class of Druids

dynasty a line of kings and queens from the same family

electrum an alloy of gold and silver

emancipated not constrained or restricted by custom or tradition

epigram a short poem or pithy saying

epigraphic referring to inscriptions on monuments, stelae, and stone and clay tablets

epiphany a manifestation or revelation of a divine being

equestrian class originally those who could afford a horse, but later wealthy Roman businessmen, tax collectors and bankers

eugenics the practice, by selective breeding, of trying to improve the characteristics of offspring

eunuchs castrated males

faience a glaze made by heating quartz sand with soda until the quartz melted and solidified

fief an estate of land, especially one held on condition of feudal service

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flies of honour golden flies that were given as awards for valour in battle

franchise the rights of a citizen, especially the right to vote

frescoes paintings done on plaster while it is still wet and fresh

gypsum a common mineral (hydrated calcium sulfate) used to make plaster

hazarapatis 'commander of 1000', the highest official at court

Heb-sed the king's jubilee, generally held every 30 years to rejuvenate the king's powers and reinforce his authority to rule

hegemony political or military leadership or dominance of one state over another

Hellenistic the merging of Greek (Hellenic) and eastern cultural elements after the time of Alexander the Great

helots state-owned agricultural serfs whose lives were determined by the state

heretical a body of beliefs contrary to the orthodox beliefs associated with a religious system

hetairoi royal Companions

hierarchy graded in order from highest to lowest

hieratic script a simplified version of the hieroglyphic script in which the images were replaced with strokes

homoioi 'similars' or 'peers', often wrongly translated as 'equals'

hoplite a heavily-armed infantry soldier

hubris excessive pride

iconoclast a destroyer of images used in religious worship

iconography related to the subject matter of an image, picture or other representation

imperator an honorific title proclaimed by the troops of a commander after a great victory

imperium the power to command, including an army, held by consuls, praetors, dictators, proconsuls and pro-praetors

inhumation refers to the practice of burial as opposed to cremation

Janus in ancient Roman religion, Janus is the god of beginnings, gates, transitions, duality, doorways, passages and endings. He was usually depicted as having two faces, since he looks to the future and to the past

ka the life force or double

khepresh the blue war crown of the pharaoh

kleros (pl. *kleroi*) an allotment of land

kohl a fine black powder made from antimony (a metal) and used to darken around the eyes

koulouras (sing. *kouloura*) round, stone-lined storage pits built into the ground

krater a vessel for mixing wine and water

krypteia means 'secret' and was used to describe a body of young men employed to periodically kill helots

kurtash workers on royal or noble estates and households

kylix a wine-drinking cup with two handles

Laconia the territory of the city-state of Sparta

Lares deities worshipped as protectors of houses or particular localities

larnakes (sing. *larnax*) small decorated pottery chests or containers used by Minoans for burying their dead

lector priest the priest who recited prayers and spells at festivals and funerals

legate high-ranking officer in the Roman army, in charge of a legion

lictors attendants of magistrates who held *imperium*

lingua franca a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different

lintel the crossbeam support for a doorway

loess fine, fertile wind-driven earth

lot random or chance selection, as of drawing a name out of a receptacle

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lunette in reference to a stela, it represents the rounded space at the top used as a prelude to the stela's theme

Lupercalia an ancient pastoral festival observed 13–15 February, to avert evil spirits and purify the city, releasing health and fertility

lustral basins basins used for ritual washing and purification

ma'at refers to the ancient Egyptian concepts of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice

magazines storerooms usually configured in rows

magister equitum 'master of horse', assistant to the dictator

magus (pl. *magi*) a member of a priestly caste of ancient Persia. Most *magi* are believed to have been Medes

maiestas treason

maius imperium the power to command, including an army, but outranking all others with *imperium*: supreme power

malachite a green copper ore used to protect the eyes

Mandate of Heaven a concept that there could be only one legitimate ruler of China at a time and that this ruler had the blessings of the gods (heaven)

manumitted refers to the freeing of a slave

mausoleum a free-standing monument enclosing the burial chamber of a deceased person or group of people

medimni a unit of dry measurement equal to about 55 litres

Medjay Nubians used by the Egyptians as mercenary soldiers and as police in Egypt

milfoil a water plant used in one of two forms of Chinese divination: shapes on the stalks of milfoil plants and cracks on burnt tortoiseshells

modii (pl. *modius*) an ancient Roman measurement for dry goods (about the equivalent of 8 dry litres)

moles massive structures, usually of stone, set up in the water to act as a causeway or breakwater

mortuary temple a temple where the funerary rites of the Egyptian rulers were carried out by a special group of mortuary priests

muu ancestral spirits who met the deceased at the mouth of the tomb, represented by real dancers dressed in kilts and high conical hats

necropolis cemetery or 'city of the dead'

nemes refers to the striped, stiffened linen headdress with two lappets which fell forward over the king's shoulders

New Kingdom the period of the 18th, 19th and 20th Dynasties from c.1550–1070 BC

nobiles those senators who have had a consul in their family

obelisk a pillar of stone tapered towards the top and surmounted by a pyramid-shaped stone which was usually gilded

obverse the side of a coin bearing the head or principal design

ochres mixtures of hydrated oxides of iron and other earthy materials ranging in colour from pale yellow to orange and red

oligarchy rule by the few

optimates a faction in the Senate who wanted to maintain the *status quo* and who opposed anything that would adversely affect their authority

oracles advice or prophecy received from a god through the mediumship of a priest or priestess in ancient times

ossuaries chests, boxes, buildings or sites made to serve as the final resting place of human skeletal remains

ostraca (sing. ostracon) pieces of broken pottery often used for writing on

ostracism the temporary banishment for ten years of any powerful citizen who threatened the stability of the state

paean a song of praise, joy or triumph

pairidaeza an Iranian walled garden with fountains and shade trees

panhellenic means 'all Greek'

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papyrus material made from plant fibre (Egyptian papyrus plant) resembling paper

parasang an Iranian unit of distance, the length of which varied according to terrain and speed of travel

pater patriae 'father of the country'

pax Romana Roman peace

pectorals elaborate necklaces worn on the breast

Peloponnese the southern area of mainland Greece, separated from central Greece by the narrow Isthmus of Corinth

peltasts lightly armed missile troops

perioikoi the free non-citizen inhabitants who lived in Spartan territory and played a significant economic role in Spartan society

phalanx a massed body of heavily armed infantry

pharaoh from the Egyptian 'pero' or 'per-a-a', which was the designation for the royal residence and means 'Great House'. The honorific title of 'pharaoh' for a ruler did not appear until the New Kingdom

pirradazis refers to the Persian system of horse changing on the Royal Road

pithoi (sing. *pithos*) large clay storage jars

plinth in architecture it refers to the solid base or platform upon which a column, pedestal, statue, monument or structure rests

polemarch magistrate in charge of military matters; commander-in-chief

polis (pl. *poleis*) an independent city-state, its population and way of life

polychrome refers in art to something done in many colours

polygamy the practice of having many or several wives at one time

polytheism the worship of many gods

pomerium sacred boundary around Rome which no Roman in arms was permitted to cross except for the purpose of a triumph

populares a faction in the Senate who were men of reform when it suited them

potestas the power associated with a particular magistracy

Praetorian Guard an elite body of troops within the army that helped protect the city of Rome, the princeps and the imperial household

princeps iuventutis 'first among the youth': an honorary title for young princes destined to rule

principate a form of government led by a princeps or 'first man/citizen'. The term was used to describe Roman rulers from the time of Augustus

propaganda information used to promote a political cause or point of view, often of a biased nature

proscription the act of announcing the name of a person as condemned to death and subject to confiscation of property

proskynesis a Greek term that refers to the traditional Persian act of kissing, bowing, kneeling or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank

provenance usually refers to the place of origin or earliest known history of an artefact

pylon a large ornamental gateway of a temple used as a billboard for royal propaganda

pyramidion the uppermost piece or capstone of an Egyptian pyramid or obelisk, associated with the sun-god

Pythia a prophetess, female mouthpiece of the god Apollo at Delphi

qanats gently sloping underground channels to transport water from an aquifer to the surface for irrigation and drinking

regent usually a member of the royal family who ruled in the place of a child until he was old enough to take responsibility to rule alone

rhetoric the art of influencing the thought of one's audience

rhetra a saying, public pronouncement or law

rhyton (pl. *rhyta*) container for liquid offerings or drinks

rishi coffin a coffin adorned with feathers

Romanisation the adoption of Roman culture by conquered people within the empire

sacrosanct free from violence

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salutatio the formal morning greeting of the Roman patron by his clients

sarcophagus a large stone outer coffin

sard a variety of the mineral chalcedony, similar to carnelian

sarissa spears or pikes about 5 metres long

scimitar a sword-like weapon with a curved cutting edge

secession breaking away or withdrawing from an alliance

sekhem sceptre a ritual sceptre associated with power and control

sem priest a priest dressed in a leopard skin who conducted the funerary rites at the entrance to the tomb

senatus consultum ultimum an emergency decree of the Senate, usually interpreted as authorising the consuls to use every means to save the state

sennet a board game similar to draughts

sesterces Roman coins made of bronze

silt fine soil carried and deposited by water (alluvial)

sistrum a rattle used to accompany singing

stade an ancient Greek unit of length, based on the length of a typical sports stadium of the time (approximately 600 feet or 185 metres in length)

stela (pl. stelae) also spelt stele/steles, upright slabs of stone, bearing inscriptions

strategy long-term planning

stratified layered

syssition (pl. *syssitia*) a military dining club

talatat an Arabic word meaning 'three-hand-breadths' that refers to small stone blocks of a standardised size used during the reign of Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten)

tell in archaeology an artificial mound formed from the accumulation of refuse left by people living on the same site over centuries or millennia

temenos (ancient Egypt) refers to a wall that surrounds a temple domain

thalassocracy mastery or control of the sea; having a maritime empire

theocracy a system of government administered by a priest-king or by priests and priestesses

theogamous birth refers to the concept of being fathered by a god

theogamy a marriage of, or between, the gods

thetes in Ancient Greece, these were the lowest social class of citizens

titulary a list of titles and names

toga virilis a garment worn by boys entering manhood

torcs large metal neck rings made either as a single piece or from strands twisted together

trepanation a crude process whereby a hole is drilled into a skull to relieve pressure after a head injury

tribunician power right of veto by a tribune against the election and actions of magistrates and against the laws and decrees of the Senate

tribute a contribution made by one ruler or state to another as a sign of submission or as the price of protection

trireme Greek-style ship with three banks of oars

triumph a civil and religious ceremony granted by the Senate for an army commander who had won a great military success to publicly celebrate his military achievement

triumvirate a political regime ruled or dominated by three powerful individuals, known as triumvirs

unguents soft, perfumed ointment-like preparations, used to moisturise and heal

ureaus the rearing cobra worn on the royal diadem or crown: a symbol of kingship

ushabtis funerary figurines placed in tombs, intended to act as servants for the deceased in the afterlife

vacabara 'bow bearer', an important royal official

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

vizier a minister of state who in ancient Egypt was second only to the king

votive offering an offering given or dedicated in fulfilment of a vow or promise

wadi a dried river bed in desert areas which occasionally floods after a thunderstorm

zendan a tower thought to be associated with fire rituals

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CHAPTER 4

Persian society in the time of Darius and Xerxes

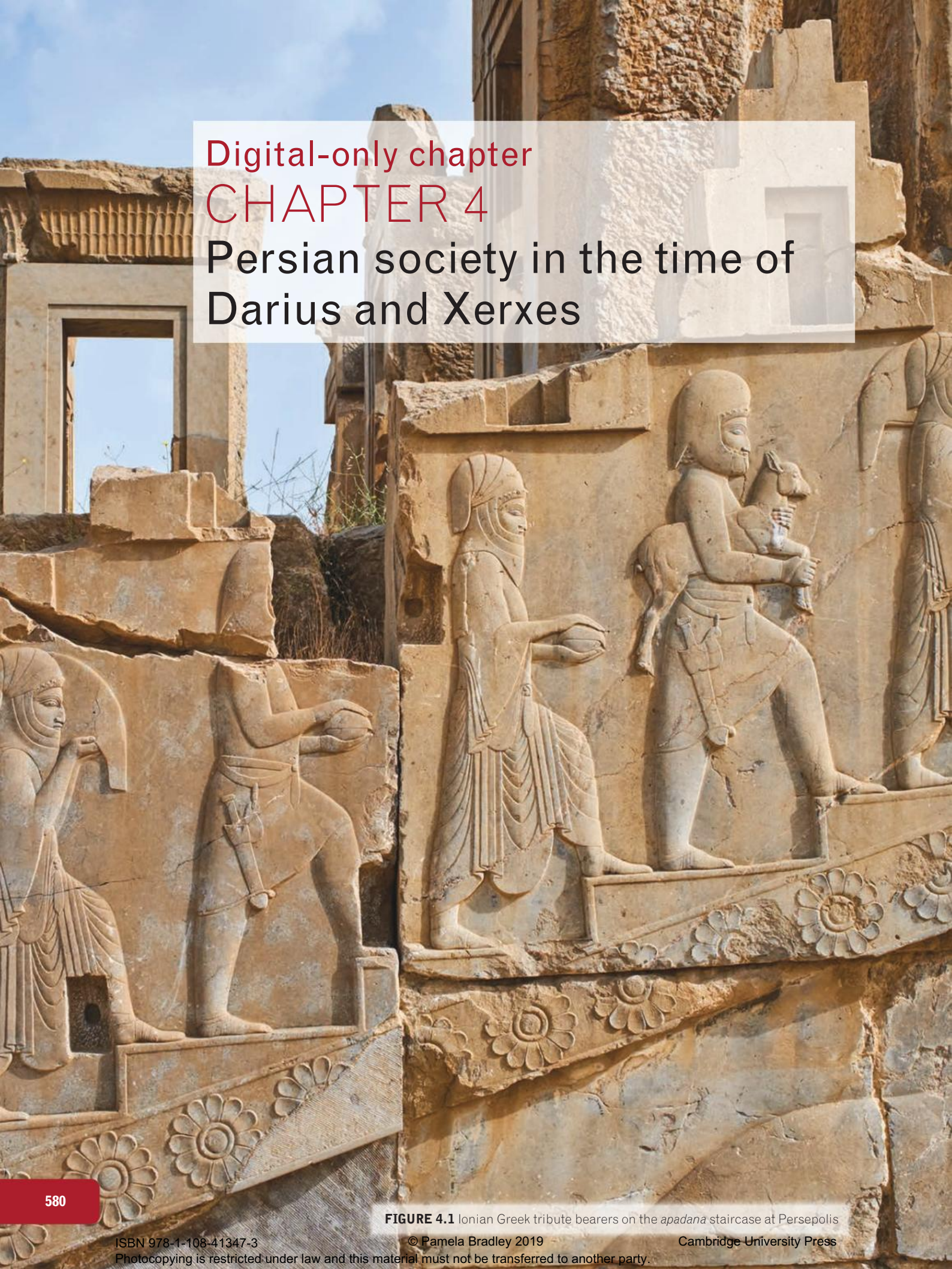

FIGURE 4.1 Ionian Greek tribute bearers on the *apadana* staircase at Persepolis

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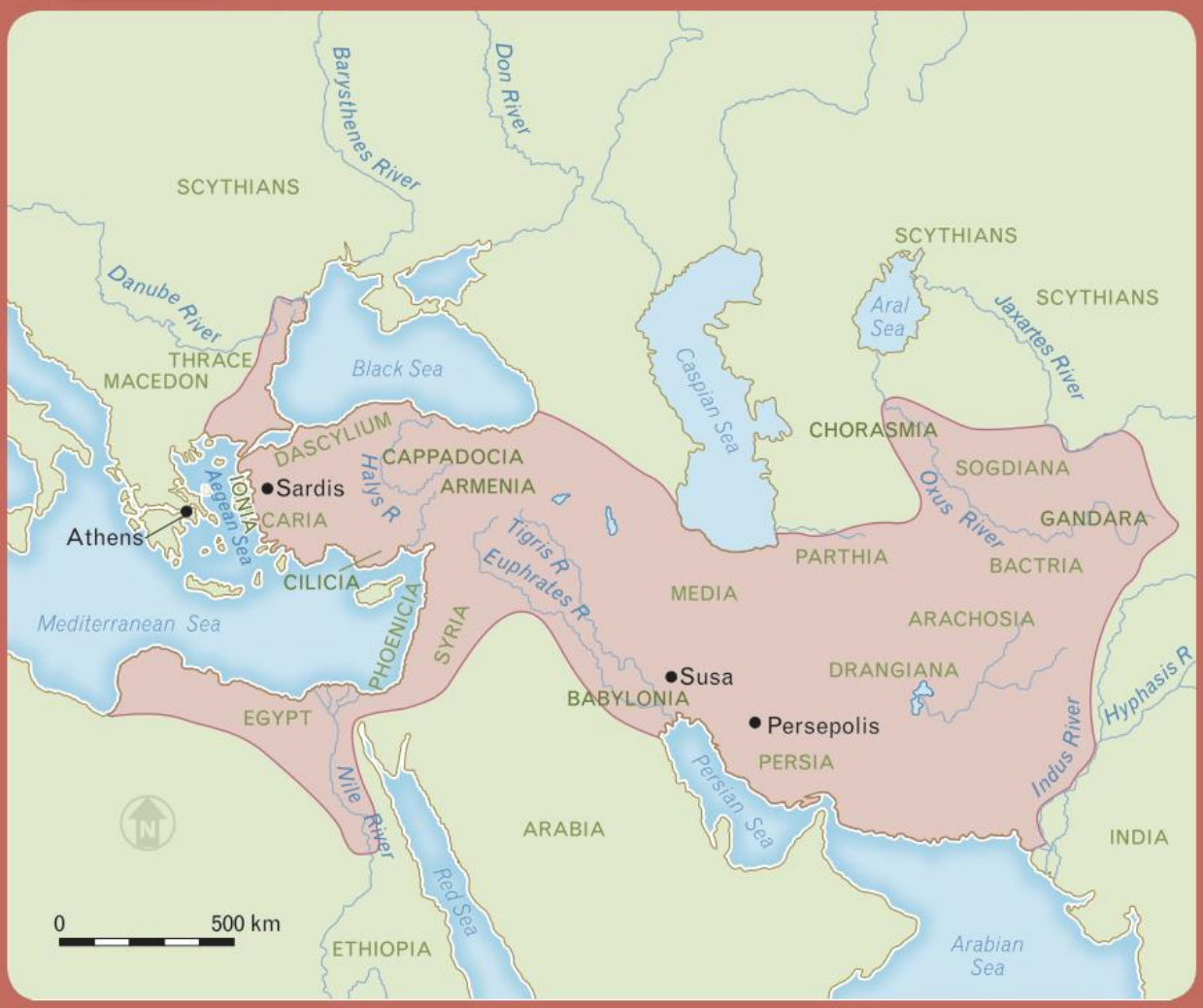
FIGURE 4.2 The Achaemenid/Persian Empire at the time of Darius I, the homeland of the Persians and significant sites



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students examine a range of archaeological and written sources and relevant historiographical issues of the Persian society at the time of Darius and Xerxes.
KEY ISSUES	• The historical and geographical context • Social structure and political organisation • The economy • Religion, death and burial • Cultural and everyday life

... I will not tolerate that the weak shall suffer injustices brought upon them by the mighty. What is just pleases me. ... You, my subjects, must not assume what the powerful undertake as sublime. What the common man achieves is much more extraordinary.

SOURCE 4.1 Darius the Great's inscription on his tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 4.3 A relief from the palace at Persepolis showing some of Darius' subjects bearing tribute to the king

Look carefully at the images in Figures 4.2 and 4.3 and consider the following questions. What do they tell you about the nature of the Persian Empire at the time of Darius and Xerxes? What do they suggest about the resources and economy, and what questions do they raise about the administration of the empire?

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CHAPTER 4 Overview

KEY IDEA

Although society at the time of Darius and Xerxes was multicultural, much of our evidence is restricted to that of the Persians and Medes. This was a society where the ideology of the king permeated every aspect of life, from tolerance of diversity, fairness in law, administrative unification and stunning building programs.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

It is important today that we understand that a vast, ancient multicultural empire, ruled by a powerful elite, can still show tolerance towards different religious beliefs and customs, provide economic stability and fairness to people no matter what their class and, within the constraints of a patriarchal society, allow considerable freedom to women.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- propaganda
- *magus* (pl. *magi*)
- tell
- *apadana*
- baldachin
- *akinakes*
- *proskynesis*
- eunuchs
- *hazarapatis*
- *arstibara*
- *vacabara*
- *kurtash*
- vassal
- tribute
- *parsang*
- *angaroi*
- *pirradazis*
- triremes
- *qanats*
- aquifers
- polytheistic
- *zendan*
- *pairidaeza*
- inhumation
- ossuaries
- ashlar
- plinth
- cists
- capitals
- rhyta
- torcs
- pectorals
- polychrome
- provenance
- lingua franca
- cuneiform

Painting the picture

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the features of the royal ideology that shaped the kings' status?

Between 522 and 465 BC, the Persian kings Darius and his son, Xerxes, ruled over an empire founded by their illustrious ancestor, Cyrus the Great, who ruled between 550–530 BC. 'In its scope and durability, and in its ability to project and maintain its power', the Persian Empire, known as the Achaemenid Empire (see pp. 584–6), 'was unprecedented in world history. Its equal was not to be seen again until the height of the Roman Empire under Augustus and his successors in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.'[1]

Because this empire embraced many nations and cultures, each with its own distinctive social structure, it is impossible to speak of society in the singular, although there were trends throughout the empire which allow some generalisations to be made. However, in this option, when we speak of society we are referring to that of the Persians and Medes (Iranians), and because of the lack of sources, this tends to focus on the elite in this group.

Society under Darius and Xerxes was a model of multinational rule where the kings made no attempt to force cultural or religious uniformity over their subject people, who were permitted to continue with their particular customs, laws, religions and languages. Where these different ethnic groups lived and worked side by side in the large cities, there was a 'sort of cultural-religious syncretism'.[2]

The various ethnic groups were unified, however, on an administrative level which was under the control of the Persian king and his nobles. Imperial administration had to cope with far-flung areas which were linked by royal roads, and Darius introduced reforms that put the economy on a sound level and introduced a system to keep an eye on the various provincial governors who were answerable only to the king.

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The ideology of the king permeated every aspect of Persian society, and its stunning architecture – a blend of foreign elements – served to glorify the power and importance of the kings who never failed to honour their god, Ahuramazda, for their successes.

The problem in understanding society – despite the number of royal inscriptions which record and depict what the kings wanted to present (royal **propaganda**), and a number of useful public records – is that the 'ancient Persians wrote almost nothing in the way of narrative history'.[3] Although the Greek writers – relied on by scholars for centuries – fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge, we can't rely on them to be completely unbiased or reliable.

propaganda information used to promote a political cause or point of view, often of a biased nature

Herodotus, a Greek who came from Halicarnassus on the coast of Asia Minor and lived for part of his life in Athens, is the main narrative source for this period. He provides some important insights into Persian life, although we know little of his sources, and we must remember that his chief aim in writing his *Histories* was to record the conflicts between the Greeks and Persians during the reign of Darius and Xerxes and that he was biased in favour of the Greeks.

4.1 The historical and geographical context

The Achaemenid Empire was the first world power recorded in history.

A COMMENT ON...

The term 'Achaemenid'

- The term Achaemenid refers to a noble Persian clan named after its supposedly legendary founder, Achaemenes.
- Their homeland was in ancient Parsa, in southwest Iran (modern-day province of Farsa).
- Cyrus the Great founded the Achaemenid Empire in 550 BC and a royal dynasty that lasted about 200 years, until the overthrow of the empire by Alexander the Great.
- The Achaemenid Empire was at its peak economically and culturally during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes.
- The term has been used to distinguish this period in Persian history from subsequent empires in the area (Seleucids, Parthians and Sassinads).

TABLE 4.1 Chronological chart of the reigns of the Achaemenid Persian kings

DATES (BC)	KING	EVENTS
559–530	Cyrus the Great	• Cyrus the Great defeated Astyages, King of the Medes, and took Ecbatana • He conquered Lydia and Babylonia • Began construction at Pasagardae • Died in battle in the northwest of the empire
530–522	Cambyses	• Cambyses, Cyrus' son, invaded Egypt and added it to the empire • Died on his journey back to Persia after 3 years in Egypt
522	Bardiya	• Six-month reign of a possible imposter of Bardiya, Cambyses' brother

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DATES (BC)	KING	EVENTS
522–486	Darius I	• Acceded to the throne after an upheaval in the empire (see below) • Engraved the significant Behustin relief and inscription • Founded Persepolis and began other building programs • Campaigned in Europe (Scythia and Thrace), India and Libya • Put down revolt of Ionian Greeks and responded by initiating an invasion of Greece in 490 BC • Defeated at the Battle of Marathon in Greece in 490 • Died in 486 while preparing another invasion of Greece
486–465	Xerxes I	• Chosen by Darius as heir to the throne • Faced and dealt with revolts in Egypt and Babylonia • Invaded Greece after putting down revolts • Saw his invasion of Greece in 480–79 BC as having achieved what he set out to do (punish Athens), although the Greeks saw it as a humiliating defeat for the Persians • Continued his father's policies, especially his building programs • Assassinated by his son
464–331	Xerxes II Darius II Artaxerxes I Artaxerxes II Artaxerxes III Artaxerxes IV Darius III	• This was a period of alternating stability and rebellions by subject states; loss and recovery of Egypt; interference in Greek affairs; dynastic upheavals (war between brothers Artaxerxes II and Cyrus the younger) and assassinations. • During the reign of Darius III, Alexander, King of Macedon, invaded the Persian Empire and at the Battle of Issus defeated Darius, who fled into hiding. By 331 BC, Alexander was welcomed into Babylon, declared King of Kings and in 331, Darius III died, bringing to an end the Achaemenid Dynasty.

The usurpation and accession of Darius I

The chief sources for the turbulent time following Cambyses' death are confusing and contradictory. Darius' autobiography carved onto the façade of Mt Behistun (or Behistan), and the account in Herodotus, both indicate that the crisis of 522 'was of epic proportions and the stability of the fledgling empire was at stake.'[4] However, both sources contradict each other in vital details, making the truth difficult to arrive at. Much of what was written about this period by Darius himself, and by Herodotus, have to be treated with a degree of scepticism.

- Darius had been in Egypt with King Cambyses as part of the royal bodyguard. One month before Cambyses' death in early 522 BC on his return to Persia, news reached him that Bardiya (called Smerdis by Herodotus), a brother of Cambyses, had usurped the throne. On the accidental death of Cambyses, Darius became the military commander, headed to Media and with the help of six other Persian nobles killed the usurper, who he later claimed was really an imposter called Gaumata, who had impersonated Bardiya after Bardiya had been previously murdered secretly on the orders of Cambyses. Some scholars suggest that Darius invented the story of Gaumata in order to justify his actions and that, in fact, he murdered Bardiya who was indeed the son of Cyrus.
- According to Herodotus, some form of debate between the 28-year-old Darius and his six Persian supporters led to Darius' accession to the throne. His supporters were given high positions in his new administration. (See Source 4.2)

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- Although Darius (from a collateral branch of the royal family) had no right to the throne as there were others with more legitimate claims, he declared that by killing an imposter he was restoring the kingship to the rightful Achaemenid house.
- Darius immediately strengthened his hold on the throne by associating himself with the family of Cyrus. He married Atossa and Artystone, daughters of Cyrus, and Parmys, the daughter of the real Bardiya. He also married the daughter of one of his noble supporters. All the same, his strategic marriages did not ensure his position.
- There was intense resistance to Darius from rebel kings in other parts of the empire who set up independent governments, claiming to belong to the former ruling families. Challenges for the throne came from Elam, Babylonia, Media and other parts of northern and eastern Iran and the empire 'was in real danger of splintering'.[5]
- Darius and his supporters were unrelenting in tracking down and defeating the rebel kings, who were brutalised and impaled as a warning to others.

magus (pl. *magi*) a member of a priestly caste of ancient Persia. Most *magi* are believed to have been Medes

King Darius says: These are the men who were with me when I slew Gaumâta the Magian [**magus**], who was called Smerdis [Bardiya]; then these men helped me as my followers:
- Intaphrenes [Vidafarnâ], son of Vayâspâra, a Persian;
- Otanes [Utâna], son of Thukhra [Thuxra], a Persian;
- Gobryas [Gaubaruva], son of Mardonius [Marduniya], a Persian;
- Hydarnes [Vidarna], son of Bagâbigna, a Persian;
- Megabyzus [Bagabuxša], son of Dâtuvahya, a Persian;
- Ardumaniš, son of Vakauka, a Persian.

King Darius says: You who may be king hereafter, protect the family of these men.

SOURCE 4.2 L. W. King and R. C. Thompson, *The sculptures and inscription of Darius the Great on the Rock of Behistûn in Persia*, 1907

FIGURE 4.4 Relief depicting Darius standing above the usurper, Gaumata, and the conquered rebel leaders on Mt Behistun

ACTIVITY 4.1

1. Why was the Persian Empire under Darius and Xerxes known as the Achaemenid Empire?
2. Why were the years after the death of Cambyses and the accession of Darius I referred to as a 'crisis of epic proportions'?
3. How did Darius strengthen his hold on the throne?

Geographical environment

If you should wonder how many are the lands that Darius the King held, behold the sculpted figures who bear the throne, then you shall learn, then it shall become known to you that the spear of the Persian man has gone forth far.

SOURCE 4.3 Inscription from the Tomb of Darius I, Naqsh-i Rustam, (DNa 4)

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At the time of Darius I, the Persian Empire stretched from the Caspian Sea in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south, and from the Ionian coast and Egypt in the west to the Indus River Valley in the east. Due to its vast extent, it encompassed an assortment of terrain, just as it included a wide range of ethnic groups.

The Iranian Plateau and its natural features

The focus of the empire was the great, high-elevation Iranian plateau east of Mesopotamia and its river systems. It rose about 1000–2000 metres above sea level. It was here, in the south, that the Persians first settled.

Despite being termed a plateau, this vast 3 700 000-square-kilometre area was far from flat. The heart of the Persian Empire was an area of contrasts.

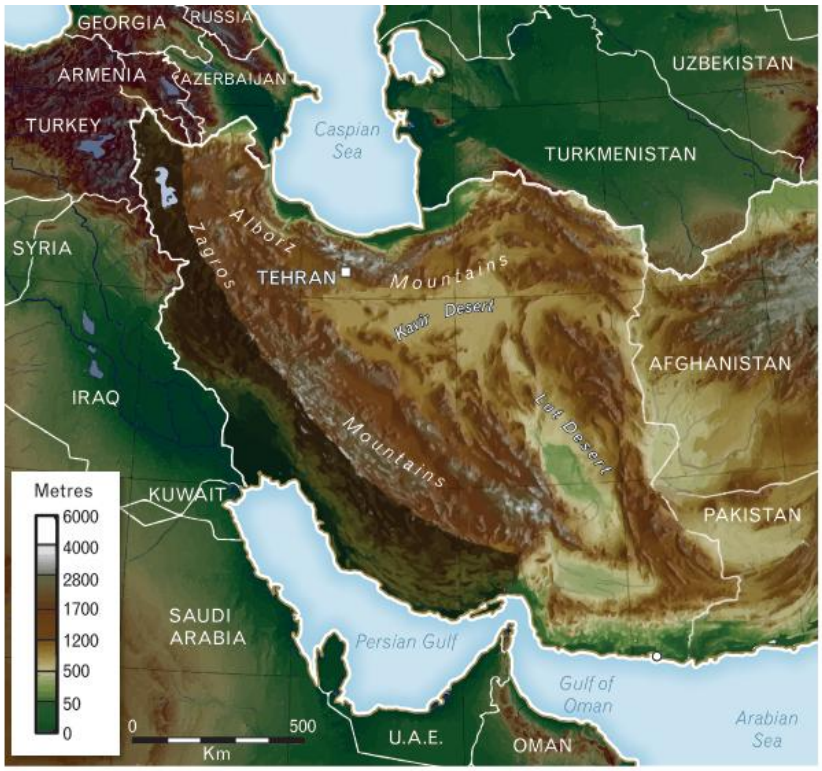

FIGURE 4.5 Topographic map of the Iranian plateau

> … the plateau was rimmed in by mountains on every side. To the west towered the Zagros; on the north Alborz. Eastward the plateau rose steadily to the roof of the world in the Himalayas. While a lower range shut off the southern ocean. … In the centre were great deserts, difficult to traverse and covered in part by salt lakes, in part by brownish-red, salt-impregnated soil. Equally barren were the mountains, generally devoid of trees or even shrubs. Between mountain and desert was good soil, needing only water – but water was a rare and precious treasure. If the mountains shut off potential enemies, they also shut off the rains.

SOURCE 4.4 *History of the Persian Empire*, oi.uchicago.edu.. p. 19

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1 The Zagros Mountain range, composed of a series of parallel ridges interspersed with plains, dominates the Iranian plateau, bisecting it from northwest to southeast. Many of its peaks are over 4000 metres high. In the winter, these mountains are covered in snow, making the passes almost inaccessible.

2 The Alborz mountain chain, rimming the Caspian Sea, is narrower but higher than the Zagros, with Mount Damavand reaching 5610 metres. This area is wetter than elsewhere, often experiencing torrential rains of over 1500 millimetres a year, and the northern side of the mountains is covered with dense forest. The plain that borders the Caspian Sea extends for about 400 kilometres and is subtropical.

3 There is no major river system in the country as in Mesopotamia, but numerous rivers flow after the mountain snows melt, pouring down bare slopes, often with little warning. For much of the year, however, the rivers dry up under the blistering summer sun.

4 Except for the Caspian coast, most of the plateau is arid or semi-arid with scant rainfall, which led to innovative methods to find water. 'This eternal quest for water left a permanent impress on the Persian mind.'[6] See p. 614 for information on irrigation technology.

FIGURE 4.6a An aerial view of the Zagros Mountains

FIGURE 4.6b Summer in the Zagros Mountains

FIGURE 4.6c In the Alborz Ranges

FIGURE 4.6d The deserts in the central Iranian plateau

Resources of the empire

The vastness of the Persian Empire meant it was rich in natural resources. The empire's wealth and power also meant it could conduct trade with vassal and independent kingdoms from far away (see Figure 4.7).

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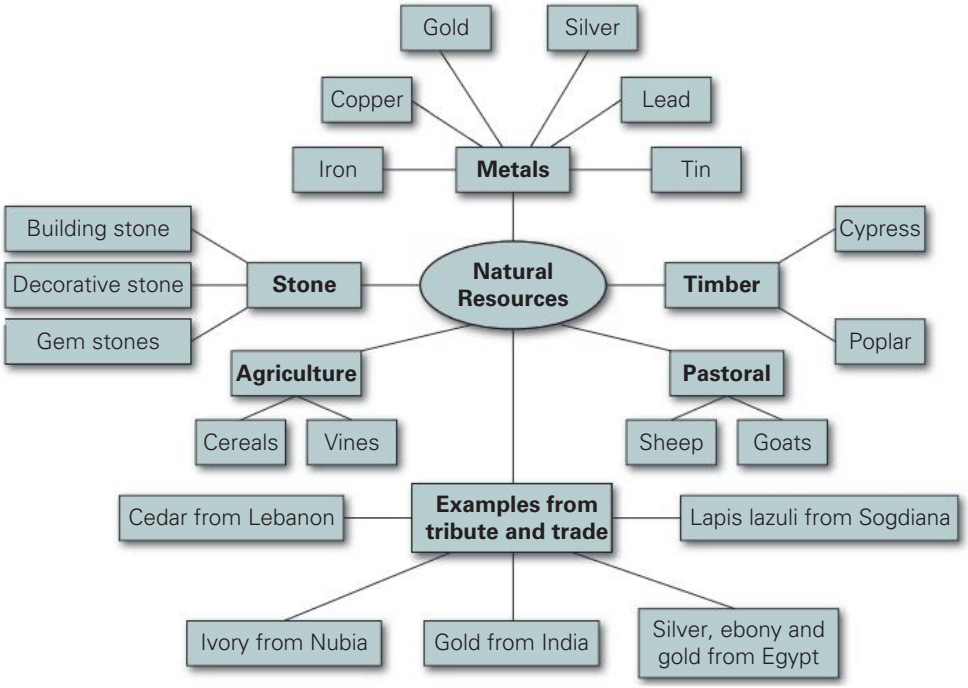

FIGURE 4.7 Diagram showing some of the available natural resources

An empire of such scope as the Achaemenid Persian Empire could hardly have just one capital. The Persian kings had five, all in the centre of the Empire. Four straddled the Zagros mountain chain – Pasargadae and Persepolis in Parsa, Susa in Khuzistan, and Ecbatana in Media – and the fifth, Babylon, near modern Baghdad. Only the first two were new cities founded by Cyrus and Darius, respectively, though not completed in their reigns. Susa and Babylon were centuries old.

SOURCE 4.5 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire 559–330 BCE*, p. 134

FIGURE 4.8 Reliefs of Iranian sheep at Persepolis

Significant sites

The following are sites of:

1 royal palaces
2 administrative and ceremonial centres
3 royal tombs
4 important royal inscriptions.

tell in archaeology an artificial mound formed from the accumulation of refuse left by people living on the same site over centuries or millennia

Ecbatana

Ecbatana (modern Hamadan) was the former capital of the Median Empire conquered by Cyrus the Great. The present **Tell** Hagmatana is thought to correspond to the ancient citadel of Ecbatana which:

- held a strategic position on the major east–west trade route through north-western Persia; a route that later became part of the Silk Road
- appears, according to the Greek writer Xenophon, to have been an ideal resort for the Persian kings during the middle of the summer

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- was described by Herodotus (1.98) as having seven massive concentric walls enclosing palace and treasuries. However, Herodotus' description of the number of walls and their different colours seems to have been imaginative.

Pasargadae

Pasargadae, near the modern city of Shiraz and a World Heritage site, was founded by Cyrus the Great as the first capital of the Achaemenid Empire.

- Cyrus chose the site, surrounded by high mountains, because it was where he defeated the Median King Astyages and 'transferred the rule of Asia to himself'.[7]
- He was crowned there, and it remained a significant site in future royal coronation rituals.
- He wanted to build something uniquely Persian. The archaeological excavations have revealed the grandeur of the site which included two palaces; an elaborate gate and an impressive garden area; a sacred area, with a structure of unknown function; an artificial terrace which could have hosted religious activities; and his tomb, built on a six-tiered platform. These buildings were clustered along a 3.2-kilometre axis. However, he failed to complete the complex before his death; it was finished by Darius I.

FIGURE 4.9 The remains on the terrace at Pasargadae

Susa

Susa, located in the lower Zagros Mountains, is one of the oldest and most important cities in the ancient Near East. It was the site of one of Darius' palace complexes, built to replace Pasargadae. It appears that Susa was:

apadana refers to the audience hall of a Persian palace, often featuring rows of tall columns

- enlarged by Darius. A number of detailed inscriptions record his building activities there, especially his great palace and adjoining ***apadana***.
- the administrative capital of the Achaemenid empire and where the king received foreign guests.
- the king's chief residence during the winter.
- a cosmopolitan city. It underwent a major political and ethno-cultural change when it became part of the Persian Empire. Judging by the varied subject people living and working there at the time of Darius, it was a symbol of the multicultural empire.

FIGURE 4.10 The remains of a large piece of statuary from Susa

Persepolis

Persepolis, initiated by Darius and added to by his son and grandson, is a World Heritage site, 32 kilometres southwest of Pasargadae. Its stunning remains are an 'enduring symbol of the Achaemenid legacy'.[8]

FIGURE 4.11 A panorama over Persepolis

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Persepolis, 'the richest city of all those under the sun'[9], was an administrative and ceremonial centre and its surviving architectural features include:

- a partially artificial platform that covers approximately 125 000 square metres with walls about 12 metres high
- a complex of buildings: palaces, the so-called Harem, the Hall of One Hundred Columns, the *apadana*, the Gate of All Nations, a treasury and monumental gates. (See pp. 624–8 on art and architecture for details of the World Heritage site of Persepolis.)

Naqsh-i Rustam

Naqsh-i Rustam, approximately 5 kilometres north of Persepolis, is one of the most spectacular ancient sites of the Achaemenid Empire, comprising the rock-cut tombs of a number of Achaemenid rulers and their families, including those of Darius and Xerxes. The façades of the tombs were cut in the shape of a cross and the tomb of Darius featured autobiographical inscriptions. (See p. 617 for religion and funerary practices.)

The site was regarded as sacred before the Achaemenids came to power, and was significant for centuries after. Unfortunately, when Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, the tombs were opened and looted; however, the site still stands as a legacy of the once great Achaemenid power.

FIGURE 4.12 The site of Naqsh-i Rustam

Behistun

Mount Behistun is the site of one of the most important inscriptions from Darius' reign. The inscription is located on a limestone cliff face, 100 metres above ground level, on the east–west route between Babylon and Ecbatana. It is 15 metres high by 25 metres wide, written in three different versions of cuneiform: Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. It includes a:

FIGURE 4.13 The location of the Behistun Inscription

1 brief autobiography of Darius, including his ancestry and lineage, and a detailed account of the battles he fought after the problems resulting from the death of Cambyses.
2 bas-relief showing Darius holding a bow – the sign of kingship – accompanied by two servants and with one foot on a figure lying before him believed to have been the imposter Gaumata. There are also nine bound figures, representing the people he conquered.

This inscription has helped in understanding this period in history, the royal ideology and in translating the cuneiform script (see p. 629 on writing).

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ACTIVITY 4.2

1 What was the:
   - extent of the empire
   - heartland of the empire
   - homeland of the Achaemenid/Persians?
2 What are the two dominant topographic features of the Iranian plateau?
3 Why were the inhabitants of the plateau involved in an eternal quest for water?
4 What were the major resources of Persia?
5 Name the five capitals mentioned in Source 4.5.
   - How was each one used by Darius and Xerxes?
   - Which two were built by the Achaemenids?
   - Why are these significant World Heritage sites?
6 What was the significance of Naqsh-i Rustam and Behistun to the Persians and why are they important to scholars of Near Eastern history?

4.2 Social structure and political organisation

Like many ancient societies, Persian society was hierarchical: king and royal family, priestly advisors, aristocratic nobles, 'benefactors' (those who had done the king a favour), military officials and scribes who were in charge of the complex imperial administration, merchants, craftsmen/artisans, peasants and slaves. However, no matter what a person's social status, they were all known as the king's *bandaka* (subjects).

The image and role of the Persian king

'The King of kings was the sun around whom all else revolved'[10] and everything about him marked him out from all others.

When Darius seized the throne, killed the imposter and defeated the rebel kings, he wrote his own history and established the basic formula for legitimate kingship which was continually reinforced by royal propaganda. This was so effective that it lasted for two centuries.

The royal ideology was based on:

1 descent from the traditional Achaemenes
2 Persian heritage
3 divine legitimacy via the god Ahuramazda
4 royal lineage.

Darius' Behistun Inscription became the blueprint for all future Achaemenid ideology.

> I am Darius [Dâryavuš], the great king, king of kings, the king of Persia [Pârsa], the king of countries, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achaemenid ... Ahuramazda has granted unto me this empire; by the grace of Ahuramazda do I hold this empire.

SOURCE 4.6 The Behistun Inscription, trans. L.W. King & R.C. Thompson

FIGURE 4.14 A Relief of an enthroned Darius

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The ideology of the king was reflected in the:

- succession
- qualities expected of a perfect king, as well as kings' titles and names
- role of a king
- court ceremonials.

Succession, throne names and titles

Even though Darius was selected as king by relatives of the most distinguished Persian families, the form of succession after his time was settled by the king's designation based on royal lineage. The heir to the throne was usually the first-born son. However, Darius, who had three sons before he became king, ignored them and chose Xerxes, born after he came to the throne and married Atossa, the daughter of Cyrus.

From the reign of Darius, kings adopted a throne name on their accession. For example, Darius was named 'holding the good' and Xerxes adopted the name 'ruling over heroes'. Kings were also known as 'Great King', 'King of kings' and 'King of the countries'.

> Xerxes the King proclaims: Darius had other sons as well, but thus was the desire of Ahuramazda: Darius my father made me greatest after himself. When my father Darius died, by the favour of Ahuramazda I became king in my father's place.

SOURCE 4.7 A Persepolis inscription cited in Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE*, p. 115

Qualities of the perfect ruler

The king must:

- respect the interests of his subjects, strong or weak
- protect what is right and to strive against what was called the 'Lie'
- control his impulses and temper and be calm in the face of threats
- be a model of intelligence and good thought
- be a paragon of order
- be an accomplished warrior on horse and foot with bow and spear
- punish disloyalty and wickedness
- reward good behaviour and faithful service.

The following sources, inscribed on the façade of Darius' tomb, illustrate several of the qualities by which a king wanted to be known.

> The right is my desire. To the man who is a follower of the Lie I am no friend. I am not hot-tempered. What things develop in my anger, I hold firmly under control by my thinking powers. I am firmly ruling over my own impulses.

SOURCE 4.8 Inscription from Darius' tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam, DNb 41–45

> As a horseman I am a good horseman, as a bowman I am a good bowman, both as a foot soldier and as a horseman; as a spearman, both as a foot soldier and a horseman.

SOURCE 4.9 Inscription from Darius' tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam, DNb 41–45

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The roles of a Persian king

The king was expected to:

1 establish and maintain order and peace as the earthly representative of Ahuramazda; this might entail waging wars and taking revenge against those who rebelled against the king's authority and threatened his integrity

2 promote tolerance and justice

3 protect the land from drought

4 stabilise the empire economically and unify the disparate ethnic groups under efficient Persian administration

FIGURE 4.15 A royal hero perhaps in some cosmic contest or performance with hybrid creatures

5 secure the boundaries of the empire against enemies and display his image as a successful military leader

6 undertake major building projects that reflected the royal ideology and restore anything which had been taken away or destroyed

7 promote the regimes' power and ideology by carefully-scripted court ceremonials.

> Darius the King proclaims: much that was out of place I put right. The Lands were in an uproar, one was battling another. That which I have done I accomplished by the favour of Ahuramazda: one no longer battles another, each one is in its place. It is my law that they fear, so that the strong neither oppresses nor overpowers the weak. Darius the King proclaims: By the favour of Ahuramazda, there was much construction work done before which was in need of attention. That I accomplished.

SOURCE 4.10 An Inscription from Susa, trans. A Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period*, pp. 491–2

The iconography of court ceremonials

Court ceremonials – from the choice of venue, the route of processions, 'depictions of thrones, footstools, parasols, fly-whisks, sceptres, crowns and robes' as well as the identity of participants – were 'loaded with symbolic implications'.[11] They also appealed to people of diverse backgrounds, instilled fear and wonder, created an aura around the throne, reinforced the separation of king and subjects, as well as the hierarchy within the elite.

There are various written accounts of royal audiences in the Greek and Biblical sources, but only iconographic evidence from the Persian side, the best examples of which are stone reliefs at Persepolis.

FIGURE 4.16 A relief of Xerxes leaving the palace with officials holding a parasol

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The audience relief in Figure 4.17 shows the following features:

- Darius the Great King wearing a court robe, false beard and crown, sitting on a throne on a dais under a **baldachin**, decorated with an image of Ahuramazda and separated from those requiring an audience by two incense-burners to demarcate the royal space as sacred. His throne – high-backed and resting on leonine feet – was a significant icon of kingship as was his footstool, as it was 'a given that the Great King's feet should never touch the ground'.[12] He holds a golden sceptre (as a sign of peace or to stretch out to grant a favour) and a lotus (sign of the sacredness of the event).
- Xerxes the Crown Prince, standing behind the throne, similarly garbed and also holding a lotus.
- Several high-ranking members of the court and military: the Royal chamberlain and the weapon bearer of the King carrying his axe and more importantly his bow (the royal insignia) standing behind the royals.
- The king receiving a leading court official who is wearing an ***akinakes*** and is making obeisance before the king by bowing and kissing from the hand. There is much debate over Persian forms of obeisance, which the Greeks referred to a ***proskynesis*** (see comment below).
- Members of the Royal Guard on either side of the relief, identified by long spears and headgear.

FIGURE 4.17 Audience relief of the north stairs of the *apadana* at Persepolis, now in the Archaeological Museum in Tehran

baldachin a ceremonial canopy of stone or fabric over a throne or altar

akinakes a type of double-edged dagger or short sword (originally Scythian), worn on the right side usually in an elaborate scabbard, the wearing of which was a sign of royal favour

proskynesis a Greek term that refers to the traditional Persian act of kissing, bowing, kneeling or prostrating oneself before a person of higher social rank

A COMMENT ON...

Persian and Greek attitudes to the ritual of *proskynesis*

- The ritualised obeisance at the Achaemenid court was rather complex. It was based on the belief that Ahuramazda had created all types of people but only one king for many nations. In their contact with the king, everyone had to make gestures and wear the types of clothes that were fitting for his social position and ethnicity. The form of *proskynesis* demanded before a king depended on one's status.
- To the Greeks, performing *proskynesis* to a mortal was completely unacceptable since they only ever showed this form of submission in front of a god, which led to their misconception that the people within the Persian Empire worshipped their kings as gods.

FIGURE 4.18 An *akinakes* worn by the King's Weapon-Bearer on the Treasury Relief at Persepolis

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ACTIVITY 4.3

1. What is meant by the following terms in relation to the social structure of Persian society:
   - hierarchical
   - *bandaka*?
2. What was the ideology of the Persian rulers based on? How was it maintained and how was it reflected in the life of the king?
3. Despite the importance of succession being passed to the first-born son, why did this vary in the case of Xerxes?
4. How did Xerxes justify his succession in Source 4.7?
5. What qualities did a Persian king wish to be known for? How do you think this might have been reflected in his administration of the empire?
6. Refer to Sources 4.1, 4.8 and 4.9. What do they say about some of the qualities required of a king. Which do you consider the most important?
7. Which three roles expected of a king are reflected in Source 4.10?
8. List the ways court ceremonials 'were carefully scripted' with symbolic images to create an aura around the throne.
9. What individuals are featured in the famous Audience Relief shown in Figure 4.17?
10. Explain why the Persian custom of obeisance might have been misinterpreted by the Greeks.

The role and nature of the imperial bureaucracy

The imperial court – focused on the absolute power of the king – was the centre of a vast empire-wide administrative and bureaucratic system that was relatively tolerant with little interference in local religion or customs. However, a firm hold was needed in matters of foreign policy, the payment of tribute and loyalty to the king.

The royal court

Available information from the Greek sources on the Achaemenid imperial court is very limited and not entirely reliable, and there is little in the way of evidence from the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury Tablets. The reliefs depicting the royal tribute ceremonies on the Persepolis *apadana* are the only major Persian source for the royal court.

The imperial court has been defined by Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones in *King and Court in Ancient Persia 559–331 BCE* as:

- a group of elite people
- an administrative institution that connected the Great King and the ruling elite in the regions of the empire
- spaces (royal residences, audience halls, bureaucratic quarters etc.) within a building complex; these were located in many places
- a setting for royal ceremonials.

It appears that the court crossed large tracts of the empire as it moved from one centre to another with the seasons and the various annual ceremonies. Susa, the Achaemenid administrative capital, was the focus of the court in spring; Babylon hosted the court in autumn and winter; Ecbatana in summer; Persepolis was the site of the great national holidays; and Pasargadae was where coronations were celebrated. Xenophon (*Cyropaedia*, 8. 3. 15–20, 33–34) gives some idea of the royal processions, which involved precise planning, massive resources and thousands of people.

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An inner court comprised the spaces occupied by the king and royal family on a more intimate basis (private dining rooms, bedchambers, bathrooms) and of the people who routinely worked within them such as elite nobles, powerful officials and personal body-servants. An outer court comprised the public areas of the residence, including throne rooms and banqueting halls, and the people – many of whom came from other parts of the empire and who were not tied to the service of the king on a regular basis – such as bureaucrats, scribes, royal judges, emissaries, translators, physicians, as well as servants such as grooms, stable hands, cooks, bakers and wine stewards.

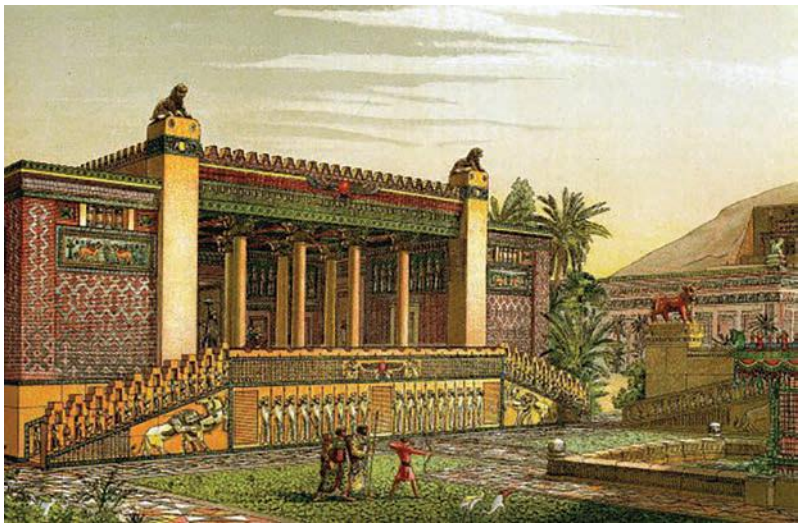

FIGURE 4.19 An artistic reconstruction of the Palace of Darius by Charles Chipiez (1835–1901)

Often found in the inner court were those with the honorific title *Friends of the King*, while in the outer court might be found foreign ambassadors and exiled tyrants (e.g. Hippias of Athens), kings (e.g. King Demaratos of Sparta) and politicians (e.g. Themistocles of Athens).

Important court officials

1 The **hazarapatis** (or chiliarch), commander of the royal bodyguard, which consisted of 1000 Persian noblemen, and in charge of all court security and order. He had the confidence of the King and controlled all access to him. 'Except for a few intimates, anyone who wished an audience with the king had to make application to the *hazarapatis* who would conduct him into the royal presence.'[13] The *hazarapatis* appears to have been second after the king.

hazarapatis 'commander of 1000', the highest official at court

arstibara 'spear bearer', an important royal official

vacabara 'bow bearer', an important royal official

2 The steward of the royal household, sometimes referred to as the 'Marshal of the Court', was responsible for all the royal palaces and properties within the empire, which involved controlling the storehouses, wine cellars and herds.

3 The royal cup-bearer was a high-ranking royal official of impeccable loyalty to the king, as his job primarily involved serving wine to the king.

4 The **arstibara** ('royal spear-carrier'), the **vacabara** ('royal bow-bearer') and the royal charioteer were probably part of the royal bodyguard. Not much is known about these officials but their presence at court seems to indicate that the kings were seen as warrior rulers.

5 The *ganzabara* or treasurer

6 A number of 'royal judges', appointed for life from the Persian nobility, lived at court and advised the king on the law and custom. Herodotus said of them, 'These royal judges are specifically chosen men … their duties are to determine suits and to interpret the ancient laws of the land, and all disputes are referred to them.'[14]

7 *Magi*, priests who performed a variety of rituals and functions such as interpreting the king's dreams (see p. 617 on religion).

8 The following civil servants also formed part of the royal court: announcers who proclaimed official decrees; treasurers, accountants, judicial investigators and security officials; scribes who could write in Elamite, Aramaic or Akkadian; and translators.

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9 Emissaries, called King's Secretaries, were the main administrative link between the imperial court and the governments of provincial governors, and secret agents known as 'Ears and Eyes' of the king reported any seditious speech or act directly to the king.

There were also **eunuchs** who had access to both the inner and outer courts in their positions as supervisors of the royal harem, advisors, bureaucratic agents and messengers.

Greek writers tended to depict the Persian court as rather effeminate and lacking vigour, based on what they believed was the dominance of royal women and eunuchs. They seemed to have been obsessed with eunuchs and overemphasised their role and importance in court life and politics.

eunuchs castrated males

- Xenophon wrote in his *Cyropædia* (7.5.60–64) that Cyrus the Great included eunuchs among his guards.
- Herodotus recorded (8.105) that, like other oriental peoples, the Persians valued eunuchs highly for their trustworthiness and that eunuchs carried the king's messages (3.77); that a eunuch named Hermotimus was sent from Sardis to the court of the Persian king where he gradually became the most trusted of Xerxes' eunuchs and was put in charge of the royal children (8.103–5); and that as part of their tribute, Persia's subjects sent hundreds of boys to court to be made eunuchs (3.92, 3.97, 8.105).

While admitting that there were eunuchs in lower-level domestic roles at court, Matt Waters in *Ancient Persia* believes that 'only in exceptional circumstances did a eunuch rise to a significant position'.[15] He suggests that the excess of eunuchs in the Greek accounts could have resulted from some confusion over Persian titles.[16]

FIGURE 4.20 Depiction of Darius from a Greek vase, perhaps revealing the Greek view of the court as rather effeminate

> The court apparatus of the King's nobles, advisors, guardians, scribes and a host of others were all cogs in the imperial machine. They all worked towards the same goal and were all dependent on each other for success ... They were absolutely dependent upon royal favour for their positions and prerogatives, and as such could be removed.

SOURCE 4.11 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia: A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE*, p. 93

Royal favour and punishment

There seems to have been a hierarchy of rank among the many groups at court. Any person who had rendered important service to the king was called a 'benefactor' and, according to Herodotus, his 'name was enrolled in the catalogue of the King's Benefactors'.[17] Royal favours could take the form of:

- attendance at elaborate royal feasts
- gifts such as special clothing, jewellery, precious metal work, golden *akinakes*, a horse with a bridle ornamented in gold, and 'a splendid tent, often richly furnished with couches, textiles, gold plate and slaves'[18]
- vast land grants including entire villages and cities.

However, royal favours could just as easily be taken away, as in the case of a one-time close ally of Darius, Itaphernes (also spelled Intaphrenes), who was executed by the king with most of his family for failure to show proper respect to Darius' authority.

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Having business to transact with Darius, he [Itaphernes] wished to enter the palace. ... Itaphernes refused to have his name sent in by a messenger, and claimed his right to walk straight in. He was, however, stopped by the king's chamberlain and the sentry on duty at the palace gate ... Itaphernes drew his scimitar and cut off their ears and noses. ... The poor fellows showed themselves to Darius and explained the reason for their plight, which at once suggested to the king the alarming possibility of a fresh conspiracy ... he had him arrested with his children and all his near relations as condemned criminals.

SOURCE 4.12 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 3, 118–19

A COMMENT ON...

The royal household bureaucracy in the wider area

- The royal household was a huge economic unit; a state-within-a-state.
- It owned large estates scattered throughout the empire, and included more than a hundred towns within Iran.
- It owned and managed multitudes of industrial enterprises, mostly small crafts.
- It employed thousands of workers.
- The royal properties and enterprises were managed as a unified organisation and required a major bureaucracy to run it.
- The deposits of clay tablets found at Persepolis reveal aspects of this bureaucratic hierarchy and a range of administrative activities.
- They contain 1100 distinct seals, which were an integral part of the administrative process and deal with the supply and distribution of foodstuffs and livestock, the organisation of labour and financial management and distributions given to travellers on state business.

ACTIVITY 4.4

1. Why was a vast royal bureaucracy needed to support the king?
2. What is meant by an inner and outer court?
3. Draw a diagram illustrating the major court officials.
4. Why was the position of *hazarapatis* so important?
5. What roles did the following perform at court:
   - *arstibara*
   - *vacabara*
   - *ganzabara*
   - *magi*
   - eunuchs?
6. List some of the rewards and benefits they might receive from the king.
7. Why were all people in official positions vulnerable? Use Source 4.12 to explain why and how Darius removed one of his close allies, Itaphernes.
8. What is meant by 'the royal household was a huge economic unit: a state within a state'?
9. Research the way foreign rulers were treated in Persia. Refer to Herodotus regarding Demaratus (Spartan king) and Themistocles (Athenian leader).

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Provincial administration: satrapies and satraps

Cyrus and Cambyses had organised the empire into satrapies (provinces) ruled by satraps – 'protectors of the kingdom', somewhat like a governor – in order to administer it effectively. However, when Darius came to the throne, he was forced to adapt and improve the system. It is not possible to establish definite boundaries for the satrapies, but it is likely that they corresponded in many cases with natural features such as rivers. According to Darius' tomb inscription, he divided the empire into:

1 the central region, Persis (Parsa)
2 the western region encompassing Media and Elam
3 the Iranian plateau encompassing Parthia, Aria, Bactria, Sogdiana, Chorasmia and Drangiana
4 the borderlands: Archosia, Sattagydia, Gandara, Sind and Eastern Scythia.
5 the western lowlands: Babylonia, Assyria, Arabia and Egypt
6 the northwestern region: encompassing Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, overseas Scythians, Skudra Greeks.
7 the southern coastal regions: Libya, Ethiopia, Maka and Caria.

Within these regions Darius is supposed to have established 20–23 provinces, although there is some debate over these administrative units and their numbers as they were modified occasionally as the empire changed (see Figure 4.2).

The role of a satraps

Former rulers conquered by the Achaemenids were replaced by a satrap from the Persian elite, or a member of the extended royal family. The Persians 'had never been governed by a satrap but always by the king himself and in their hands, were concentrated the most important and influential civil and military offices'.[19]

The position of satrap often passed through generations of the same family and each satrap had a court based on the imperial court (in miniature) with its own administration and military force.

A satrap had great independence in the day-to-day running of his province, which was necessary as the distances from the centre of empire were great. However, they 'were aware not only of their responsibilities to the royal administration, but also of the sorts of initiatives they could, and were expected to, undertake',[20] and were always directly responsible to the king, particularly in foreign policy.

FIGURE 4.21 A Persian nobleman, possibly Artaphernes, brother of Darius and satrap of Lydia

A satrap was responsible for:

- the collection and delivery of the tribute and taxes to the king
- justice within the province: he was the supreme judge of the province before whom every civil and criminal case was brought
- control of the local officials, subject tribes and cities
- the security of his province, particularly the putting down of rebels and bands of roaming brigands
- the maintenance of roads and other networks of communication
- assembling a military or naval force from the subject peoples in response to a request by the king.

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Without loss of time he [Xerxes] dispatched couriers to the various states under his dominion with orders to raise an army much larger than before; and also, warships, transports, horses, and grain. So, the royal command went round; and all Asia was in an uproar for three years, with the best men being enrolled in the army for the invasion of Greece ...

SOURCE 4.13 Herodotus, *Histories*, 7.1

Because the king relied on his satraps' loyalty for the smooth running and stability of the empire, he made sure of this loyalty by appointing separate military and civil officials in each satrapy to help run the administration, and report on any seditious or suspicious behaviour.

1 The task of the 'royal secretary' was to control the council that assisted the satrap, to check on the satrap's administration and to communicate this to the king.
2 A royal treasurer safeguarded the province's finances.
3 A garrison commander was in charge of military troops stationed in the province and was responsible only to the king.
4 Royal inspectors or intelligence agents, known as the 'eyes and ears of the king', carried out regular inspections and were answerable only to the king.

Although the evidence suggests that the majority of satraps adhered to the directives from the king during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, there were several satraps who posed problems and paid for their disloyalty with their lives. Oroites, appointed as satrap of Lydia by Cyrus, murdered one of Darius' messengers in an act of defiance, and Aryandes, appointed to govern Egypt by Cambyses, began minting coins without the king's permission and was charged with treason.

Laws

Achaemenid law reflected both the legal traditions of the past, as well as changes that were needed to cope with altered conditions. Unfortunately, there is no surviving Achaemenid Law Code, which reflected the new forms of legislation and jurisdiction introduced by Darius. The king was not only interested in his laws being applied across the empire, but was keen that local legal traditions (Egyptian, Jewish) should be collected and codified.

The king's law was based on divine law, and it appears that the desire for tolerance and peace came from the influence of their religion, Zoroastrianism. The king's judicial authority was therefore entrusted to him by Ahuramazda, but he rarely adjudicated individual cases himself. He left it to his special royal judges whose task was to interpret the ancient laws, and dispense justice only after inquiring closely into the case and considering the previous merits of the accused. This seemed to be in line with the Zoroastrian judgement where the deceased's good and bad deeds were weighed against each other. However, the Persians were – according to Greek writers like Herodotus – harsh in their punishment when it came to corrupt judges.

Sandoces, who was one of the royal judges, had been arrested by Darius before and crucified, on a charge of perverting justice for money. But while he was on the cross, Darius came to the conclusion that his [Sandoces] services to the royal house outweighed his offenses, and realizing that he had acted with more promptitude than wisdom, caused him to be taken down.

SOURCE 4.14 Herodotus. *Histories*, Bk 7.194

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ACTIVITY 4.5

1 What was a satrapy?
2 Why is there some controversy over how many there were and their exact boundaries at the time of Darius and Xerxes?
3 What was a satrap?
   - How were they generally selected?
   - Why did they have great independence?
   - How were their activities restricted and why?
   - What were their main responsibilities?
4 Explain the role of the royal secretary and the royal inspectors.
5 What happened to those who disregarded the king's directives?
6 What were the laws of Darius believed to have been based on?
7 What does 'I will not tolerate that the weak shall suffer injustice brought on them by the mighty' reveal about the Achaemenid's code of law?
8 How were royal judges expected to behave in dealing with cases?
9 What does Source 4.14 reveal about royal treatment of corrupt judges?
10 What evidence is there that the kings were keen to maintain local legal traditions?

Nature and role of the army and navy, workers and artisans

The main sources for the Achaemenid army during the time of Darius and Xerxes are:

- the palace reliefs on glazed tiles at Susa; the stone reliefs at Persepolis; and depictions of guardsmen and cavalry found on Persian seals. Most of these show soldiers in court dress and, unlike the Assyrians, they do not depict scenes of warfare.
- Herodotus (7.60–80), who describes the appearance and diversity of the massive army recruited by Xerxes for his invasion of Greece in 480 BC, although his portrayal 'better describes a parade than a battle array'.[21] Herodotus also highly exaggerates the numbers that the Persian commanders had to turn into an effective fighting force. It is possible that he based his information on an estimation of the fighting strength of the entire Persian Empire.

The composition of the army and navy

The army, under the command of the king, his family and his closest companions, varied depending on the conditions at the time.

1 During peacetime, the standing army was composed of an elite Persian and Median infantry and cavalry, and there were garrisons commanded by Persian officers quartered in strategic areas throughout the empire: at frontier fortresses, at mountain passes, river crossings and on routes connecting royal capitals.
2 During time of war, supplementary forces from all satrapies in the empire were added. These national units, fighting under Persian commanders, were armed according to their national customs.

FIGURE 4.22 Immortals in battle dress

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Custom decreed that all Persians up to 50 years had an obligation to serve their country as royal warriors but little is known about the organisation of the Persian army except that it was based on units of 10: 10 men composed a company; 10 companies made up a battalion; 10 battalions made a division; and 10 divisions formed a corps.

The nucleus of the army was the elite Persian force numbering 10 000, who were referred to by Herodotus as the Immortals because whenever the contingent suffered casualties, its numbers were brought back up to full strength.

The Immortals, both Persian and Mede, were professional soldiers, of whom 1000 of the most elite formed the King's Guard in peacetime and the cream of the army in war. Unlike their court dress (see Figure 4.23) they are shown equipped for warfare with a:

- corselet of metal scales under a highly-coloured loose tunic
- soft cloth head covering (*tiara*) which could be drawn across the face to keep out the dust
- bow, an iron-headed spear with counterweights of gold or silver pomegranates, an *akinakes* (short sword or long dagger) in highly decorated scabbard and a hide-covered wicker shield of traditional shape (a *gerron*).

> ... A body of infantry 10 000 strong. Of these a thousand had golden pomegranates instead of spikes on the butt of their spears, and were arrayed surrounding the other 9000 whose spears had silver pomegranates.

SOURCE 4.15 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7.41

The main units of the highly-trained Persian troops comprised spearmen and bowmen, some of whom were infantry detachments and some cavalry detachments. Persians, both infantry and cavalry, were renowned for their use of the bow, either unleashing a barrage of arrows from behind their shields or harrying the enemy from the back of a horse with volleys of arrows, as described by Herodotus (9.1) during the Battle of Plataea in 479 BC.

FIGURE 4.23 Glazed tile depicting Immortals in ceremonial dress

Pictorial and written sources show that the fully armed Persian horsemen wore protective corselets, helmets and bronze face shields, and carried both a bow and javelin. Their horses were also heavily protected: head, chest and thighs. The horsemen acted as shock troops while the light-armed cavalry operated as missile troops.

Although chariots were still used throughout the Aechaemenid period as a symbol of authority and power, for cultural and military parades, and for hunting, they were not a main offensive contingent of the army during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, having been replaced by a more effective cavalry. However, Xerxes was carried in a royal chariot on the march to Greece, and he was accompanied by the sacred chariot of Ahuramazda. This golden solar chariot was pulled by eight white horses with the charioteer walking behind holding the reins as no mortal was permitted to ride in it. Accompanying the king was also the eagle standard and the holy fire of Ahuramazda in portable fire-holders attended by chanting *magi*.

FIGURE 4.24 A representation of an Achaemenid king entering Babylon with his army

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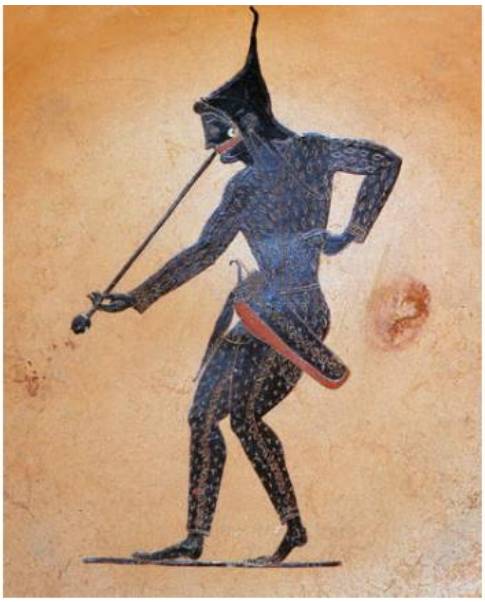

FIGURE 4.25 A Scythian (Sakae) archer used by the Persians during the conflicts with Greece in 480 BC

Herodotus describes in detail the other national units (e.g. Scythians, Bactrians, Ethiopians, Indians), the way they were outfitted and their weapons. The army of Xerxes on the march in 480 BC was, according to Herodotus, an incredible sight. Refer to Bk 7.54–97.

The Persians esteemed personal bravery, which is why the king or commanders' scribes kept details of such people who exhibited particular valour or died bravely.

> Xerxes watched the course of the battle [Salamis] from the base of Mt. Aegaleos ... whenever he saw one of his officers behaving with distinction, he would find out his name, and his secretaries wrote it down, together with his city and parentage.

SOURCE 4.16 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8.91

A COMMENT ON...

Herodotus' perspective on the Persian army

It is hard to estimate the effectiveness of the Achaemenid forces from Herodotus' insistence on the inferiority and inexperience of the Persian infantry compared to the Greeks (Xerxes' invasion of Greece in 480 BC). There is no doubt that the Persians were confronted by Greek heavily-armed hoplites fighting in tight phalanx formation and that they faced the greatest army (the Spartans) in the known world. It is also true that the conscripts from all parts of the Persian empire did not have the armour and weaponry of the core of the Persian forces or of the Greeks. However, we must remember Herodotus' bias and Greek stereotypes of the Persians, as well as the fact that had the Persian army not been effective it could not have conquered and retained such a large empire for so long.

The Persians had no navy of their own, but during wartime, when naval resources were called for, the maritime satrapies, such as Phoenicia, Ionia, Caria, the Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Egypt and others, contributed ships, supplies and experienced commanders, who nonetheless were under the control of inexperienced Persian admirals (refer to Herodotus 7.89–97). The invasion of Greece in 490 BC, during the reign of Darius, was a naval attack with ships carrying troops and horses, but the invasion of Greece by Xerxes in 480 BC was a combined land and naval force. Their policy on that occasion was to keep the army and navy in contact with one another.

ACTIVITY 4.6

1 How do we know about the role and appearance of the Achaemenid army during the time of Darius and Xerxes? How reliable do you think each of these sources would be to a real understanding of the Persian army?

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2 How did the composition of the army change during peacetime?
3 Who were the Immortals? Despite the many images of this elite group depicted in reliefs and on glazed bricks in ceremonial garb, how would they have been outfitted in times of war?
4 Who made up the main units of the Persian army and for what were they renowned?
5 Use Figure 4.24 and text to describe the heavily-armed Persian horsemen. What was their main purpose?
6 Why were chariots not used as an offensive unit in the army at this time? What purpose did they serve during a military campaign?
7 Read Herodotus 7.54–97 for an account of the ethnic contingents, their appearance and weaponry during Xerxes' march to invade Greece in 480 BC.
8 What was Herodotus' perspective on the Persian army? Why do we have to be cautious about accepting it?
9 What does Source 4.16 indicate about the king's esteem for personal bravery?
10 How did the Persians provide themselves with a navy during times of war?

Workers and artisans

The Persepolis Tablets as well as Darius' Foundation Inscription at Susa are major sources for those within the empire classified as ***kurtash*** or workers, although the exact translation of this term is not clear. It is very difficult to know much about Persian social stratification, especially at the lower end of the scale, and these can only be referred to in generalised terms.

kurtash workers on royal or noble estates and households

> Workers were of varying sorts: those who worked in the fields and shops controlled by the administration and those who labored on the massive on-going construction projects at Persepolis. They encompassed varying levels of specialization and economic status.

SOURCE 4.17 Matt Waters, *Ancient Persia, A Concise History of the Achaemenid Empire, 550–330 BCE*, p. 105

What the sources reveal about the empire's workers and specialised craftsmen include the following:

- The payments they received for their work – mostly in the form of rations of foodstuffs, or sometimes in silver – varied according to their ranking. Those in the lower levels received payment at a subsistence level.
- Rations also differed according to age and gender, although these varied depending on the types of jobs performed and place where they were performed. See p. 606 for non-royal women.
- They appear to have been recruited from a wide range of ethnic groups, although how they were recruited (by force, by selection according to particular skills) is not clear. The Susa Foundation Inscription that describes the building of Darius' palace at Susa provides some information on the ethnicity of some of the craftsmen.

> The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were Yaunâ and Lydians. The goldsmiths who wrought the gold, those were Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the wood, those were Lydians and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked brick, those were Babylonians. The men who adorned the wall, those were Medes and Egyptians.

SOURCE 4.18 The Foundation Inscription in Susa, cited in livius.org

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ACTIVITY 4.7

1. Who were those within the empire classified as *kurtash*? What does Source 4.17 say about these people?
2. What do the Persepolis Tablets reveal about payments for work?
3. What does the Susa Foundation Tablet tell us about the ethnicity and crafts of those employed in building Darius' palace at Susa?

Roles and status of women

As in most ancient societies, little is known about ordinary women, especially those from non-Persian backgrounds. It is royal women and those of the elite about whom we know the most, although there is some mention of non-royal Persian women in the Persepolis Fortification and Treasury Texts.

> The majority of women in the ancient Orient have left no trace in the historical records. They remain nameless and unnamed. Exceptions that escaped anonymity are mostly of a notorious kind.

SOURCE 4.19 *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. Averil Cameron and Amelie Khurt, p. 20

TABLE 4.2 Women in Persia

Images of women in the Greek sources	Absence of women in Persian royal inscriptions and Persepolis palace reliefs	Women in Persepolis Fortification Tablets
Greek writers have provided a stereotypical picture of the Achaemenid Empire, one in which luxury, wealth and harem intrigues had a corrupting influence and where 'women started playing all-important roles'[22] – women like Atossa mentioned in Herodotus (Bk 3.134). Although Atossa (daughter of Cyrus, sister and wife of Cambyses, wife of Darius and mother of Xerxes) was an influential woman, some of the tales told about her by Herodotus – that she was an ambitious woman who interfered in state political affairs – are obviously fictitious. These stories were designed to show that the Persian court was effeminate.	No human woman is mentioned in any of the royal inscriptions, even where one might expect them to occur. Among the relief images on the walls of the Persepolis palace (king, nobles, courtiers, guards and tribute bearers from all parts of the empire), there is not a single image of a woman. However, the absence of women in these important Persian sources does not mean that women did not play a significant role in Persian society during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes.	These texts provide some valuable, although brief, information about the social and economic status of both royal and non-royal women. Individual elite women are identified by name and some non-royals by their work titles. They provide insights into the way the royals and elite managed their wealth and freely travelled the country with their own retinues. These texts also provide glimpses into the way non-royals were paid for work and the status of certain women.
There are few depictions of women, even those of royalty, except for an image of a queen on a cylinder seal holding an audience, and an ivory statuette from Susa of a crowned woman in Persian dress. It was once thought that some of the beardless images on reliefs were of women but these are now believed to have been eunuchs or priests.		

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The status and influence of royal women

The status of royal women depended on how close they were to the king. Although the king could have many wives and scores of concubines, only one wife was the Great King's principal wife. She and the king's mother were at the top of the hierarchy of royal women, who were collectively called *duksis* (princess) although their individual status was designated as 'King's Mother', 'King's Wife', 'King's Daughter'. Their marital status was also significant. A daughter of Darius, Artazostre, was referred to as 'the wife of Mardonius, daughter of the king'.

As in most ancient cultures, royal daughters and other close relatives were often given to nobles and foreign kings in marriage to cement political alliances.

Concubines, who were usually of high rank and not slaves, were referred to as 'women of the king'. However, because most of these were non-Persian, they could not marry the king, nor could any offspring accede to the throne.

FIGURE 4.26 A head, believed to belong to an Achaemenid queen, possibly Atossa

Although there was a designated area for the royal women in each of the palaces, there is no evidence that they lived in seclusion. However, like the king, their status at court was stressed by their relative invisibility.

Despite the fact that Archaemenid society was patriarchal, and Persian royal women were not permitted to hold any government offices or conduct religious ceremonies, they were enormously powerful and influential but 'in ways that often defy the stereotypes rampant in Greek sources'.[23]

Queens, and especially the king's mother, had their own courts and were permitted to hold their own councils and audiences much like that of a king. An image on a seal depicts a queen with a personal attendant. Like the king, she is separated from the female supplicant or visitor by incense holders. 'These formal audiences only served to heighten their significance at court.'[24]

Elite women:

1 had great economic independence with vast personal estates in Persia, as well as outside the core of the empire, in Babylonia, Syria, Media and Egypt. They leased out their landholdings, employed their own workforces, were assigned administrative officials, such as stewards, to receive their direct orders, collect rents and oversee tax payments. They were responsible for the rations paid to the workers on their estates. They had their own seals, which they used on various transactions.

FIGURE 4.27 An Achaemenid queen conducting an audience

2 travelled around the empire with their own entourages, sometimes as part of the king's movements (on ceremonial occasions, military campaigns and even royal hunting expeditions), sometimes travelling independently, as well as with other royal women or their royal sons. They travelled with their own guards, physicians, judges, personal servants and cooks.

3 threw lavish parties for special occasions and ordered provisions for their quarters.

The Persepolis Texts give a great deal of detail about a very high-ranking royal woman called Irdabama, whose identity has not been reliably identified but, according to Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, could have been Darius' mother. According to the texts she:

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- owned vast estates and a workforce of almost 500
- was economically active, overseeing her estates and distributing food supplies
- had authority to issue commands to the administrative hierarchy at Persepolis, interacted constantly with high male officials on royal and private business, and used her seal to authorise various transactions
- went on long journeys with her own courtly entourage. She is attested at Susa and Babylon. It is possible that she deputised for the king when he was not present at these places.

It is strange that Queen Atossa is not mentioned in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, which covered the 15-year period down to 493 BC. Had she already died? If so, it would mean that Herodotus' information about her was totally inaccurate.

Non-royal women

Not much is known about non-royal women except what is recorded in the Fortification Tablets about their active participation in economic life around Persepolis in the period between 508–493 BC. What they tell us is that:

- women who worked were paid in rations according to their skill and rank in group workshops.
- there were female supervisors called *arashahara* ('great chief') who were employed at different locations and managed large groups of women, men and children, and for which they received higher pay than men. Their monthly rations are recorded as 50 quarts of grain, 30 quarts of wine and a third of a sheep.
- pregnant women received higher rations, and if they produced a boy they were paid twice as much as for a girl. Also, at the birth of a boy, the mother, the nurse and even the physician were given higher rations for a month.
- a woman named Artim, who was a nanny for a royal daughter, received rent payments for a property she owned.

The lives of most of the women of different ethnicities in the empire are unknown to us, except that, unlike Persians, they took part in religious rituals where there were female deities.

ACTIVITY 4.8

1. What does Source 4.19 suggest about women in ancient cultures?
2. Study Table 4.2 and:
   - describe the female bias in Herodotus
   - the mention of women in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets.
3. Can you suggest a reason why there are few depictions of royal women on artefacts, and no mention or images of them in the royal inscriptions from Persepolis?
4. How was the status of royal women gauged? Who had the greatest status?
5. What evidence is there that royal women had great significance at court?
6. Assess the social and economic freedom and influence of elite Persian women.
7. What specific, though sketchy, references do the Persepolis Fortification Tablets provide for non-royal women?

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

Vassal states and subject peoples

The Achaemenids were the first to attempt to govern many different racial and ethnic groups on the principle of equal responsibilities and rights for all peoples, and they were far more humane than other ancient cultures. However, there was no one-size-fits-all approach across the empire with regard to **vassal** rulers and subject peoples.

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In many cases, former rulers continued to rule peacefully as independent vassals under the control of the Persian satrap of an area, and the various subject communities within the empire paid their taxes, kept the peace and were loyal to the Persians, who had allowed them to retain their own customs and religious beliefs without any interference.

However, in some areas such as Ionia, where the Persians had appointed Greek leaders as pro-Persian tyrants answerable to Artaphernes, the satrap of Sardis and brother of Darius, things were not so peaceful. Between 499–493 BC, due to the ambitions and intrigues of the tyrant of Miletus, as well as deep-seated discontent against Persian rule, the Ionian states rebelled against the Persians with the help of the Athenians, and for five years, the area was in turmoil. The Persians had the resources to maintain a sustained war effort and when they finally put down the rebellion, the Ionians saw just what punishment the Persians would hand out for disloyalty. The great city of Miletus, where the rebellion began, was destroyed, its temples burned and plundered, and its inhabitants killed or taken into captivity to Susa.

However, in an act of tolerance, the Persian satrap introduced measures which encouraged peace, conducted surveys to determine a fair land tax and, in the following year, Darius sent Mardonius to the coast to set up democracies. On the other hand, neither Darius nor Xerxes forgot the part played in the revolt by the Greek mainland city of Athens, against whom both would attempt to inflict vengeance.

The Persians were often lenient to opponents who requested it and usually treated their captives with respect, especially nobles and princes. Even rebellious subjects who were deported were often given new lands.

ACTIVITY 4.9

1. What was the general attitude of the Persians to subject people?
2. What was a vassal ruler?
3. What is meant by there was 'no one-size-fits-all' approach to governing the Persian Empire?
4. What happened in the case of loyal vassal rulers?
5. Why and how did the Persians treat Ionia differently in 499–3 BC?
6. In what cases did the Persians show leniency to opponents?
7. Research Herodotus for an account of the Ionian revolt against Persian control. Note the following:
   - disloyalty to Persia
   - the reason for the widespread nature of the rebellion
   - excessive Persian punishment to the ring-leader city, Miletus
   - subsequent tolerance/leniency to cities of the region
   - a future act of vengeance against two Greek cities of the mainland.

4.3 Economy

The significance of agriculture

As in most ancient cultures, agriculture was the back-bone of Achaemenid society. Even in urban areas, the population was chiefly focused on agriculture because:

- the army and all workers, including royal officials, were predominantly paid in agricultural rations (grain, sheep, wine and other foodstuffs), although some elite workers did get paid in unminted silver.
- it was necessary to establish huge granaries at strategic locations and keep them full for armies on campaign.

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- enormous quantities of food and drink were needed by the courts (imperial and satrapal) for elaborate feasts, particularly those held by the king, and special ceremonial banquets. Achaemenid inscriptions suggest that 15 000 people were fed daily at the king's expense and that for one New Year celebration there had to be enough grain to make bread for 10 000 of Darius' guests over a 10-day period.
- taxation, which was the main source of the empire's income, was assessed on land classified according to crops cultivated and to the size of the harvest.

Barley was the most commonly-grown cereal in the empire, particularly in Babylonia, Egypt, Elam and Persia, while Persia specialised in wine. There was extensive movement of foodstuffs and livestock from one area to another. One text speaks of 700 shepherds driving small livestock – probably sheep – of the king from Persia in the direction of Susa. On the basis of the numbers of shepherds, there must have been tens of thousands of animals in the herd.

Agriculture throughout the empire depended on the availability of water and irrigation technology (see p. 614).

Economic exchange

Tribute and taxation

The whole **tribute**/tax system was rather complex and at times confusing. One of the problems is that there was some discrepancy between Darius' and Xerxes' *dubyu*-lists (people or countries) and the tribute lists of Herodotus.

tribute a contribution made by one ruler or state to another as a sign of submission or as the price of protection

To put the empire on a sound economic footing, Darius assessed a fixed yearly tribute from each satrapy and arranged tax districts (not quite identical with the satrapies). The annual tribute had to be paid, not in coin, but in precious metals: gold and silver, as well as some fixed supplementary tribute in kind (horses, livestock, grain, wine, oil) according to the individual resources of the administrative areas. The Indians paid their tribute in gold dust. Tribute might also have been in the form of troop levies, tax payments from royal granaries, fisheries and mines, and conscription for building projects.

These revenues poured into the satrapal capitals and were then moved to the treasuries at Persepolis, Susa, Babylon, Pasargadae and Ecbatana.

In addition to tribute, some subjects were expected to deliver gifts of determined sizes. These included such things as logs of ebony wood and elephant tusks (ivory), as well as other objects like gold and silver vessels. Arabia had to deliver annually 1000 talents of frankincense as gifts to the Persian king.

Other sources of revenue were customs dues and highway and transit taxes.

Persians were exempt from tribute on precious metals and forced labour, although they had to pay tribute in kind.

Coinage, communications and trade

Darius facilitated trade and commerce throughout the empire. He:

1 initiated uniformity in weights and measures and introduced a new weight in the shape of a pyramidion called a *karsha*
2 minted coins: gold *darics* and silver *sigloi*
3 covered the empire with a network of high-quality roads
4 bridged rivers
5 built a canal from the Nile in Egypt to the Red Sea.

FIGURE 4.28 Ionian tribute bearers on the *apadana* staircase at Persepolis

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Coinage

Darius was the first Achaemenid ruler to mint gold and silver coins, although the Lydians and Greeks of Asia Minor had been using coined money long before Darius' time. His attempt to introduce a uniform state currency was probably to make commerce easier with the people on the western edge of the empire who were accustomed to coins.

The new standard was the *daric*, struck from pure gold and weighing 8.42 grams, the minting of which was under the direct authority of the king, who made sure they were of a regular weight and alloy. This coin was roughly oval in shape and had no legend. On the obverse side was an image of the king in a running or half-kneeling position wearing a crenellated crown, carrying a spear in his right hand and holding a bow in his left.

Scholars do not all agree on the origin of the name 'daric'; some believe that it was named after Darius, others that it came from the Old Persian word for gold, 'dari'.

There were also coins struck from pure silver that weighed 5.6 grams and were known as *sigloi* (sing. *siglos*), 20 of which equalled a *daric*.

These coins appear to have been rarely used outside Asia Minor and there were none circulating in Persia, where exchange was in the form of agricultural products and livestock as well as in ingots of silver.

FIGURE 4.29 A gold daric

A COMMENT ON...

Prices and exchange values

- It is hard to judge the equivalent value of various agricultural products and livestock but it appears that prices were officially established in the royal economic sector, although they probably varied where exchange was carried out in a free market.
- According to documentary evidence from Babylonia, grain in Persia was more expensive than in Babylonia and wine was many times cheaper in Persia than in Babylonia.
- The Persepolis documents mention some of the following:
  - a donkey cost 500 litres of barley or of fruit
  - a 10-litre jug of wine cost 30 litres of barley or 1 *siglos*
  - grain and fruits were equivalent
  - a sheep cost 100 litres of barley or 3 *sigloi* of silver.

Communications and roads

Commerce was encouraged and made easier by the network of patrolled roads that spanned the empire, although it is the so-called Royal Road from Susa in Elam to Sardis in Lydia (approximately 2600 kilometres long) that features in the Greek sources, Herodotus and Xenophon. It is unlikely that any royal road would not have run through Persepolis, so the description of Herodotus and Xenophon probably reflected the Greek belief that Susa was the pre-eminent Achaemenid city. They seemed to know little of Persepolis.

There are records in the Persepolis Tablets of other roads 'running in all directions from the Empire's core'.[25] These would have included the following:

- The continuation of the road from Susa through the formidable Persian Gate to Persepolis (a distance of 552 kilometres).
- The road that connected Babylon and Ecbatana, which crossed the Royal Road near Opis, and continued on into central Asia and the far East, later known as the Silk Road.
- The road from northern Mesopotamia to Damascus and on into Egypt.

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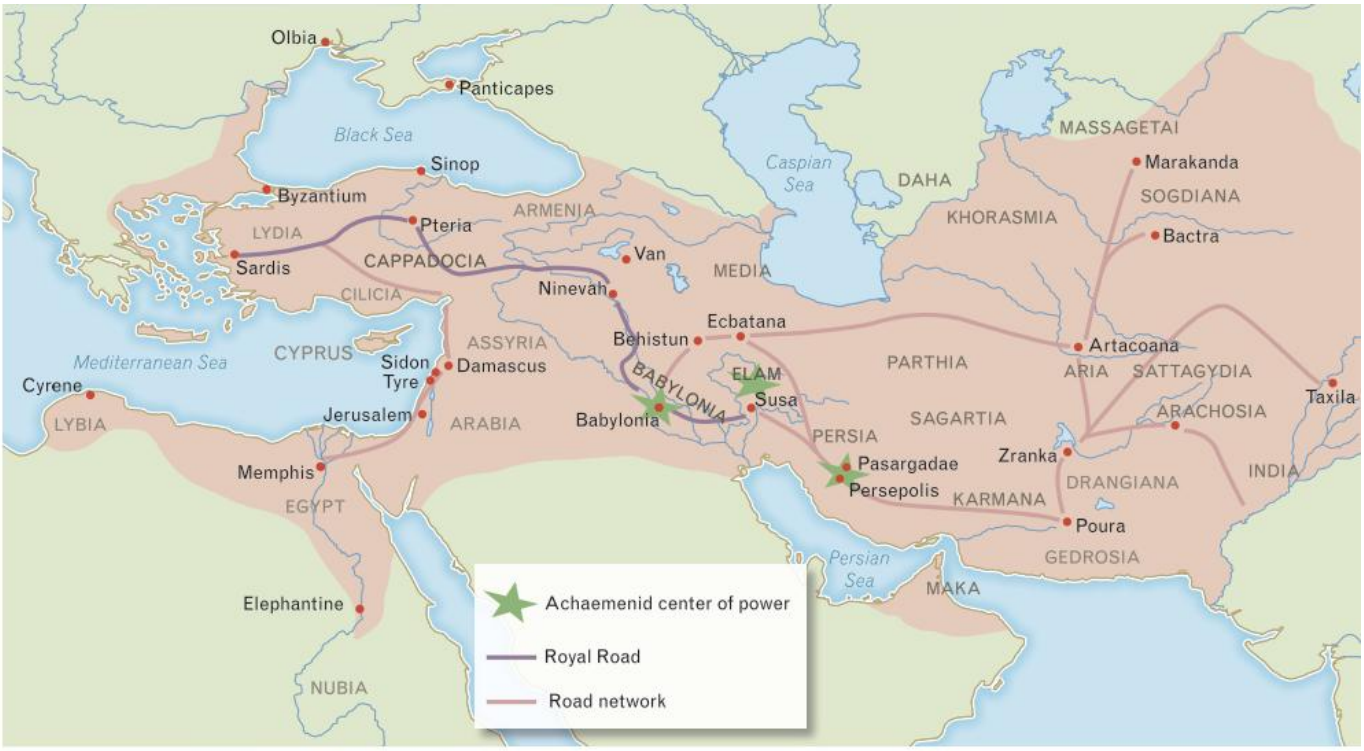

FIGURE 4.30 The Achaemenid road network and the Royal Road

parasang an Iranian unit of distance, the length of which varied according to terrain and speed of travel

angaroi a Babylonian word referring to royal messengers

pirradazis refers to the Persian system of horse changing on the Royal Road

Distances along these roads were estimated using a Persian measurement known as a ***parasang***. Just as the roads were used for military movements, for a royal postal service of couriers (***angaroi***) and kings' inspectors, so too were they used for massive movements of goods via trade caravans and transportation of tribute. 'The construction, maintenance, and guarding of an extensive network of roads and bridges, required a great deal of engineering expertise, manpower, and expense.'[26]

Herodotus' Royal Road

Herodotus says that 'at intervals all along the road are recognized stations with excellent inns, and the road itself is safe to travel by as it never leaves inhabited country'. He then describes the satrapies through which it passes, the number of staging posts in each and some particular details such as 'on the far side of Phrygia one comes to the river Halys, there are gates here which one must have to be passed before one crosses the river, and a strong guard-post.'[27] He maintains that a person, in no hurry, could travel the Royal Road from Sardis to Susa in 90 days, but that royal messengers in a relay system could carry dispatches in as little as seven days, changing both messengers and horses at the staging posts along the way (***pirradazis***).

> There is nothing which travels faster than these Persian couriers … riders are stationed along the road equal in number to the number of days the journey takes – a man and a horse for each day. Nothing stops these couriers from covering their allotted stage in the quickest possible time neither snow, rain, heat, nor darkness.

SOURCE 4.20 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 8.98

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There is a story (probably not reliable) told by Diodorus Siculus that messages between Susa and Persepolis could be passed by lookout posts on high mountains, close together. Those with the loudest voices were stationed at a distance at which a man's voice could be heard and the messages passed on to the next mountain post until it was delivered to the border of the satrapy.

FIGURE 4.31 The remains of the Royal Road near Susa

The manpower required to build and maintain these roads, which had to be wide enough for wagons and chariots to travel on them and grooved for all-weather use, was vast and constant. Also, rivers had to be bridged: either by permanent constructions such as across the Halys River in Anatolia (modern Turkey), or by pontoon bridges.

During his Scythian campaign around 512 BC, Darius built a bridge across the Bosphorus (Bosporus) – the narrow straight between the Propontis and Black Sea – and, later, another bridge over the Danube River. Both were pontoon bridges.

Xerxes' massive engineering preparations for his invasion of Greece in 480 BC involved the bridging of the Strymon River in Thrace, the cutting of a canal for his navy through the Mt Athos peninsula, and the greatest challenge of all, the construction of two floating bridges, approximately 1.5 kilometres in length, across the Hellespont between Asia and Europe, one for troops and one for baggage. Read the description of its construction in Herodotus 7.36.

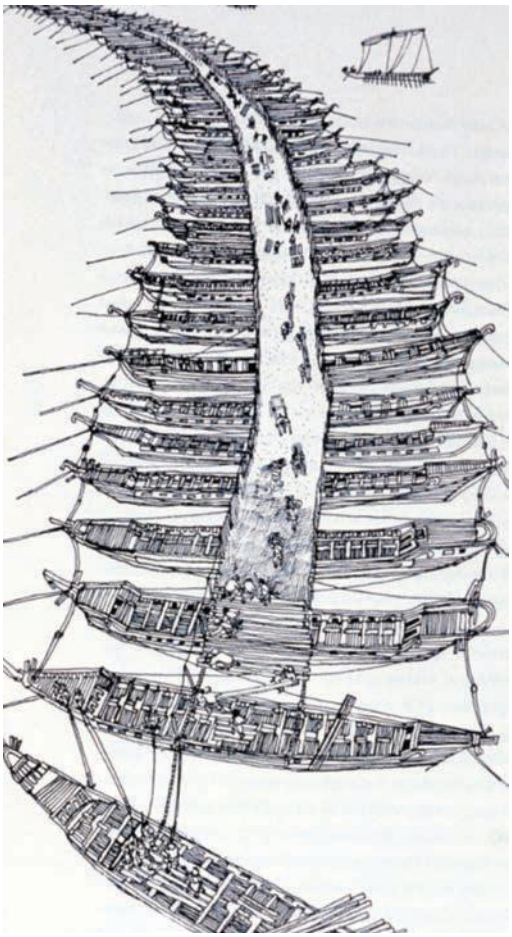

FIGURE 4.32 Xerxes' bridge of boats across the Hellespont

Trade sea routes

Darius had a longsighted trade policy that involved a search for new markets, natural resources and easier trade routes by sea. One of his major contributions to interregional trade was the completion of a canal, planned by the Egyptian pharaoh Necho II at the beginning of the 6th century BC, linking the Nile and the Red Sea. This was an ancient precursor of the modern Suez Canal. According to Herodotus, 'the canal was broad enough for two **triremes** sailing side by side and ships could pass through it in four days'.[28]

This allowed the circumnavigation of the Arabian Peninsula from Babylonia to Memphis in Egypt and ships to sail from India to the Mediterranean along which valuable spices were brought to the west. Unfortunately, the canal had a tendency to silt up, necessitating continual dredging.

Darius also sponsored explorations such as that of the Carian, Scytax of Caryanda, who discovered the mouth of the Indus River.

trireme Greek-style ship with three banks of oars

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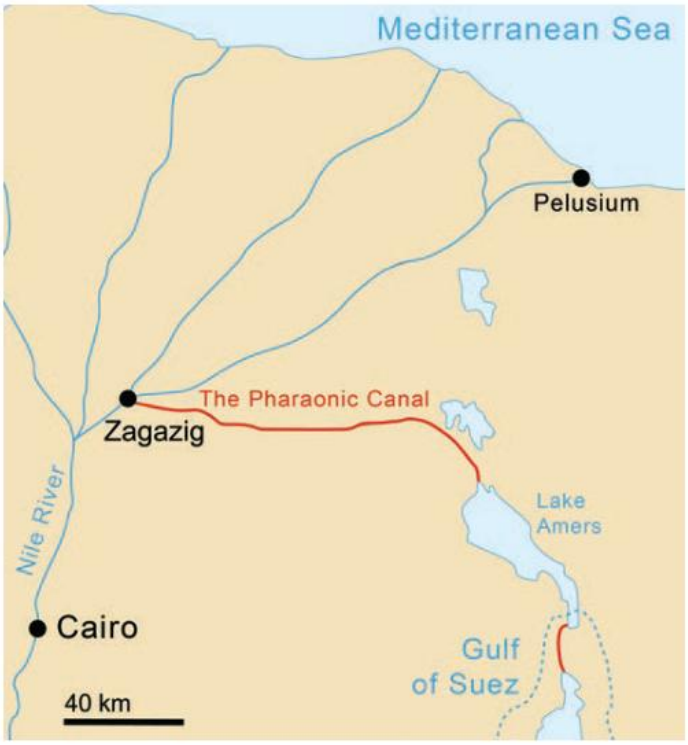

FIGURE 4.33 The site of the ancient Suez Canal

ACTIVITY 4.10

1 Explain why agriculture was the basis of Persian society.
2 What evidence is there for the nature of tribute within the empire?
3 In what form was it paid?
4 What other forms of 'revenue' were paid into the satrapal and imperial treasuries?
5 How did the Persians establish prices and exchange rates?
6 Draw a mind map showing how Darius' facilitated trade and communications throughout the empire.
7 Describe the following:
   - The Egyptian canal
   - The so-called Royal Road, its *pirradazis* and couriers
   - The building of bridges.
8 Use Herodotus to research the massive engineering feats of the Athos Canal and the bridging of the Hellespont in preparation for Xerxes' massive invasion of Greece in 480 BC.

Technology, construction and building materials

Irrigation technology

The major food bowls of the Achaemenid Empire were the fertile river valleys of the Nile, and the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and the peoples of these regions had for millennia been practising an effective form of irrigation. However, for much of the empire, particularly the Iranian plateau, there was a shortage of water for large parts of the year.

At some point in the first millennium BC, the people of the plateau had found an innovative solution to the lack of water: a form of gently sloping subterranean canals known as **qanats**. These underground channels tapped into groundwater in upland alluvial **aquifers** (usually at the head of a mountain valley) and transported the precious water to outlets in settlements from where it was distributed via a system of canals to the fields for irrigation. This ancient *qanat* system was accessed along its length – sometimes several kilometres in length – by vertical access shafts about one metre in diameter that were sunk at intervals of 20–30 metres. These were used to originally excavate the *qanat* and for ventilation when later checking on its condition.

The advantages of this form of predominantly underground irrigation were that:

1 it reduced water loss from seepage and evaporation
2 there was no need for pumps as the water was fed by gravity.

The written records leave little doubt that ancient Persia was the origin of this irrigation innovation and that it spread right across the empire under the Achaemenids. In fact, Darius provided a major incentive to *qanat* builders and their heirs, allowing them to retain, for five generations, any profits they gained from newly constructed *qanats*. This irrigation system is still in use in parts of modern Iran and in places like Afghanistan.

qanats gently sloping underground channels to transport water from an aquifer to the surface for irrigation and drinking

aquifers underground layers of permeable rock, sand or gravel that contain groundwater

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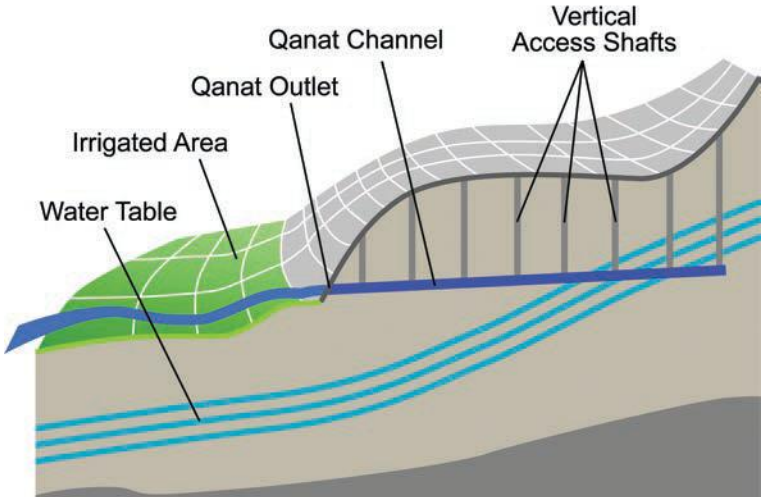

FIGURE 4.34 Cross-section of a *qanat*

FIGURE 4.35 A *qanat* tunnel near modern-day Istafan in Iran

Construction and building materials

We have already seen some of the construction work carried out by Darius and Xerxes: roads, canals and huge granaries, but it is the remarkable archaeological remains at the palace city at Persepolis, and the Susa Building Inscription of Darius, that have allowed scholars to understand some of the building materials and construction techniques used during this time. See p. 624 for more details on architecture.

TABLE 4.3 Construction materials in Persia

Materials	Use
Sun-dried mud bricks	Mud bricks were the most common building materials, sometimes used for foundations and upper walls. These bricks were generally quadratic in form and larger than present-day bricks. Walls were plastered with mud, tempered with chaff and later lime plaster.
Glazed bricks	Used for decoration at Susa due to lack of stone resources for decoration as at Persepolis. All glazed bricks were siliceous bricks (a mixture of sand and lime) and had to be fired three times. They were produced in different shapes dependent on the use.
Rubble	This was the second most commonly-used building material and was composed of natural fragments, or deliberately chipped rock, of no specific shape. Rubble was used for foundation walls, and spaces between were filled with loose pebbles and cemented together with mud mortar.
Cut stone	Sometimes used for flat terraces where stone was available, but predominantly used for special features such as columns (bases, shafts and capitals); door sills, frames and jambs; wall niches, crenellations and elaborate reliefs. Stone was cut with iron tools (chisels) and smoothed by abrasion by harder stones in conjunction with water and fine sand.
Wood	Coniferous and deciduous trees – such as poplars – were used for building supports. Cedar was imported from Lebanon. Roofs and ceilings were constructed of logs, covered with wooden boards, reed mats and thatch, all covered in a mixture of mud and straw.

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TABLE 4.3 (*continued*)

Materials	Use
Gravel (course and fine) and unworked stone blocks	These materials were used for embankments, roads and other forms of paving.
Metal	For the manufacture of sheet metal, strips, shapes and wire, craftsmen used hammers and anvils of stone, chisels with sharp edges and pliers. Measuring tools, such as dividers and rulers, were used for dimensional accuracy, and furnaces, using a gold alloy, were used to solder the metal. Goldsmiths were specialised professionals with a high level of artistic and aesthetic talent. See p. 623 for Achaemenid art.

1 The buildings at Pasargadae were probably reproductions in stone of traditional forms in mud-brick and wood. Skilled masons – probably from the conquered territories of Ionia and Lydia – were needed to make the transition from wood to stone.

2 Darius' best-known building project is Persepolis. In c. 515 BC, Darius' workers levelled the ground and created a 450- by 300-metre terrace on which was built the Treasury and an Audience Hall, with a roof supported on 72 stone columns, each 25 metres high.

3 The Susa Building Inscriptions and a few fragments of columns are all that remain of the great palace of Darius at Susa. In antiquity, Susa was better known to the Greeks than Persepolis. The following source is unique for the details it gives on the building of the palace.

Darius the King says: By the grace of Ahuramazda I built this palace …

This palace which I built at Susa from afar its ornamentation was brought. Downward the earth was dug, until I reached rock in the earth. When the excavation had been made, then rubble was packed down, some 40 cubits in depth, another part 20 cubits in depth. On that rubble, the palace was constructed.

And that the earth was dug downward, and that the rubble was packed down, and that the sun-dried brick was molded, the Babylon people performed these tasks.

The cedar timber, this was brought from a mountain named Lebanon. The Assyrian people brought it to Babylon; from Babylon, the Carians and the Yauna [Ionian Greeks] brought it to Susa. The *yakâ*-timber was brought from Gadara [modern-day northern Pakistan] and from Carmania.

The gold was brought from Lydia from Bactria, which here was wrought. The precious stone lapis lazuli and carnelian which was wrought here, this was brought from Sogdia. The precious stone turquoise, this was brought from Chorasmia, which was wrought here.

The silver and the ebony were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation with which the wall was adorned, that from Yaunâ [Ionia] was brought. The ivory which was wrought here, was brought from Kush and from India and from Arachosia.

The stone columns which were here wrought, a village named Abirâdu, in Elam – from there were brought. The stone-cutters who wrought the stone, those were Yaunâ [Greeks] and Lydians. The goldsmiths who wrought the gold, those were Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the wood, those were Lydians and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked brick, those were Babylonians. The men who adorned the wall, those were Medes and Egyptians.

Darius the King says: At Susa, a very excellent work was ordered, a very excellent work was brought to completion.

SOURCE 4.21 Susa Building Inscription, cited in livius.org

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ACTIVITY 4.11

1. Use Figures 4.34 and 4.35 as well as text to describe the innovative method of irrigation known as *qanats*.
2. What were the two most commonly-used materials used in construction?
3. For what were the following used:
   - cut stone
   - glazed bricks
   - gravel?
4. Use Source 4.21 to make a list of the materials used in Darius' great palace at Susa.

4.4 Religion, death and burial

There are useful references to Achaemenid religion in Greek writings and Persian texts, as well as from artefacts and depictions on royal monuments. However, the imperial religion – believed to be Zoroastrianism and the worship of a creator god, Ahuramazda – is still a subject of debate among scholars, due to the difficulties in interpreting the various documents and reliefs.

Apart from the worship of Ahuramazda, there was a vast array of religious beliefs and practices within the empire because of its diversity of people. Most of these religions were **polytheistic**, such as:

- the Greek pantheon of gods and goddesses in Asia Minor, headed by Zeus
- the endless deities in Egypt
- the range of gods in Phoenicia and Mesopotamia, such as Marduk (head of the Mesopotamian pantheon and the chief god of Babylon), Baal (a god worshipped in many ancient Middle Eastern communities, especially among the Canaanites, who apparently considered him a fertility deity and one of the most important gods in the pantheon) and Asherah, a mother fertility goddess who appears in various Near Eastern pantheons
- the various local religions in the eastern part of the empire.

polytheism the worship of many gods

Then, there was the monotheistic Jewish religion and the worship of Yahweh (one of the Hebrew names of God in the Bible).

Despite the Persian kings' emphasis on their god Ahuramazda, they 'did not displace older or local gods' and there is no trace of the 'compulsory worship of Ahuramazda' throughout the empire.[29] The question is: was the Achaemenid's tolerant attitude due to 'political expediency' or 'a universal policy derived from religious conviction?'[30]

Two things the kings would not tolerate, however, were any disruption to the rituals of the worship of Ahuramazda, or any attack on any sacred place under the king's protection; for example, when the mainland Greeks were responsible for the burning down of the Temple of Cybebe, a goddess worshipped in Sardis.

A COMMENT ON...

Evidence of Achaemenid religious tolerance

Because the empire encompassed a variety of peoples with different religious beliefs, the Persians adopted a policy of tolerance. They:

- allowed subjects to follow their own religious beliefs and perform their own ritual ceremonies freely
- provided financial aid for building or rebuilding temples dedicated to foreign gods and religions
- promoted religious co-existence.

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The most famous instance of their tolerance was their dealings with the Jewish exiles who they found in Babylon and other Mesopotamian cities after their conquest of that region.

For example:

- Cyrus returned the treasures of the Jews and gave official permission for the rebuilding of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem.
- Darius confirmed the Jews' return to Jerusalem and funded the reconstruction of the temple granted by Cyrus.
- Artaxerxes (son of Xerxes) sent the Jewish priest Ezra to Jerusalem to reintroduce temple worship and the old Mosaic Law back into Jewish life. Later, he sent a Jew who had risen high in his service, Nehemiah, to enhance the security of the people of Jerusalem by rebuilding the walls of the city.

Other instances of tolerance:

- Cyrus ordered that the traditional Babylonian temples should be rebuilt and refurbished, allowing temple life to go on much as before.
- During the reign of Darius, there were Elamite and Mesopotamian gods worshipped alongside the Iranians (Persian and Median) right in the heart of the empire, and Elamite gods received regular rations together with the Iranian gods.
- Darius also restored the former position of the Babylonian cult of Marduk and ordered his official, Gadatas, to restore a Greek sanctuary.
- Egyptian religion went on as before and there is evidence of mixed religious practices in Phrygia.

The worship of Ahuramazda

Zoroaster (Zathustra) was supposedly an Iranian prophet/reformer who taught that Ahura (Lord Creator) Mazda (Supremely Wise) created man, light and darkness and all else in the material and spiritual world. No one knows when Zoroaster lived (with suggested estimates ranging 1800 BC–6th century BC) or where he came from. Some scholars question if he really even existed. The central texts of Zoroastrianism are the hymns known as *Gathas*.

There is also some debate over whether the Persians during Darius and Xerxes' time were Zoroastrians or if they followed a form of Ahuramazda worship independent of Zoroastrianism, as Darius does not mention Zoroaster and merely describes himself as a follower of Ahuramazda.

Most important among Ahuramazda's creation were two opposing forces representing:

1 the 'Truth' (*Spenta Mainya* or the 'holy spirit')
2 the 'Lie' (*Angra Mainya* or 'destructive spirit').

Both of these powers were constantly at work on man, whose moral responsibility was to choose between them. Ahuramazda would judge them on death and if a person chose good, he would receive eternal life; if evil, he would suffer eternal torment.

Darius and Xerxes were devout followers of Ahuramazda, and although they invoked other Persian gods (*bagas*) in their royal inscriptions, they did not name them. Darius records only 'the other gods that are'. Later Achaemenid successors did, however, mention others by name. For example, Artaxerxes II wrote that he built his palace at Susa by the will of Ahuramazda, Anahita and Mithra and invoked them to protect him from evil.

The gods, apart from Ahuramazda, mentioned in the Persepolis Texts are:

- Mithra – an Indo-Iranian god associated with light. In mythology, he was born with a torch and knife, and slew the life-giving cosmic bull whose blood fertilised the earth. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persians, the worship of Mintra (Mithra) spread to the west and was associated with the Greek and Roman sun gods. In the Persepolis Texts, he is noted as receiving ritual payments and rations

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- Anahita – a cosmological goddess of fertilising waters, often associated with Mithra
- Spenta-Armaiti – earth goddess
- Nariyosanga – messenger god
- Turma – god of limitless time.

Symbols and rituals associated with Ahuramazda

The sacred fire

Zoroaster had appointed fire as the icon before which each of his followers should stand to pray as it represented the energy of creation, and the light of Azuramazda that can never be contaminated. Evidence of this practice was found in the form of fragments of fire holders at Pasargadae which early Western scholars misinterpreted as fire altars, common in many ancient religions. The fire-holder was particular to Zoroastrianism.

> The Pasargadae specimens, found near the tomb of Cyrus, consisted of a three-stepped top and base, joined by a slender square shaft, with the top hollowed out to hold the deep bed of hot ash necessary to sustain a continually burning wood-fire.

SOURCE 4.22 M. Boyce, 'Achaemenid Religion', *Encyclopædia Iranica*, I/4, 1983, pp. 426–9

Figure 4.36 depicts a stone tower (***zendan***) constructed during the 6th century, which some scholars believe was a structure for igniting the holy fire and a place for worshipping. However, others disagree, suggesting it is a mausoleum. No interpretation can be accepted with certainty.

zendan a tower thought to be associated with fire rituals

The *magi*

The *magi* were a caste of Zoroastrian priests. The word has its origins in the Old Persian 'magush'. Apart from tending the sacred fire that always accompanied the king on campaigns, and performing fire rituals, they were the transmitters of Iranian lore and traditions, made prophecies, interpreted omens and royal dreams, and in some cases were royal advisors. Their influence was also widespread throughout the empire, particularly in Asia Minor, and they left an indelible impression on Greek writers.

- In the 6th century, Heraclitus cursed them for their impious rites and rituals, although there is no surviving evidence as to just what these were.
- Herodotus mentions them in two ways: as a particular tribe of Medians, and also as a priestly caste but with no specific ethnicity.
- Xenophon imagined that they were the educators of the future king.

FIGURE 4.36 A *zendan*

Their depiction on artefacts, such as seals, shows them in the following number of ways:

1 They are beardless like priests in many cultures: Egypt, Assyria and Elam.

2 When in the presence of the king they are shown wearing Persian-style dress and a white folded headdress, but at other times, they are depicted in Median garb.

3 When standing in front of the sacred fire, they cover their mouths with a piece of cloth known as a *padam* to prevent polluting the fire.

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4 They are sometimes shown with a mortar, pestle and plate, preparing a sacred liquid in a ritual called 'haoma crushing'. Haoma was a divine floral plant and only the *magi* knew how to prepare the liquid, which they mixed with milk and which was believed to bestow supernatural powers.

FIGURE 4.37 A figure dressed in Median garb believed to be a *magian* because of the bundle of sticks or *barsom* he carries (British Museum)

Religious ceremonies

The ancient Greek sources record that the Persians never erected statues of their gods, and had no temples or built shrines. Rather the kings worshipped and offered sacrifices at sacred places associated with the highest mountain peaks, and with water sources known as *hapidanus*; they presided over open-air, night-time performances under a crescent moon, and some ritual ceremonies were carried out in a walled garden known as a 'paradise' (**pairidaeza**). Heavenly gardens were significant in Achaemenid ideology and religion.

pairidaeza an Iranian walled garden with fountains and shade trees

The most frequent ceremony performed by the kings was the *Lan* ceremony. It seems to have involved both Persians and Elamites, who made offerings of small cattle, barley, flour, figs, dates, wine and beer, and some texts indicate that the offerings were distributed among the workmen (*kurtash*) after the ceremony.

The winged Khvarenah

The earliest Achaemenid kings had no representation of Ahuramazda. Scholars once believed that the winged image carved all over the royal monuments of Darius and Xerxes was of their god. Instead, it is believed to have represented the concept of divine splendour and the mystical force or power of Ahuramazda projected onto and aiding the king.

FIGURE 4.38 A relief of the winged Khvarenah

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ACTIVITY 4.12

1. Who was the Persian imperial god?
2. Who was Zoroaster and what did he teach?
3. Give examples of:
   - the Persian kings' inclusive attitude towards foreign religions
   - specific instances of tolerance.
4. Draw up a table with two columns and fill in with relevant information under the following headings:
   - The range of gods/religions worshipped throughout the empire
   - Persian gods mentioned in the Persepolis texts.
5. Why was fire sacred to the worship of Ahuramazda?
6. List material evidence that has been found to confirm the worship of Ahuramazda through fire.
7. Who were the *magi*, what role did they play in Persian religion and how were they depicted on artefacts?
8. Since Persians built no temples or sanctuaries, where were their ritual ceremonies carried out?
9. What is the image in Figure 4.38 believed to represent?

Burial beliefs and customs

Each part of the empire followed its own funerary beliefs and traditions for disposing of a corpse.

Before the rise of Zoroastrianism, the common burial practice among Iranians was **inhumation**, but with the introduction of Zorastrianism, burial was explicitly prohibited, and no corpse was permitted to pollute the sacred elements of fire, water and earth. Source 4.23, an epigram about a Persian slave, reflects something of this belief.

inhumation refers to the practice of burial as opposed to cremation

> Do not burn me Philonymos, and do not pollute fire by contact with me. I am a Persian of Persian parentage, master, and the pollution of fire is more grievous to us than death. Bury me in the earth, but do not sprinkle my body with lustal water, for I also revere streams.

SOURCE 4.23 J. R. Hinnels, *Persian Mythology*, p. 33

To the followers of Zoroastrianism, 'exposure to flesh-eating animals was prescribed as the only acceptable way to dispose of a body'.[31] There is, however, evidence that a large proportion of the Iranian population resisted this change and continued with burials, although Herodotus and Strabo allude to both forms of disposal in the following sources.

> There are other matters concerning the dead which are secretly and obscurely told – how the dead bodies of Persians are not buried before they have been mangled by bird or dog. That this is the way of the *Magians* I know for certainty; for they do not conceal the practice. But this is certain, before the Persians bury the body in earth they embalm it in wax.

SOURCE 4.24 Herodotus, *Histories*, 1.140

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> They [the Persians] smear the bodies of the dead with wax before they bury them, though they do not bury the *Magi* but leave their bodies to be eaten by birds.

SOURCE 4.25 Strabo, *Geography*, XV.3.20

Exposure versus burial

It is difficult to evaluate the surviving evidence and gauge the relative importance of exposure and burial during the reigns of Darius and Xerxes, for it appears that there was still a common belief among those who chose either form that the body should be insulated from the natural elements to prevent contamination.

1 There is no doubt that the *magi* practised exposure of the body, as did people in eastern Iran judging from the archaeological evidence. This practice involved the deceased being removed to a place where corpse-devouring birds/animals would remove all flesh, leaving only the cleaned bones. These remained exposed to sun and rain for a set period of time, after which the disarticulated bones would be collected and deposited in **ossuaries** known as *astodan* ('bone receptacle' chambers), carved into rock. In western Iran, it seems to have been less common to gather bones.

2 Where inhumation continued to be practised, there seems to have been a primitive form of embalming (the body covered with wax) or an attempt to prevent the corpse contaminating the earth. These burials were usually in the mountains or among rocks, or in graves protected by stone slabs.

In the case of the wealthy, once the body was covered in wax, it was often placed in a metal coffin – sometimes gold – and buried in stone monuments or mountain locations along with offerings and personal effects. Arrian, when writing of Alexander the Great, says of the disturbed tomb of Cyrus, that the king was buried in a golden coffin lying beside a couch 'with feet of wrought gold; a Babylonian tapestry served as a coverlet and purple rugs as a carpet'. On it were placed 'garments of Babylonian workmanship' with 'necklaces, scimitars and earrings of stones set in gold'.[32]

Royal tombs

The Achaemenid kings were buried at three sites in the province of Parsa, which was the symbolic core of the empire: Pasargadae, Naqsh-i Rustam and Persepolis.

The monumental rectangular **ashlar** tomb of Cyrus at Pasargadae, with its 10.6 metre-high gable roof, standing on top of a six-tiered **plinth** (stepped platform), was unique, although there were similar stepped tombs in Sardis in Asia Minor. See Figure 4.39.

ossuaries chests, boxes, buildings or sites made to serve as the final resting place of human skeletal remains

ashlar masonry masonry made of sawn, dressed, tooled or quarry-faced stone with proper bond

plinth in architecture it refers to the solid base or platform upon which a column, pedestal, statue, monument or structure rests

cists ancient coffins or burial chambers made from stone

However, when Darius became king, he designed a different type of funerary monument for himself, a rock-cut tomb in a mountain 4.8 kilometres northwest of Persepolis at the imposing site of Naqsh-i Rustam. Although it had long been a sacred site, Darius was the first to choose it as a burial place. His Achaemenid successors followed his innovation of a cliff tomb and also copied the layout of the tomb itself. Of the four tombs at Naqsh-i Rustam, only Darius' has been identified with certainty. The other three are believed to have belonged to his immediate successors: Xerxes, Artaxerxes and Darius II. Later Achaemenids built similar rock-cut tombs at Persepolis itself, cut into the rock face of the Kuh-i Rahmat, overlooking the Persepolis Terrace.

The tombs at Naqsh-i Rustam are all similar in form and layout, their façades constructed like a cross with an entrance that led deep into the rock to a main chamber with a number of smaller vaulted chambers. Each of these contained burial **cists** carved in stone with a stone lid. Each cist was prepared for the king and his closest family members and was large enough to accommodate a coffin, perhaps of gold.

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The façade of Darius' tomb features the king standing on a three-stepped pedestal in front of an altar, his hand raised in a gesture of worship and supported by throne bearers representing the nations of the empire, while above him is the winged Khvarenah. The side panels depict the king's weapon bearers and Persian guards.

> ... contemporary evidence indicates that similar ritual activities took place at all of the [royal tombs] ... the Persepolis Fortification Archive refer to the funerary monuments (*sumar*) of the Achemenid kings and cult rendered at them for the benefit of the king's soul. Officials were drawn from the nobility and charged with serving as keepers of the tombs and ensuring that sacrifices were offered at the tombs. These officials had a cadre of servants to assist them in caring for the royal tombs, for who, they received rations of grain or flour, wine and cattle for their upkeep as well as for the sacrifices themselves.

SOURCE 4.26 W. Henkelman, 'An Elamite Memorial', (2003), pp. 117 & 139–140

FIGURE 4.39 The façade of Darius' tomb

ACTIVITY 4.13

1. Why was the original custom of inhumation prohibited by Zoroastrianism?
2. What do Sources 4.23 and 4.24 reveal about the Zoroastrian form of body disposal?
3. Why is it difficult to determine the relative importance of exposure versus burial throughout the empire during the time of Darius and Xerxes?
4. What are ossuaries and how are they associated with the worship of Zoroastrianism?
5. How did the royal tombs of Darius and Xerxes differ in location, design and construction from that of Cyrus?
6. Describe the façade and interior of Darius' tomb.
7. What does Source 4.26 reveal about the ongoing cult of the Persian king?

4.5 Cultural and everyday life

Art

The peak of Achaemenid art was reached when kings aimed at 'building palaces and capital cities larger and finer than those of their Babylonian and Assyrian forerunners', and 'when abundant gold and silver flowed into the royal treasury from the whole empire'.[33]

> Xerxes the Great King proclaims: By the favour of Ahuramazda, King Darius, who was my father, did much that is good. And by the favour of Ahuramazda, I added to what had been and I built more.

SOURCE 4.27 A trilingual inscription from the *apadana* at Persepolis

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Architecture of palace complexes

The style known as Achaemenid architecture began during the reign of Cyrus and was finalised within two generations in the reigns of Darius and Xerxes.

The stunning monumental remains of the palace complexes, particularly at Persepolis:

- reflect and display the grandeur and power of the multinational Achaemenid Empire
- incorporate aspects of the empire's cultural diversity while still being distinctly Persian.

The main influence on Achaemenid architecture came from Assyria, but there were also Ionian and Egyptian-style features at Pasargadae and Persepolis.

> The entrance to the gatehouse [at Pasargadae] was flanked by winged bulls of Assyrian type, which no longer survive but a stone relief on one of the door jambs is still preserved, and this shows a winged genius of Mesopotamia wearing an Egyptian crown. These features, as well as the remains of Assyrian style reliefs in the doorways of the palaces, and the Ionian influence on the stone-making techniques at Pasargadae, already show the eclectic nature of Achaemenid art and architecture.

SOURCE 4.28 John Curtis, *Ancient Persia*, p. 39

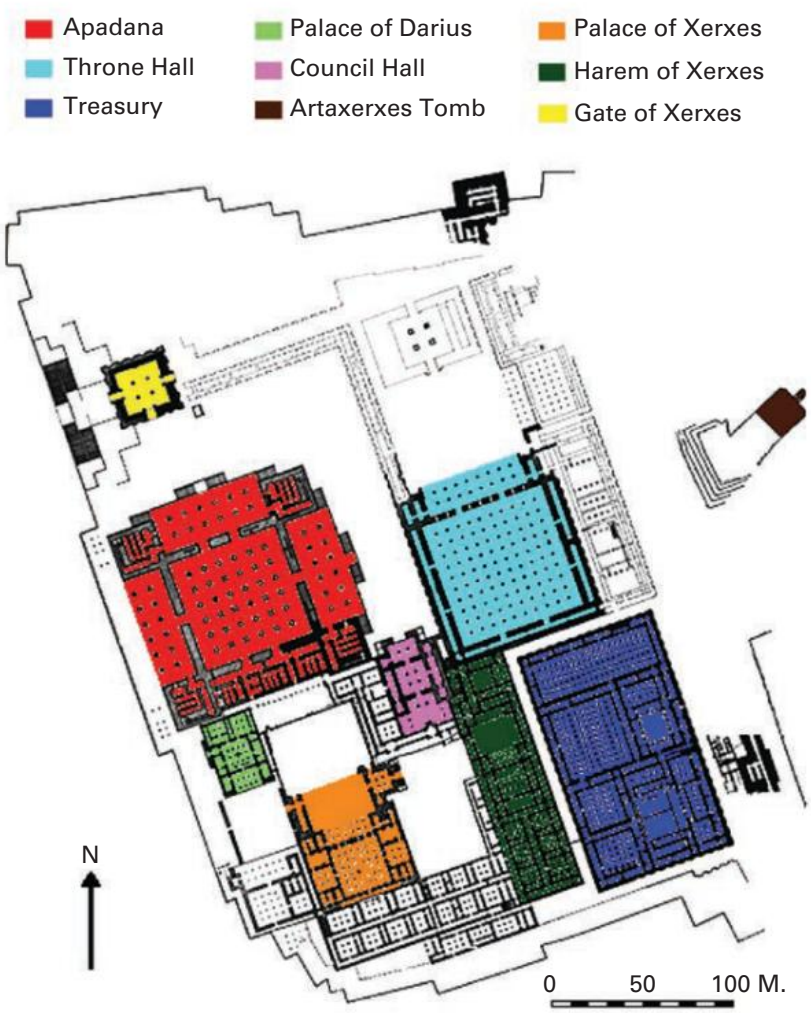

FIGURE 4.40 Plan of the Persepolis terrace

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The main architectural elements at Persepolis include the following:

1 Vast stone or mudbrick terraces approached by monumental staircases.

2 Central columned halls (*apadana*) which were characterised by:
   - four corner towers with internal staircases leading to upper floors
   - three-columned porticoes
   - high-level windows that could be accessed by a balcony. Lower-level windows had double shutters indicated by a bolt hole in the centre of the frame
   - roofs of cedar
   - floors, some of red polished lime plaster or paved with bricks or stone
   - gates – a mixture of gate and palace directed guests and visitors to specific locations.

3 Other buildings that served various purposes such as palaces, the Hall of 100 Columns, the Gate of All Nations and the Treasury.

4 Stone reliefs on staircases, façades and doorways such as the delegations of tribute bearers from all over the empire; processions of noblemen carrying food, drink and live animals; the imperial army; and others of the king in combat with a monster and other hybrid creatures. It is believed that these reliefs may have been painted. Despite the Assyrian influence in Achaemenid architecture and art, the Persian reliefs did not show images of warfare and treatment of prisoners as did the Assyrian kings.

5 Massive sculptures of colossal human-headed winged bulls and mythological creatures. There is little evidence of round sculpture (statues) apart from a reference in Plutarch's *Alexander* that a great statue of Xerxes in Persepolis was overthrown by Alexander's soldiers.

A COMMENT ON...

Types and features of columns in monumental buildings

There were two types of columns used in Achaemenid buildings. Those:

- with bell-shaped bases such as those at Persepolis, many of which are massive. One from the Hall of 100 Columns weighs 4 tonnes
- with square bases as at Pasargadae
- which were a mixture of both, as at Susa.

These bases supported wooden or more commonly fluted stone shafts that might reach 20 metres in height. They were polished or covered in plaster and painted.

The **capitals** of these columns, especially at Persepolis, were very elaborate, featuring:

- a circle of pendant leaves
- a palm capital
- volute decoration
- a figural part of the capital either in human or animal form e.g. human-headed bulls, lions and griffins, joined by a saddle that supported gigantic cedar beams.

capital in architecture is the topmost part of a column which supports the load of a beam or roof

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FIGURE 4.41 A collage of the monumental remains of the World Heritage site of Persepolis

Gold and silver tableware, jewellery and other artistic objects

Unfortunately, not much is left of the superb artistic objects and personal ornaments that would have once been found within the Achaemenid palace complexes. Many were looted by the army of Alexander the Great and, over the years, what remained was cleared out by treasure hunters and later rulers.

rhyton (pl. *rhyta*) container for liquid offerings or drinks

torcs large metal neck rings made either as a single piece or from strands twisted together

pectorals elaborate necklaces worn on the breast

The classical Greek sources imply that objects of gold and silver (***rhyta***, jugs, plates, cups, spoons, ladles) were commonly used by royalty and members of the court both on a daily basis and during the frequent royal banquets. They were even taken on military campaigns. Royal entourages travelled with vast amounts of treasure. Vessels are also shown in the Persepolis palace reliefs as gifts for the king

It is known that royalty and nobles wore elaborate and superbly-crafted gold jewellery (bracelets and **torcs** with animal-headed terminals, greatly prized as gifts; round earrings, some made of gold wire and filigree, others inland with precious stones; Egyptian-type **pectorals**; beads and clothing ornaments), much of it with

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inlaid **polychrome** decoration in turquoise, lapis lazuli, carnelian, onyx and rock crystal. Earrings are shown in the Persepolis reliefs and the Susa glazed tiles, and were an important part of the King's apparel.

polychrome refers in art to something done in many colours

The Persians also had a long tradition of decorating their clothes and other textiles with gold ornamentation in the form of plaques with small rings on the back for attaching to garments.

> Regardless of their shape, all such pendants [earrings] were hung as loosely as possible, each shimmering and trembling at the slightest movement.

SOURCE 4.29 D. B. Stronach, *Pasargadae: A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies 1961–3*, p. 169

> Of all the troops in the army, the native Persians were not only the best but the most magnificently equipped ... every man glittered with the gold which he carried about his person in unlimited quantity.

SOURCE 4.30 Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 7.83

> Treasure there was a plenty – tents full of gold and silver furniture: couches overlaid with the same precious metals: bowls, goblets and cups, all made of gold, and wagons loaded with sacks full of gold and silver basins.

SOURCE 4.31 An account from Herodotus of what was discovered in the tent of the defeated Persian commander, Mardonius, after the Greek victory at Plataea, in 479 BC, in Herodotus, *Histories*, Bk 9.80

FIGURE 4.42 Achaemenid gold and silver tableware (British Museum)

FIGURE 4.43 A lion *rhyton*

FIGURE 4.44 One of a pair of armlets with animal-headed terminals. It has lost its polychrome inlaid decoration.

FIGURE 4.45 A pair of gold wire earrings with semi-precious stones

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provenance usually refers to the place of origin or earliest known history of an artefact

Although there have been several hoards of these objects discovered at Pasargadae, Susa and as part of the Oxus Treasure, most of the artefacts have no **provenance**.

A COMMENT ON...

The Oxus Treasure

In 1887, a large hoard of gold and silver objects were found scattered in the sands of the Amu Darya River (the Oxus River of antiquity) in central Asia. These stunning artefacts, in what is called the Achaemenid Court Style, are dated to the 5th and 4th centuries BC. The Oxus Treasure is the most important collection of Achaemenid metal work ever found. The discovery of the treasures by villagers living close to the ancient Persian satrapies of Bactria and Sogdiana, and the subsequent story, filled with a strange cast of characters, in settings with exotic names like Buhkara, Kabul, Peshawar and Rawalpindi, is intriguing.

FIGURE 4.46 Gold decorations for attaching to clothes

The objects may have once formed part of a currency hoard as precious metals were commonly used as items of exchange, or as a deposit of votive offerings. However, exactly when these objects were deposited or hidden, or whether they came from the same source, is unknown.

The Treasure includes about 180 pieces: gold and silver jugs and bowls, some embossed; a gold scabbard with a hunting scene; magnificent gold model chariots with horses and drivers; silver and gold votive plaques and statuettes; jewellery, including two large gold armlets with lion-griffin terminals, and spiral bracelets or torcs; ornaments to be attached to clothes; and numerous coins.

ACTIVITY 4.14

1. How do the stunning examples of Achaemenid palace architecture:
   - reflect the power of the empire
   - incorporate the empire's cultural diversity?
2. Draw a diagram showing the main architectural features of these palace complexes.
3. Research more fully the World Heritage site of Persepolis and prepare an oral and visual presentation. Include in your research:
   - what was built by Darius and what was built by Xerxes
   - the purpose of the various elements within the complex
   - its destruction by Alexander the Great
   - its restoration and present status.
4. Why are there few surviving examples extant of the superb objects once used or worn by the Persian elite?
5. Use Figures 4.42–4.46, the comment box and text to describe the kinds of artefacts that can be seen today in museums around the world.
6. What can we learn from Herodotus in Sources 4.30 and 4.31 about the luxury with which the Persians surrounded themselves?
7. What is meant by unfortunately 'most of artefacts have no provenance'?
8. Research more fully the discovery and significance of the Oxus Treasure.

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Writing and inscriptions

Within the Achaemenid Empire, people wrote in many forms and spoke many languages, although Aramaic – a Semitic language, which became the **lingua franca** under the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires – was used by the Achaemenids as the official language of communication and it spread to the remotest areas of the empire. Surprisingly, it was never used in official Achaemenid inscriptions.

Royal inscriptions were trilingual; written in three different forms of **cuneiform** script: Old Persian (not a spoken language), Elamite (spoken in southwest Iran before the arrival of the Persians) and Akkadian (the ancient language of Babylonia and Assyria). See table below.

The predecessors of the Achaemenid kings used only the language of the rulers in their palace inscriptions, whereas kings like Darius and Xerxes broke from this pattern by including the language of their subject peoples, Babylonians and Elamites, as a symbolic way of showing their relationship between ruler and ruled, and also because both Elamite and Babylonian scripts were of great antiquity.

Most of these trilingual inscriptions were found only in the core of the empire, although there were a number of exceptions in more remote areas such as Egypt, and copies made of the originals have been found elsewhere.

Like all ancient rulers, Darius and Xerxes promoted themselves as the chosen of their god Ahuramazda, who was also the source of their achievements. However, except for the Behistun text, none of the other inscriptions were narrative accounts of historical events.

lingua franca a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different

cuneiform one of the earliest systems of writing used in the Near East, distinguished by wedge-shaped marks made by a stylus on clay tablets

FIGURE 4.47 An example of cuneiform script used in the time of Darius and Xerxes

TABLE 4.4 The cuneiform scripts used in Achaemenid trilingual and other inscriptions

Old Persian	• In trilingual inscriptions, Old Persian cuneiform was presented first. • It seems to have come into existence during the reign of Darius I and appears to have been an adaptation of Elamite and Mesopotamian forms originally used on clay tablets, although it had different cuneiform-style signs and was of a simpler form. • It was not the spoken language of the Persians but was designed as a script of the Persian rulers and was only ever inscribed on durable materials like rock walls, stone tablets, gazed bricks, column bases.
Elamite	• Elamite came immediately below Old Persian in trilingual inscriptions as Elam was where the Iranians settled (Anshan) and where Cyrus came from. • Unlike Old Persian, Elamite had been used for many purposes other than royal display, particularly for administration and communication. • During the Achaemenid period, Elamite texts on clay were found at Persepolis revealing records of labourers and supplies.
Akkadian	• This was the third language on the trilingual inscriptions and was, like Elamite, an ancient spoken and written language, used for diplomacy, commerce, literature, religion and science • As it was a language of learning, it had considerable prestige in the Achaemenid trilingual inscriptions.

There were three commemorative stelae found alongside the ancient Suez Canal constructed by Darius that were not only in a trilingual form, but included an extended version in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

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The significance of the Behistun (Bisitun) Inscription

Details of the Behistun Inscription have been described already. Also see Figure 4.4 for the Behistun relief. This trilingual inscription, with connected reliefs, is believed to be the oldest of this kind of writing, carved around 520–518 BC.

1 It is the only extant Persian 'narrative' of the critical historical events of 522 BC and it:
   - describes the events of Darius' accession of which the classical writers had some knowledge
   - narrates the defeat of his opponents in Babylonia, Elam, Media, Iran and other points in northern and eastern Iran, events unknown by the classical writers.
2 It was the blueprint of all subsequent inscriptions outlining royal ideology.
3 It provided – via the decipherment of Old Persian, an invented script – the key for understanding both the Elamite and Akkadian cuneiform scripts.

> The decipherment of Achaemenid cuneiform was a wonderful achievement both in itself, and in its broader consequences, for the long-awaited breakthrough with Old Persian led directly to the unlocking of the parent Mesopotamian, i.e. Babylonian cuneiform, and subsequently to other scripts … the decipherment has made available to modern scholarship the whole panoply of ancient Near Eastern history and thought that is available today.

SOURCE 4.32 Irving L. Finkel, 'The Decipherment of Achaemenid Cuneiform', in *Forgotten Empire*, ed. Curtis and Tallis, p. 26

Other inscriptions

The Persepolis Tablets

These comprise two collections of tablets found at Persepolis that provide some evidence of Achaemenid administration, the economy and social structure.

1 One large archive of thousands of tablets was found deposited within the fortification walls of the northeast part of the Persepolis terrace (the Fortification Tablets). These covered the years 509–493 BC and were written in Elamite cuneiform. The huge variety of seals on theses tablets has provided evidence for those agents who carried out economic transactions related to royal and noble estates, and they are also a rich source for Persian art and culture.
2 A relatively small collection of useful tablets were deposited in the 'Treasury' in the southeast part of the Persepolis terrace. Although only 129 in number, they cover a wider period than the Fortification Tablets, ranging from 492–457 BC (from the latter period of Darius' reign to that of Artaxerxes).

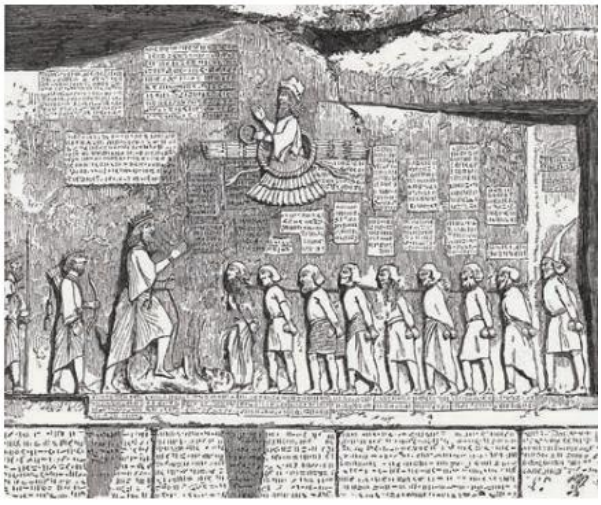

FIGURE 4.48 An 1880 woodcut of the Behistun Inscription

Inscriptions on Darius tomb

Darius left two inscriptions on the façade of his tomb.

1 The inscription in the upper register can be regarded as part of his autobiography.
2 The second inscription in the middle register is more of a religious and moral testament.

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Leisure activities

Textual sources of evidence for the leisure activities of the Persian elite come predominantly from the Greek writers with their usual bias. Unfortunately, there are few texts that give a Persian perspective. There is, however, some evidence from Achaemenid material remains.

According to Herodotus, the Persians were quick to indulge in pleasures of all sorts.[34] These appear to have included:

- hunting and holding competitions
- relaxing in pleasure (paradise) gardens
- feasting and drinking
- enjoying games.

Hunting and competitions

Evidence for the importance of hunting among royalty and the elite comes from fragmentary references in the Greek sources and from the engravings on sealstones. However, it must be remembered that hunting was part of the ideology of the king as an accomplished horseman and bowman, and as the enemy of chaos, often symbolised by wild animals. See Figure 4.49.

Hunting was part of the education of princes and the elite youths were expected to excel in all things to do with hunting, such as horsemanship, archery and the use of a lasso made from plaited strips of hide. Many hunters became so adept at using the lasso that it was used as a weapon in wartime.

The king is supposed to have gone hunting many times a month with companions and young men in training. He was not just a war leader but he was the leader in the hunt and, in most cases, no one was permitted to throw a javelin at a beast before the king.

The hunters were accompanied by packs of hounds (seen on seal engravings) to track down their quarry, which included lions, leopards, boars, bears, deer, mountain sheep and goats and wild ass, and often worked in teams when pitted against speedy animals. Riders were often positioned at intervals, taking it in turns to chase down the animals at full speed and then replaced as their horses tired.

Because, young men passed their time 'shooting with the bow and hurling the spear, and practicing all the arts they learnt when boys'[35] it has been suggested, and confirmed by depictions on coins, that elite males engaged in sporting competitions.

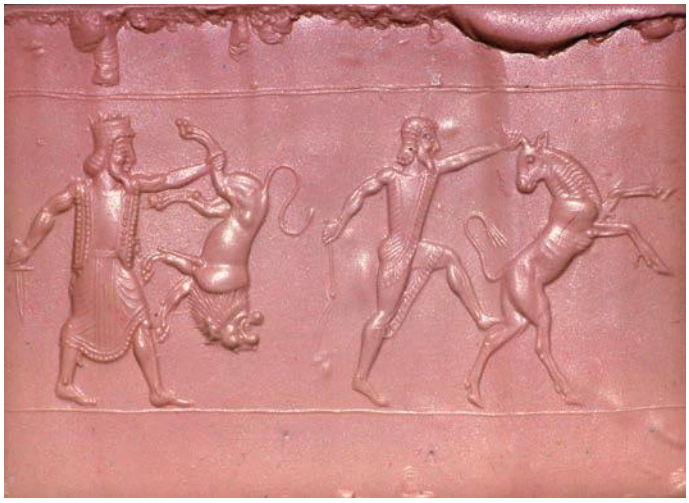

FIGURE 4.49 A cylinder seal depicting a royal hunt (British Museum)

Relaxing and parading in sensuous pleasure ('paradise') gardens

These landscaped gardens and cultivated areas, common in Achaemenid Persia, and which supposedly symbolised the Garden of Eden:

- were enclosed in rectangular walls
- combined the elements of a formal garden design and freely-growing, sweet-smelling plants and fruit trees
- were divided into four quarters, often with a central fountain
- contained many water features as well as fountains, such as canals, ponds, rills (shallow channels) and even waterfalls.

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- provided much-needed shade in the form of trees, trellises and structures such as pavilions
- harnessed the light by including specific textures and shapes.

Some even incorporated menageries of wild animals.

Feasting, drinking and courtly banquets

There is considerable evidence in the Greek sources for the Persians' fondness for wine which, Herodotus says, they drank in large quantities, as well as for the copious amounts of food they consumed. The Persepolis Fortification Tablets record the rations allocated for royal banquets, the Persepolis reliefs depict servants carrying food, and the number of gold and silver bowls, cups, and pouring vessels already discussed indicate the luxury of these banquets.

Xenophon, in his *Cyropaedia* and *Agesilaus*, comments on:

- how an army of royal cooks were always inventing new dishes and sauces for the king's pleasure[36]
- how the king sent his wine-makers into every land looking for some new drink that would appeal to him.[37]

> Elaborate etiquette, conspicuous consumption and intensity of the preparation of food are hallmarks of courtly cuisine, although they were interpreted by the Greeks as a sign of decadence.

SOURCE 4.33 St. John Simpson, 'The Royal Table', in *Forgotten Empire*, ed. Curtis and Tallis p. 110

Games

Although the evidence is very flimsy, some modern writers suggest the possibility that the Persians engaged in such games as:

1 an ancient form of the Iranian game of chogan (polo) – Mari Womack in *Sport as Symbol: Images of the Athlete in Art, Literature and Song* (2003)

2 board and dice games such as chess and backgammon – Touraj Daryaee in 'Mind, Body and the Cosmos: Chess and Backgammon in Ancient Persia', *Iranian Studies* 35, no. 4 (2002).

ACTIVITY 4.15

1 What is a 'lingua franca', and what was the one used for communication throughout the Achaemenid Empire?
2 In what languages were the trilingual inscriptions written? Explain why.
3 What was the significance of the Behistun Inscription?
4 Research the decipherment of the ancient cuneiform script and explain its significance for understanding Near Eastern history.
5 Describe:
   - a Persian 'Paradise Garden'
   - a royal hunt.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

4.1 THE HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- The vast Persian Empire stretched from the Mediterranean and Egypt in the west to the Indus River valley in the east. The focus of the empire was the Iranian plateau dominated by the Zagros and Alborz Mountains, with deserts and salt lakes on the interior and no major river system. The extent of the empire provided a variety of resources: metals, timber, building and decorative stone, agricultural and pastoral products.
- Within the empire, the significant sites (royal palaces, administrative and ceremonial centres, royal tombs and places of royal inscriptions) were Persepolis, Pasargadae, Susa, Ecbatana, Behistun and Naqsh-i Rustam.

4.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND POLITICAL ORGANISATION

- Society was hierarchical from the 'king of kings' to the king's *bandaka* (subjects).
- Everything in society revolved around the king (an autocratic ruler). His position was based on a royal ideology: Achaemenid descent, royal lineage and divine legitimacy that also outlined the qualities of the perfect ruler and his divine duties. This ideology impacted on every aspect of Persian society.
- There was a vast empire-wide bureaucratic system centred of the king and the imperial court. Within the court bureaucracy, the chief positions were the *hazarapatis, arstibara* and *vacabara,* and provincial government (satrapies) was carried out by satraps (governors) directly responsible to the king. These provincial rulers were predominantly Persian nobles, but to prevent disloyalty, the Kings separated the powers and sent inspectors to check on them.
- Darius introduced a new form of jurisdiction across the empire, based on divine law. It was entrusted to royal judges to implement and they were expected to be fair and cautious in their deliberations. There were harsh punishments for corrupt judges.
- The composition of the Persian army changed over time, during peacetime and in war. The core of the army was the Persian and Median contingent (10000). The elite were the 1000 Immortals.
- Workers were referred to as *kurtash* and there was a vast range of workers with specialist skills working on all royal building programs.
- Although there is not a lot known about women, the status of royal women depended on their closeness to the king. There is some evidence that they held their own courts, had great economic independence with vast personal estates and had the freedom to travel the country with their own entourages. The Fortification Tablets reveal some aspects of the economic life of non-royal women.
- So long as vassal rulers within the empire paid their taxes and remained loyal to the king, they were allowed to retain their own customs and religious beliefs without interference.

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4.3 THE ECONOMY

- As in most ancient societies, agricultural workers supported the rest of the population. Taxes and economic exchange throughout the empire were based predominantly on agricultural produce. Tribute could also be based on payments from fisheries, mines, on gold and silver, conscription on building projects and troop levies.
- To facilitate trade and commerce, Darius introduced uniformity of weights and measures, a form of coinage (including gold *darics*), a network of roads, including the Royal Road from Susa to Sardis, bridged rivers and built a canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea canals.

4.4 RELIGION, DEATH AND BURIAL

- Apart from the worship of the Zoroastrian creator god, Ahuramazda, there was a vast array of religious beliefs and practices throughout the empire e.g. Hebrew beliefs, Bel Marduk, Egyptian gods.
- Despite the kings' emphasis on the worship of Ahuramazda, their religious policy was one of tolerance and they would not tolerate an attack on any sacred place under the king's protection.
- The *magi* were a caste of Zoroastrian priests (predominantly Median) who performed fire rituals (fire was sacred), advised the kings, transmitted Iranian law, made prophecies and interpreted omens and dreams.
- Each part of the empire followed its own funerary beliefs and traditions for disposing of a corpse. For those who worshipped Ahuramazda, burial was explicitly forbidden as no corpse was allowed to pollute the sacred elements of fire, water and earth. The bodies of some followers were exposed to flesh-eating animals/birds and the bones stored in ossuaries; others were embalmed in wax and placed within cists inside rock-cut tombs. The kings followed this latter custom.

4.5 CULTURAL AND EVERYDAY LIFE

- The stunning examples of royal architecture, with their elaborate stone reliefs, particularly seen in the remains of the World Heritage Site at Persepolis, reflect the grandeur and power of the empire and incorporate aspects of the Persian society's cultural diversity while remaining distinctly Persian. The artistic artefacts (gold and silver rhytons, golden torcs and polychrome jewellery) that have survived looters over the years are superb, although most are without provenance (Oxus Treasure).
- The royal inscriptions at Behistun and Naqsh-i Rustam are trilingual and bilingual respectively, and in these Darius and Xerxes promoted themselves as the chosen of Ahuramazda, who was the source of all their achievements. The Behistun Inscription, written in three different forms of cuneiform, helped in the significant decipherment of cuneiform with its impact on modern scholarship. The inscription at Naqsh-i Rustam is part autobiography and part a religious and moral testament.
- Our knowledge of Persian leisure activities comes predominantly from Greek sources and some Persian material remains. These included: hunting and competitions, relaxing in 'paradise' gardens, feasting and drinking, and games, although the evidence is flimsy.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following words in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- *apadana*
- *proskynesis*
- *hazarapatis*
- *akinakes*
- vassal
- tribute
- immortals
- Ahuramazda

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where these skills have been used throughout the chapter

- Causation, continuity and change, perspectives, significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What caused the near-disastrous upheaval in 522 BC after the death of Cambyses and in the first reign of Darius I?

2) What changes occurred in the Persian economy under Darius?

3) What is the significance for historians of the following:
- the Behistun Inscription?
- the Persepolis Inscriptions?

4) What was the significance of the following in Persian society:
- the royal roads
- *qanat* technology
- the *magi*?

5) What are the perspectives of Herodotus on the:
- Achaemenid court and royal women
- Persian forces that faced the Greeks in 490 and 480–79 BC
- practice of *proskynesis*?

Historical skills

1) What do the material remains reveal about royal audiences?

2) What do the royal inscriptions reveal about the ideology of the 'king of kings'?

3) What do the following sources indicate about the Persian code of law?
- 'The right is my desire. To the man who is a follower of the Lie, I am no friend'.
- 'It is my law they fear, so that the strong neither oppresses nor overpowers the weak'.

4) Describe the:
- status of royal women
- role of the satrap
- nature of the army
- reliefs at Persepolis
- features of a 'paradise' garden
- burial practices associated with Zoroastrianism and Ahuramazda.

5) Assess the reasons for, and nature of, the religious and cultural tolerance practised by the Persian elite.

6) Explain why the site of Persepolis was granted World Heritage status.

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CHAPTER 6
Akhenaten

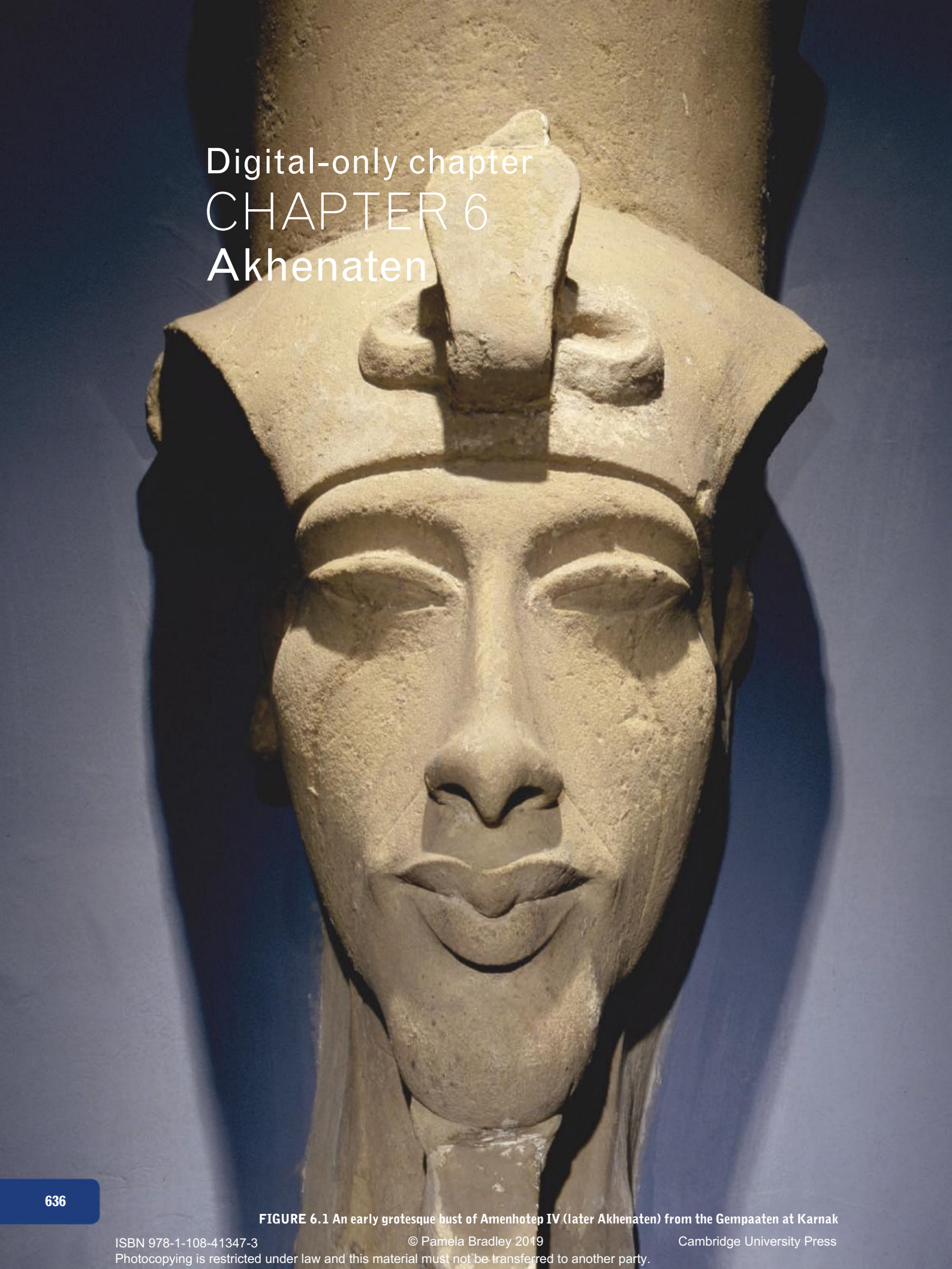

FIGURE 6.1 An early grotesque bust of Amenhotep IV (later Akhenaten) from the Gempaaten at Karnak

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FIGURE 6.2 The location of Akhenaten's new capital city Akhetaten, at Tel el-Amarna midway between Memphis and Thebes

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?	
FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Akhenaten through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The historical context to the rise of Akhenaten • Background and rise to prominence of Akhenaten • Key features and developments • The impact of Akhenaten during his time • The value and limitations of the Amarna letters as a source for Akhenaten.

His Majesty mounted a great chariot of electrum, like the Aten when He rises on the horizon and fills the land with His love, and took a goodly road to Akhetaten, the place of origin which [the Aten] had created for Himself that he might be happy therein.

SOURCE 6.1 Inscription on a boundary stela at Amarna, cited in C. Aldred, *Akhenaten, King of Egypt*, p. 48

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

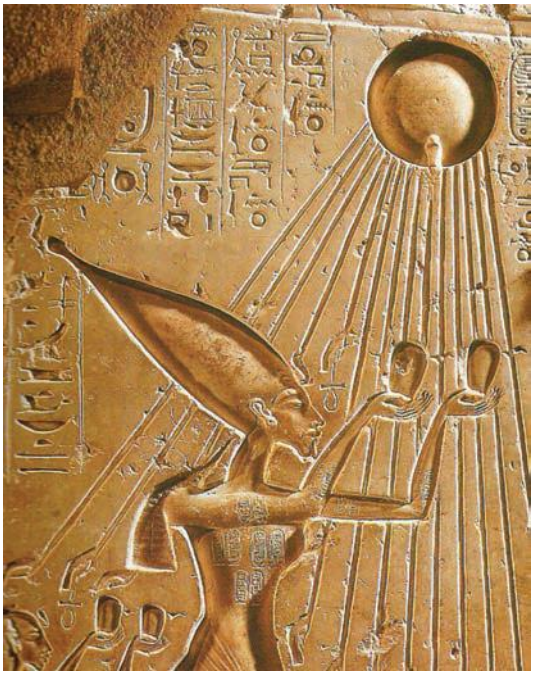

FIGURE 6.3 A relief of Akhenaten, during the Amarna period, in a 'revolutionary' depiction worshipping the god Aten

FIGURE 6.4 A traditional image of a pharaoh worshipping the gods

Look carefully at the images in Figures 6.3 and 6.4, and consider the following questions. What is the major difference between the depictions of the gods, and the form of the worship in each image? How is the pharaoh depicted in the traditional and 'revolutionary' images? Think about what might have happened to bring about such changes.

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CHAPTER 6 Overview

KEY IDEA

In the short space of about 17 years, the pharaoh Akhenaten attempted to overturn millennia of traditional Egyptian religious beliefs and practices. Most of these changes were directed against the dominant state god, Amun, and its priesthood. His obsession with the Aten led to the establishment of a new city isolated in middle Egypt where his new solar cult focused on himself and his family. This exclusive cult – in which he alone 'knew' the Aten, and other gods were not permitted – had serious repercussions on the traditional beliefs in the afterlife, on the economy and the lives of ordinary Egyptians. However, within a short time of his death, everything associated with him was destroyed, traditional religious practices were restored and he disappeared from history until the 19th century.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Akhenaten has been described as a heretic, and a religious fanatic. Perhaps he could even be regarded as the first fundamentalist in history, where fundamentalism refers to an unwavering and intolerant attachment to a set of beliefs (usually religious). With many forms of fundamentalism and cults emerging in today's world, Akhenaten appears almost as a contemporary figure. However, his short-lived reign, his failure and fate reveal that in any of its forms, fundamentalism – with its associated intolerance of other views – will rarely survive, since what it tries to suppress will in the end overtake it.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- dynasty
- wadi
- necropolis
- heretical
- conjecture
- *khepresh*
- *ma'at*
- theogamy
- stela (*pl*.stelae)
- cuneiform
- *talatat*
- *uraeus*
- *ankh*
- co-regency
- Heb-sed
- titulary
- iconography
- anthropomorphic
- corvée
- *temenos*

INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the effects of the religious changes introduced by Akhenaten on Egyptian art and architecture?

Painting the picture

Akhenaten (originally called Amenhotep IV) was a young man when his father, the great Amenhotep III, died and he became the 10th king of the 18th **Dynasty**. On his accession, he was already married to his *Great Royal Wife*, Nefertiti, who played a prominent role in his reign.

dynasty a line of kings and queens from the same family

His 17 years as pharaoh (c. 1353–1335 BC) are referred to as the Amarna period, after the name of the present-day village (el-Amarna) where the remains of his capital city Akhenaten (*Horizon of the Sun-disk*) were found. He built his capital midway between Memphis and Thebes at a site never before claimed by any other god.

The Amarna period was a brief but dramatic period in Egyptian history during which Akhenaten initiated religious innovations that focused on the sole worship of the sun-disk, known as the Aten.

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wadi a dried river bed in desert areas which occasionally floods after a thunderstorm

necropolis cemetery or 'city of the dead'

heretical a body of beliefs contrary to the orthodox beliefs associated with a religious system

conjecture the expression of an opinion without sufficient evidence for proof

The worship of the Aten became a personal cult of the king, and the temples of the other gods were for a time closed and their priesthoods disbanded, most importantly that of the state god, Amun-Re.

His religious changes had an impact on the Egyptian economy, the lives of ordinary citizens, rituals, funerary practices, architecture and art. The distinctive style of art of the Amarna period reflected the new iconography (symbol) of the Aten, and the role of the king and his family (queen and six daughters) in its worship. To show how important his new city to the Aten was, the royal tombs and those of his nobles were to be built in the **wadis** and cliffs west of the city, breaking with the tradition of burial in the **necropolis** on the west bank at Thebes.

Akhenaten's obsession with his new cult is believed to have contributed to the loss of Egyptian prestige and influence abroad which his predecessors had gained.

Because of the **heretical** nature of Akhenaten's reign, most of his monuments were destroyed or dismantled soon after his death. The material that survives is in many ways like the pieces of a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. Depending on the pieces of the puzzle that particular scholars consider most significant, there has been a tendency in the past to misinterpret or over-interpret the evidence,[1] leading to a great deal of doubt and confusion about some of the events and individuals of this period. Many questions about Akhenaten and the Amarna period are based on **conjecture**.

Fortunately, as more evidence comes to light and more scientific methods are utilised in Egyptology, some parts of the picture appear a little clearer.

6.1 Historical context

Geography and resources

The ancient Egyptians referred to the land of Egypt as the Black Land (*Kemet*), comprising the wide triangular delta, the Faiyum and the long fertile strip on either side of the Nile River. The Black Land – divided into The Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt – referred to the dark, rich silt deposited over the valley flats when the Nile broke its banks at the same time every year. Agriculture, the basis of all Egyptian society, depended on the Nile's life-giving waters in a country that very rarely saw rain. The desert areas were known as the Red Land (*Deshret*) and comprised the Western Desert, the Eastern Desert and the Sinai.

The resources provided by the fertile Nile valley and delta included the rich silt; mud for bricks; clay for pottery; papyrus for paper, baskets, boats and sandals; grain crops; flax for linen; and fish and water fowl; while the adjacent deserts were exploited for gold, copper and a great variety of building and decorative stones.

A COMMENT ON...

The quarries of Amarna

'The rock of the cliffs at Amarna and of the high desert behind is limestone that mostly lies in approximately horizontal beds. Much of it is closely fractured', which makes it 'unsuitable for quarrying. Nonetheless, beds do exist where the rock is fairly fine grained and homogeneous. These were sought out and used in the Amarna Period to supply stone to the city' for 'wall blocks' in the temples and in parts of the palaces; and for column bases, door frames, door thresholds and certain small kinds of furniture.

The blocks were cut to a common size, one cubit (52 cm) long, so of a size that one man could just lift and put into place during building.[2]

Adapted from the Amarna Project website. The Amarna Project explores the archaeology of Amarna (the ancient city founded by Akhenaten) in its historical context.

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FIGURE 6.5 A view of el-Amarna (Akhetaten) today with armed tourist guide

Beyond Egypt

By the time Akhenaten acceded to the throne, areas outside Egypt – Nubia as far as the 4th Cataract, Palestine and Syria – had been added to the Egyptian Empire by his 18th-Dynasty 'warrior pharaoh' predecessors such as Thutmose I and Thutmose III. Other areas were under Egyptian influence and some kingdoms further afield were regarded as zones of contact. When Akhenaten's father Amenhotep III came to the throne, there was peace throughout the empire and great wealth poured into Egypt in the form of tribute, trade and gifts from 'brother' kings.

From these areas, Egyptians obtained:

- gold, cattle, ebony, ivory, feathers and animal skins from Nubia
- valuable metals: copper, lead and silver; semi-precious stones: lapis lazuli and rock crystal; timber: cedar; and grain and animals from Palestine and Syria
- incense (myrrh resin and trees), fragrant woods, animals (baboons, monkeys and dogs), gold, ivory and ebony, animal skins (southern panther) and antimony (a mineral used by Egyptians as an eye cosmetic) from Punt (modern Somalia).

The historical context

In order to appreciate the changes that Akhenaten implemented during his reign, it is important to understand the society into which he was born: the role of the king; the importance of royal women; the pre-eminence of the god Amun; the traditional funerary beliefs and practices; and developments in the solar cult.

TABLE 6.1 An overview of the 18th Dynasty

The expansion and features of the 18th Dynasty	
Ahmose	Expelled the foreign Hyksos from the Delta and reunited Egypt
Amenhotep I	Reconquered Nubia, consolidated Egypt's control over it, rebuilt fortresses and appointed a viceroy in Nubia, took the first steps in developing the west bank at Thebes as the site of a vast necropolis and founded a special workforce to build the royal tombs
Thutmose I	Led two important military campaigns to Nubia and western Asia. His Syrian campaign reached the Euphrates. He ordered superb additions to the god Amun's temple at Karnak, and began the process of all future kings in building his tomb in the Valley of the Kings.
Thutmose II	In his short reign, he quelled a revolt in Nubia and brought one of the princes of Kush to be held as a hostage by the Egyptians.

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TABLE 6.1 *(continued)*

The expansion and features of the 18th Dynasty	
Hatshepsut (female) A co-regency with her stepson Thutmose III	Hatshepsut, the queen of Thutmose II, became regent for the heir, Thutmose III, but usurped the throne and ruled as a king for about 20 years. Her reign was a time of internal peace and vigorous growth. She sent a trading mission to the land of Punt but her top priority was her building program and devotion to 'her father', the god Amun.
Thutmose III A co-regency with his stepmother Hatshepsut and then a successful sole rule	Possibly the greatest pharaoh to occupy the throne of Egypt and one of the most significant pharaohs of the New Kingdom. He spent the first 20 years of his reign beyond the borders of Egypt fighting his country's enemies, maintaining Egyptian control and developing an effective administration. He built with the same energy as he had fought against his enemies and was a patron of the arts.
Amenhotep II	Amenhotep was a ruthless but successful warrior and, like his father, the epitome of the 'warrior king'.
Thutmose IV	Thutmose IV's reign was a turning point in terms of the empire as diplomacy, rather than war, was employed to deal with foreign powers. He entered into diplomatic relations with the powerful king of Mitanni and an alliance was sealed with the arrival of a Mitannian princess to join the pharaoh's harem.
Amenhotep III	The reign of Amenhotep III (known as the *Dazzling Sun Disk*) was possibly the most magnificent period in Egypt's history and Amenhotep 'probably the most significant ruler of the entire pharaonic period'.[3] His reign marked half a century of peace and prosperity as he reaped the benefits of his predecessors.
Amenhotep IV/ Akhenaten	A brief but dramatic period known as the Amarna period initiated by Akhenaten (formerly known as Amenhotep IV), featuring a religious 'revolution' (worship of one god only: the Aten) and a construction of a new capital in middle Egypt, Akhetaten (Amarna). Chief consort: Nefertiti.
The decline of the 18th Dynasty	
Smenkhkare	Possible son of Akhenaten by a subsidiary wife. Continued debate over his identity. Shared a short co-regency with Akhenaten and reigned solely for no more than a year after Akhenaten's death.
Tutankhamun (Tutankhaten)	Son of Akhenaten, possibly by a subsidiary wife. Came to the throne as a child of 9 and died around the age of 18. Noted most for his returning Egyptian religion to orthodoxy and for his tomb excavated by Howard Carter in 1922.
Ay	Chief official under Akhenaten, and regent and vizier for Tutankhamun. As the 'boy king' had no offspring, Ay assumed the throne but ruled for only four years.
Horemheb	A military commander, and 'one of the most enigmatic power wielders of the New Kingdom'.[4] He re-established the country after the upheaval of the Amarna period, destroyed everything associated with Akhenaten's heresy, put an end to the 18th Dynasty and ushered in the 19th Dynasty.

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ACTIVITY 6.1

1. Why is the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten referred to as the Amarna period?
2. What areas comprised the Egyptian Empire when Amenhotep IV came to the throne?
3. What resources did the Egyptians receive from their empire?
4. Study Table 6.1. Write a paragraph describing:
   - the years between Ahmose and Amenhotep III
   - the years from Smenkhkare to Horemheb.

Overview of Egyptian society

The god-king controlled every aspect of Egyptian society and government – political, religious, military and economic – but a hierarchical bureaucracy carried out the day-to-day running of the country. A small group of powerful officials controlled each division of administration. These were the:

- Vizier, second only to the king, and head of the civil administration
- Steward of the Royal Domain
- Overseer of all Priests of All the Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt
- Commander-in-chief of the Army
- King's Son of Kush (viceroy in charge of Nubia).

Responsible to each of these heads of department were deputies and officials of high status (high priests and overseers of the treasury) who in turn were supported by a vast bureaucracy of minor officials such as scribes. Each official was answerable to someone above him and responsible for someone below him. Below the minor officials were craftsmen and tradesmen employed in temple workshops, on royal and noble estates, and on tomb construction and decoration; peasant farmers and agricultural labourers who formed the bulk of the population; and slaves.

The pharaoh and royal women

From the earliest times, the king was regarded as:

- the earthly form of the falcon god, Horus
- the son of Re, the sun-god
- Horus, the son of Osiris, when he ascended the throne
- Osiris when he died.

During the New Kingdom, the pharaoh was also regarded as:

- the son of the imperial god Amun-Re
- the incarnation of a warrior-god like Montu.

He was often shown wearing the ostrich feathers of Amun and the wings of Montu in battle. The warlike image of the 18th Dynasty kings was reflected in their names and titles, and in their regalia such as the blue leather war crown called the ***khepresh***. They were also shown larger than life in their war chariot in the midst of battle, facing overwhelming odds.

khepresh the blue war crown of the pharoah

ma'at refers to the ancient Egyptian concepts of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice

It was the king's responsibility to uphold ***ma'at*** or divine order established at the time of creation. Without *ma'at* there would be chaos in both the physical and spiritual worlds. His responsibilities were to:

- honour and show gratitude to the gods by performing sacred rituals, attending festivals and building temples

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- dispense justice
- provide prosperity and nourishment for both the people and the land
- protect the country and its people by supervising defences against all physical enemies, as well as chaotic and evil forces.

Although queens in all periods of Egyptian history were regarded very highly, the 18th Dynasty was notable for a number of exceptional and influential women such as Queen Ahmose-Nefertari (wife of Ahmose and mother of Amenhotep I), Hatshepsut (the female pharaoh) and Queen Tiy (Tiye), wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Akhenaten. Akhenaten's consort, Nefertiti, continued this trend.

Of all the royal women, the most important was the queen consort, *Great King's Wife*, who was identified with the goddesses Ma'at, Hathor and Isis. If she also happened to be the mother of the heir-apparent, her status was further enhanced. The dowager queen was also held in high regard, as were royal daughters. Queens and some royal daughters were prominent in public life. They were present at royal audiences, went on tours of inspections of building sites with their husbands or sons and attended investitures of important officials, presentations of rewards and dedications.

The role of Amun and the Amun priesthood

Amun, a local Theban god, was elevated to the status of a state god when the Theban rulers of the 18th Dynasty liberated Egypt from the Hyksos invaders, reunited the country under one king and expanded Egyptian control in Nubia, Syria and Palestine. With the foundation of the Egyptian Empire, Amun became an imperial god. So that he could have no rival in Egypt, his priests early on associated him with the sun-god Re, the protector of royalty. Amun-Re became the pre-eminent god of Egypt.

theogamy a marriage of, or between, the gods

The pharaohs regarded him as their divine 'father' and promoted the belief that the god, in the guise of the king, took the queen as his divine consort and impregnated her so that a future king would be regarded as the living son of a god (**theogamy**). This legend of the miraculous birth of kings had always been an aspect of Egyptian kingship.

Amun's temple at Karnak in Thebes was enlarged and embellished as each 18th-Dynasty king dedicated more and more to the god's treasury. The position of High Priest of Amun was a political appointment made by the king. From the time of Hatshepsut, the High Priest of Amun was given the right to also supervise the cults of other gods, such as Ptah of Memphis and Re of Heliopolis.

The god's priesthood increased in power, prestige and wealth, controlling one of the largest and richest establishments in Egypt (huge estates all over the country, mining deposits and their own fleet of ships).

FIGURE 6.6 A representation of the god Amun-Re

Religious beliefs, cults and practices prior to the reign of Akhenaten

Gods and goddesses

Egyptians worshipped a plurality of gods and goddesses, although they did not take part in the worship in major cult temples except during the great festivals when the images of the gods were brought out. They worshipped at home, at village shrines and in the tomb chapels of their ancestors as part of a mortuary cult.

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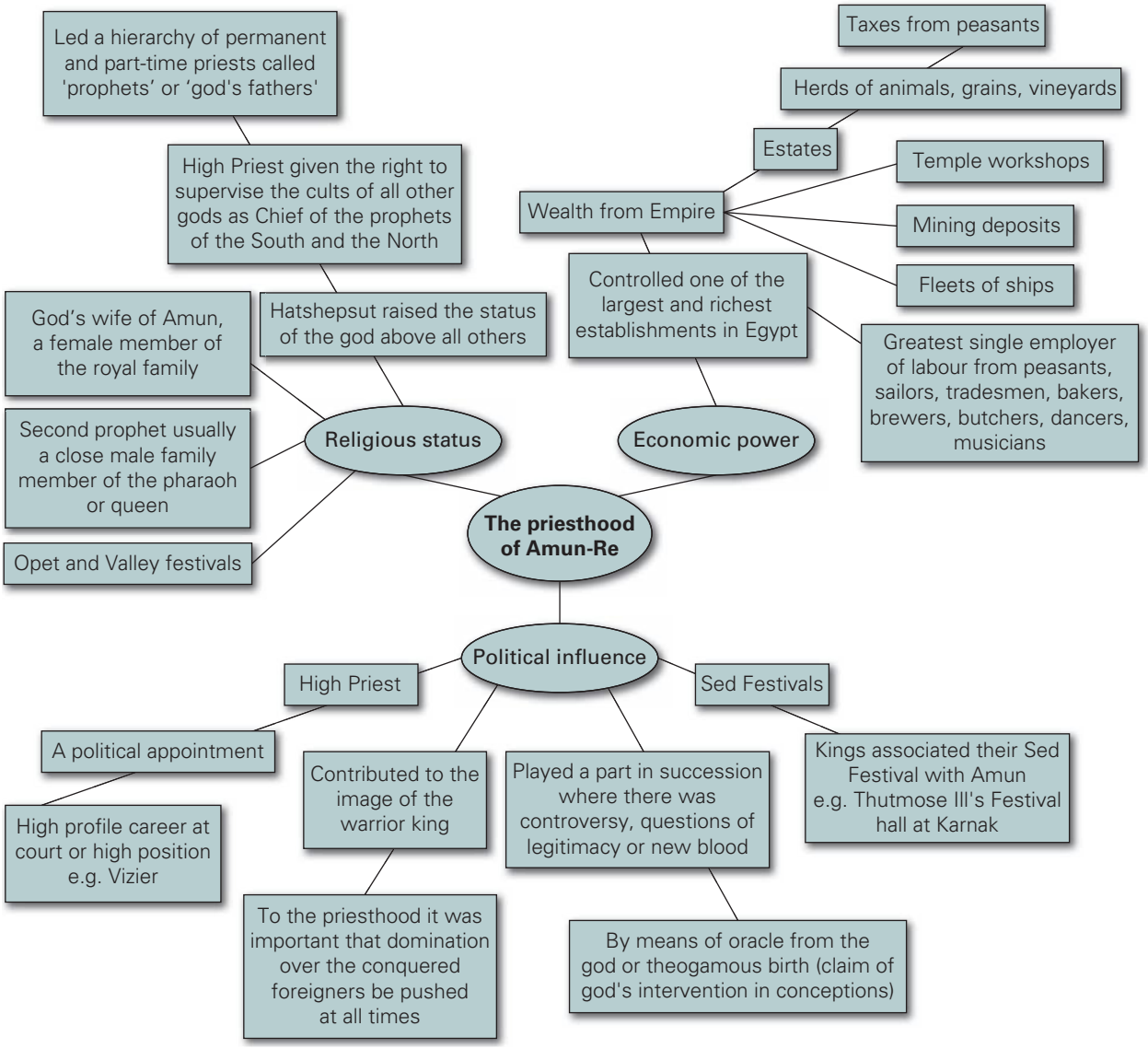

FIGURE 6.7 Diagram of the status, power and influence of the cult and priesthood of Amun-Re

Egyptian gods and goddesses fell into a number of categories. There were:

- state gods such as Re/Atum, Ptah and Amun, worshipped in the great cult centres of Heliopolis, Memphis and Thebes
- funerary gods such as Osiris, Isis, Nephthys, Anubis and Thoth
- cult gods and goddesses such as Hathor, Horus and Khnum
- personal household and village deities worshipped in shrines, such as Taweret (hippopotamus goddess of childbirth), Bes (bearded dwarf god of fertility, dance and music), Meretseger (snake goddess of the peak) and Bastet (cat goddess).

Beliefs about life after death

Prior to the reign of Akhenaten, Egyptians believed that when they died they faced a judgement before the god Osiris. This involved declaring before each of 42 gods that they had committed no sin, after which they were led into the hall of Osiris by Anubis, the jackal-headed god of embalming and the necropolis. Near to Osiris stood the goddesses Nephthys and Isis and the god Horus. Then the deceased's heart had to be weighed on the scales of truth against the feather of the goddess Ma'at, with the judgement recorded

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by Thoth. If the judgement was favourable, the deceased was escorted before the throne of Osiris who announced that the deceased was true of heart and could pass into the afterlife.

A pharaoh expected to spend eternity travelling with the sun-god, Re, across the heavens during the day and through the Underworld of Osiris during the night. The dead king supposedly joined the crew of the sun-god's boat, which included other gods such as Horus, Seth and Thoth. During the nightly journey through the Underworld, the sun-god brought light to the region and fought off the enemy serpent, Apopis. At dawn the following day, the king emerged from the eastern horizon and travelled for the next 12 hours with the sun-god's boat and its celestial crew.

Most ordinary Egyptians preferred the idea of an afterlife spent in the *Field of Reeds*, the kingdom of Osiris, a land somewhat like the lush Nile delta. There they continued an ideal rural existence and helped the sun-god's boat on its nightly journey.

To help them through the ordeal of death, the Egyptians had special texts inscribed and painted on the walls of their tombs and on special papyrus rolls which were buried with the body. The scenes of the judgement, the sun-god's journey and life in the Osirian Field of Reeds were recorded on the tomb walls.

FIGURE 6.8 The judgement before Osiris

The Theban necropolis

As Thebes became the religious capital of Egypt during the New Kingdom, most pharaohs, queens, nobles, minor officials and royal workmen were buried in a vast necropolis in western Thebes. Thutmose I broke a 1200-year-old tradition in tomb construction (from pyramids to rock-cut tombs), setting a pattern for future kings to follow by instructing his architect, Ineni, to locate a well-hidden site for his tomb in the isolated and rugged limestone cliffs in what became known as the Valley of the Kings.

FIGURE 6.9 An aerial view of the Valley of the Kings on the west bank of Thebes

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ACTIVITY 6.2

1. Why was the government of Egypt known as a hierarchical bureaucracy?
2. Who were the gods with whom the pharaoh was associated during the 18th Dynasty down to the reign of Amenhotep III?
3. What was the king's responsibility with regard to *ma'at*?
4. Describe the status of:
   - royal women throughout the 18th Dynasty
   - the god Amun and its priesthood when Akhenaten came to the throne.

The rediscovery of Akhenaten

The Amarna period is perhaps the most controversial in Egyptian history. The following quotes from Professors Donald B. Redford and Barry J. Kemp throw light on the difficulties in building up a narrative of Akhenaten's life, motivations and achievements.

> We are ill-informed about the internal political history of the reign. As any formally published texts were destined for effacement after the passing of Akhenaten's regime, it is scarcely surprising that this is the case. ... We can put together a chronicle of sorts listing the events we know, or suspect, took place but we would be dishonest if we did not indicate the haphazard and often unlikely sources of our information. ... We have no clear idea, therefore, whether our chronicle includes the truly important events and conveys a generally accurate record, however brief, of the heretical reign.

SOURCE 6.2 Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten, The Heretic King*, p. 185

> The lack of background sources cripples the historian. It has proved impossible to write a history of Akhenaten's reign which does not embrace an element of historical fiction. It is as if one has to decide which actor would best play the part: an effete, limp-wristed dreamer, or a fearsome, despotic madman.

SOURCE 6.3 Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilisation*, p. 264

ACTIVITY 6.3

1. How does Donald Redford explain in Source 6.2 the difficulties scholars face in studying the Amarna period?
2. What is Barry Kemp suggesting in Source 6.3 about any assessment of this period?

Due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence, there have been any number of conflicting interpretations – many quite fanciful – of Akhenaten, the identity and roles of members of the royal family and the major events of his reign. The whole period is one of confusion and contradictions, although accidental discoveries and ongoing excavations carried out for well over a century at Amarna and Karnak have lifted the veil on aspects of this controversial period.

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A COMMENT ON...

The rediscovery of Akhenaten and his city dedicated to the Aten

- The existence of Akhenaten, who was never included in the King Lists of Egypt, was rediscovered in the 19th century when European travellers copied a series of unique scenes from the private tombs in the cliffs of Amarna. They were followed by others who came to the area, especially when the local villagers stumbled upon the royal tomb further out in the desert around 1882.
- Following this was the discovery of the unique commemorative boundary **stelae** – that varied in size from 2–8 metres in height – carved on the instructions of Akhenaten in the surrounding cliffs and on the west bank (see pp. 662–3) that featured images of Akhenaten, Nefertiti and their two eldest daughters under the rays of the Aten. The text provided valuable information about the founding of the new capital, but natural decay, deliberate destruction when the city was abandoned and later damage by locals left the text and reliefs in a very bad way.
- In 1887, a momentous discovery of a cache of clay tablets written in a **cuneiform** script (the language of international communication) was made in the area, originally by a peasant woman digging among the debris for *sebakh*, 'the nitrous compost into which ancient brickwork in Egypt so often decays' and which is used as fertiliser. The locals secretly dug them up and sold them on the antiquities market. Eventually 377 clay tablets were identified. These so-called 'Amarna Letters' were dispatches from foreign kings and princes sent to Amenhotep III – in the last days of his reign – and to Akhenaten. (Refer to section 6.5 on the value of these as a source for this period).

stela (pl. stelae) also spelled stele/steles, upright slabs of stone, bearing inscriptions

cuneiform one of the earliest systems of writing used in the Near East, distinguished by wedge-shaped marks made by a stylus on clay tablets

talatat an Arabic word meaning 'three-hand-breadths' that refers to small stone blocks of a standardised size used during the reign of Amenhotep IV(Akhenaten)

- Fortunately for historians, it was also discovered that thousands of inscribed and decorated small blocks of stone, some still with brilliant colours, from Akhenaten's earliest sun temples at Karnak, had been used by the later pharaoh Horemheb – after dismantling them – for filling in his own buildings. For decades, during restoration work at Karnak, tens of thousands of these rescued small blocks (52 by 26 by 24 centimetres), called ***talatat***, were collected and provided iconographic images of the early years of Akhenaten. Eventually, a number of scenes were reassembled, although some of these combinations and reconstructions are a bit dubious. The *talatat* provide glimpses into rituals associated with the worship of the Aten and the king's jubilee, Akhenaten and his family, as well as palace scenes and foreign emissaries bearing tribute.
- More and more physical material is being excavated at Amarna (for example, the south cemetery together with an analysis of its human remains), and DNA analysis of royal mummies has clarified somewhat various controversial issues. However, as Professor Barry Kemp – who has worked at Amarna since 1977 on the Amarna Project – says: 'The more one seeks to make sense of the past, the more one has to imagine'.[5]

ACTIVITY 6.4

1. Why did scholars have no idea of the existence of Akhenaten until the 19th century?
2. Draw a simple diagram of the main types of evidence that came to light in the 19th–20th centuries.
3. How has science in the 21st century continued to answer some of the puzzles associated with this period?

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FIGURE 6.10 Example of a *talatat* from Akhenaten's temple in Karnak

6.2 Background and rise to prominence of Akhenaten

Because the most striking feature of religion during the first half of the 18th Dynasty was the dominance of the cult of Amun, it is often thought that Akhenaten stood out from his predecessors by his radical religious thinking and that he 'invented' the life-sustaining sun-disk (Aten). This was not the case. Changes had been building up for generations before Akhenaten's supposed heresy.

Akhenaten's predecessors and the solar cult

Amenhotep II: Akhenaten's great-grandfather

During his reign, Amenhotep II had taken an interest in the sun cult centred at the northern cult centre of Heliopolis and had paid particular attention to the Old Kingdom Sphinx at Giza, which was venerated as the mighty sun-god Re combined with Horakhty (Horus of the Horizon). He was also the first pharaoh to depict the Aten in the form that is normally associated with Akhenaten.

> The Aten's earliest representation in its familiar form of a disk adorned with the royal ***ureaus*** serpent, and rays ending in small hands holding out the ***ankh*** sign, appeared on a stela erected at Giza by Amenhotep II.

ureaus the rearing cobra worn on the royal diadem or crown: a symbol of kingship

ankh the hieroglyph for life: the key or breath of life

SOURCE 6.4 Joann Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King*, p. 16

Thutmose IV: Akhenaten's grandfather

Thutmose IV – Akhenaten's grandfather – appeared to be less concerned with promoting the welfare of Amun and more interested in the cult of the sun-god (Re-Horakhte) at Heliopolis and the Aten (disk of the sun).

He attributed his accession to the throne – even though a second son – to a prophecy in a dream he had while sleeping near the Sphinx, whereby Re-Horakhte promised him the throne if he cleared the sand away from the Sphinx. He recorded this in the Dream Stela he erected between the Sphinx's paws.

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... the sun had reached its zenith and he found the majesty of this revered god speaking with his own mouth ... 'Behold thou me! See thou me! My son Thutmose, I am thy father, Horakhte-Khepri-Re-Atum [all forms of the sun god] who will give to thee thy kingdom on earth at the head of the living. ... The sand upon this desert upon which I am, presses down on me: I have been waiting for you to do what I have desired, for I know you are my son and protector.

SOURCE 6.5 The Dream Stela of Thutmose IV, trans. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, pp. 323–4

Whether this was a folktale or some incident associated with Thutmose IV, there is no doubt that he had a large commemorative scarab issued on which *The Disk in his Horizon* (Aten) was described as a god. Thutmose IV also recorded that he fought 'with the Aten before him' and hoped that the conquered foreigners would, like the Egyptians, 'serve the Aten forever'. There was a tendency during his reign to describe the sun-disk as a god in its own right rather than as the physical aspect of Re.

Although Thutmose IV did not turn away from the worship of Amun, he built fewer monuments at Amun's temple at Karnak than his predecessors.

Amenhotep III: Akhenaten's father

It was during the reign of Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III, that the Aten sun-disk:

- became increasingly associated with royalty and particularly with the status of the king
- developed into a god with its own temples and priests
- began to be credited with the creative powers of Re.

Amenhotep III was known as *The Dazzling Sun-disk* and he gave the name *Radiance of the Aten* to his state barge and to his Malkata palace in western Thebes.

At some time during Amenhotep III's reign, a shrine to the Aten was built near the Karnak temple of Amun-Re and a priesthood was established. Ramose, a priest of Amun, also had the title of *Steward in the Temple of the Aten* and another official, named Pen-buy, bore the title of *Scribe of the Treasury of the Temple of the Aten*.

The sun-god was increasingly praised throughout Egypt and the hymn of praise, inscribed in the tomb of Amenhotep III's architects, the twins Suty and Hor – a precursor of the Hymn to the Aten during Akhenaten's reign – describes the Aten as the one who created everyone and made their life. 'Hail to you, Aten of daytime, Creator of all who makes all things live! … creator of the earth's bounty …'[6] Throughout this period, the sun-god was depicted in the traditional form of a falcon-headed man with a sun-disk on its head or as a winged sun-disk.

So in the generations before Akhenaten's accession to the throne, there was already:

- the concept of one universal, creative sun-god (Re-Horakhte)
- a new god called the Aten, possibly with its own sanctuary and priests
- a close association of the Aten with the pharaoh.

Although these measures by Thutmose IV and Amenhotep III 'were not directed against the cult of Amun or any other god', they 'were part of a wider struggle being waged by the crown'[7] against the wealth and power of the priests of Amun, and Sir Alan Gardiner maintains that religious 'revolution was already in the air'.[8]

Akhenaten was not at all an isolated phenomenon, divorced from his time and place. In every way his movement was a product of past centuries. A cult that could only have come into being at the height of a great empire.

SOURCE 6.6 Donald B. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, p. 5

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FIGURE 6.11 Depiction of the sun god as Re-Horakhte

ACTIVITY 6.5

1. What does Donald Redford in Source 6.6 mean by 'Akhenaten was not an isolated phenomenon'?
2. What does he suggest by saying Akhenaten's 'cult could only have come into being at the height of a great empire'?

The parents of Akhenaten

Amenhotep III and Queen Tiy

Amenhotep III came to the throne as a teenager, and before long took full advantage of the status, wealth, peace and unrivalled position in the known world that his conquering predecessors had left him. There was no need for him to go to war, he was pre-eminent among the great kings of the east and used diplomacy and marriage alliances to rule his cosmopolitan empire. 'Amenhotep III and the Egypt he ruled, never had been or would be again, in such a position of absolute power in the world'.[9]

As incredible wealth poured into Egypt, he created a court that was fashionable, elegant and filled with luxury, and began the greatest building boom in the 18th Dynasty. His gigantic constructions were envied and emulated by Ramesses the Great generations later. His reign was a time of great artistic achievements and under him the country reached a 'zenith of magnificence'.[10]

> Whether in monumental architecture, painting, relief or the 'lesser' arts, craftsmen displayed a confident and complete command of their medium, which was never again equalled in the 1500 years Egypt's pharaonic culture survived.

SOURCE 6.7 Donald Redford, *Akhenaten, the Heretic King*, p. 45

As a young man he married Tiy, who became his *Great Royal Wife.* She is believed to have come from an important and influential family from Akhmin, north of Thebes. 'After her marriage, she rapidly gained power and influence and became a key figure in his court'[11] and appears to have had Amenhotep III's affection and confidence throughout his reign. He was very rarely represented without her, and associated her name with his on official inscriptions.

It appears that Tiy was in every way the equal of her husband, as she:

- acted as Amenhotep's trusted adviser and confidante
- presided at festivals
- corresponded on her own behalf with foreign dignitaries who seemed to respect her wise advice, especially in the reign of her son
- worked with officials and scribes overseeing the administrative aspects of the empire
- was the first queen to have her name recorded on official acts.

The large number of surviving representations of her indicate her importance to the king. In statuary, he often had her depicted on an equal level (size) with himself. She was also represented as a sphinx – an image usually reserved for kings – and she was worshipped as the incarnation of Hathor. She wore the crowns

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that incorporated the horns, solar disk and feathers of the vulture goddesses Mut and Nehbet, indicating her partnership with Amenhotep on both the mortal and divine sphere.

Despite his affection for his *Great Royal Wife*, Amenhotep had also married two Mitannian princesses, two Babylonian, two Syrian and one from Arzawa. His harem was filled with numerous concubines and children.

Amenhotep III and Tiy are known to have had seven children together: two boys and five girls. The eldest son and heir was Thutmose, who had been shown in an official capacity with his father and held the titles associated with a crown prince. He was destined to marry his sister, Sitamun, the eldest princess, but he died prematurely, perhaps in his early teens. His brother, Amenhotep, became the heir to the throne.

FIGURE 6.12 Colossal statues of Amenhotep III

FIGURE 6.13 Queen Tiy

FIGURE 6.14 Colossal statues of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiy

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The early years of Akhenaten

Akhenaten was probably born in the northern capital of Memphis where the court resided until the last decade or so of his father's reign. Apart from the fact that he was born at the height of the Egyptian Empire and brought up in an environment of luxury and elegance, very little is known about the young prince's childhood and youth. This is not surprising since information about royal sons is generally lacking in the sources and Amenhotep was not expected to rule. Even when he became heir after the death of his brother, he still appears to have been kept in the background. According to Breasted, he was 'conspicuous by his absence from the monuments of his father',[12] who for some reason seems to have overlooked him and kept him away from the activities of the court. The evidence, however, seems to suggest that he might have been close to his mother, Tiy.

It is possible that on his brother's death he inherited the title of High Priest of Ptah, commonly held by the crown prince. Cyril Aldred suggests that it may have been Ptah's other role as the god of craftsmen that influenced Akhenaten's interest and flair in art and sculpture.

FIGURE 6.15 The titulary of Amenhotep IV before he changed his name to Akhenaten

Whether the priests of the sun-god at Heliopolis had any influence on Amenhotep's religious beliefs is not known. It is possible that he spent some time there because of the number of Heliopolitan officials who later made up his entourage. The young Amenhotep would have been familiar with the developments in the solar cult that had taken place during the reigns of his grandfather and father, and it would have been surprising if he had not been influenced by them.

In the last 10 years of his father's reign, the court moved south to Thebes where it occupied the new palace (*House of Rejoicing*) at Malkata on the west bank of the Nile. The only firm evidence that the young Amenhotep lived there comes from the seal of a wine jar found in the palace which mentions the estate of 'the true king's son, Amenhotep'. During this time, it is believed that he was already married to Nefertiti and had his own quarters in the palace.

Unlike his predecessors, Amenhotep did not boast of his sporting abilities. Rather, he appears to have had poetic tendencies and was fascinated with nature. It must have been with some apprehension that the officials who had served his father waited to see how this young and unknown youth would administer Egypt and its empire when he came to the throne.

Accession to the throne and the question of a co-regency

It is believed that Amenhotep IV was about 16 or 17 when he came to the throne. A wall relief from the tomb of Ramose, Vizier of the South, shows the young king, wearing the blue *khepresh* crown and enthroned under a canopy with the goddess Ma'at, in the traditional form.

One of the most debated aspects of Amenhotep IV's accession is the question of a **co-regency**. Some scholars (Cyril Aldred and W. C. Hayes) believe that he shared the throne with his father for a number of years as Amenhotep III's health failed. Such a co-regency has been judged to be anything from two to 12 years in length. Other scholars (Donald Redford and Peter Dorman) believe he acceded to the throne at the time of his father's death.

co-regency joint rule

Why is this debate important?

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The long coregency of ten or eleven years is far more than a chronological quibble: it has serious implications for the structure of royal administration, the determination of foreign relations, the management of economic resources, the promulgation of art styles, the coexistence of apparently conflicting religious cults, and the reconstruction of the genealogy of the royal family at the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

SOURCE 6.8 Peter F. Dorman, *The Long Coregency Revisited: Architectural and Iconographic Conundra in the Tomb of Kherue*, p. 1

A COMMENT ON...

Recent evidence for a co-regency between Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV

- Most of the recent scholarly debate revolves around the supposed evidence in the tomb of Vizier Amenhotep Huy, in Asasif, near Luxor, which dates from Amenhotep III's 30th regnal year, a time connected with the celebration of the king's first Jubilee (*Heb-sed*) Festival.
- The excavation of the tomb is being carried out by a team of Spanish and Egyptian archaeologists, led by Francisco Martin Valentin, who claim to have found written and iconographical evidence that at least from year 30, the king was not a sole ruler, but was sharing his throne with his son, Amenhotep IV.
- A press release from Egyptian Minister of Antiquities announced that the cartouches of both kings have been found side by side on the shafts of several columns, both kings described as 'Son of Re and King of Upper and Lower Egypt'.
- Although there is still a large area left to excavate, this is a significant find which, if true, would mean that a co-regency of possibly eight years would require the complete re-interpretation of this period.
- However, there are still reputable scholars who continue to believe the evidence is not conclusive.

FIGURE 6.16 An unfinished head of Nefertiti

Marriages

Nefertiti, Amenhotep IV's *Great Royal Wife*, was described as 'possessed of charm' and 'sweet of love' and, judging by the painted bust of her found in a workshop in Amarna and now in the Neues Museum in Berlin, she appears to have been a great beauty. (See the comment box below on p. 655.)

There are no details about Nefertiti's background or parents, but it is generally believed that she came from a family that was well-known at court. It has been suggested that she was the daughter of Ay, believed to be the brother of Queen Tiy, in which case she would have been Akhenaten's cousin. She also had at least one sister at court: Mutnodjmet.

The earliest depiction of her was found in the tomb of the vizier, Ramose. At this early date the young king and queen are represented in the traditional artistic form with the wife standing demurely behind her husband. There appear to be no children at this time. However, after the birth of her first daughter, Meritaten, Nefertiti is shown officiating as the king's equal and from this time she is treated as the king's partner, not only in their family life but in religious and political life as well. (See p. 687 on the role of

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Nefertiti). By year 9 of his reign the king had fathered six daughters by Nefertiti: Meritaten, Meketaten, Ankhesenpaaten, Nefernefruaten-Tasherit, Nefrenefrue and Setepenre.

Akhenaten also married other wives: Kiya and Tadukhelpa.

Kiya, an intriguing individual, was never mentioned in the scholarly literature until 1959. It is suggested that she may have been of Mitannian origin, although there is no real evidence for her background. She was a secondary wife and never given the title of the *Great Royal Wife*, which was reserved for Nefertiti. She was often simply called *Favourite* and *The greatly beloved wife of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt*, which elevated her above all women in the harem except for Nefertiti. She is believed to have had one daughter by Akhenaten and may also have been the mother of the mysterious Smenkhkare, who shared a brief co-regency with Akhenaten at the end of his life. Although she was once thought to be the mother of Tutankhamun, this has now been refuted by DNA testing that shows that Tutankhamun's mother was a sister or cousin of Akhenaten. However, in this period, nothing can be completely ruled out.

FIGURE 6.17 A possible image of Kiya

Tadukhelpa was a Mitannian princess originally sent to Egypt to marry Amenhotep III, just as her aunt Kiluhepa had been decades before. However, Amenhotep III died soon after her arrival and Amenhotep IV took her into his harem as another wife.

A COMMENT ON...

The discovery of the bust of Nefertiti

- This exquisite painted stucco-coated limestone bust of Nefertiti was discovered on the floor of the workshop of a sculptor, Thutmose, in Amarna in 1912 by a German archaeological team led by Ludwig Borchardt. In order to keep the bust for the Germans, he is said to have covered it in mud to disguise its beauty from the Egyptians when negotiating the division of finds. It is housed in the Neues Museum in Berlin and has been the subject of vehement requests by the Egyptians for repatriation.
- The face is completely symmetrical and almost intact, except for the missing crystal inlay in one eye and some damage to the ears. It is believed to have served as a sculptor's model for official portraits.
- This portrait has entranced people since it first went on display, but was she as beautiful as that, or did the king's artists translate her into a model of feminine beauty?

FIGURE 6.18 A view of the bust of Nefertiti found in a workshop in Akhetaten wearing her tall-straight-edged blue cap headdress that she initiated for herself.

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ACTIVITY 6.6

1 Describe the:
   - society into which Akhenaten was born
   - possible early influences on his life as a young prince.
2 How old was he when he came to the throne and what is the continuing controversial issue about his succession?
3 How does Source 6.8 explain the reason why the question of a co-regency is so important to scholars?
4 Who was Akhenaten's *Great Royal Wife* and what is the generally accepted belief about her background? How many children did she have with Akhenaten?
5 Name two of his secondary wives. What is known about them?

6.3 Key features and developments

TABLE 6.2 The possible sequence of major events during the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten

POSSIBLE REGNAL YEARS	DEVELOPMENTS
Years 1–3 Amenhotep IV	• Amenhotep IV proclaimed a new version of the solar god Re-Horakhte. • He ordered the decoration of his father's pylon gateways at Karnak in the traditional form. • The name of Re-Horakhte was enclosed in a double cartouche and a new icon (the rayed sun-disk) was inscribed on the temple pylons. • A decree was issued announcing the erection of four sun-temples near the enclosure of the god Amun-Re at Karnak. • Amenhotep IV held a jubilee (**Heb-sed**) festival in year 3 (normally this would occur in year 30 of a king's reign).
Years 4–8 Akhenaten	• From years 4–5, changes began occurring that were to affect every area of life. 'The vast extent of the reorganisation was unique – religion, art, language and eventually the economy'.[13] • The king had produced three daughters by year 5. • In year 5, Akhenaten announced the founding of a new capital city (Akhetaten) dedicated to the Aten, half-way between Memphis and Thebes. • He changed his name from Amenhotep IV to Akhenaten, and ordered the closure of Amun's temple and some of those of the traditional deities as well. The priests of Amun were dismissed from state service. • By year 8, the city of Akhetaten became the religious and administrative centre of Egypt.

Heb-sed the king's jubilee, generally held every 30 years to rejuvenate the king's powers and reinforce his authority to rule

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TABLE 6.2 *(continued)*

POSSIBLE REGNAL YEARS	DEVELOPMENTS
Years 9–11	• Akhenaten changed the name of the Aten, giving the god a new **titulary** in line with developments in the cult teaching. • Akhenaten now took the most radical step:There was to be no plurality of gods, leaving only Aten and Re. The images and names of many gods were obliterated, although this was not consistently applied. The 'persecution that now ensued was directed especially against Amun and his consort Mut ... care was taken to erase the name of Amun even from the letters in the diplomatic archive, commemorative scarabs and the tips of obelisks ...'.[14] • Ma'at (truth) was no longer represented as a woman and other animal symbols of gods were removed. Only the falcon and *uraeus*-serpent were allowed. • By year 9 Akhenaten had six daughters.
Years 12–17	• A great reception of foreign ambassadors from Asia, Africa and the Aegean was held at Akhetaten in year 12. • The queen mother, Tiy, and her supposed youngest daughter, Baketaten, visited and possibly lived at Akhetaten. • The Egyptians were faced with problems in Syria and Palestine. Also, a plague spread through Egypt that is believed to have caused the deaths of members of the royal family. • About year 14 Queen Tiy and Akhenaten's 2nd daughter, Meketaten, died. • After year 14, there were no more references to Nefertiti and soon after, Kiya died or retired. • Akhenaten's eldest daughter took the role of the queen and in year 15 was married to Smenkhkare (parentage still not confirmed). • Between years 14–17, there was an intensification of attack on Amun. • Co-regency between the heir, Smenkhkare, and Akhenaten. • Possible death of Akhenaten in year 17.

titulary a list of titles and names

The Theban years

For the first four years of his reign, Amenhotep IV, the royal family and his court resided at Thebes.

At this point in time the king's titles and names were:

> Strong Bull; Tall of Feathers, One who lifts up the crowns in Thebes; Great of kingship in the temple of Karnak; Perfect are the manifestations of Re; Amenhotep (Amun is satisfied).

Amenhotep IV's building program at Karnak and a new iconography

Early in his reign, Amenhotep IV ordered the decoration of his father's pylon gateways at Amun's temple at Karnak in the traditional form, but the new king's closer attachment to the sun-god was becoming obvious. Although the sun god still had the form of a falcon-headed man with the sun disk, it was now referred to as the Aten.

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iconography related to the subject matter of an image, picture or other representation

anthropomorphic giving human features to something that is not human

In years 3–4 he replaced the image of the **anthropomorphic** god – a falcon-headed man – with an icon. The Aten was now represented as a large sun-disk with a *uraeus* and arm-like rays ending in a hand holding an *ankh*, offering the symbol of life to the king. In other scenes, the hands are open to accept the king's offerings. The gods' name *Aten the Living, the Great who is in Jubilee, Lord of Heaven and Earth* was enclosed in two cartouches symbolic of a heavenly king. By choosing an icon rather than an anthropomorphic form for his god, Amenhotep IV was breaking with the tradition of cult images and the ritual associated with them. In these new images, Amenhotep's figure is large, and dominates the scene, indicating that the king was the son of the Aten on earth and the focus of the worship of the Aten.

According to the evidence, he then began building sun-temple complexes oriented to the rising sun at various sites in Egypt, including at Heliopolis, Memphis and, most importantly, just outside the temple enclosure of Amun at Karnak.

> This great undertaking was set in train almost as a national enterprise, with an energy that had hitherto been devoted to foreign campaigns ...

SOURCE 6.9 Cyril Aldred, *Akhenaten, King of Egypt*, p. 262

corvée forced recruitment of farmers to work on buildings and community tasks such as major water and land management schemes

> The first occasion when His Majesty issued a command to ... pursue all work from Elephantine to Sema-behdet, and to the commanders of the army to levy a numerous **corvée** for quarrying sandstone, in order to make the great *bnbn* of Re-Harakhte in his name *Sunlight which is in the Disk at Karnak*. The princes, courtiers, supervisors, and baton-bearing officers were in charge of his levy for transporting the stone.

SOURCE 6.10 *Urk*. IV, 1962

These temples were known as the:

- Gempaaten (*The Sun-disk is Found*)
- Mansion of the Ben-ben
- Rud-menu (*Sturdy are the Monuments of the Sun-disk Forever*)
- Teni-menu (*Exalted are the Monuments of the Sun-disk Forever*).

These buildings were built quickly using *talatat* blocks. The size of these blocks made it easy for those who later wished to destroy any evidence of the heretic king to disassemble them.

temenos (ancient Egypt) refers to a wall that surrounds a temple domain

The Gempaaten was a rectangular enclosure approximately 130 by 200 metres enclosed with a sun-dried mudbrick **temenos** wall. It was oriented to the rising sun, roofless (as all sun temples were), with red granite offering tables exposed to the direct sunlight; it had a large open court surrounded by a roofed colonnade of squared piers that reached 7 metres in height and against each pier was set a colossus of the king 'gaily painted and depicted in the eccentric and grotesque manner of his early years'.[15] These images are grossly exaggerated and feature:

- a large, elongated head, long neck, narrow face, pronounced chin, pouting lips and elongated and hooded eyes
- a narrow upper torso with prominent breasts
- a lower torso of obviously feminine proportions: prominent buttocks, swelling thighs, drooping belly and no evidence of genitals
- short spindly lower legs.

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As no artist would have represented the king in such a way without royal approval, Amenhotep IV must have been making a statement of some kind. The possible symbolism of these early representations, which were later modified, are discussed on p. 677.

The Mansion of the Ben-ben was closely associated with the Gempaaten and featured images of Nefertiti offering to the Aten, from the Ben-ben colonnade.

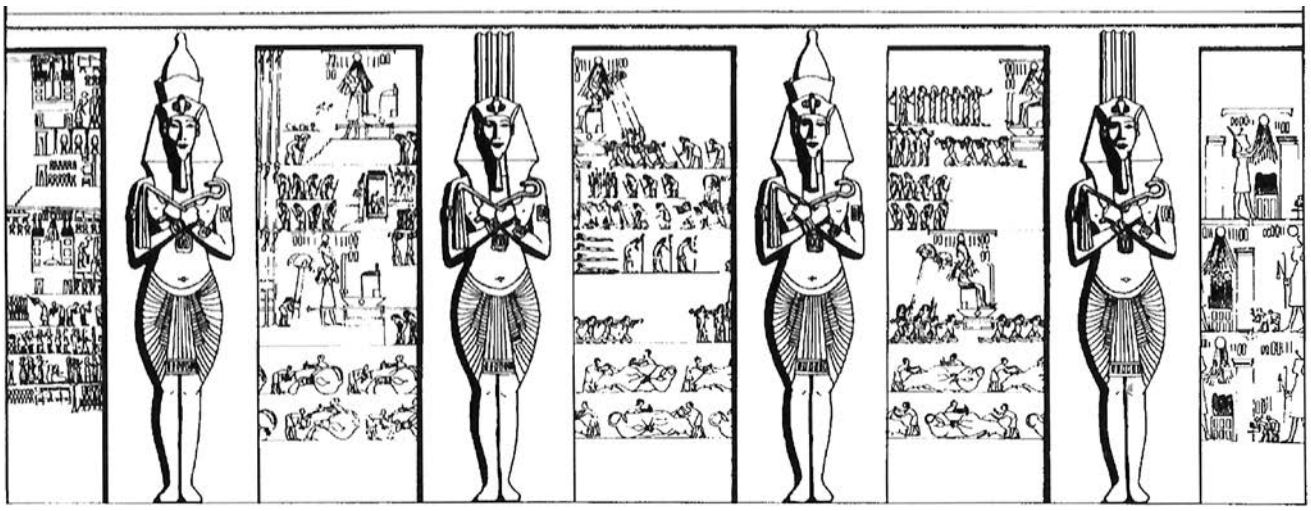

FIGURE 6.19 A drawing of the likely appearance of the south colonnade of the Gempaaten at Karnak

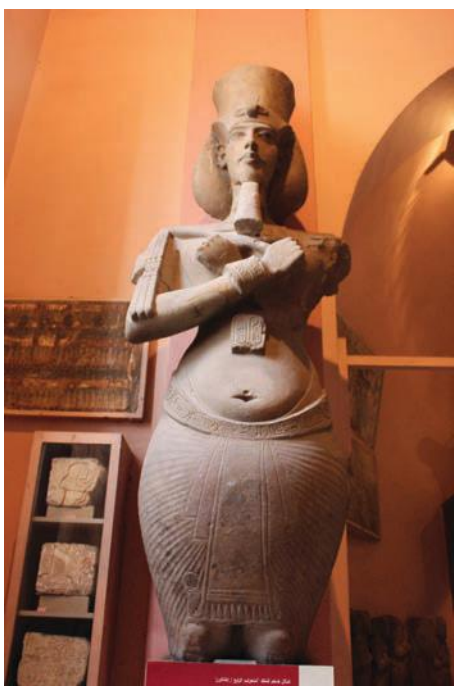

FIGURE 6.20 A colossal statue of Amenhotep IV from the Gempaaten

FIGURE 6.21 A *talatat* of Nefertiti offering to the Aten

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FIGURE 6.22 *Talatat* from the Gempaaten in Karnak

Amenhotep IV's jubilee festival (Heb-sed) in Year 3

The *Heb-sed* or jubilee festival, a very ancient ritual, was one of the most significant events in the reign of a pharaoh. It was usually held after a king had been on the throne for 30 years and its purpose was to reaffirm the king's right to rule and to rejuvenate his powers. The principal acts associated with the festival, which involved the use of coronation imagery, changed very little throughout Egyptian history. Amenhotep's father, Amenhotep III, celebrated three great *sed* or jubilees: in years 30, 34 and 37. However, Amenhotep IV celebrated his in his 3rd year on the throne. His reasons for breaking with tradition are not known. Those who support the theory that he shared a co-regency with his father suggest that his *sed* may have corresponded with one of his father's jubilees.

Although it seems that he followed the traditional form of the festival, his new doctrine required some changes be made (see p. 671). Most of the relief decoration from the recovered fragments from the Gempaaten use the jubilee festival as its theme.

ACTIVITY 6.7

1. What changes occurred in the image of the Aten in the early years of Amenhotep IV's reign? Why might he have felt this change was necessary?
2. What do Sources 6.9 and 6.10 reveal about the king's implementation of a sun-temple building program?
3. Of the four sun-temples at Karnak, which one provided the most evidence about the early years of Amenhotep IV's reign?
4. Using the text and Figures 6.19–6.21, describe the significant features of the decoration that would possibly have shocked the people of Thebes.
5. What were the most noticeable differences between these temples and the Temple of Amun?

Transfer of capital to Akhetaten

Sometime around year 5, Amenhotep IV:

1. changed his name to Akhenaten: Beloved of Aten; One who proclaims the Aten; great of kingship in Akhetaten; Perfect are the manifestations of Re; Akhenaten (*he who is serviceable to the Aten*).
2. announced his decision to build a new sacred space dedicated solely to the Aten and which he named Akhetaten (*The Horizon of the Aten*). Akhenaten never used the word 'city' in his inscriptions.

Perhaps because he had already built temples to Aten at the cult centres of Amun at Thebes, of Ptah at Memphis and of Re at Heliopolis, he believed that the Aten deserved a special site of its own, somewhere that had never been associated with any other god. According to Sir Alan Gardiner, Akhenaten's decision was 'doubtless promoted by the recognition that the cults of Aten and Amun-Re could no longer be carried out side by side'.[16]

Although there is no evidence of any civil strife at this time, it would be unusual if there had not been some shock at what was being done in Karnak, especially the break with tradition regarding the structure

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of temples and the exaggerated depictions of Akhenaten. In fact, the king later recorded that he had heard 'evil words'. Whether these so-called 'evil words' were associated with opposition to his projects from some of his officials or from the priests of Amun is not known but it is possible that they may have had some connection with his decision to abandon Thebes.

> As my father Aten lives! If ... even though it be more evil than what I heard in the 4th year, than what I heard in the [...], than what I heard in the 1st year, than what my father Nebmare [heard, or than] what Menkheperure ...

SOURCE 6.11 K. Sethe, *URK*, IV

ACTIVITY 6.8

1. Why was year 5 of Amenhotep IV's reign so significant?
2. What does Source 6.11 suggest about the reaction to Akhenaten's decision at this time?

The site and layout of Akhetaten

> Akhenaten moved to Amarna with a plan in his mind, and a clean expanse of desert on which to develop it. Amarna thus offers a rare example of religious innovation on the scale of a major state, captured through archaeology at its inception ... How the Aten was to be conceived was, in part, defined by its temples and the landscape in which they were built'.

SOURCE 6.12 Barry Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna And Its People*, p. 79

Site

A site for the Aten's new 'city' was found almost midway between Memphis and Thebes, near modern El Amarna. The king recorded that the Aten had revealed it to him, 'no official proposed it, nor any man in the entire land'.[17] It is possible that on one of his river journeys between Memphis and Thebes, Akhenaten had noticed the site and how the morning sun, rising over a break in the eastern hills, formed the hieroglyph for 'horizon'. It is interesting that he named his new city Akhetaten, which meant *Horizon of the Aten*, and built his tomb in a wadi over which the morning sun rose.

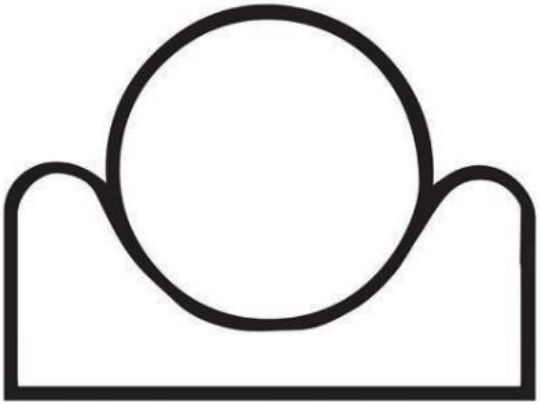

FIGURE 6.23 The hieroglyph for 'horizon'

FIGURE 6.24 Sunrise over the Nile

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FIGURE 6.25 The remains of a boundary stela

The site for the king's new city was a plain about 13 kilometres long and 5 kilometres wide, surrounded by a crescent of hills which were interrupted in places by wadis. On the opposite side of the river was an area of fertile land, large enough to support a substantial agricultural population. Akhenaten claimed both sides of the river for the Aten and delineated the area with boundary stelae cut into the surrounding cliffs. These stelae were between 3 and 9 metres high, flanked by statues depicting Akhenaten and Nefertiti holding narrow tablets inscribed with the names of the Aten and themselves. The two eldest royal daughters, Meritaten and Meketaten, were also featured on the stelae.

These would have once been seen from afar. Carved from the limestone cliffs, they would have been white and the details picked out in brilliant colours.

According to the inscriptions on his boundary stelae, Akhenaten visited the site in year 5 and conducted a foundation ceremony from an altar specially erected for the occasion. After making a great offering to the god, the king called his followers before him – nobles, officials and army officers – and explained how the Aten had led him to the site and outlined the extent of the proposed city.

> I have demarked Akhetaten on its south, on its north, on its west, on its east ... Now as for the area within the four landmarks ... it belongs to my father Aten, whether mountains, or cliffs, or marshes or uplands, or fields, or waters, or towns, or shores, or people, or cattle, or trees, or anything which Aten, my father, has made ... I will not neglect this oath which I have made to the Aten, my father ...

SOURCE 6.13 J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. II, p. 398

Akhenaten swore an oath that no one, not even the queen, could convince him to build Aten's city anywhere else and that he would not extend the city beyond these original boundaries. The king then:

- announced that Aten's city would be the new capital where he would hold audience for people from all over Egypt.

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- listed some of the buildings he planned to erect on the site so that the city would be a true monument to the Aten: 'I shall make the 'House of the Aten'; 'I shall make the Mansion of the Aten'; 'I shall make the Sun-temple for the [Great King's]Wife'; 'I shall make the "House of Rejoicing"'; 'I shall make for myself the apartments of Pharaoh', and 'I shall make the apartments of the Great King's Wife'.[18]
- indicated that he intended Aten's city to last forever, by announcing that the royal tombs would be built in the eastern hills and that if he happened to die elsewhere, his body was to be brought back to Akhetaten for burial. The same applied to his family.

In the following year, the king returned to the site, and although surveyors and builders had been working at a feverish pace, he had to stay in 'a pavilion of woven stuff'.[19] He inspected and confirmed the boundaries and ordered the cutting of more boundary stelae. It was once thought there were 14 of these, but it is now believed that there were 16.

It was a further two years before the city was fully occupied and functional.

> One passage in the tablets has sometimes created the impression that Akhenaten swore never himself to leave the confines of the city. This, however, is a misunderstanding. The relevant passages, in stating that he will not go beyond the boundaries, means that he will not extend the limits of Akhetaten beyond them.

SOURCE 6.14 Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilization*, p. 267

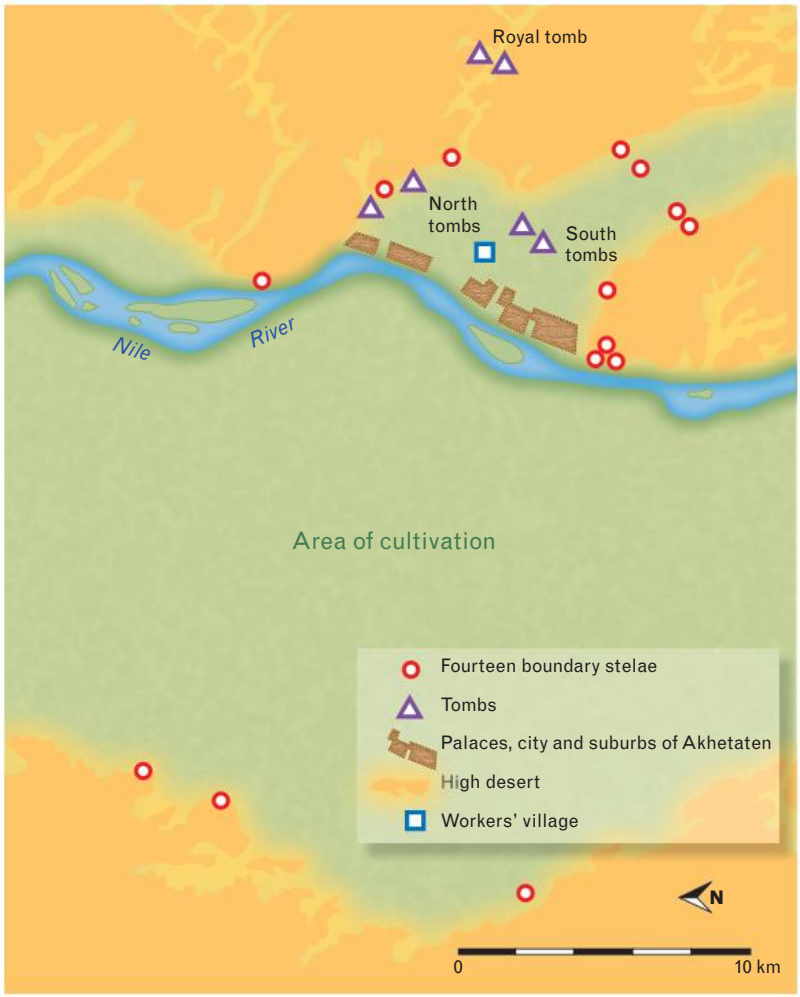

FIGURE 6.26 The site of Akhetaten marked out by boundary stelae

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Layout

Since the site had never been occupied, the city could be planned with no constraints. The main public buildings (religious and administrative) were located in what is referred to today as Central City. The focus of the city was the great Temple of the Aten (see p. 671 for the impact of the solar cult on changes in architecture), the Mansion of the Aten (believed to be the king's mortuary temple), the Great Palace of State (possible site for formal receptions and ceremonies) and the King's House (administrative/ reception area). 'These were all parts of the same complex grouped around a single sprawling service hub' and it was where the king's 'routine face-to-face contact with working ministers' occurred',[20] which also included great storage areas and bakeries.

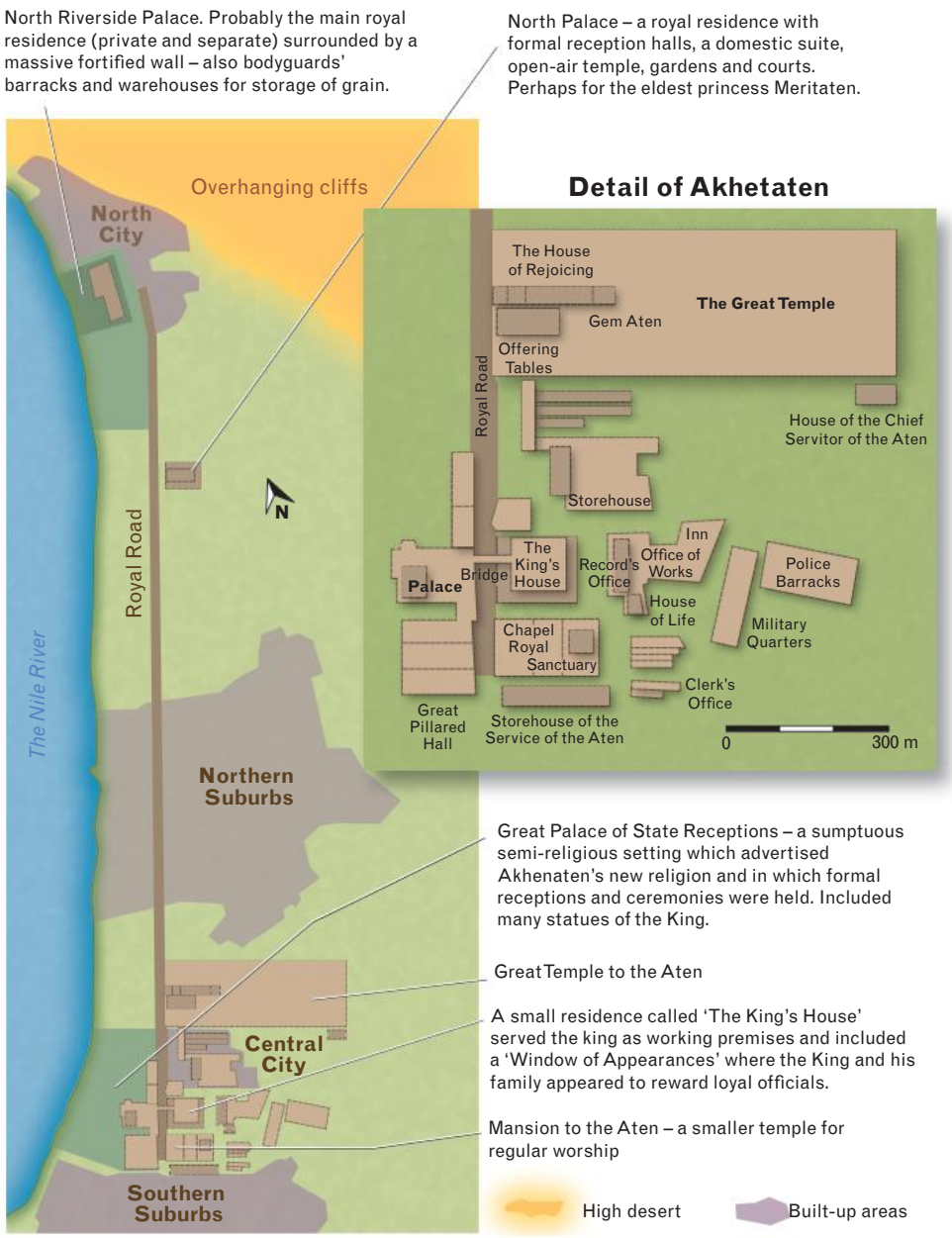

FIGURE 6.27 Structural elements at Akhetaten and details of Central City

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In this central service hub were also:

- an archive office (for storage of records such as the Amarna Tablets)
- police and military barracks
- storehouses and bakeries
- residential areas for nobility.

From this nucleus, the city spread along the river north to the North Riverside Palace (main royal residence); the North Palace (residence for a royal woman, possibly Kiya or Meritaten) and the satellite Northern Suburb (middle-class estates and villas). To the south were the Southern Suburbs and some of the 'Sun-shades of Re', sanctuaries of the royal women.

FIGURE 6.28 The remains of Akhetaten

FIGURE 6.29 Remains of the Northern Palace

A COMMENT ON...

The enigmatic sun-shade shrines at Amarna

- Every royal woman at Amarna, including the Queen Mother, had her own 'sun-shade of Re', indicating that sun-shades played an important role in Akhenaten's religious reforms. These appear to have been composed of gardens, water features and shrines to the Aten.
- The only one that gives some idea of what these sanctuaries were like is that known as *Maru-Aten*, which lay 1.5 kilometres south of the southern limits of the city and was not far from the river. There is evidence of at least three more around the periphery of the city. The Maru-Aten is believed to have originally been dedicated to Kiya but her name and image were carved over to re-dedicate it to Akhenaten's eldest daughter, Meritaten.
- The Maru-Aten gives an image of calm, and of a retreat away from the main part of Akhetaten. It consisted of:
  - twin enclosures surrounded by brick walls, one larger than the other
  - shallow pools or lakes and gardens planted with trees
  - small pavilions of various kinds set around the edges
  - a long narrow stone causeway and pier with a decorated kiosk at one end
  - an artificial island in the north-east corner surrounded by a ditch, supporting a stone platform as an open-air offering place
  - a pillared structure providing shade to a series of interlocking T-shape water basins surrounded by scenes from nature.

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The whole complex seems to exemplify the spirit of sun worship providing an idyllic garden landscape presided over by the sun and also expresses the wish for retreat.

SOURCE 6.15 Barry J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt, Anatomy of a Civilization*, p. 285

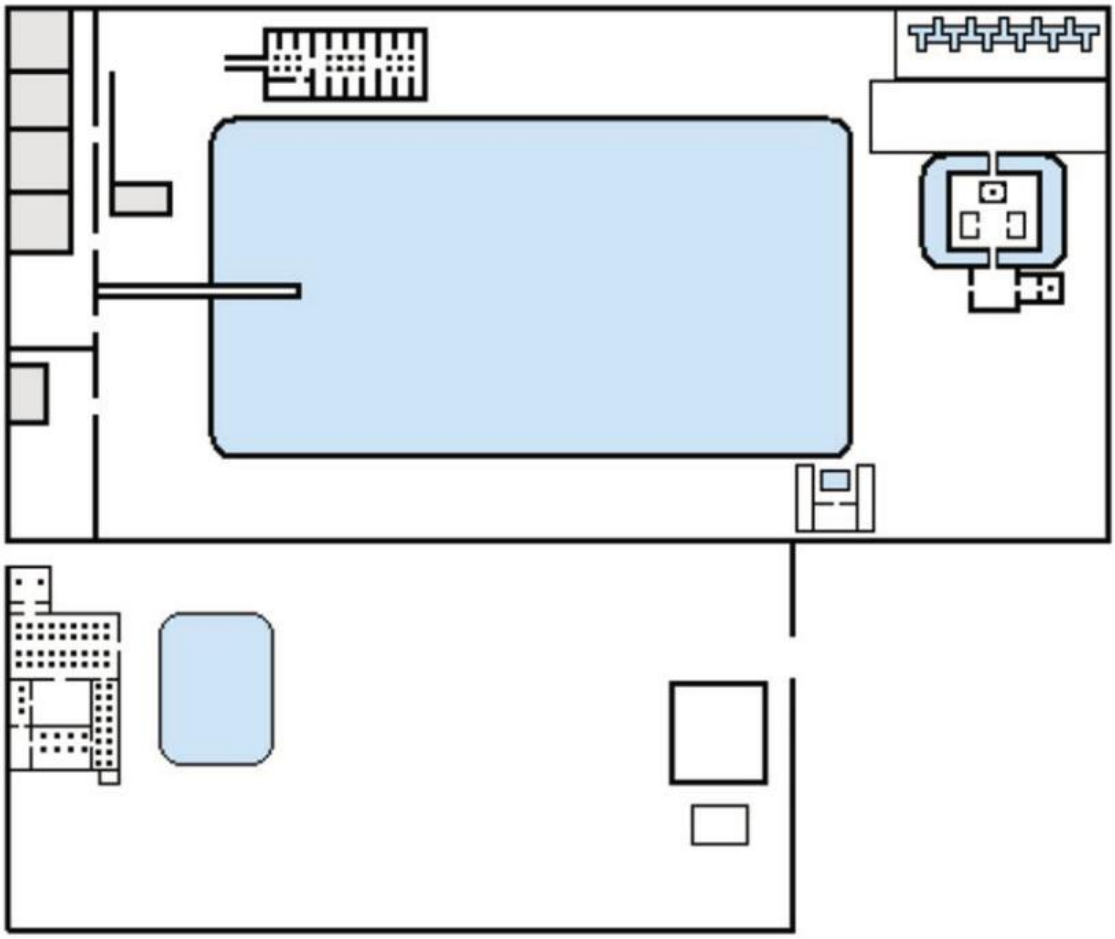

FIGURE 6.30 Plan of the Maru-Aten complex and gardens in Amarna

Apart from the corridor of royal and administrative buildings, there appears to have been no real planning in the suburbs. The impression gained from the excavations is one of a series of joined villages composed of houses, both rich and poor, interlocked in complex patterns.

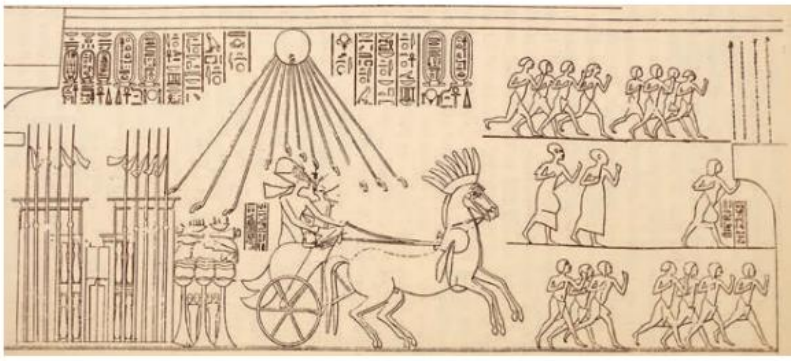

FIGURE 6.31 A royal chariot procession

This spread of domestic and public buildings provided Akhenaten with an 'arena of royal display'.[21] As he and his family made their way in procession from the chief royal residence in the north city to the Central City and back again via an 8-kilometre road (the Royal Road), there was plenty of opportunity for public adulation of the living image of the Aten. *Windows of*

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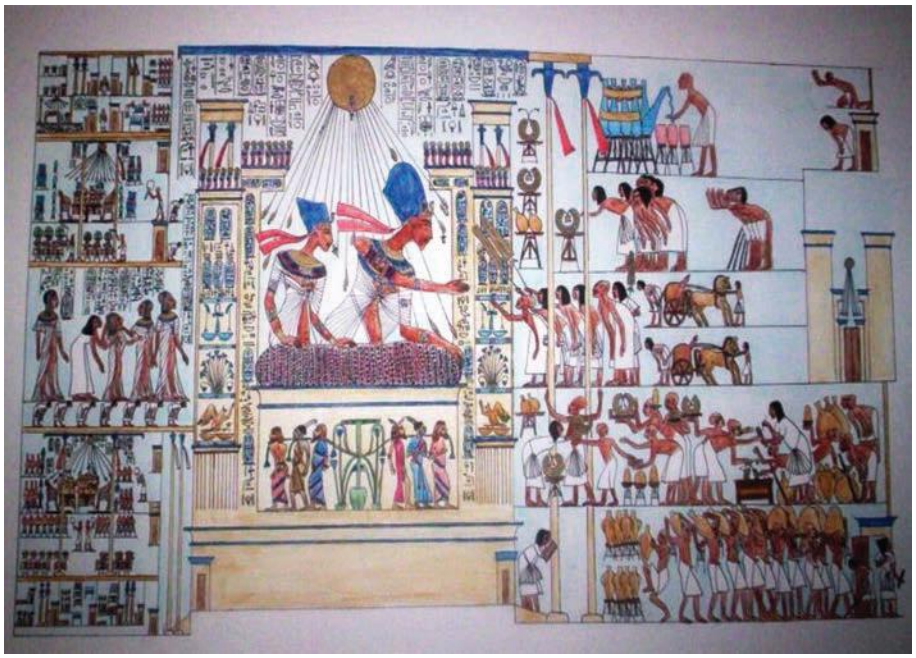

FIGURE 6.32 A drawing of the Window of Appearances from the tomb of Parennefer

Appearances provided further opportunities for the royal couple to display themselves, receive blessings and accept praise. These were architectural features built into some of the Amarna buildings from which the king and queen bestowed gold collars and other gifts on worthy officials.

Apart from the city spread along the Nile, there were:

- the royal tombs deep in a wadi beyond the plain (see p. 684)
- two groups (north and south) of rock tombs of the king's courtiers and officials cut into the cliffs and hills, which bordered the site in a great arc to the east (see p. 686)
- the Workers' Village, which, in its enforced isolation and general scale and layout, resembled the village of Deir el-Medina in western Thebes that housed the royal tomb makers. Enclosed within a brick wall, the workman's village in Amarna comprised about 72 houses of similar design.

FIGURE 6.33 The northern cliff tombs

The economic impact of the move to Akhetaten

For centuries the Egyptians had a system in which religion, politics and economics were integrated. Akhenaten's decision to build a new capital in a remote, isolated and in many ways inhospitable site required a large-scale mobilisation of workers, officials and troops, and a source of revenue for his massive building project.

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By closing the temples and disbanding priesthoods he was able to take control of temple estates and revenues, especially those of Amun, whose domain was the richest in Egypt and the greatest single employer of labour in the land. These resources were redirected to Akhetaten, leaving the temples of Amun and other gods to fall into disrepair. N. Grimal says, 'The abandonment of the system of divine estates led to the ruination of a whole system of production and distribution without providing any new structure to replace it'.[22]

As more and more of the country's resources were transferred to Akhetaten and the court was isolated in the new capital, 'the once thriving religious and administrative centres of Thebes and Memphis stood idle. Government offices had been virtually shut down, and the sons of illustrious houses that had served pharaoh well, suddenly found themselves bereft of function'.[23]

The 'construction of the new city and new temples was to the detriment of the economy in general and to the temple-based economy in particular'.[24] (See p. 694 for Akhenaten's legacy.)

Personnel at Akhetaten

It has been estimated that somewhere between 20 000 and 50 000 people may have lived in Akhetaten. Did they all go by choice?

All Egyptian kings relied on a body of loyal officials to help them govern, and Akhenaten was no different. Who were these men?

> Some, perhaps many, were men newly chosen to be close to the king. They might have been brought up with him, at a time before it was realised that he would become a king … Especially because of Akhenaten's ambition to bring in changes that would provoke opposition, it is expected that, more than ever, the circle of those loyal to him contained men new to the court, outsiders.

SOURCE 6.16 Barry J. Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti: Amarna and its People*, p. 41

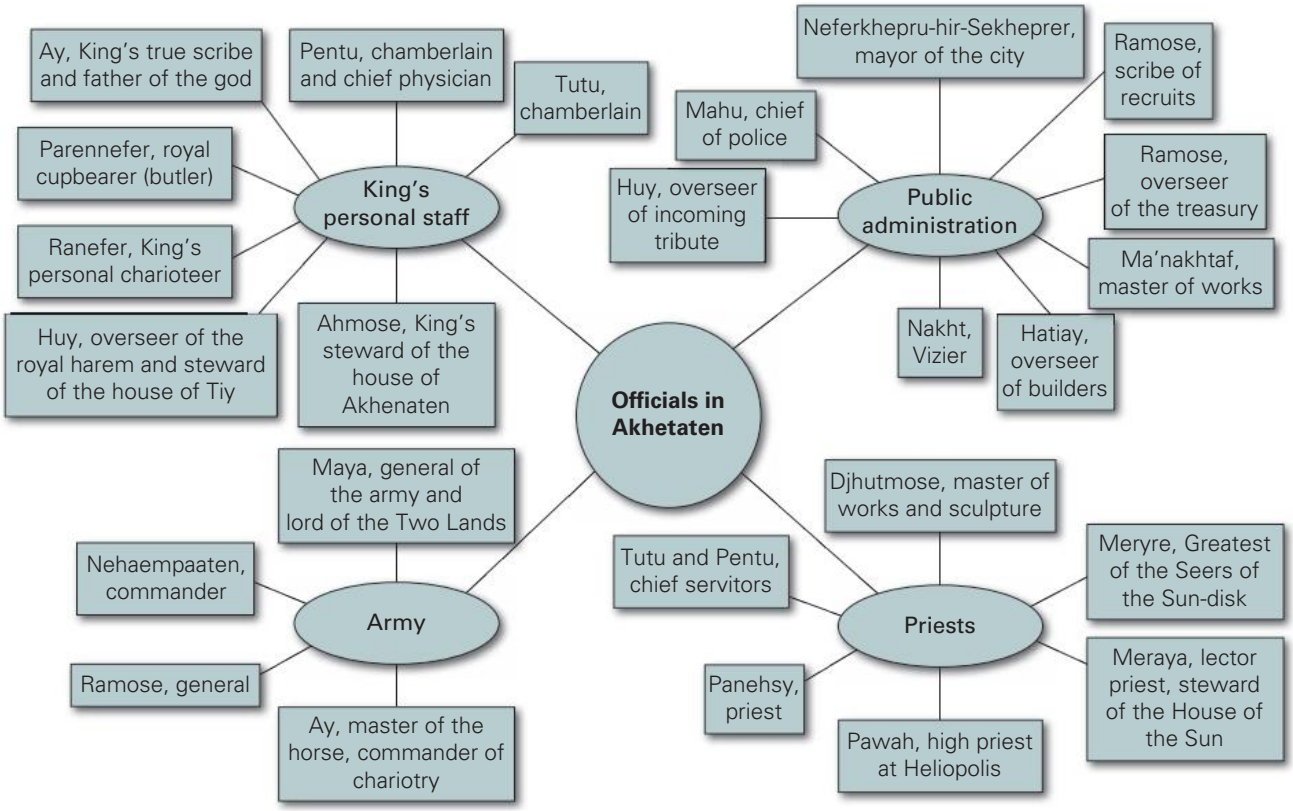

FIGURE 6.34 Diagram of Akhenaten's courtiers

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These officials were in turn supported by people who may have followed them from provincial towns due to their new-found status.

The army (partly filled with conscripts and mercenaries) appears to have played a significant role in Amarna: construction, security and escorting the royal family.

Craftsmen and workers employed on the temples and tombs in other parts of Egypt, especially those in Thebes from the state-sponsored village of royal tomb builders (Deir el-Medina), were initially recruited and housed in the special Workers' Village at Amarna. However, the supply of these experienced craftsmen, as well as labourers, could not have kept up with the speed needed to construct Akhenaten's new city. There is evidence that the so-called isolated, small Stone Village housed 'an expansion of the original community – one that came from a different background – which had to be kept separate …'.[25] Were these inhabitants foreign prisoners or those drafted from lower levels of society and supervised by army officers? There is evidence that the back-breaking work of quarrying stone for the king's buildings was 'done by a mixture of professional quarry teams and numerous groups of individuals temporarily assigned to the task'.[26]

It appears that many of these people, including children, suffered great hardship judging from the state of the bodies from a cemetery in a desert valley (the South Cemetery), which has been excavated and analysed since 2006.

A COMMENT ON…

The darker side of life in Amarna

- From the art and other material remains (temples, palaces and houses of the nobles) of Amarna, there has been a modern tendency to depict Akhenaten as the generous provider, and life in Amarna as prosperous with abundant supplies of food. Akhenaten was obsessed with copious food offerings to the Aten, but this food was not shared out among the general public. 'Only those in the higher echelon were allowed to partake in the feasts laid out for the god.'[27] The images of abundance are in direct contrast to what is being seen in the study of the skeletons at Amarna, which indicate a very unhealthy population who lacked access to proper nutrition, were malnourished and diseased, particularly those of the workers living in isolated villages in the desert, many toiling in the extreme summer heat in quarries.
- Of the 278 bodies examined so far from the Southern Tombs Cemetery – which possibly held 3000 bodies – 65% had skeletal markers, indicating long-term bodily stress. These seem to have been caused by: inadequate nutrition in childhood (leading to scurvy, anaemia and stunted growth); compressed fractures of the spine due to bearing heavy loads; and earlier deaths than normal for ancient Egypt in the adolescent and sub-adult category (possibly due to childhood malnutrition, infectious diseases like malaria and epidemics such as plague). Plague seems to have been the reason for the spike in early juvenile deaths, and may explain the hurried burials (lack of mummification and several people placed in one grave.)
- Although malaria and plague affected even the royal family (see p. 689) and nobles, they are hardly likely to have suffered like those buried in the Southern Cemetery.

Perhaps life in Amarna 'was not the paradise in the desert that Akhenaten wanted so much for everyone to believe it to be'.[28]

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ACTIVITY 6.9

1. What does Source 6.12 say about the importance of Akhenaten's move to Amarna for historians and archaeologists?
2. What is believed to have been the reason for Akhenaten's choice of the site in Middle Egypt for his new capital city?
3. Use the text and Figure 6.31 to describe the site of Akhetaten.
4. What was the purpose of the boundary stelae erected by Akhenaten? What can modern Egyptologists learn from the damaged remains of these?
5. Describe the layout of the major buildings in Akhetaten.
6. What do the comment box, Source 6.15 and Figure 6.30 reveal about the sun-shade sanctuaries for royal women?
7. What is meant by the statement, 'The construction of a new city and new temples was to the detriment of the economy in general and to the temple-based economy in particular'?
8. Describe the personnel that would have made up the 20 000–50 000 people who lived in Amarna at the time of Akhenaten.
9. What evidence is there that Amarna might not have been as ideal as Akhenaten envisaged?

Religious policy

According to Cambridge Professor Barry Kemp (The Amarna Project), some of the religious aims of Akhenaten appear to have been: to simplify and purify the cult of the sun, leaving it without mythology; to establish a sacred home for the Aten; and to instruct those around him in righteous conduct. But because Akhenaten did not live in a world that expected consistency across a wide front, Kemp believes that Akhenaten's 'reforming zeal might have been confined to local targets of his choice',[29] such as the official class.

Changes in his religious policy

As the king's reign progressed, his religious policy changed. When he decided to build a cult centre to the Aten and to change his name to Akhenaten, he limited the number of gods with whom he was associated, although other gods were still recognised.

However, by year 9 of his reign, the exclusivity of Aten had reached a high point. Akhenaten:

- directed that Re and Ma'at were to be written without the symbol for a god
- focused his attack on Amun, the great god of the Egyptian Empire, and his 'wife' Mut
- had the name of Amun erased from temple walls and tombs
- ordered the closure of some (not all) temples of the other gods
- no longer allowed the funerary gods such as Osiris to be mentioned in the texts, or the Osirian rites to be practised.

Features of the new cult

- Unlike other chief deities, the Aten was not associated with a divine family (Amun, Mut and Konshu; Osiris, Isis and Horus; or Ptah, Sekhmet and Nefertum). However, it appears that Aten, the creator, was linked in a triad with his creation, Akhenaten (the male principle) and Nefertiti (the female principle).
- An abstract symbol – the rayed sun-disk – replaced the vast collection of anthropomorphic deities that existed in the complex universe of the ancient Egyptians.
- There was no mythology associated with the Aten. All the ancient myths associated with the afterlife and the magical texts from the *Book of the Dead* disappeared.

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- The traditional roofed temple with its dim interior and dark windowless sanctuary was replaced with a temple open to the sky so that the living disk could be seen throughout the day.
- The Aten, as a living god, had no cult statue which required the daily attention of the priests. The only daily ritual was the essential food, drink and incense offerings presided over by Akhenaten and Nefertiti.
- With no cult image of the god, there was no need for processional festivals such as the Opet and Valley festivals, during which the god's statue was taken from its sanctuary in a procession in which the ordinary people could participate. This was replaced by the daily chariot processions from the palace to the Great Temple.
- During the Heb-sed festival, the great gods – Amun, Ptah, Osiris and Thoth – were not mentioned, and their statues were absent from the individual shrines in the Court of the Great Ones. Instead, in each roofless shrine was a statue of Akhenaten under the rays of the sun-disk. In the Hymn to Hathor, the names of the other gods were removed.

FIGURE 6.35 Akhenaten and Nefertiti worshipping the new Aten icon

- The king communicated directly with the Aten for he alone 'knew' the god; the hierarchy of priests assisted with the offerings, but primarily ministered to the cult of Akhenaten, offerings prayers to the royal family.
- There were significant changes in funerary practices (see p. 685)

A COMMENT ON...

Features of temple architecture and ritual

- Our understanding of the changes in temple architecture comes from the remains on the ground and from the images in the tombs of Meryre, *Chief of the Seers of the Aten in the House of Aten*, and Panehsy, *Chief Servitor of the Aten in the House of Aten*, although these are stylistic and may not be totally accurate.
- Since there was no longer an anthropomorphic image of the god in the new cult, there was no need for a place to house the statue and its ritual paraphernalia. These vast, open temple enclosures featured:
  - decorated pylons (gateways) and flagpoles with streamers.
  - statues of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, everywhere overlooked by the image of the Aten
  - lustration basins, a giant altar and numerous stone offering tables. In all large and small spaces at the Great Temple of Aten in Amarna there were 1700 of these. Barry Kemp says that 'Akhenaten's 'multiplication of offering tables is surely a symptom of obsession'.[30]
  - a slaughtering court for cattle.
- Temple rituals performed by the king, queen and daughters are also depicted in the tombs of some of Akhenaten's officials. There appear to have been have been two types of rituals that involved Akhenaten, Nefertiti and their daughters: one inclusive that involved a large portion of the citizenry, and another that was exclusive where the royal family were attended only by a small select group.

continued...

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The main features shown in the tombs include the following:

- Akhenaten and Nefertiti presenting a token of food and drink to the Aten from the offerings which fill the temples, sometimes in the form of raising aloft a tray of offerings. They also brandished a sceptre in the shape of the hieroglyph for power.
- the royal daughters rattling metal sistra.
- groups of men and women singing or chanting to the clapping of hands.
- playing of drums and waving of palm branches.
- courtiers on their hands and knees before the royal family.
- military escorts.

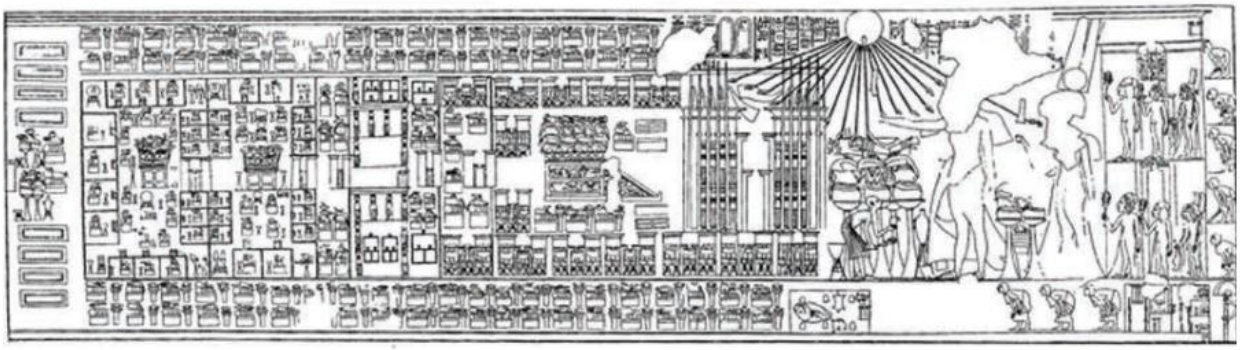

FIGURE 6.36 The Great Temple of Aten from the tomb of Meryre

FIGURE 6.37 A military escort for royal procession to the temple

Akhenaten's view of, and relationship with, the Aten

Akhenaten's view of his god is revealed in the beautiful *Great Hymn to the Aten*, which was found inscribed in the tomb of Ay. The ideas expressed in this hymn, which may have been written by Akhenaten himself, are not new. A similar hymn to Amun included many of the same sentiments. However, there is one major difference – in Akhenaten's hymn there is no mention of other gods.

According to the hymn, the sun-disk was:

- the creator of all life
- a universal god
- the sustainer of life
- a source of power and beauty
- a remote heavenly king.

The following quotes from the hymn illustrate each of these aspects of the Aten.

> You made the earth as you wished, you alone, all people, herds, flocks, all upon earth that walk on legs, all on high that fly on wings. You made millions of forms from yourself alone, towns, villages, fields, the river's course.

continued...

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...continued

The lands of Khor (Syria) and Kush, the land of Egypt, you set every man in his place ... Their tongues differ in speech, their character likewise; their skins are distinct, for you distinguished the peoples.

Your rays nurse all fields, when you shine they live, they grow for you. Who makes seed grow in women, who creates people from sperm, who feeds the son in his mother's womb ... When he comes from the womb to breathe on the day of his birth, you open wide his mouth to supply his needs ... When the chick in the egg speaks in the shell, You give him breath within to sustain him.

When you have dawned in eastern lightland, you fill every land with your beauty. You are beauteous, great, radiant, high over every land.

Though you are far, your rays are on earth. Though one sees you, your strides are unseen.

SOURCE 6.17 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, pp. 96–8

Despite the great beauty of this hymn, Redford maintains that Akhenaten's god was cold and lacking in compassion. 'No text tells us that he hears the cry of the poor man, or succours the sick, or forgives the sinner'.[31] So the sun-disk was not a god to which the ordinary Egyptian could relate, and this was intentional. Akhenaten had created an exclusive cult, and in his attempt to simplify the worship of the god, what he 'left to Egypt was not a god at all but a disk in the heavens'.[32]

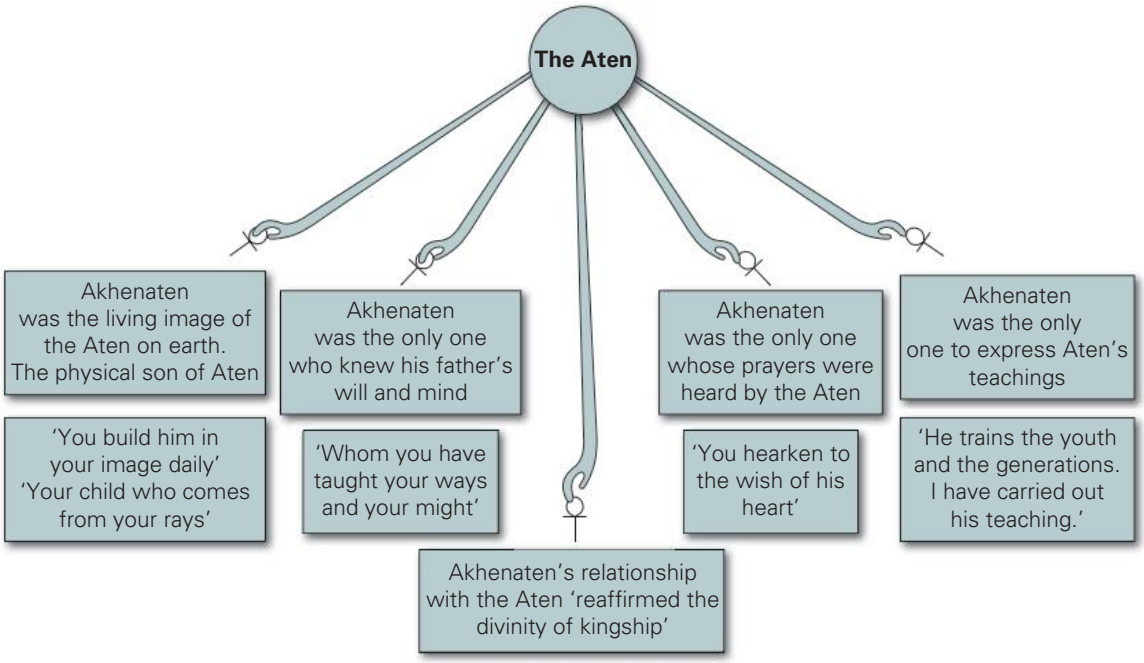

FIGURE 6.38 Diagram of Akhenaten's relationship with the Aten

The impact of the solar cult on ordinary Egyptians

It appears that the new Aten religion's impact on the population of Akhetaten varied from courtiers and officials to the ordinary craftsmen and labourers.

There is evidence of the adulation of Akhenaten and the royal family depicted in the homes of the wealthy Amarna courtiers who followed him to Akhetaten. For example:

- carved and painted short prayers, and images of the owner kneeling before the cartouches of the Aten and royal family on the stone frames of their entrances

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- stelae or plaques showing the royal family
- free-standing ornamental garden chapels and platform sanctuaries fitted with statues of the royal family.

These depictions of reverence and loyalty were not obligatory and it is not known how many leading officials actually took Akhenaten's teachings to heart. Were these depictions of adoration in their homes:

- simply responses to their regard for the gifts bestowed by Akhenaten on them (e.g. the gold of honour and a fine tomb)?
- 'marks of status, advertising that the owner was a member of the king's establishment?' [33]

Although some courtiers changed their name to incorporate 'aten', these were rare, and it appears that some of them 'did not suppress the symbols of the old gods'.[34]

The religious changes did not affect the personal worship of most of the common people in Amarna. Throughout Egyptian history, they were, to a certain extent, isolated from what went on in the great cult temples and, for them, the Aten was a remote god associated exclusively with the king. As they had always done, they worshipped a variety of household gods.

When the Workers' Village at Amarna was excavated, it provided evidence of the variety of personal forms of worship. It appears that right through Akhenaten's reign the inhabitants had continued to worship Hathor, Bes, Taweret and a cobra deity, Renenutet. These deities were in the form of figurines, amulets and painted images on the walls of their houses. They also built little shrines on the slopes adjacent to their village for these deities, who they believed – unlike Aten – provided protection from accidents, illnesses and premature death. In the South Tombs cemetery, the few material finds so far excavated make no reference to Akhenaten and the Aten.

Both within Amarna, and elsewhere, the greatest negative effect of the new cult on the ordinary people was the abolition of the annual festivals and processions of the gods in which they had participated. These had always been an important feature of their social life. 'The failure to set up a program of celebration and feasting with its popular appeal'[35] would have contributed to the dissatisfaction of the populace.

> The people who populated Amarna arrived with minds shaped by the traditions of their upbringing. They balanced interest in the new spiritual environment against their own beliefs, which addressed different and more urgent needs than the intellectual concerns of the king.

SOURCE 6.18 B. Kemp, *The City of Akhenaten and Nefertiti; Amarna and its People*, p. 20

ACTIVITY 6.10

1. What does Professor Barry Kemp suggest as some of the religious aims of Akhenaten?
2. Why was year 9 so significant in the development of Akhenaten's religious policy?
3. Draw a diagram to illustrate the main features of Akhenaten's solar cult.
4. Draw up a table of two columns. In one, list what Akhenaten believed about the Aten, and in the other choose a brief quote from the *Great Hymn to the Aten* (probably composed by Akhenaten) that illustrates each of these views.
5. What do you think the *Great Hymn to the Aten* and Figure 6.38 reveal about the character of Akhenaten?
6. What does the evidence suggest about the different ways the solar cult impacted the population of Amarna?

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Artistic innovations

Akhenaten appears to have been the guiding hand behind Amarna-style art, just as he was behind the Aten religion. An inscription by the master sculptor, Bek, describes himself as 'one whom his majesty himself instructed'. Religion and art were inextricably linked together and they both evolved gradually during the course of Akhenaten's reign.

A trend towards naturalism had already started during the reign of his father Amenhotep III, although it did not exhibit the exaggerated naturalism of the Amarna Period that followed.

It appears that before Amenhotep III's death, there were two schools of artists working in Thebes – those following the more traditional style and others (more progressive) tending towards the style later inaugurated by Akhenaten. The exquisite reliefs in the tomb of the vizier, Ramose, are evidence of this. The work is done in both 'the style of the high 18th Dynasty and in the somewhat eccentric style of Akhenaten's reign'.[36]

> We find the two styles side by side in one and the same tomb, the new decorations being exceedingly similar to that soon to be found in the tombs of el-Amarna Akhetaten, where the king moved with his entourage and officials. Ramose may have been invited to go, for even before the decoration of his tomb had been completed, work was abandoned for good ... His tomb remains a monument of conventional versus controversial concepts of art ...

SOURCE 6.19 A. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 227

It has been suggested that apart from following an artistic trend already established in the reign of his father, Akhenaten:

1 may have been interested in artistic innovation and encouraged artists to explore new themes
2 needed a new iconography in temple decoration
3 may have believed that 'living in truth' necessitated more realistic artistic depictions.

There appear to have been three phases of artistic experiment during Akhenaten's reign:

1 the early radical 'grotesque' style at Karnak (a caricature of the human form) seen in the statuary at the Gempaaten and in the relief scenes at Karnak.
2 the radical style at Akhetaten but more naturalistic with a softening of facial features and torsos, plus more emotion and movement.
3 the mature style in the latter years at Akhetaten. This was a better-proportioned, more life-like form, with more realism such as the effects of ageing as seen in the plaster heads from private homes and the sculptor's models from workshops.

The two most obvious changes in temple and funerary art were in:

1 the proportions of the human figure, particularly that of the king
2 the composition of scenes which included the royal family.

A COMMENT ON...

The 'grotesque' earlier form

- The earliest scholars who saw the images of Akhenaten on the *talatat* from the Gempaaten temple in Karnak described them as a complete caricature.

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- Some believed that Akhenaten, in having himself depicted in such a physically repulsive way, was deliberately trying to distort reality in order to shock: 'a rebellion against the classical ideal of beauty established earlier in Dynasty 18'.[37]
- Others believed that since Akhenaten was described over and over as 'living in truth', the art at this time became more realistic and the images in some way reflected what he looked like, that perhaps he had some form of physical deformity, but recent examination of his body has put paid to any such suggestion.
- If it was not a realistic depiction of the king, then it must have reflected the king's religious convictions.
  - Since Akhenaten believed he was the living image of the Aten, perhaps he had himself depicted in an androgynous form to incorporate both male and female aspects of the creator.
  - Also, there are constant references to Akhenaten as Hapy, the Nile. Hapy brought fertility, abundance and prosperity to Egypt and was always shown as a male with drooping stomach, female breasts and no genitals. The depiction of Akhenaten 'recalls the way in which fecundity figures are depicted'.[38] The suggestion of fertility is also obvious in the images of Nefertiti where the focus is on the pubic area.

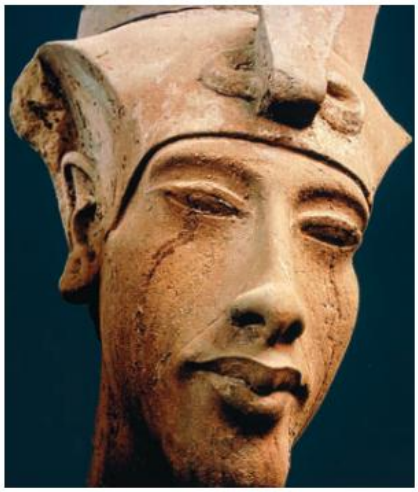

FIGURE 6.39 A grossly exaggerated colossal head of Amenhotep IV

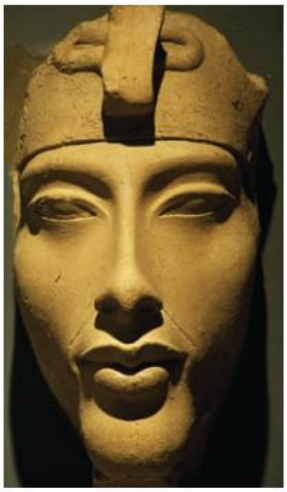

FIGURE 6.40 A huge bust of Amenhotep IV

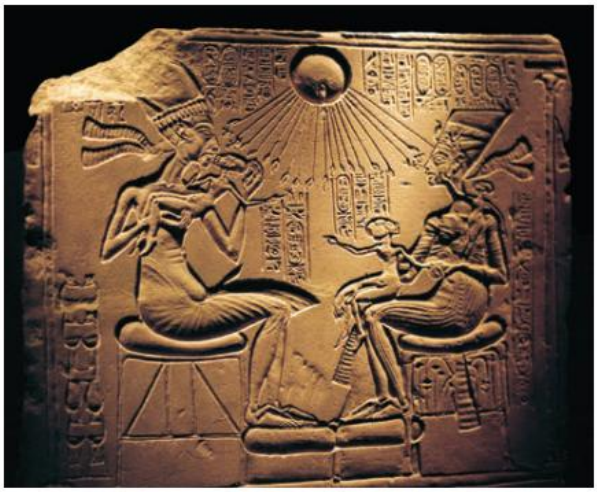

FIGURE 6.41 A family image

FIGURE 6.42 Nefertiti kissing one of her daughters

FIGURE 6.43 Two princesses in a natural style

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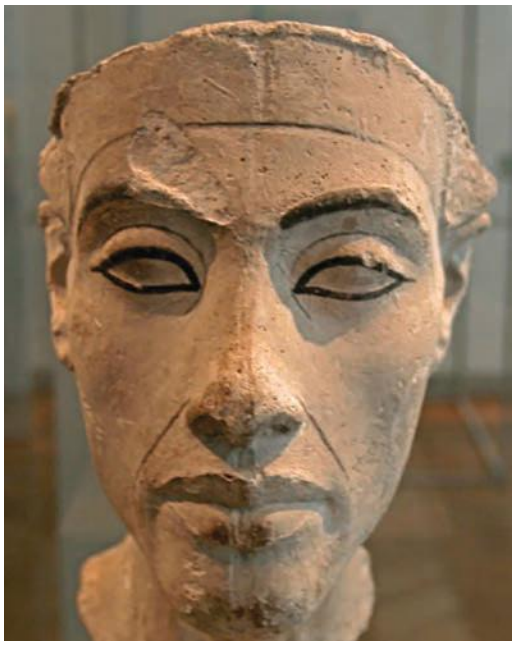

FIGURE 6.44 Example of the later style: a limestone head of an ageing Nefertiti

FIGURE 6.45 Example of the later style of Amarna

According to Gai Robins, just as with the new depiction of the king, the composition of the scenes of royal public and private life also 'encode a statement of belief'.[39] Wherever Akhenaten and Nefertiti appear together, standing under the rays of the Aten, the image created is one of a divine triad: creator god and the male and female aspects of the cosmos. Robins believes that when a child was added to the scene, this represented 'the continued powers of creation'.[40]

According to Kemp, other scenes of Akhenaten and his family were intended to show them as 'a loving group so perfect as to warrant veneration'.[41] Evidence of this veneration comes from the tombs and houses of Akhenaten's nobles. Not only did they address their prayers to Akhenaten and Nefertiti, but they are also shown worshipping before them.

Royal themes included:

1 offerings to Aten. These offering scenes no longer depicted the king and anthropomorphic god face to face as in the past, but rather the king and queen reaching up to the sun-disk as if being caressed by its light.

2 family life and intimate displays of affection. In any other period, it would be unthinkable to represent pharaoh is such ways. The themes of daily life are not the timeless ones of Egyptian tradition, but ones that capture a unique moment such as a family gathering at the time of a visit by Queen Tiy, and the grief expressed in the royal tomb over the death of Akhenaten's second daughter, Meketaten.

3 royal processions with the king and his family in their chariots, attended by retainers and bodyguards running alongside in a bowed position. No other period of Egyptian art featured so many chariots. This icon is believed to have served two purposes:
   - It identified the movements of the king with the cycle of the sun-disk across the sky during the day.
   - It was the equivalent of the previous processions of the gods during important festivals, such as the Opet. According to Kemp, these activities were used to fill the vacuum left by the lack of religious festivals and processions previously celebrated.

4 windows of appearance scenes which gave another opportunity for the adulation of the royal couple as they bestowed blessings and gifts on officials and courtiers.

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FIGURE 6.46 Images of nature

Nature and art

Egyptians had always drawn inspiration in their art from the natural world around them and at Akhetaten this theme was continued, especially as the Aten was seen as the creator of all things. The walls of buildings – especially in the so-called Green Room of the North Palace – depicted a colourful diversity of plant and animal life painted in a flowing and naturalistic manner: scenes of marshes, papyrus plants, birds and butterflies, and pools of water with fish, fowl and geese. Some ceilings were decorated with a grapevine pattern, and painted faience tiles were used liberally for decoration.

Although Amarna art was distinctive because of the new themes used in the 'decoration' of temples and tombs, and the change in the proportions of the human figure, it did not depart dramatically from the traditional form in any other way. According to Gai Robins, in *Egyptian Painting and Relief*, size was still used to denote importance, artists still used registers to depict different aspects or phases of an event, groups were still shown as rows of overlapping figures and the importance of balance was recognised.

ACTIVITY 6.11

1. What evidence is there that:
   - there were already some changes taking place in art during the reign of Amenhotep III?
   - Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten might have had some influence on this initial change?
2. Describe one of the early beliefs about the grossly exaggerated depictions of Amenhotep IV / Akhenaten in the Gempaaten at Karnak.
3. Explain how these early images and later depictions of the royal family might have 'encoded a statement of belief' by Akhenaten.
4. What is believed to have been the symbolic purpose behind the:
   - chariot processions of the royal family attended by retainers and bodyguards
   - the royal family's Window of Appearance ceremonies?

Foreign policy

During the reign of Akhenaten's father, the Egyptian Empire – which extended to northern Syria in western Asia and to the 4th cataract in Upper Nubia (Kush) – was relatively peaceful and diplomatic relations had been established with the kingdom of Mitanni to the northwest of Egypt's Syrian territories. This cordial relationship was cemented by the marriage of Mitannian princesses to several Egyptian kings. There were also continuing diplomatic negotiations between so-called 'brother kings' in Babylonia and Assyria and rulers of trading partners such as Cyprus (Alasiya).

However, there had always been persistent difficulties involved in maintaining Egyptian control in Syria and Palestine, despite these vassals being forced to take oaths of loyalty to Egypt. The dissensions between states and their periodic attempts to revolt from Egypt and seek independence meant that most pharaohs

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had to make frequent shows of strength, particularly at the beginning of their reigns. Since the time of Thutmose III, the Egyptian kings trusted their officials, governors and garrisons stationed at strategic sites to deal with petty quarrels between dependent states, provided they did not disrupt trade and continued to pay the tribute the Egyptians demanded. To keep any prospective rebellious leaders in check, the Egyptians took the sons of leaders as hostages to be brought up in the Egyptian court.

There is a view that Amenhotep III was responsible for the trend towards a decline in Egypt's prestige in western Asia, by allowing a certain amount of complaisance to creep into his administration when a number of Syrian princes began to seek their independence from Egypt. By failing to deal with these minor rebellions, he created problems for his son, especially since a new force had appeared on the scene in Asia Minor: the young, energetic and ambitious Hittite king Šuppiluliuma, one of the great strategists in the ancient world.

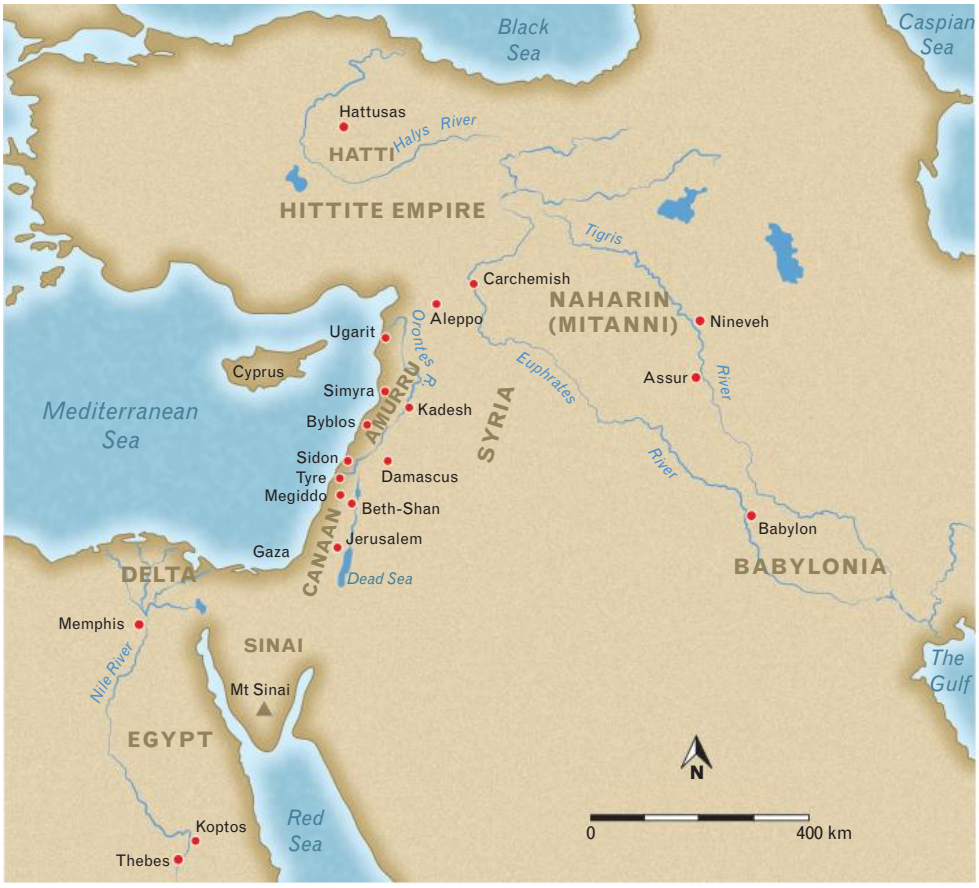

FIGURE 6.47 Western Asia (Palestine, Syria, Mitanni and Hatti) when Akhenaten came to the throne

Akhenaten and western Asia

Like many of the issues associated with Akhenaten, the nature of his military policy has been controversial. Some mid-20th century historians, such as Wilson and Gardiner, referred to him as a pacifist, and blame him for Egypt's loss of prestige and influence in their lucrative 'empire' in western Asia. Akhenaten's 'hesitancy and lack of foresight lost him the initiative'.[42] More recent historians, however, are more cautious about accepting the view that Akhenaten ignored the empire and all appeals for help. There is some evidence that Akhenaten took an active interest in foreign affairs, and that where it was in Egypt's interests to intervene in regional conflicts, he did so.

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FIGURE 6.48 An Amarna tablet

The most important source for Akhenaten's foreign policy in western Asia is the cache of cuneiform tablets discovered in Amarna in the 19th century (See p. 697). The following account of the problems faced by Akhenaten in Egypt's territories in Syria and Palestine is based on the *Amarna Letters*, which unfortunately 'show only interrupted glimpses of the shifting historical scene and the characters who played their parts in it.'[43] (Refer to section 6.5, which looks at the reliability of these Amarna tablets as a source.)

Syria, Mitanni and the Hittites

According to the *Amarna Letters*, when Akhenaten came to the throne it appears that – unlike his predecessors – he treated the Mitannian king, Tushratta, with indifference. He supposedly failed to answer Tushratta's letters and even kept a Mitannian messenger waiting at the Egyptian court for four years before giving a reply to one piece of correspondence. Why he behaved this way is not known. Perhaps Akhenaten had no interest in the internal problems facing Tushratta. Unfortunately, this allowed the Hittite king, Šuppiluliuma, to interfere in the power politics of Mitanni. Eventually, Tushratta was assassinated and the great power of Mitanni declined.

The Hittite king then attacked those northern Syrian cities which had been in alliance with Mitanni. Several leaders wrote to Akhenaten pleading for help, hoping he would send a military force to support them and saying that if the king himself will not march out, 'let my lord dispatch archers' and 'let my lord send one of his commissioners with troops and chariots'.[44] However, before any letter could reach Egypt, Šuppiluliuma swept into northern Syria, attacking those cities which failed to give him allegiance. Redford suggests that Akhenaten took no action to help these former vassals of Mitanni because it would have meant sending a force of at least 10 000 men to make any impression against the Hittites. This he was not prepared to do. Perhaps he considered that the affairs of these northern Syrian cities were of no concern to him.

Šuppiluliuma refrained from threatening any of Egypt's vassal states at this stage, but formed a friendly alliance with Aziru, prince of Amurru, Egypt's northernmost dependency. The princes of Amurru had been playing a double game with Egypt for some time, carving out an independent state for themselves at the expense of the weaker states around them while continuing to write friendly letters to the pharaoh, assuring him of their loyalty.

The Hittites used Prince Aziru as a tool to undermine Egyptian power in central Syria by supporting his activities. The chief areas that Aziru coveted were the wealthy city-states of the Phoenician coast – Simyra, Sidon, Tyre and Byblos. The loyal ruler of Byblos, Rib-Addi, had warned Akhenaten, like his father before him, about Aziru's actions but they took no action against him. The first coastal city to fall to Aziru was Simyra, the headquarters of Egyptian administration. The elders of the city of Tunip had sent a letter warning Akhenaten that this would happen.

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Who would have formerly plundered Tunip without being plundered by Thutmose III? When Aziru enters Simyra, Aziru will do as he pleases, in the territory of our lord the king; and on account of these things our lord will have to lament. And now Tunip, thy city weeps, and her tears are flowing, and there is no help for us. For twenty years we have been sending to our lord the king, the King of Egypt but there has not yet come to us a word – no, not one!

SOURCE 6.20 'The Amarna Letters', cited in B. Mertz, *Temples, Tombs and Hieroglyphs*, p. 229

The leaders of the cities threatened by Aziru sent letter after letter to Akhenaten, but they received no support and Aziru continued to escape justice. The leaders of Sidon, realising that the Egyptian king would send no help, joined forces with Aziru who then attacked Tyre. Byblos was next. The wily and persuasive Aziru convinced the Egyptian army commander in Galilee that Rib-Addi of Byblos was a traitor to the Egyptians and the pharaoh's mercenaries attacked the city. It has been suggested that Aziru may have had a friendly agent at the court of Akhenaten who kept from the king much of what was happening in Syria.

When Akhenaten was informed that the loyal Rib-Addi – who had been pleading for help for 15 years – had been put to death, he sent a strongly worded letter to Aziru, ordering him to come to Egypt for investigations. Aziru delayed appearing in Egypt, playing on Akhenaten's lack of resolve, and continued his double game, even going so far as to entertain the Hittite king's envoys.

Eventually, Akhenaten sent his envoys to accompany Aziru to Egypt where he was kept for a long time. However, Aziru's power was such that he continued to influence affairs in central Syria. Rib-Addi's successor in Byblos wrote to Akhenaten.

Aziru committed crimes even after the king had interviewed him, a crime against us! He has sent his men to Etakkama, and he has smitten all the lands of Amki, the king's lands; and now he has [even] sent his men to take possession of the lands of Amki.

SOURCE 6.21 Amarna Letters, cited in D. Redford, *Akhenaten, Heretic King*, p. 20

When Aziru was eventually released from Egypt and returned to Syria, he became a **vassal** of the Hittites. He was forced to pay an annual tribute and forbidden from pursuing an independent foreign policy. Obviously Šuppiluliuma's power was greater than that of Akhenaten. Aziru's defection to the Hittites reveals the difficulty Egypt faced in keeping control over its sphere of interests in northern Syria, particularly in the face of aggressive Hittite expansion.

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

In Palestine, the situation was not much better. Akhenaten's hesitancy to take military action encouraged some of the petty princes who ruled in this area to rebel, and allowed the Habiru and Suti Bedouin, warlike desert tribesmen, to overrun the countryside and seize towns for themselves. The loyal leader of Jerusalem, Abdu-Heba, warned Akhenaten that 'the Habiru are plundering all the lands of the king' and 'if no troops come in this very year, then all the lands of the king are lost'.[45] He continued, 'if there are no troops in this year, let the king send his officer to fetch me and my brothers, that we may die with my lord the king'.[46] He asked Akhenaten to send as few as 50 soldiers to help him, but according to the *Amarna Letters* his appeals were in vain. The Habiru continued to plunder the countryside and took the cities of Jerusalem and Megiddo.

The Amarna Letters seem to indicate that the Egyptian king did not respond to many of the requests made by Syrian and Palestinian princes for Egyptian military help. The king's reaction to these requests may never be known, but one possible explanation is that the true situation in Syria was never revealed

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to him. The workings of a complex bureaucracy do not always allow for good communication and are sometimes screens for truth. The writers of the *Amarna Letters* complained that pharaoh's officials were misrepresenting them. Perhaps they did not pass on all of the foreign messages to the king, preferring to deal with some of them themselves.

There is, however, some evidence in the *Letters* that Akhenaten issued orders and advice to local princes concerning the need to be alert in protecting their territory; that he sent some limited military aid, such as a brigade of archers to one vassal ruler and chariots to another, and that he wrote a letter on behalf of the anxious Rib-Addi of Byblos to the ruler of Sidon.

Despite the complaints of the rulers mentioned in the Amarna Letters, foreign princes and kings continued to correspond with Akhenaten and send tribute and gifts, as well as attend a huge reception for foreign ambassadors organised by Akhenaten in Year 12.

Actions in Nubia

It appears that Akhenaten maintained a traditional foreign policy in Nubia.

An inscription on a fragmentary stela from Buhan (Nubia) suggests that Akhenaten ordered at least one military campaign in Nubia. The stela records that when a minor rebellion broke out among some southern tribes, Akhenaten ordered the Viceroy of Kush to move against them. There is also further evidence that Akhenaten used Nubian contingents for garrison duty in his Asiatic dependencies, deported numbers of troublemakers from Asia to Nubia, and continued his predecessors' practice of implanting Egyptian-type towns in Kush. Redford maintains that Akhenaten's policy in Nubia may have been 'unoriginal but it was pursued with determination and intelligence'.[47]

Foreign policy, trade and the great reception for foreign dignitaries

According to the evidence from the tombs of Huya and Meryre II, a magnificent reception for foreign dignitaries – described as *the chieftains of every foreign land* – was held in Akhetaten in year 12. Representatives from Nubia, Libya, Punt, Palestine, Syria, the Aegean, Naharin (Mitanni) and Khatte (the Hittites) came to the new capital with tribute and gifts for the Egyptian king. It has been suggested by scholars that this great reception may have been instigated by Queen Tiy, who was aware of the problems in the empire, particularly in western Asia. See Section 6.5 for further comments.

ACTIVITY 6.12

1. When Akhenaten came to the throne:
   - what was the extent of the Egyptian Empire?
   - how were Egyptian territories in Syria and Palestine administered?
   - what was the relationship between Egypt and the kingdom of Mitanni?
2. What is the major source for Akhenaten's foreign policy in western Asia?
3. How might Amenhotep III have contributed to the problems faced by Akhenaten in western Asia?
4. Who was King Šuppiluliuma, and how did he contribute to the shifting alliances in northern Syria?
5. Explain the double game played by Aziru, ruler of Akhenaten's Syrian vassal of Amurru.
6. Provide evidence from the *Amarna Letters* that seems to indicate that Akhenaten did little to help his Syrian and Palestinian vassals.
7. Suggest some reasons for Akhenaten's apparent 'hesitancy' in dealing with rebellious vassals and his apparent failure to help those who remained loyal.
8. What were the features of Akhenaten's traditional foreign policy in Nubia?

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Changes in afterlife beliefs and funerary practices

Akhenaten's religious policies resulted in significant changes to views about the afterlife and to funerary practices.

Beliefs about the afterlife

With Akhenaten's religious reforms:

- the afterlife was no longer peopled with a host of gods.
- the new doctrine focused only on the life-giving aspects of the disk as it travelled alone across the daytime sky. There was no journey by the sun through the Underworld, there was no kingdom of Osiris – the god of the underworld and resurrection – and 'the realm in the west where the blessed dead had walked, disappeared'.[48]
- the world of the dead was not distinct from the living; during the day, the Aten shone over both. By day, the Aten drew the deceased's *bas* (or souls) from their bodies to stay near the altar of his temple with the royal family, to receive their offerings. At night there was nothing: the living and the dead merely slept in the cold darkness. The 'decisive moment of existence was awakening in the morning, which signified the renewal of life'.[49]
- life after death was the responsibility of the king who was the lord of provisions both in this life and the next, while the Aten was responsible only for the continued existence of the king, the beautiful child of the disk who knew the mind of his heavenly father, and received favours from him.
- the people could no longer look forward to the 'Judgement before Osiris', being welcomed into the afterlife by the gods and spending eternity in the *Field of Reeds*. All they could hope for was that they would survive because of their dedication to the king. Only by addressing their praise and prayers to Akhenaten – who 'lived on Ma'at' – could they look forward to a favourable life in the next world. The extract below, which illustrates this hope, is from a prayer to Akhenaten found in the tomb of Ay.

ACTIVITY 6.13

Review the information on traditional beliefs in the afterlife and funerary practices on p.685 and keep these in mind as you study the changes introduced by Akhenaten.

I live by worshipping his *ka*,
I am sated by attending him;
My breath, by which I live is this north wind ...
Neferkheperure, Sole-one-of-Re.
Grant me a lifetime high in your favour!
How happy is your favourite, O Son of the Aten!
All his deeds will endure and be firm.
When the *ka* of the Ruler is with him forever ...
Grant me to kiss the holy ground
To come before you with offerings
To Aten, your father, as gifts of your *ka*.
Grant that my *ka* abide and flourish for me,
As when on earth I followed your *ka*,
So as to rise in my name to the blessed place,
In which you grant me to rest, my word being true.
May my name be pronounced in it by your will,
I being your favourite who follows your *ka*
That I may go with your favour when old age has come.

SOURCE 6.22 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. II, pp. 94–6

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Changes to funerary practices

Some of the traditional funerary practices were retained during the Amarna period.

Mummification was still practised, heart scarabs continued to be placed on the bodies and **ushabtis** placed in tombs. Mummiform coffins and stone sarcophagi were still used, and tombs equipped with grave goods.

However, modifications were made in line with the new doctrine.

1 Osiris was eliminated from the funerary texts.
2 Heart scarabs were now inscribed with an offering formula to the Aten.
3 Texts from the *Book of Coming Forth By Day* (Book of the Dead) were removed from ushabtis and replaced with the owner's name and petitions to the Aten.
4 All references to the Underworld and *Amduat* were removed from texts and tomb scenes.
5 The royal sarcophagus was protected by images of Nefertiti at the four corners, instead of the traditional goddesses: Isis, Nephthys, Selket and Neith, who spread their wings around the body.
6 Tombs, both royal and noble, reflected the dramatic religious changes. See below.

Amarna tombs

Amarna tombs were built east of the city (where the sun rose), unlike the site of the famous Theban necropolis on the west bank (where the sun set, the place of the blessed dead).

The royal tomb

It is possible that Akhenaten chose a site as similar as possible to the Valley of the Kings in Thebes: excavated into the hillside of an isolated and barren wadi 6 kilometres from Akhetaten. The royal tomb was constructed not for an individual, but with the intention of burying the entire royal family within its rock-cut chambers. Although it was unfinished at the time of Akhenaten's death, there are signs that it was to have been much more extensive. There was also substantial progress made on four more tombs of royal proportions in the area and a start on a fifth before the city was abandoned.

ushabtis funerary figurines placed in tombs, intended to act as servants for the deceased in the afterlife

iconoclast a destroyer of images used in religious worship

Unlike the tombs at Thebes, the royal tomb at Amarna had a straight axis from entrance to burial chamber and featured a totally new and limited number of funerary themes, focusing on the royal family. These scenes were painted on plaster, most of which has fallen, or been cut away by ancient **iconoclasts** or later antiquity seekers.

The remains of these scenes reveal:

- the sunrise, the awakening of the temple personnel and worshippers
- the king and his family making offerings in the temple court
- groups of officials and charioteers waiting in attendance, plus a military escort of soldiers
- the king and queen in two scenes mourning the death of a princess or another royal lying on a bier. There is no name to identify the deceased. Mourners outside wail and throw dust over their heads. One of the mourners is the vizier, identified by his long robe. A nursemaid has emerged from the inner chamber with a child in her arms. The presence of a fan bearer indicates that the child is high-born. Perhaps the deceased woman died in childbirth.
- the distraught king and queen and four daughters mourning the death of a woman in a lowered arbour. The deceased, garlanded and anointed, is depicted either as a statue or a mummy. The accompanying inscription identifies the woman as Akhenaten's second daughter, Meketaten

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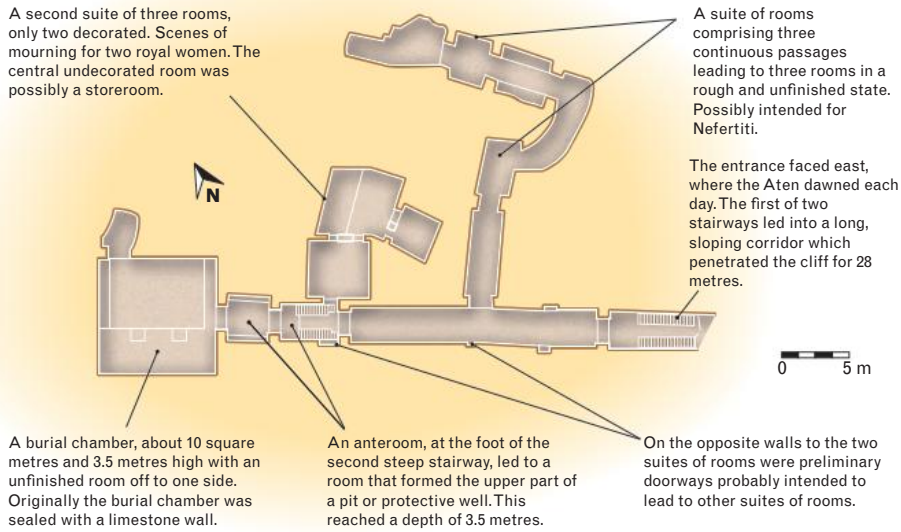

FIGURE 6.49 Diagram of royal tomb

FIGURE 6.50 Main passageway of the royal tomb in Amarna

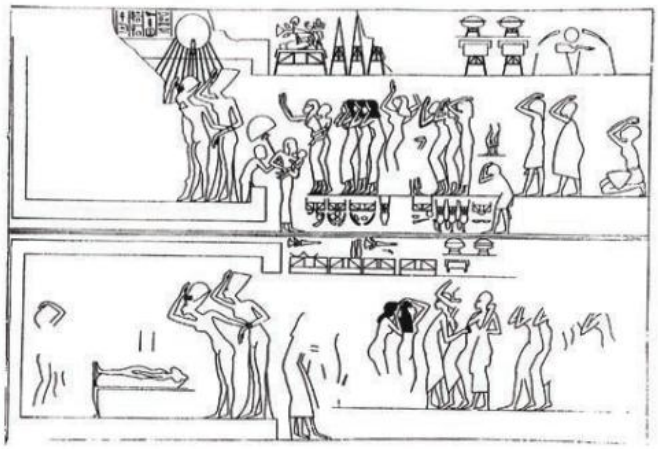

FIGURE 6.51 The king and queen mourning an unidentified woman, possibly princess Meketaten.

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FIGURE 6.52 A drawing of the inscription of The Great Hymn to Aten, published in 1907

Tombs of the officials

Many of Akhenaten's courtiers prepared tombs for themselves in the northern and southern hills to the east of the city. Unfortunately, many of the tomb owners cannot be identified because – unlike traditional non-royal tombs which feature the name and biography, plus images of the careers and domestic life of the owner – the Amarna tombs included:

- the life of the royal couple and various daughters (e.g. chariot processions, visits to the temple, offerings to the Aten, the king holding audiences, the reception of tribute in year 12).
- the tomb owner – smaller than in traditional tombs – kneeling as he offers prayers to Akhenaten. Sometimes the tomb owner's wife is also shown worshipping the king.
- some scenes showing the duties performed for Akhenaten: for example, in the tomb of Mahu, there is an image of him inspecting the defences of the city with Akhenaten and Nefertiti, and another presenting captives to the vizier.
- depictions of the awarding of the gold of honour. It appears that many nobles had at some stage been awarded with gifts by Akhenaten, as well as a fine tomb. According to Breasted, 'it is clear that Akhenaten was holding all his great officials faithful to his reforms, only by such means'.[50]
- a copy or summary of the Great Hymn to Aten.

FIGURE 6.53 Depiction of Ay receiving the gold of honour from his tomb

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ACTIVITY 6.14

1. Describe the massive changes in the afterlife introduced by Akhenaten.
2. What does Source 6.22 indicate about Akhenaten's role in people's expectations of enjoying an afterlife?
3. In what ways did funerary practices (as opposed to beliefs) change under Akhenaten, including the location, construction and decoration of tombs?
4. Why would the changed funerary practices have not had widespread appeal?

Role of Nefertiti and the members of the royal family

There is no doubt about the exceptional status of Nefertiti. There are more images of her performing public duties than of any other queen and she played a vital role in the Aten ritual where she was the female element in the triad with Akhenaten and the Aten. After the court's move to Akhetaten, her status increased and her role became more central. This is reflected in the tombs of Akhenaten's courtiers.

Nefertiti's political status

Although Akhenaten treated Nefertiti as a real partner, sharing 'in the rulership without being formally a co-regent',[51] Hornung believes her importance was not as political as that of Tiy. However, she was featured in the inscriptions in a role normally reserved exclusively for pharaohs. For example:

- She was depicted as a warrior-king subduing the enemies of Egypt. In her particular blue crown, she was shown striding forward towards the captives, grasping them by the hair and swinging a scimitar over their heads.
- She featured prominently in Akhenaten's Heb-sed festival. She was carried in a palanquin, the state carriage of the day, surrounded by the kingly symbols in the manner of the pharaoh. While Akhenaten's carrying chair was carved with striding lions and sphinxes, hers was carved with striding lionesses, and sphinxes in her own image. She was surrounded by courtiers and officials.
- She was shown wearing the traditional crowns and headdresses of a king, for example, the triple *atef* crown, the cap crown and the *khat* head cloth.
- She was shown handing out the treasured gold collars to those who had performed outstanding service to her husband. Traditionally a queen stood behind her husband on these occasions.
- There are scenes of her in Akhetaten driving her own chariot in kingly fashion.
- Her full name Nefernefruaten Nefertiti was placed in a double cartouche like that of a king.

A number of scholars believe that these examples of Nefertiti's unique 'political' status (perceived equality with Akhenaten) provide evidence that he intended Nefertiti to be his successor. Whatever the truth of this matter, the public profile of Nefertiti was exceptional.

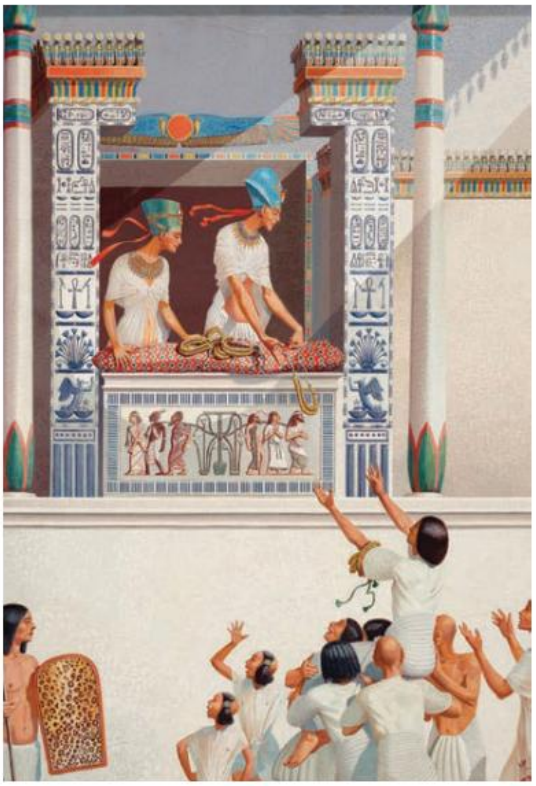

FIGURE 6.54 An artistic representation of Nefertiti and Akhenaten presenting the gold of valour

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Nefertiti's religious status

It appears that the couple's roles in the worship of the Aten were interchangeable. For example, when they were shown making offerings together, sometimes the king offered flowers while she poured libations or vice versa. Sometimes they both held up the **sekhem sceptre** in recognition of their equal authority.

sekhem sceptre a ritual sceptre associated with power and control

The Amarna nobles directed their prayers for blessings in the afterlife to the Aten, the king and his queen. Sometimes she was shown officiating alone in the manner of a king. For example, she was shown performing the ritual of purification in the libation ceremonies to the god.

In the inscriptions, her name was linked closely with the Aten. For example:

- The hieroglyphs of the god's name were written so they faced her name.
- Accompanying her name were the words 'adoration' and 'praise', words usually reserved for a god or a pharaoh.
- Prayers were directed to her as well as Akhenaten on stelae at Akhetaten, and the Aten is shown presenting the *ankh* to both her and Akhenaten in the royal tomb.
- The usual phrase 'He who found the Aten' became 'She who found the Aten'.
- On the sarcophagi and canopic chest of the Amarna nobles and that of Akhenaten himself, Nefertiti's images replaced those of the protective goddesses Isis, Nephthys, Selket and Neith normally found at each corner.

The royal family

It seems from the images (temples, royal tomb and tomb of many of Akhenaten's officials) that Akhenaten was a devoted family man, and informal scenes of the royal couple, their children and other family members were a prominent feature of Amarna art. The six daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, plus the secondary queen Kiya, the dowager Queen Tiy (Akhenaten's mother) and her supposed youngest daughter Baketaten, are all featured in the inscriptions. Akhenaten was only ever depicted in the company of women, particularly Nefertiti and his daughters, even though it is possible that he fathered two sons: Smenkhkare and Tutankhamun.

- The daughters of Akhenaten appear singly and together worshipping the Aten; accompanying Akhenaten and Nefertiti on official engagements such as the Window of Appearance ceremonies during the reward ceremonies for officials; were part of the loving family worshipped by the king's courtiers; and their chariots formed part of the royal procession. They had sun-shade shrines built in their own names. Towards the end of his reign, Akhenaten 'married' two of his older daughters, raising their status. In either year 14 or 15, the king's eldest daughter, Meritaten became more prominent – possibly after the disappearance of Nefertiti. She was given the rank of 'favourite of the king' and 'mistress of his house' and was shown performing certain religious rituals. She was also shown in the company of a young man named Smenkhkare who seems to have held the role of co-regent with Akhenaten for three years prior to the king's death in year 17.
- It is believed Queen Tiy had considerable influence over her son and that she and Baketaten arrived in Akhetaten for the reception of foreign ambassadors in year 12 and continued to reside there permanently.
- Kiya, the much-loved secondary wife of Akhenaten, seems to have had 'her name associated with both the early and late forms of the Aten',[52] but the inscriptions do not assign her any religious significance like Nefertiti. Her status, however, is indicated by the sun-shade temple that Akhenaten built for her in the Maru-aten (a royal retreat comprising two large walled enclosures, lakes, gardens and shrines to the south of the city), as well as chapels for her cult near the great Aten temple and her opulent funerary equipment.
- Nefertiti's sister, Mutnodjmet, was present in Akhetaten and is shown in the tomb of Parennefer supervising the young princesses. She later played a greater role as the wife of King Horemheb.
- The noble Ay had considerable influence. He was referred to as *God's Father, Fan-bearer on the right hand of the King, Overseer of horses of His Majesty*.

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He was evidently a brother of Tiye, and also tutor to and perhaps father-in-law of Akhenaten, if Nefertiti actually came from this prominent family from Akhmin. Aye played an important role during the entire Amarna period; the king's *Great Hymn to the Aten* is recorded in his tomb, and it is highly tempting to understand him as a sort of guru of the young reformer. But it must be stressed in this case as well, that no secure sources for this have yet been found.

SOURCE 6.23 Erik Hornung, trans. David Lorton, *Akhenaten and the Religion of Light*, p. 60

ACTIVITY 6.15

1. Draw a diagram summarising Nefertiti's political and religious status.
2. What roles did the following play in the life of Amarna:
   - The royal daughters
   - Queen Tiy
   - Ay?

The final years and the question of the co-regency

The later years of Akhenaten's reign are 'filled with puzzles and problems, and none of the proposed reconstructions of this period is entirely workable. … new reconstructions keep surfacing for these eventful but poorly documented years. The lack of sources has proven favourable to a luxuriant overgrowth of speculation'.[53]

After the reception of tribute in year 12, there is no further evidence of the king's three younger daughters, and in year 14 tragedy struck, with the death of Akhenaten's second daughter Meketaten, Queen Tiy and possibly Kiya, whose names disappeared from the records.

Although many illnesses, such as malaria, were prevalent in Egypt, it has been suggested that some epidemic was responsible for so many royal deaths about the same time. Some sources believe that a devastating plague – perhaps influenza or a form of bubonic plague – broke out in Simyra, the Egyptian headquarters in western Asia, and was spread to Egypt by traders, officials, soldiers and envoys attending Akhenaten's reception in year 12.

A series of Hittite texts, known as the *Plague Prayers*, indicate that a great plague was ravaging the Hittite population at the time of Akhenaten. The same plague is mentioned in the Amarna letters (EA 11, EA 35, EA 96 and EA 932). In the second *Plague Prayers*, the Hittite king Muršili II, son of the great Šuppiluliuma I, pleads with the Storm God to take the plague away that has afflicted them for years and gives an account of its source.

My father let his anger run away with him, he went to war against Egypt and attacked Egypt. He smote the foot soldiers and the charioteers of the country of Egypt. But when they brought back to the Hatti [Hittite] land, the prisoners which they had taken, a plague broke out among the prisoners and these began to die. When they moved the prisoners to the Hatti land, these prisoners carried the plague into the Hatti land. From the day on people have been dying in the Hatti land.

SOURCE 6.24 Itamar Singer, *Hittite Prayers* (2002), 58

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The fate of Nefertiti and the issue of a co-regency

Nefertiti was Akhenaten's chief wife and consort for most of the Amarna period. All evidence suggests that their marriage was a happy one and that Akhenaten regarded her as his equal. Her disappearance from the historical record is puzzling. Historians are divided over the eventual fate of Nefertiti and several hypotheses have been put forward.

Older theories

1 William C. Hayes suggests she fell out of favour with Akhenaten over religious or foreign policy and retired to the North Palace.

2 Cyril Aldred believes that Nefertiti died in year 14 at about the same time as so many other members of her family from the plague and was buried as the beloved great wife of Akhenaten in the royal tomb at Akhetaten. This would explain, he believes, why her eldest daughter was elevated to the position of great wife prior to her marriage to Smenkhkare.

3 Donald Redford believes that she was alive during the last years of her husband's reign, but that she was less prominent in public life than she had been earlier. She outlived Akhenaten and died in year 4 of Tutankhamun's reign.

4 Christiane Desroches-Noblecourt has suggested that she ultimately rejected Akhenaten's religious revolution and was banished for promoting a takeover by Tutankhaten (Tutankhamun). This is not generally accepted.

5 J. R. Harris and Julia Samson have proposed the most controversial of the theories about Nefertiti based on the fact that she seemed to have disappeared from the records at the same time as the appearance of the youthful Smenkhkare, who is supposed to have ruled for a short-time with Akhenaten and then after his death as king with his wife Meritaten.

Harris and Samson believe that the royal youth known as Smenkhkare did not exist and that the co-regent with whom Akhenaten shared his last three years was in fact Nefertiti. As a co-regent with Akhenaten, Nefertiti would need a consort. This explains the elevation of Meritaten to the position of *Great Royal Wife*. A piece of evidence they cite to support this theory is a broken stela on which Akhenaten's two names were accompanied by a co-regent with two names, one of which was 'Nefernefruaten, Beloved of …' This was Nefertiti's name and she had always been described as beloved of Akhenaten. The name in the other cartouche was Ankhkeprure. Samson maintains that after Akhenaten's death, the co-regent's name (Nefertiti) was changed to Ankhkeprure-Smenkhkare, 'beloved of Aten', and that she ruled as regent for the boy king, Tutankhamun, who they say succeeded to the throne after the death of Akhenaten. Samson points to a statue in the Berlin Museum of the ageing Nefertiti, wearing a pharaoh's crown, to support her view.

> While the theory of Harris and Samson is well reasoned and ingenious, it glosses over and raises too many difficulties. The fact that Nefertiti and Smenkhkare share a name in common is not significant. There is upon closer examination, a slight but consistent difference in the writing of the epithet when applied to Smenkhkare, in contrast to the ubiquitous spelling when seen in Nefertiti's cartouche.

SOURCE 6.25 D. Redford, *Akhenaten: The Heretic King*, p. 192

Aldred agrees that the arguments put forward by Harris and Samson are ingenious but totally unacceptable in the light of an inscription on a ushabti of Nefertiti that shows she had not changed her name or held kingly titles when she died. The inscription says, 'The heiress, high and mighty in the palace, one Trusted by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Neferkheprure Waenre, the Son of Re, Akhenaten, Great in his lifetime, the Chief Wife of the King, Nefernefruaten-Nefertiti'.

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Also, those who refuted Harris and Samson's views said that they ignored the evidence in Tomb KV55 in the Valley of the Kings (a secondary burial of Amarna individuals). In the 1960s and 1970s, medical and scientific investigation of the mummy in the tomb, determined it to be a young male about the age of 21 (Smenkhkare), and when the mummy's blood type was taken it was found to indicate a close relationship with Tutankhamun, possibly a brother. However, as of 2010, scientists have declared with near certainty that the skeletal remains in KV55 are in fact Akhenaten himself, the father of King Tutankhamun.

So where does this leave Harris and Samson's view?

New evidence about Nefertiti

In 2012, new evidence for the presence of Nefertiti in year 16 of Akhenaten's reign, a year before his death, was discovered in a limestone quarry at Dayr Abū Hinnis, on the eastern side of the Nile about 10 kilometres north of Amarna. It is a building inscription by Penthu – King's Scribe – and mentions the presence of the Great Royal Wife, His Beloved, Mistress of the Two Lands, Nefernefruaten Nefertiti. The five-line text was published in a 2014 journal by Athena Der Perre.

> ... The importance of the inscription from Dayr Abū Hinnis lies in the first part of the text, this inscription offers incontrovertible evidence that both Akhenaten and Nefertiti were still alive in the 16th year of his (i.e. Akhenaten's) reign and, more importantly, that they were still holding the same positions as at the start of their reign.

SOURCE 6.26 A. Van de Perre, 'The Year 16 graffito of Akhenaten in Dayr Abū Hinnis: A contribution to the study of the later years of Nefertiti', *Journal of Egyptian History*, (2014) 7:67–108

Although this text does not solve the problem of when Nefertiti died, or the identity of the shadowy figure of Smenkhkare, if such an individual existed, this text 'makes it necessary to rethink the final years of the Amarna Period'.[54]

The death of Akhenaten

The last date for Akhenaten is year 17. There is no record of his death, but he was buried in the tomb in the royal wadi east of the city he built for his 'father', the sun-disk. Although his sarcophagus was viciously destroyed sometime after his death, fragments have survived. At some time, his body was removed from Amarna and reburied in Thebes. In 2010, the male body in tomb KV55 was identified almost certainly as that of Akhenaten, who was in his 40s when he died. The testing has also put paid to the speculation that Akhenaten had a body with both masculine and feminine characteristics, and an elongated skull, both of which were once believed to indicate some rare disease that distorted the body. Barry Kemp believes that this 'ought to dampen down some of the more dramatic interpretations. But people do love a good story'.[55] Unfortunately, since Akhenaten's remains are just bones with no soft tissue, it has been impossible to gauge his health and possible reasons for his death.

ACTIVITY 6.16

1. What evidence is there for a possible cause of so many royal deaths after year 12?
2. Consider the various theories that have been posed to explain the disappearance of Nefertiti from the historical record. Which theory do you think the most likely? Explain reasons for your choice.
3. What happened to Akhenaten when he died, possibly in year 17?

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4 Describe the significance of the recent identification of the male body in tomb KV55 in Thebes for an understanding of the following:
   - subsequent treatment of royal burials
   - the physical appearance of Akhenaten.
5 Why is it impossible to say with certainty how he died?

6.4 Evaluation

Impact on his time

For thousands of years the Egyptians had developed a conservative attitude to life. Nothing much changed from one year to another. Rather than adopt a totally new belief or idea, they were more likely to graft the new concept onto the old. Although the acquisition of empire in the 18th Dynasty brought about many changes in society, including the development of a wider view of the world, there were things which continued as before, the long-held values that had always worked within society and created a certain stability. These things included the importance of the gods, the way they were depicted and forms of worship, the view of creation and the afterlife, the funerary practices that would ensure an afterlife, and the nature and images of the god-king and his responsibilities to maintain *ma'at* or divine order.

Within a short space of time – no more than 17 years – many of these millennia-old concepts, values and beliefs were overturned by Akhenaten, although they were not all sudden changes, and it is hard to judge just how widespread his impact was.

- According to the Restoration Stela, inscribed and erected during the reign of Tutankhamun, 'the temples of the gods and goddesses from Elephantine down to the marshes of the Delta had gone to pieces. Their shrines had become desolate, had become mounds overgrown with weeds. Their sanctuaries were as if they had never been. … The land was topsy-turvy and the gods turned their backs on this land'.[56] However, it is hard to estimate the impact of Akhenaten's religious policy on the temples from the information on this stela since it was possibly written under the influence of the restored priesthood of Amun and is an example of propaganda. Utter destruction throughout the country is unlikely. It is more probable that anything associated with Amun was destroyed or erased, but that other gods and their temples were mostly untouched.
- Akhenaten's religious policy did not really impact the worship of the ordinary people, who continued to use amulets and figurines associated with traditional personal worship, although replacement of a cult statue with an icon, that removed the need for the annual religious festivals that were so important to the common people, obviously did affect them. Because the solar religion of Akhenaten was an elite cult, it seems to have had more effect on the upper courtier class, as seen in their homes and tombs.
- Akhenaten's new self-images, that did not fit the traditional depictions of the pharaohs, as well his doctrine of 'one god', his removal of Osiris (god of the Underworld) and his judgement of the deceased in the afterlife – central to the fabric of Egyptian civilisation – must have been both incredible and confounding to the people, leading to a degree of anxiety.
- His temple closures, re-direction of temple revenues to Amarna, cessation of all building programs except for those at Amarna, annual taxes imposed on individuals to pay for the excessive daily offerings and his dislocation of work forces all badly affected the economy.
- There was instability within the country as the number of disaffected groups increased. Akhenaten admitted himself that he had heard 'evil words' spoken against him. These disgruntled groups included members of the various priesthoods, particularly those of Amun, and those men from the powerful upper ranks of the bureaucracy who traditionally had followed their fathers and grandfathers into high-ranking positions but were not included among Akhenaten's entourage.

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- To those Egyptians in the know, the loss of parts of Egypt's Asiatic territory might have led to some questioning of whether the empire under the influence of the imperial god Amun was more successful than under Aten.
- It appears that there was a decline of morale and confidence towards the latter part of his reign, and a desire to return to the way things had always been.

An assessment of his reign

As with all things related to Akhenaten and the brief but dramatic Amarna period, assessments by modern historians of his reign vary between those who:

- think that his efforts to impose his policies were a failure, causing chaos and destruction
- consider that his changes had little effect on the people at large and that they carried on regardless
- believe that Egypt remained more or less stable and prosperous.

By breaking with tradition and introducing a new revolutionary way of thinking (although not everything was revolutionary), Akhenaten would have been judged in the context of his time by the ancient expectations regarding the role of pharaoh to maintain *ma'at*, the right order established at the time of creation. According to the traditional concept of *ma'at*, Akhenaten was expected to glorify the pantheon of the gods, build new temples to these gods and continue their rites and festivals, and to provide stability, prosperity and security throughout the land. Even though he referred to himself as 'living in the truth of *ma'at*', he did not fulfil the traditional concept.

Akhenaten had an original mind, developing a vision and 'the means to turn that vision into reality'.[57] Despite his attempt to try to 'explain the entire natural and human world on the basis of a single principle'[58] and the fact that the world in which he lived was tolerant of religious inconsistencies, his religious experiment failed.

- Atenism (Akhenaten's religious beliefs) offered little to the people who wanted the comfort of a god who could be approached by anyone, even in their own home. The new 'one god', although promoted as a kind and nurturing deity, was not one that the ordinary person could relate to or worship directly.
- Akhenaten's message was just too austere to gain widespread support and, judging by the things the inhabitants of Amarna left behind, he 'won few hearts and minds'.[59] The established religion had existed for millennia and the people who moved to Amarna had arrived at the site with firmly-held traditional beliefs and practices, which they continued to resort to 'in moments of uncertainty' to fill the vacuum left by Akhenaten's rigid concept of the Aten.[60]
- The worship of the Aten did not become widespread throughout Egypt. Its practice was limited predominantly to Akhetaten and focused on the royal family and its entourage isolated in the new capital.
- The new religion took away an important feature of the ordinary people's social life: participation in the celebrations and feastings of the cult festivals. Also, they could no longer look forward to the possibility of being judged before Osiris, welcomed into the afterlife by the gods and continuing for eternity in the *Field of Reeds*.
- Most of the courtiers who served the king in Akhetaten were not totally committed, paying only lip service to the new doctrine and abandoning it after his death.
- Since Akhenaten had concentrated his teaching exclusively upon himself as the only one who knew the Aten, it was doomed to perish when he died.

However, during his 17-year reign, Akhenaten faced no rebellion and was not deposed; Akhetaten remained a city for another 20 years after his death, albeit much reduced in size; the Aten remained a god among others; and his dynasty in the form of Tutankhaten (with a name change to Tutankhamun, married to his third daughter), continued until the young king's death. But the unpopularity of his new doctrine can be judged by the actions of those who came after him, such as Horemheb, in destroying the memory of the 'great heretic' as they returned Egypt to orthodoxy.

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With regard to his foreign policy, he does appear to have been somewhat complaisant, if not apathetic, although the sources tend to present a one-sided view of his actions. However, the empire continued to exist, if a little smaller, trade and tribute continued to flow to Egypt and its reputation as a major power continued under the 19th Dynasty warrior pharaohs, Seti I and Ramesses II.

Akhenaten's building program, first at Karnak and subsequently at Akhetaten, and the artistic innovations he introduced – particularly those of the Mature Amarna style – are to be admired and, according to Hornung, his religious changes had a stimulating influence on the spiritual history of Egypt.

ACTIVITY 6.17

1. Draw a diagram summary to illustrate the impact that Akhenaten had on his own time.
2. On what basis would the ancient Egyptians have assessed the reign of Akhenaten?
3. What do you think from a modern perspective was his greatest failing?

Legacy

According to Barry Kemp, Amarna came and went in an archaeological moment and very little associated with the reign of Akhenaten survived. In the generations that followed his death, all that was left was the memory of a heretic king. He disappeared from the historical record for millennia and yet, from his rediscovery in the 19th century, 'his vision has intrigued people', as has Amarna 'where he put his vision into practice'.[61] In the modern era he has been recruited to monotheism as well as to nature and mystic cults and 'his chosen and unlikely self-image of the beautifully sculpted freak has already gained in modern times compelling iconic status'.[62] Today, the Amarna period is regarded as an exciting epoch in Egyptology, and in popular culture it forms the context for most modern novels and stories set in ancient Egypt. Akhenaten has been the subject of at least 25 novels, a play by Agatha Christie, five movies and the source for various musical compositions.

Legacy down to the 19th Dynasty

- On Akhenaten's death, the sole worship of the Aten along with the ban on the remainder of the gods and the denial of an Osirian afterlife were immediately abandoned. The traditional gods were restored, new priesthoods were established, work on temples that had been discontinued during Akhenaten's reign was resumed and temples were paid damages for their loss of wealth. However, not all the accomplishments of Akhenaten disappeared. During a transition period (the reigns of Tutankhamun and Ay), there was a cautious attempt to carry on his work.
- It seems that in the last days of the Amarna period there was oppression of the poor, widespread corruption among high officials, robbery, exploitation by royal inspectors and soldiers, extortion and legal abuses. These were blamed on the laxity of Akhenaten's rule.
- Some 20 years after the death of Akhenaten, Horemheb – the military leader, great power wielder and later pharaoh – moved the court back to Memphis, and issued an edict to deal with the deplorable conditions. He reformed the army and began a wholesale dismantling and destruction of the buildings and sites dedicated to the Aten. The city of Akhetaten was razed to the ground so that not a single block of stone remained on another, every stela and piece of statuary was smashed and the royal tomb was desecrated. The sun temples at Karnak, Memphis and Heliopolis were dismantled and the brightly coloured and inscribed *talatat* were used in his own buildings. While single-mindedly destroying all reminders of the cult of the sun-disk and incorporating them in to his own constructions, he inadvertently left a valuable legacy for the 20th-century archaeologists that brought Akhenaten and his reign back to life.

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- Horemheb's reign brought the great 18th Dynasty to an end and set in play the forces that led to the 19th Dynasty.
- Horemheb's efforts were so effective that in the later King Lists of the Ramesside period, he was recorded as the successor of Amenhotep III. The existence of Akhenaten, Smenkhkare, Tutankhamun and Ay disappeared from history until the 19th and 20th centuries. The number of the years of their reigns were added to those of Horemheb.
- A generation later, under Ramesses II, the last remaining traces of the buildings of Akhenaten were removed, the stone from the demolished sites used in Ramesses' own projects and all that was left were references to the 'rebel' and the 'criminal'.
- Although Amun was restored, and his temple at Karnak embellished, his status was never what it had been before Akhenaten. Ramesses II dedicated his temples to a large range of gods as well as Amun: Re, Ptah, Seth, Re-Horakhte, Nephthys, Udjo and even a Palestinian goddess, Anath.
- Thebes was restored as the religious capital, but, like Amun, it did not entirely recover after the Amarna interlude and Ramesses II built a new capital (Pi-Ramesse) in the Egyptian delta.
- Due to the religious anxiety caused by the Atenist doctrine, the funerary customs of the nobles changed. Jan Assmann believes that as a result of Amarna, 'traditional religion became more self-conscious as a result of the confrontation with its antithesis'.[63] Although there was a resurgence of interest in the Osirian underworld, there was also an increase in the symbolic representations of the daily voyage of the sun across the sky.
- The 19th Dynasty wall paintings in both royal and non-royal tombs changed. Rather than scenes of everyday life, the tomb wall paintings concentrated more on religious scenes and inscriptions. As well as the *Book of the Dead*, royal tombs featured a reinterpretation of the kingdom of the dead in the *Book of the Gates* and the *Book of Caverns*. As a reaction to Akhenaten's attempt to bring the sun into this world, and his denial of the traditional afterlife, *The Book of the Heavenly Cow* was added to the 19th Dynasty funerary texts. This was a mythic statement that because of the rebellion of human kind, the sun god had withdrawn from this world to the sky, while at the same time, he established the netherworld for the dead.
- Although there was no further attempt to initiate a religion devoted to one god (monotheism) during Egyptian pharaonic history, the Great Hymn to the Aten is believed to have been the inspiration for Psalm 104 of the Bible.
- Some of the artistic innovations and architectural features introduced by Akhenaten continued, such as the naturalism of the Mature Amarna style and the Window of Appearances as an architectural element in the constructions of palaces.
- The loss of Egyptian territory in Syria and the rise of the Hittites during Akhenaten's reign concerned those pharaohs that followed. Despite a return to the warrior pharaoh image under Seti I and Ramesses II (19th Dynasty) and years of campaigning with some successes and setbacks, those areas held from Thutmose III to Amenhotep III were never again permanently recovered.

Ancient and modern interpretations of Akhenaten

Much of what was written about Akhenaten in his own time was propaganda, and in modern times the interpretations of him are not only coloured by the background and beliefs of the scholars themselves, but are also based on flimsy evidence.

Ancient interpretations

In the years immediately after his death, his successors Tutankhamun, Ay and Horemheb described him as 'evil' and 'corrupt', and as having caused a 'sickness' in the land and loss of territory by his widespread neglect of the gods. Generations later, in the Ramesside period, he was referred to as *sebiu* or 'rebel', as well as 'criminal', the 'enemy' and the 'heretic of Akhetaten'.

Then Akhenaten disappeared from history for approximately 3100 years.

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'Modern' views

Ever since Akhenaten was rediscovered to history in the 19th century, every scholar has formed a personal opinion of him as a king and individual. These opinions range from humanist to mystic and religious fanatic, and everything in between.

Those who lived in the first half of the 20th century tended to have been more positive, while those in the latter part are less positive and don't see him as a revolutionary. However, the continuing work carried out at Amarna is providing new insights into the period and perhaps will reveal new details about the life of Akhenaten.

TABLE 6.3 Views of Akhenaten 19th–21st centuries

Egyptian scholars	Views
Adolf Erman	Saw Akhenaten as an enlightened despot.
Arthur Weigall	Regarded Akhenaten as worthy of admiration because Atenism resembled Christianity and the images of Akhenaten and his family reflected Weigall's Christian view of the sanctity of marriage. He saw him as the world's first idealist, first individual and a great teacher in human history.
J. H. Breasted	Considered Akhenaten a brave soul and the first monotheist in history. He believed he was 'a god-intoxicated man whose mind responded with marvellous sensitiveness and discernment to the visible evidences of God around him. Later, he stressed the king's inadequate comprehension of the practical needs of the people'.[64]
Sir Mortimer Wheeler	Regarded him as a remarkable man; a dreamer rather than an administrator.
Sir Alan Gardiner	Saw Akhenaten as 'self-willed but courageous'.[65]
Rudolf Anthes	Saw him 'as a prophet of religion for which his time was not yet ripe'.[66]
William C. Hayes	Described him as 'a man who had nothing in him of either the soldier or the statesman. As time went on, he concerned himself less and less with affairs of the nation and empire and more and more with matters of the mind and spirit – chiefly be it said, of his own mind and spirit'.[67]
Eberhard Otto	Described him an unpolitical and egocentric man, whose 'public spectacle with his family as seen from the Egyptian point of view was absolutely tasteless and abhorrent'.[68]
Cyril Aldred	Presented a more positive view of Akhenaten. Although he admitted that he neglected aspects of statecraft, his monuments reveal a man who was 'humane and sympathetic' with a genuine religious vision: 'a good ruler who loved mankind'.[69]
Donald Redford	Said 'Humanist he was not and certainly no humanitarian romantic.' Although he admits that the king possessed unusual ability as a poet and had a flair for art, he is contemptuous of Akhenaten and 'his immediate circle of sycophants who lived in an environment of refined sloth'. He is damning of a cult, which expected people to stand in the open sun of Egypt for hours on end. 'Akhenaten, in spirit, remains to the end totalitarian' and 'I cannot conceive of a more tiresome regime under which to be fated to live.'[70]

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TABLE 6.3 *(continued)*

Egyptian scholars	Views
Jan Assmann	Believed his actions reveal an unheard-of brutality.
Barry Kemp	Perceived him as a tragic figure who saw 'the irrelevance of much of the thought of his day but was unable to find anything acceptable to put in its place'.[71]
Nicholas Reeves	Argues that Akhenaten was not the idealistic founder of a new religion as some claim. He believes that he used his religion for political ends in an attempt to reassert the authority of the king and concentrate power in his hands.

ACTIVITY 6.18

1 What do you consider was the most significant legacy left by Akhenaten to ancient Egypt?
2 Why is the Amarna period an exciting subject of study for Egyptologists?
3 Which of the views expressed in Table 6.3 most closely approximates your opinion of Akhenaten. How would you describe him?

6.5 The Amarna Letters as a source for Akhenaten

The discovery in 1887 of around 380 clay tablets – the so-called *Amarna Letters* – inscribed in an Akkadian cuneiform script – the diplomatic language of the day – found in the remains of Amarna has already been described on p. 680.

These were communications from foreign kings, (such as Babylonian, Mitannian, Assyrian, Hittite and Alashiya [Cyprus]), and despatches to the Egyptian court from Syrian and Palestinian vassal princes. They were addressed to Amenhotep III (towards the end of his reign) and to Akhenaten, and are the chief sources of information on Egyptian foreign affairs in western Asia at the time.

There are now some 380 of these tablets dispersed among various museums around the world. Until the first translation into English in 1992 by William Moran in his book, *The Amarna Letters*, there were only versions in cuneiform available for researchers into the foreign affairs of the Amarna period.

Although these are our chief sources, there are many problems associated with their reliability.

> The *Letters* show only interrupted glimpses of the shifting historical scene and the characters who played their parts in it. Scholars have from time to time attempted to fit bits of the puzzle together so as to produce a coherent picture; but no one solution has been generally accepted and the suspicion remains that most of the important pieces are missing. The shadows these letters cast are unfortunately as numerous as the vistas they reveal.

SOURCE 6.27 C. Aldred, *Akhenaten King of Egypt*, p. 183

Problems associated with reliability

1 These *Letters* present a one-sided view as there are virtually no records of the replies by Akhenaten to the letters from the Great Kings and the despatches from vassal princes. Only six of the total number of letters are from an Egyptian pharaoh. However, it should be remembered that when communicating with his commissioners and garrison commanders in Palestine or Syria, Akhenaten's scribes would have sent instructions in Egyptian hieratic written on papyrus. This might explain why there appear to be

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so few Egyptian replies to their vassals. If this is the case, it still doesn't give scholars a balanced view of what was going on in the empire.

2 Most of the tablets were broken up when originally found and further damage was done as they were peddled from one antiquity dealer to the next. Most have survived in a very poor condition. Although it is believed that foreign scribes did not date their documents, it is almost certain that the scrupulous Egyptian scribes would have noted in ink, on the margin of the tablet, the date of receiving the message and the sender before transcribing the diplomatic correspondence to papyrus. Due to the lack of dates, and in many cases the lack of identity of the pharaoh to whom they are addressed, there has always been a problem with gauging the period covered by the archive and the sequence of events mentioned in the *Letters*.

3 In some cases, the pharaohs to whom the great kings of Mitanni, Babylonia and Assyria were corresponding were not named, referring to them only as *my brother*, and the vassal princes addressed their correspondence to *My God, the King of Egypt*, *The Sun*, *My Lord, The Great King*. In the few despatches sent from pharaoh, he uses the title of *The King* and not by name. 'In general, therefore with little more than two dozen exceptions, there is no indication of the pharaoh who sent or received the letter'.[72]

4 The translation and interpretation of these *Letters* has proved very difficult. The scribes in western Asia were using a language derived from an earlier Babylonian cuneiform with some Canaanite modifications that morphed into a diplomatic jargon. Aldred states that this diplomatic language was sometimes 'even unintelligible to its adepts'.[73] Today, any modern interpreter would have to know Akkadian, Hebrew and Ugaratic to translate them. This difficulty is obvious by analysing different versions of the same message.

5 Depending on the chronological order in which scholars arrange these letters, the interpretation of events changes.

6 There is no agreement among scholars about the length of the period covered by the archive (anything from 10–30 years).

> Despite a long history of inquiry, the chronology of the Amarna letters, both relative and absolute, presents many problems, some of bewildering complexity, that still elude definitive solution. Consensus obtains only about what is obvious, certain established facts, and these provide only a broad framework within which many and often quite different reconstructions of the course of events reflected in the Amarna letters are possible and have been defended.

SOURCE 6.28 William Moran, *The Amarna Letters*

> The many letters of Rib-Addi, for instance, have been used to tell a story of the progressive decline of Egyptian power in Asia, whereas the course of events by rearrangement of the sequence could be shown to have been an ebb and flow rather than a constant retreat.

SOURCE 6.29 C. Aldred, *Akhenaten King of Egypt*, p. 186

What do the Letters from the great kings reveal about diplomacy at the time?

The letters to Akhenaten from the great kings of Mitanni, Babylonia, Assyria and Hatti, as well as the smaller independent kingdoms of Arzawa (southwest Anatolia/Turkey) and Alasiya (Cyprus) reveal the following:

- The hope that previous friendships and treaties between the great kings and Egypt would continue. For example, the letter from Šuppiluliuma to Akhenaten: 'The messages I sent to your father and the wishes he expressed to me will certainly be renewed between us'.[74]

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- The breakup of the Egyptian-Mitannian alliance. Despite the personal letter that Tushratta sent to Akhenaten at his accession to the throne addressing him as 'my brother, my son-in-law, who loves me and whom I love … your father-in-law who loves you, your brother',[75] sometime later, he 'turned a cold shoulder to Mitanni. Tushratta's letters indicate that Akhenaten refused to send gifts or answer letters and even kept messengers waiting at court for four years before giving a reply'.[76]
- That the great kings saw themselves as the equal of Akhenaten, although it appears that he, like his predecessors, did not see foreign princes as quite as equal. For example, no Egyptian princess was ever given in marriage to a foreign ruler.
- Negotiations and constant requests/demands for the exchange of 'gifts'. These gifts were never referred to as trade and were expected by all 'brother' kings. For example, 'My brother, behold, … I have sent 500 talents of copper to you; I have sent it to you as a gift. Do not let my brother be concerned that the amount of copper is too little, for in my land the hand of Nergal [a god that brought pestilence] has killed all the men of my land, and so there is not a (single) copper-worker … do not let my brother be concerned. Send your messenger along and all the copper that you desire I will send you … you should send me silver my brother – a great quantity. Give me the best silver …'[77]
- Frequent complaints. For example, the king of Babylon complained that his merchants were set upon in Egyptian territory, beaten and robbed. In his letter he said that since 'Canaan is your country and its kings are your slaves, bind them and return the money they robbed'. He demanded that the men who murdered his merchants should be killed, and then threatens Akhenaten that if he does not order this 'they will again murder my caravans and even my ambassadors, and the ambassadors between us will cease. If this should happen the people of the land will leave you'.[78] Also, the King of Assyria wrote to Akhenaten concerning his thoughtless treatment of the Assyrian delegates to the reception of ambassadors in year 12. 'Why are my envoys kept standing in the open sun? They will die out in the open sun. If it does the king good to stand in the open sun, then let him stand in the open sun himself and let him die himself'.[79]

What does the vassal correspondence reveal about Akhenaten?

It is these series of letters and despatches, especially from the loyal vassals, Rib-Addi of Byblos (EA 75, EA 79, EA 122, EA 137 and others) and Abdu-Heba of Jerusalem (EA 286 and 287), that have led some scholars to suggest that Akhenaten was too caught up in his own solar cult to concern himself with the situation in his territories in Syria and Palestine and was responsible for its decline. The letters from kings Rib-Addi of Byblos and Abdu-Heba are difficult to gauge, but it does seem that Akhenaten had minimal control over his vassals in Palestine and Syria, and it seems that their constant pleas appear to have gone unanswered. Despite pleading with Akhenaten for help over many years, those who remained loyal to him were often left to their own devices and suffered severely for their loyalty.

From the letters of Rib-Addi of Byblos

I have repeatedly written to the palace regarding the distress afflicting me, but no one had paid attention to the words that keep arriving. Let the king heed the words of his servant.

Send archers. The hostility towards me is great.

O king, no men of garrison were given to the King's chiefs … the king has not preserved me.

Let my lord listen to the words of his servant, and let him send me a garrison to defend the city until the archers come out.

From the letters of Abdu-Heba of Jerusalem

May the king send garrison troops … when the commissioners come, I will say 'lost are the territories of the king. All the rulers are lost, The king my lord does not have a single ruler left'.

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Apiru 'dusty, dirty', a term used in texts throughout the Fertile Crescent for people variously described as rebels, outlaws and raiders

May the king direct his attention to the archers, and may the king, my lord, send troops of archers … the **Apiru** sack the territories of the king. If there are archers here this year all the territories will remain intact but if there are no archers, the territories of the king my lord will be lost.

SOURCE 6.30 http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/amarnaletters.htm

The upheaval in these territories caused by the increasing power of the Hittites, the betrayals of former Mitannian and Egyptian vassals, the constant rivalry between vassal states and the attack by armed bands of Apiru created instability in the area. In the past, Akhenaten's predecessors would have launched campaigns to restore order. Akhenaten does not seem to have done this.

However, there is evidence from the letters that there was some intervention in regional affairs. He:

- sent instructions and advice via his messengers to his governors/commissioners and to local princes
- provided some limited military aid; archers and chariots to several vassal rulers
- finally reacted harshly against the traitor Aziru, although he was no match for this wily leader
- wrote a reply to the ruler of Sidon on behalf of the anxious, ailing Rib-Addi.

FIGURE 6.55 A relief from Amarna showing soldiers on a war chariot

Akhenaten was not a pacifist judging from the military images in Amarna art: references on the *talatat* to campaigns against the Apiru of Palestine and the Syrians in the early part of his reign; depictions of military escorts at all public engagements; foreign captives featured at all Window of Appearance ceremonies; representations of him as a Sphinx wearing a *khepresh*, and an inscription on the stela describing him as 'lord of every foreign land'.

Some of Akhenaten's officials had a military background, including Ramose and Maya; he ordered his Viceroy of Kush to quell a minor rebellion in Nubia; used mercenaries to augment his troops; used Nubian troops for garrison duty in Syria; and resettled rebels to maintain order.

Things were changing in western Asia with the advent of the Hittite king, Šuppiluliuma, and perhaps some decline in Egypt's influence was bound to happen. However, the great reception of ambassadors organised in Amarna in Year 12 seems to indicate that the state of foreign affairs under Akhenaten might not have been as bad as has often been depicted in the *Amarna Letters*.

Akhenaten and Nefertiti were carried in their ceremonial lion chairs, accompanied by their six daughters (the last time they are all seen together) to a special reception area set up in the east of the city, where a platform with a shaded pavilion had been erected for the royal family to view the proceedings. Apart from the royal family, all those present were forced to stand in the scorching sun, revealing Akhenaten's lack of consideration. The delegates from the various nations approached the royal dais, carrying ornate weapons, vases, bowls of gold and silver, rings of gold, logs of ebony and elephant tusks, and leading exotic animals, cattle, chariots, slaves and prisoners.

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FIGURE 6.56 The Armana letters, written on clay tablets, 14th century BC

ACTIVITY 6.19

Present an argument for and against the use of the Amarna Letters as a source for understanding foreign policy during Akhenaten's reign.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

6.1 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- Egypt (the fertile delta, the Faiyum and the long valley on each side of the Nile River) was known as *Kemet* (the Black Land). In a country that rarely saw rain, the Nile's life-giving waters and silt provided the basis for agriculture and the Nile produced enormous resources.
- During the early 18th Dynasty, Akhenaten's predecessor 'warrior' kings expanded Egypt's territories beyond Egypt, and developed and organised an empire; and by the time of his father, Amenhotep III, Egypt was at the height of its power with a brilliant society.
- Egyptians worshipped a plurality of gods and goddesses: state gods, cult gods, funerary gods and local/personal gods. Beliefs about life after death revolved around Osiris, god of the underworld and resurrection, a judgement before Osiris where the deceased's heart was measured against the feather of truth (*ma'at*) and a future afterlife in the *Field of Reeds*.

6.2 BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE OF AKHENATEN

- Even though it is often thought that Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten invented the solar cult based on the Aten (sun-disk), changes had been building up during the reigns of his immediate predecessors, particularly during the reign of his father, Amenhotep III, known as the *Dazzling Sun-Disk*.
- Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten came to the throne about the age of 16 or 17. Scholars have argued for decades as to whether he shared a co-regency with his father. He married Nefertiti, who became the *Great Royal Wife*. He also married two secondary wives: Tadukhelpa (a Mitannian princess sent originally to his father's harem) and Kiya, a rather mysterious woman, described as *the greatly beloved wife* of Akhenaten.
- For the first four years at least, Akhenaten, Nefertiti, their three daughters and the court resided at Thebes. By year 9, he had fathered another three daughters.

6.3 KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENTS

- Amenhotep IV, in the first three years of his reign, proclaimed a new version of the solar god, Re-Horakhte: the Aten, whose name was enclosed in a double cartouche and represented by a new icon, the rayed sun-disk. He issued a decree announcing the erection of four sun-temples at Karnak near the enclosure of Amun and held a Heb-sed after only three years on the throne.
- At the site of Akhetaten, he set out the limits of the site with boundary reliefs and texts (originally 14) outlining his plans. The extent of the city was 13 km long by 5 km wide. The hub of the new capital was what is called the Central City, the focus of which was the Great Temple of the Aten.
- To construct this city, resources and revenues from other temples and construction sites were redirected to Akhetaten, as were labourers, craftsmen and soldiers from all over Egypt. Akhenaten's courtiers/officials were perhaps those who had grown up with him, or were men new to the court chosen by him.

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- As the king's reign progressed, his religious policy changed. By year 9, the exclusivity of the Aten had reached a high point and he focused his attack on Amun, demanding that his name be erased from temple walls and tombs. Osiris, the great funerary god, was no longer allowed to be mentioned in the texts, or the Osirian rites to be practised.
- Trends towards naturalism in art had already begun during the reign of Amenhotep III, but under Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten there were three identifiable phases of artistic representation: the early radical 'grotesque' style at Karnak; the radical, but more naturalistic style with more emotion and movement in the early Akhetaten period; and the mature style, better proportioned and realistic, in the latter years. The artistic themes centred on the royal family and the offerings to the Aten, although it seems that artists at this time also drew inspiration from nature.
- Akhenaten's religious changes had a great impact on beliefs about the afterlife: the world of the dead was not distinct from the living.
- Nefertiti played a vital role in the Aten ritual and she was featured in the reliefs in a way normally reserved for pharaohs. The latter part of her reign is filled with puzzles, especially her supposed disappearance from the historical record. This has led to a number of theories about her fate, one which suggests that there was never a young male co-regent with Akhenaten, and that this co-regent was in fact Nefertiti.
- The daughters of Akhenaten played a part in the worship of the Aten, the Window of Appearances, the chariot processions and the reception of tribute in year 12.

6.4 EVALUATION

- Akhenaten's reign had an impact on cultic and funerary beliefs and practices; on art and temple architecture; on the economy; the priesthood, particularly of Amun; the ordinary people; and foreign policy.
- Legacy: Some 20 years after the death of Akhenaten, everything associated with the Aten cult was destroyed and Akhetaten was razed to the ground. During the Ramesside period, the heretic's name and those of his immediate successors were not included on the King Lists and he disappeared from history. However, traditional religion underwent some changes: additional funerary books and religious themes appeared in 19th-Dynasty tombs.
- Much of what was written in his own time and in successive generations was generally negative, and in modern times, the interpretations of him have been coloured by the background and beliefs of the scholars themselves.

6.5 THE AMARNA LETTERS

- Although these clay tablets, inscribed in a cuneiform script, provide important clues to diplomatic relations during the reign of Akhenaten, as well as the important political shifts in the region, there are many problems in using them for an understanding of Akhenaten and his foreign policy: their one-sided and damaged nature; difficulties with translation and interpretation; and problems with chronology. However, there are other sources: Amarna tomb scenes, artistic depictions and a Nubian stela at Buhan that can add to the information found in the Amarna Letters.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these terms.

- heretic
- conjecture
- *ma'at*
- cuneiform
- co-regency
- titulary
- vassal
- iconoclast

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study:

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) Describe the changes that occurred during the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten in the:
- iconography of the solar god
- titularly of the king
- Heb-sed festival
- status of Amun and its priesthood
- form of temple architecture
- style of art.

2) Explain the significance of the following for an understanding of Akhenaten:
- The *talatat* discovered at Karnak
- The cuneiform clay tablets at Amarna
- The boundary stelae erected by Akhenaten
- The Amarna tombs in the eastern desert
- The most recent discovery in tomb KV55 in Thebes.

3) What significant role did the following events play in life at Amarna:
- the daily chariot processions of the royal family
- the Window of Appearances ceremonies
- the Reception of Ambassadors in Year 12?

4) What were the perspectives of Akhenaten expressed by those in the generations that followed his reign?

5) Make a list of those areas in the study of Akhenaten that have been the most controversial.

Historical skills

1) Analyse the following ancient sources and then answer the questions.

> 'I live by worshipping his *ka*
> I am sated by attending him;
> My breath by which I live is this
> northwind ...
> Neferkheperure, Sole-one-of-Re.
> Grant me a lifetime high in your favour'.

- To whom is this addressed?
- Where would it have been found?
- What does it reveal about the afterlife for those who followed Akhenaten?

> 'My father went to war against Egypt
> ... But when they brought back
> to Hatti land, the prisoners which they
> had taken, plague broke out
> amongst the prisoners and these
> began to die'.

- What is the source of this quote?
- Where did the war mentioned in this quote take place (not in the land of Egypt)?
- How important is this source for understanding the events in Amarna after Year 12?

2) Provide evidence for the following statements:
- Akhenaten did not invent the life-sustaining sun-disk.
- The ideas expressed in the *Hymn to the Aten* were not new.
- Akhenaten's relationship with the Aten reaffirmed the divinity of kingship.
- The androgynous representations are more likely to have been a religious statement than a truthful depiction of his appearance.

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- Akhenaten had a strong economic motive for closing the temples, particularly of Amun, after year 5.

3) Explain the following statements from the secondary sources:
- 'It has proved impossible to write a history of Akhenaten's reign which does not embrace an element of historical fiction.' [Barry Kemp]
- 'Changes had been building up for generations' before Akhenaten's supposed heresy. [Sir Alan Gardiner]
- 'This great undertaking was set in train almost as a national enterprise, with an energy that had hitherto been devoted to foreign campaigns.' [Cyril Aldred]
- 'While the theory of Harris and Samson is well-reasoned and ingenious, it glosses over and raises too many difficulties.' [Donald Redford]
- 'Despite a long history of inquiry, the chronology of the Amarna Letters presents many problems, some of bewildering complexity, that still elude a definitive solution.' [William Moran]

4) Describe:
- how Akhenaten showed his devotion to Aten
- the role of Nefertiti in the reign of Akhenaten.

5) Evaluate the funerary changes introduced by Akhenaten.

6) Assess the effectiveness of Akhenaten's foreign policy.

7) Assess the impact Akhenaten had on his time.

8) Evaluate the varying interpretations of Akhenaten over time.

9) Comment on the success or not of Akhenaten's reign.

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Digital-only chapter

CHAPTER 7
Qin Shi Huangdi

FIGURE 7.1 Qin Shi Huangdi, First Emperor of the Qin Dynasty

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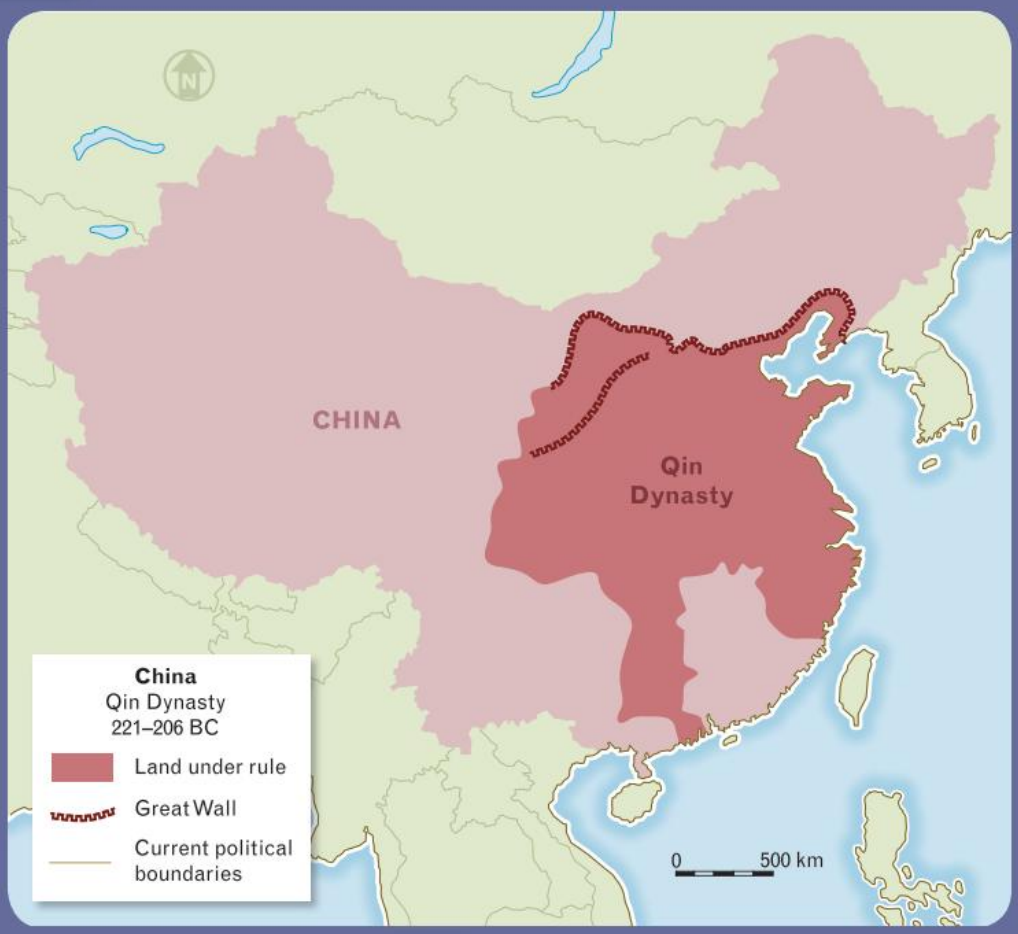
FIGURE 7.2 The Qin Empire in 221 BC



WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of Qin Shi Huangdi through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The historical context of Qin Shi Huangdi's rise to power • Background and rise to prominence • Key features and developments • Evaluation of Qin Shi Huangdi, impact and influence on his own time • The value and limitations of the 6th book of Sima Qian's *Shiji* or historical records

The Supreme One enjoys using punishments and executions as a sign of his authority and … Since the Supreme One does not hear about his faults, he grows daily more arrogant, and his subordinates, cringing in terror, practise duplicity in order to win his forebearance.

SOURCE 7.1 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 77

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

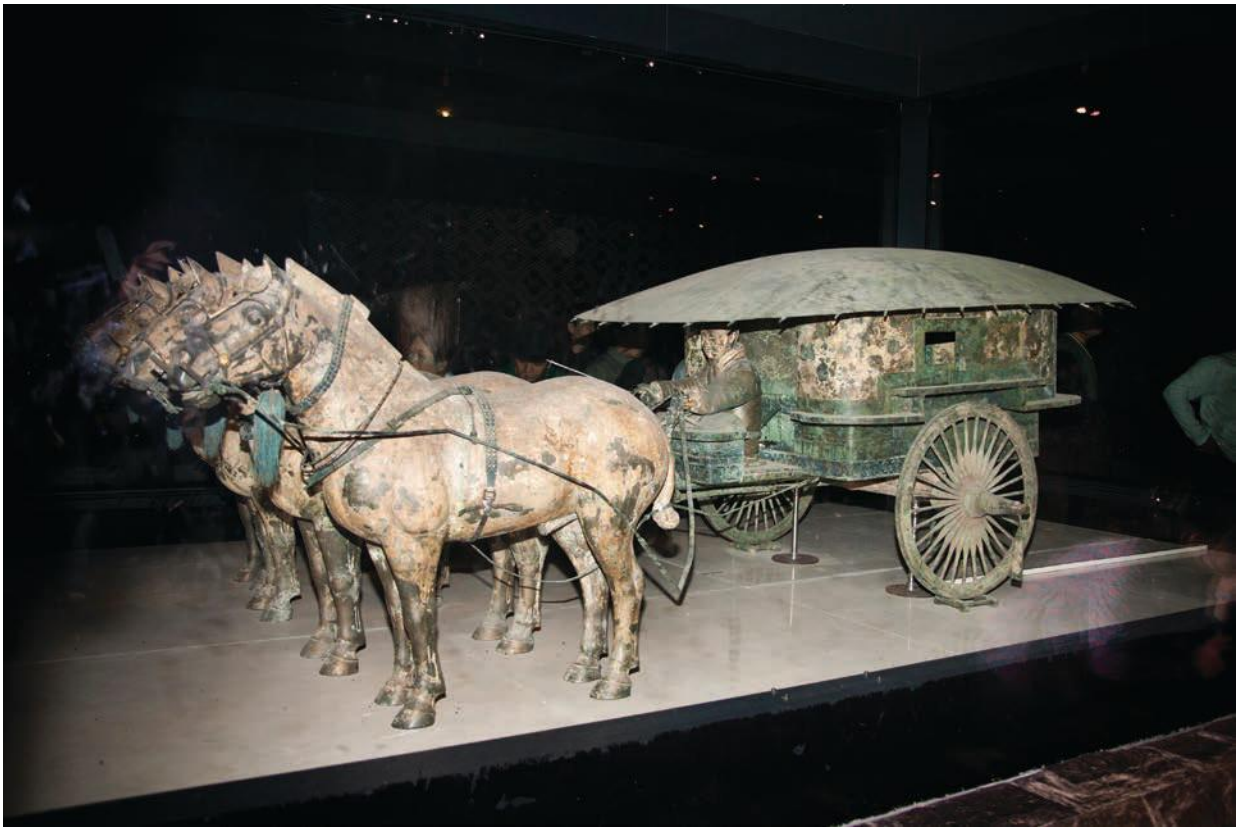

FIGURE 7.3 A bronze model of a horse-drawn chariot found in the First Emperor's mausoleum

Note the details of this image. What do you think might have been the purpose of this artefact? What does it suggest about Qin religious beliefs and technology?

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CHAPTER 7 Overview

KEY IDEA

After a dynasty (Eastern Zhou) lasting over 500 years, the state of Qin conquered all its rivals in no more than a decade, unified the previously warring states into an empire and carried out the most dramatic social and political revolution in human history. Focused on one man, Shi Huangdi, who wished to be the founder of a dynasty that would last forever, its achievements were spectacular. However, this dynasty came to an end within three years of the First Emperor's death, having lasted less than 15 years.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

A study of this topic reveals how an absolute ruler, albeit an 'obsessive megalomaniac', carrying out a policy based on total control, with strict rules and regulations covering every aspect of society, harsh punishments, with little concern for the general population and tolerating no opposition or freedom of opinion, will, no matter what his apparent achievements, engender fierce opposition and rebellion. Autocratic governments, dependent on the power of one individual, are bound to fail when that leader is no longer there with a heavy hand and is succeeded by a weaker man.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- Mandate of Heaven
- concubine
- loess
- vassals
- Confucianism
- regent
- almanacs
- Legalism
- capping
- fief
- standardisation
- corvée
- milfoil
- alchemy
- bastinado

INQUIRY QUESTION

What was the impact of Qin Shi Huangdi on his own time?

Painting the picture

When the future First Emperor ascended the throne of the state of Qin as King Ying Zheng in 246 BC, the seven feudal states of ancient China had been at war for 200 years, each battling for dominance over the other. At the time Ying Zheng was born, the **Mandate of Heaven** was still held by the kings of the Zhou Dynasty.

In his early years, King Ying Zheng was tutored and advised by two men: Lü Buwei, who became his **regent** and Chief Minister, and the Legalist (from Legalism, a Chinese political philosohpy) scholar, Li Si, whose influence with the young king was strong from the beginning and continued throughout his reign. Under the direction of these men, and with the support of skilful generals, Qin armies conquered the states of Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi between 230 and 221 BC, and under the leadership of Ying Zheng, the former separate states became a unified empire. Since he was no longer a king, Zheng needed a new title to indicate his increased status as an emperor ruling with the Mandate of Heaven. He assumed the tile of 'August Emperor of Qin' – Qin Shi Huangdi – and China became a great centralised and bureaucratic government under an absolute ruler. Not only did he amalgamate China into a single state, but under the influence of Li Si and his legalist approach to government, the First Emperor reorganised the empire by a series of reforms that imposed uniformity by standardising weights, measures, coinage, the writing script and even the width of cart axles. He abolished all the old feudal titles and property, and introduced a code of law and punishments with strict regulations covering all aspects of society, which facilitated the economy and movements across the empire. No one dared oppose the emperor's wishes for fear of cruel punishments, exile to the far corners of the empire or execution.

Mandate of Heaven a concept that there could be only one legitimate ruler of China at a time and that this ruler had the blessings of the gods (heaven)

regent usually a member of the royal family who ruled in the place of a child until he was old enough to take responsibility alone

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He initiated a massive building program (roads, canals, the Great Wall, palaces and his own Mausoleum), using labour forces made up of hundreds of thousands of conscripted labourers and soldiers, plus huge levies of criminals and prisoners. To make sure that the former noble families did not ferment trouble, he carried out large-scale relocations of their entire households to the capital of Xianyang.

After his advisor, Li Si, complained that scholars used records of the past to denigrate the Emperor's policies and to undermine popular support, he issued an edict that all writings other than Qin records and useful manuals on topics like agriculture, medicine or divination were to be collected for burning.

He travelled his empire in extensive tours of inspection, carrying out ancient rituals at sacred sites, leaving records of his achievements in a series of inscriptions. He became increasingly paranoid about his safety, suspicious and obsessed with immortality, seeking out sorcerers and alchemists to find an elixir of immortality. Despite this obsession, he died on his last tour of inspection. The aftermath of his death was marked by intrigues, the deaths of those who succeeded him and revolts throughout the empire. Within three years of his death, the Qin Dynasty was finished and his capital Xianyang razed to the ground.

concubine a woman who lives with a man and has a sexual relationship with him but is not his wife

Throughout history he was known as a cruel, ruthless megalomaniac.

TABLE 7.1 Timeline for Qin Shihuangdi

261 BC	Yiren, a minor Qin prince held as a political hostage in a foreign state, is befriended by the merchant Lü Buwei, who conspires to have Yiren accepted as the heir to the throne of Qin.
259	Yiren marries Zhaoji, Lü Buwei's **concubine** Zhaoji, who some claim is already pregnant.
256	Qin troops dethrone the Son of Heaven, ending the Zhou dynasty.
251	Yiren, his wife Zhaoji and child Ying Zheng (the future 1st emperor) return to Qin.
250	Yiren becomes king on the sudden death of his father and Lü Buwei becomes Chief Minister.
247	Death of King Yiren. Li Si leaves homeland to seek his fortune in Qin.
246	Ying Zheng becomes king of Qin at age 13 and rules with Lü Buwei as his regent. Begins building his mausoleum.
238	King Ying Zheng overthrows a coup against him by Lao Ai and undergoes ceremony of manhood.
237	Lü Buwei exiled to Sichuan. Li Si becomes Minister of Justice. King Ying Zheng attempts to exile all foreigners from Qin.
235	Lü Buwei commits suicide.
230–222	King of Qin oversees the conquest of other Chinese states such as Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi. Assassination attempt against King Ying Zheng by Jing Ke, planned by Crown Prince of Yan.
221	State of Qin unifies China and King Ying Zheng assumes a new title: 'First Emperor' (Qin Shi Huangdi). Division of former kingdoms into 36 imperial commanderies. Possible date of Gao Jianli's assassination attempt on the Emperor's life.
220	First imperial inspection of 'wall zone', north of Qin heartland.
219	The First Emperor tours his domain, intending to make sacrifices on sacred Mt Tai. Sends out first mission in search of Elixir of Life. Li Si becomes Chief Minister.
218	First Emperor orders that previously-built northern portions of state walls be connected into a long unbroken structure. Imperial tour east again. Assassination attempt masterminded by Zhang Liang.

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TABLE 7.1 *(continued)*

217	First Emperor dabbles in Taoist mysticism.
216	First Emperor assaulted by criminals.
215	Second quest for Elixir of Life.
214	First Emperor sends army south to conquer southern tribes.
213	The Burning of the Books – First Emperor orders all books that don't support the Legalism of Qin be burnt.
212	Execution by burying alive of 460 scholars on the advice of Li Si for dissenting from the views of the Emperor. Beginning of construction of Apang Palace. Increasing obsession with death.
211	Discovery of meterorite inscribed with a prophecy of First Emperor's downfall.
210	Death of First Emperor on a tour of inspection. Buried in massive mausoleum.
209	Zhao Gao and Li Si contrives to have Fu Su, the heir, killed and Hu Hai, the weak second son, placed on the throne. People of the empire grow bolder and revolt.
208	Zhao Gao takes over and executes Li Si.
206	Death of Second Emperor. Xianyang (capital of empire) is destroyed by a Han-led rebel army and First Emperor's mausoleum desecrated.
202	Civil War and the beginning of the Han Dynasty.

7.1 The historical context

The geographical setting

Chinese civilisation developed in a geographical setting that the ancients referred to as 'All-Under-Heaven' (*tianxia*), an area surrounded by deserts and vast steppes to the north and northwest, steep mountainous regions to the west and southwest, and oceans to the east.

China proper was dominated by two great eastward-flowing river systems:

1 The Yellow River in the north, which drains almost the whole of northern China, has its source in the Kunlin Mountains of central Asia and flows 5464 kilometres before emptying into the Yellow Sea. Its name originates from the yellowish sediment it carries as it carves its way through areas of fertile **loess** soils: fine, wind-driven yellow earth deposited over millennia. Each time it flooded, which it did for thousands of years, it deposited sediment, building up levee banks which in places are 10-metres above the surrounding area

loess fine, fertile wind-driven earth

2 The Yangtze River, in central China, originates from several tributaries in the eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, then flows eastward for 6380 kilometres to the South China Sea. For part of its length (320 kilometres) it passes through spectacular gorges with sheer cliffs a thousand feet high. The central Yangtze formed the heartland of the Chu, which was incorporated into the Qin Empire.

The regions drained by these river systems differ in topography, soil, temperature and rainfall. The north is colder, drier and flatter with a shorter growing season, which together with its alkaline soils produces wheat and millet. The south is warmer and wetter and can produce two crops of rice a year.

Separating the two areas are the Qin Mountains (Qinling), a major east-west range that forms a natural boundary between north and south China. It forms a watershed between the Wei River to the north and the Han River to the south, and marks a physical divide between the temperate zone of the dry loess lands to the north and the monsoonal subtropical zone in the south.

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FIGURE 7.4 A small sketch map showing the Yellow and Yangtze River systems

FIGURE 7.5 The Yellow River

FIGURE 7.6 Agriculture along the Yellow River

FIGURE 7.7 Rice farming along the Yangtze River

FIGURE 7.8 Part of the Qin Mountain range

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The cradle of Chinese civilisation

In northern China, the Yellow River makes a large rectangular bend known as the Ordos Loop and in the southern part of this loop is the 640 000 sq km loess plateau and the Wei River – the largest tributary of the Yellow River – and its fertile valley. The deposits of loess are more than a hundred metres thick and provide some of the most agriculturally productive soils in the world, although loess is also the most highly erodible soil on earth.

This was the cradle of Chinese civilisation and where 13 great dynasties, starting with the Zhou – and including the Qin – established their capitals over an 1100-year-period. This area today is predominantly in the province of Shaanxi with its populous city of Xi'an, one of the four great ancient capitals of China.

It is here, 35 kilometres east of Xi'an, that the Qin had their capital of Xianyang, and where, close by at the base of the Lishan Mountain, the First Emperor built his mausoleum and buried his Terracotta Army.

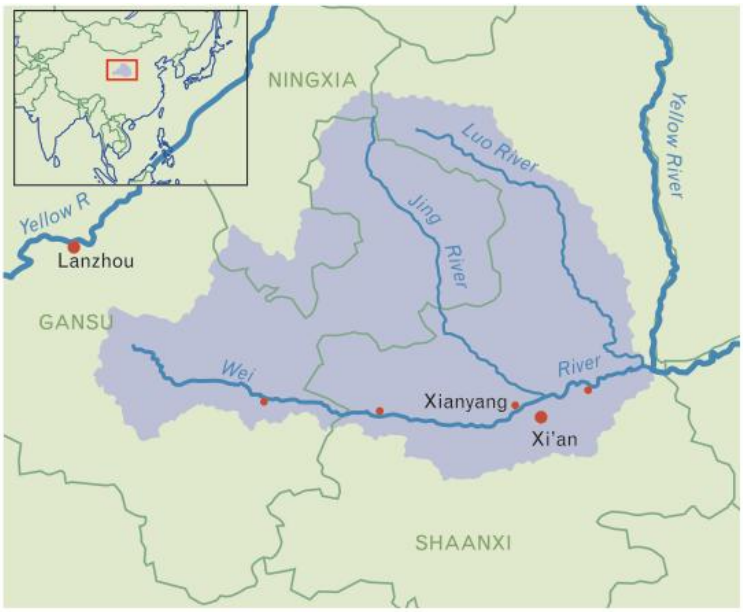

FIGURE 7.9 Sketch map of the Wei River drainage area

FIGURE 7.10 The loess plateau

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ACTIVITY 7.1

1 What was the area known as the cradle of Chinese civilisation?
2 Use the text as well as Figures 7.4–7.6 and 7.9–7.10 to describe its geographical advantages.

The historical context of the Qin state

The Qin are believed to have originated in the westernmost part of China (Gansu) and appear on the scene about the time Chinese civilisation transitioned from the Shang to the Zhou Dynasty c. 1045 BC.

One advantage Qin had on the western edge of China was 'its frequent military encounters with nomad peoples over the centuries' which 'instilled in them a military discipline and brought them into frequent contact with non-Chinese methods of warfare, including cavalry warfare and advanced crossbow technology'.[1]

The early Zhou, located in the Wei River Valley, controlled a loose feudal system of about 200 vassal rulers who owed them allegiance. During this period, the Qin, who were known for mastery of the horses that grazed the pastures west of the Yellow River, engaged in breeding war horses for the army of the Zhou kings. 'Horses and warfare were in the DNA of the Qin'.[2]

It was these skills that led to their eventual rise to power centuries later because the ancestors of the 'First Emperor' were given lands by the Zhou rulers and became their **vassals** as early as the 880s. For generations the Qin, in the far west, provided a buffer zone 'that kept the Chinese heartland safe'[3] and this gave them a certain confidence. While still continuing to fight skirmishes on their western borders, the Qin people eventually turned their warlike attentions to the more civilised states in the east.

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

In 771 BC, there was an attack on the Zhou king and his capital, and so the royal domain moved 500 kilometres to the east, closer to the Yellow River, leaving a vacuum in the west. This was a key moment in Chinese history, for the Zhou not only gave the Qin the responsibility of guarding the western frontier, but granted the Qin rulers the status of dukes. The first Qin duke was Xiang and from his reign, the Qin began moving eastward, and over the following centuries, outstanding dukes occupied nine different capitals. The most significant of these – until their final capital at Xianyang at the time of the First Emperor – was at Yong which provided more room for building, and it remained the Qin capital for 300 years until 349 BC.

Excavations carried out there reveal that the Qin created a strong city that covered 11 square kilometres, had eight main roads, numerous palaces and temples, three-arched city gates 8–10 metres wide and a wall 15 metres high.

Although the Qin was still a small state, its reputation and resolution were growing.

For the next 500 years after they moved further east, the Zhou were not able to really control the vassal states that fought among themselves. This was a tumultuous time as smaller states were absorbed, walls were built against each other and each state put massive armies into the field in what became known as the Warring States Period.

It was a time of great transformation, both technologically and intellectually.

- Iron technology was exploited for weapons, sizes of armies increased and methods of warfare changed. Chariot warfare gave way to massed infantry forces and mounted horsemen with powerful crossbows. Professional generals were provided with military manuals such as the *Art of War* by Sun Tzu.
- Rulers surrounded themselves with numerous advisers and men of ideas. This was a time of intellectual ferment known as the *Hundred Schools of Thought*, as masters in various fields argued how rulers should or should not govern. Two political theories emerged at this time that had a great impact: the works of Confucius and the Legalists.

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During the period of the Warring States, the Dukes of Qin intrigued against their rival states and built a new capital, Xianyang, upriver from the royal domain of the weak Zhou kings, who still held the Mandate of Heaven. However, there was already talk of an annexation of the Zhou territory by Qin.

A COMMENT ON

The teachings of Confucius

Confucius (551–479 BC) has been universally claimed as China's greatest teacher. To him, the highest virtue was *ren* (goodness, human-heartedness, benevolence and nobility). He believed that intentions and actions towards other people were as important as those towards gods and ancestors. He commended the reverent respect of children towards their parents, and believed that such filial piety should be extended outward beyond the family, so that the same relationship should apply between a ruler and his subjects, and between an employer and his employee. In other words, *ren* should be extended to everyone.

FIGURE 7.11 A statue of Confucius

A COMMENT ON...

The Mandate of Heaven (*Tian Ming*)

One of the most significant aspects of Chinese political philosophy is that heaven (*Tian*) gives its mandate – and thus legitimacy – to rule only to a worthy person, but when the beneficiary no longer deserves heaven's blessing, perhaps for neglecting his sacred duties and behaving tyrannically, it would be taken away. Heaven could reveal its displeasure by sending natural disasters and other ominous omens. If the ruler ignored these warnings, the mandate would be withdrawn, leading to social chaos. Part of this concept was the right of rebellion against an unjust ruler and it formed the basis of the Chinese dynastic cycle, whereby founding rulers were regarded as strong and virtuous and the last of a dynasty as weak and corrupt.

The influence of Lord Shang on the future of Qin

In 361 BC, a Legalist philosopher known as Lord Shang arrived as a fugitive in the Qin capital of Xianyang, where its rulers 'had been advertising for learned men to join its government'. By 359 Lord Shang was not only a member of the Qin government, but had drawn up plans for legal reform which 'ran in opposition to Confucian orthodoxy'.[4] When the Qin Duke Xiao hesitated in accepting them, Lord Shang 'told his ruler that he could do it the Confucian way and get nowhere, or do it Lord Shang's way and actually achieve something'.[5] Lord Shang's way was the Legalist way, which was a rejection of the Confucian beliefs of creating social order through the rule of virtue and ethical example.

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A COMMENT ON...

The Legalist approach to rule

Legalism was a political theory that condemned the old ways and claimed to understand the power and techniques that would allow rulers to enhance their control over officials and subjects.

Legalists:

- argued that strong government did not depend on the moral qualities and virtue of the ruler and his officials as Confucians claimed, but on establishing effective institutional structures
- proposed political solutions to disorder by formulating clearly expressed laws and prohibitions that everyone understood
- developed a system of automatic rewards and punishments
- taught techniques for the accumulation of power
- urged rulers to be firm, but consistent
- believed in a highly authoritarian vision of order with no room for private views about what is right and wrong because this led to weakness and disorder. The opinions of people other than the rulers had no place in this system
- argued that here was no law above the wishes of the ruler.

Lord Shang began his reorganisation of Qin by:

- making villages ('10 houses') a unit of government, expecting neighbours to keep a watch on each other and report crimes, and by providing financial rewards for reporting these and inflicting severe punishments (a person could be cut in half) on those who didn't.
- forcing citizens to labour on public works (only farmers and weavers were exempt) where idleness was an offense, punishable by enslavement. Anyone who protested against his actions was deported to the border areas.
- expecting Qin's military leaders to achieve demonstrable results or face being cut off the royal lists.
- forcing all areas under Qin control to think on a national level when it came to the recruitment, operation and administration of its army.

> Shang's reforms created a harsh, fascistic society of snooping neighbours and hungry soldiers – a nation whose leaders were obliged by their very constitution to attack and expand beyond their borders. More importantly, they also created an efficient military state, with compulsory levies for public works, and a vast standing army of well-trained, well-equipped infantry.
> ... Qin's new army was a game-changer in ancient China ... Lord Shang's reforms created a machine of conquest, but they also made him many enemies.

SOURCE 7.2 Jonathan Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, p. 11

Among his serious enemies at court was the heir to the throne, Huiwen, and when his father died, Huiwen ordered that Lord Shang be executed by being pulled apart by chariots and that all members of his family be executed. It seems that Duke Huiwen, who had opposed Shang's methods, had himself been tainted by them, as he continued to rule the state with even greater severity.

In Year 12 of Duke Huiwen's reign, he was declared King of Qin and in the years that followed, he:

- expanded Qin territory south and east, more than doubling the area under its control
- negotiated with rival states and exchanged high-level hostages with each
- showed ever-increasing contempt for the kings of the enfeebled Zhou dynasty.

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Huiwen's successor, King Zhao, had imperial ambitions, and in 256 BC, five years before his death, Qin troops dethroned the Son of Heaven, so ending the Zhou Dynasty's Mandate of Heaven.

It was the reigns of these two very capable Qin rulers, Huiwen (337–311) and Zhao (306–251), which set the stage for the eventual conquests of the future First Emperor and the unification of China.

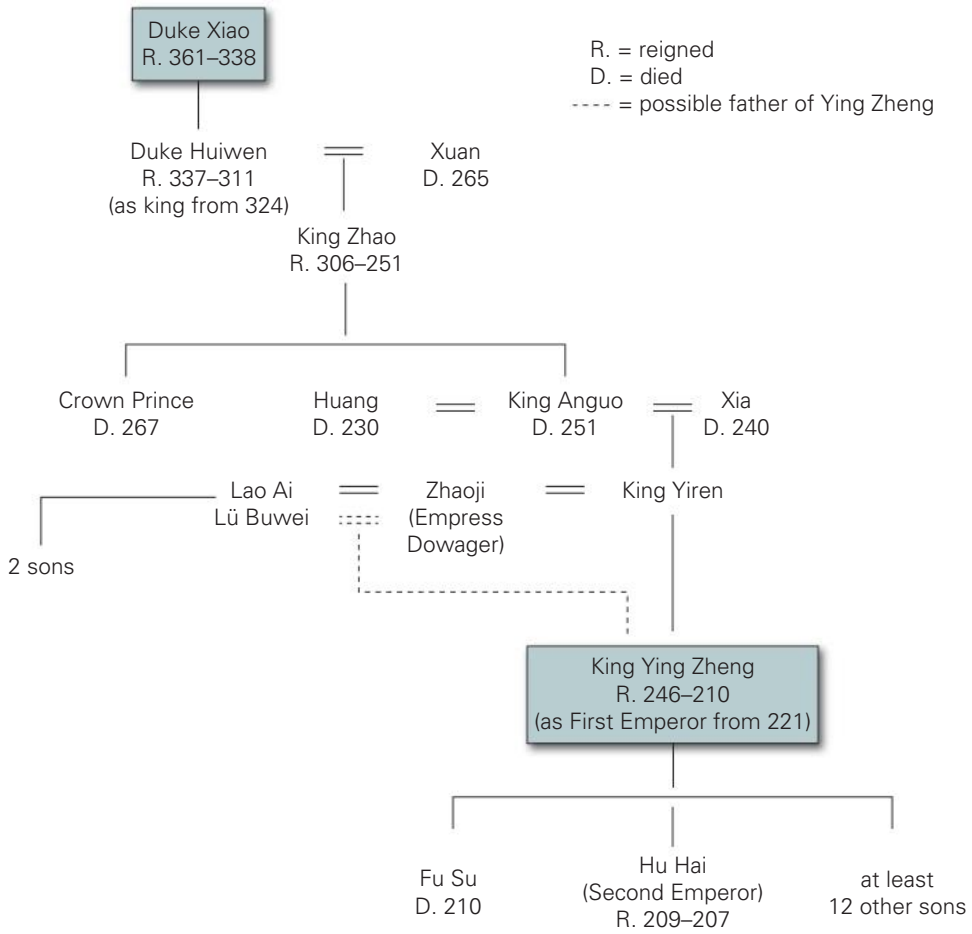

FIGURE 7.12 Diagram of the First Emperor's predecessors

ACTIVITY 7.2

1. Which Chinese dynasty held the Mandate of Heaven in the early years of the Qin? How did they rule over the other Chinese hereditary houses?
2. How did the original location of the Qin play a part in their eventual rise to power centuries later?
3. How did the movement of the royal domain of the Zhou, 500 kilometres further to the east in 770 BC, impact the Qin?
4. What technological and intellectual developments during the Zhou Dynasty's dominance impacted the Qin?
5. Explain the difference between the Confucian and Legalist approach to governing a state.
6. Who was Lord Shang and how significant were his reforms for his own time and for the future of the Qin?
7. Study Figure 7.12 and note the lengths of the reigns of the Qin rulers: Huiwen and Zhao. How important were their reigns for the future of the Qin state?

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7.2 Background and rise to prominence

Family background and status

By the time the long reign of King Zhao came to an end, he had already outlived his nominated successor, and it had taken a further two years to finally decide that his second son, Lord Anguo, would be the new crown prince. Although Anguo had no legitimate sons of his own by his principal wife, Huang (Lady of the Glorious Sun), he is believed to have had 20 male offspring by his many concubines. One of these, named Yiren, had been sent as a hostage to Handan, the capital of the state of Zhao, where he lived in relative isolation with hostages from other states and without any resources.

However, his status improved due to the interference of a local Handan merchant, Lü Buwei, who saw an economic opportunity in promoting the cause of the minor son, Yiren.

> Said Buwei [to Yiren]: The King of Qin is old, and Lord Anguo is the Crown Prince. I have heard it told that Lord Anguo dotes on his wife, but that she is without issue. And yet it stands with her alone to nominate a successor. You have more than twenty brothers, and you are neither the eldest, nor the most well-favoured, having long dwelt as a hostage in another state. When the great king passes on, and Lord Anguo replaces him, what chance do you have against your elder brothers, and those who are closer at hand, day and night.

SOURCE 7.3 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, pp. 3–4

Although the main sources for this period, Sima Qian's *The Record of the Historian* and the *Intrigues of the Warring States*, differ in some of the details of what actually took place, the following appears to be the way Yiren (the father of the future 'First Emperor') became the heir to the throne of Qin.

1. Lü Buwei was able to convince Yiren that he could secure the patronage of childless Huang (Lady of the Glorious Sun) and then provided him with the wealth to surround himself with a large entourage and enough to send gifts to Huang.
2. Lü Buwei travelled to Qin to seek an audience with Huang in order to convince her to adopt Yiren as her son. He sent a flattering message to her explaining the good character of Yiren.
3. It is not known how long the negotiations took place, and if it was a visit to the Qin capital by a richly dressed Yiren himself that finally convinced Huang to adopt him and to go to Lord Anguo and plead that Yiren be confirmed as his heir.
4. Lü Buwei returned to Handan with a carved jade seal confirming Yiren's appointment as future heir.
5. Yiren gained new found respect in Handan, took a wife and produced a son (Ying Zheng) in 258 BC (some sources suggest 256) who would grow up to become the First Emperor.
6. Lü Buwei was appointed as the child's guardian and tutor.

A COMMENT ON...

A disputed view of the birth of the future First Emperor

According to the Han historian, Sima Qian, in the *Historical Records*, Yiren became attracted to the dancer Zhouji, who was Lü Buwei's concubine and one of the prettiest women in Handan, and he told Lü Buwei that he wanted Zhouji for himself. Reluctantly, Lü Buwei agreed, but Zhouji was already pregnant with Buwei's child. She concealed her pregnancy and the account insinuates that the child born to Yiren was in fact the son of Lü Buwei. After the birth, Yiren made Zhouji his wife. See p. 768 for the reliability of Sima Qian on this issue.

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Ying Zheng spent the first 10 years of his life in Handan. When he was three, there was a threat against his father's life. Lü Buwei arranged for Yiren to be spirited out of the city to the Qin army and so back to Qin. It appears that his child and his wife were left behind. There is no information of what happened to them at this time.

Succession to kingship of Qin and the regency of Lü Buwei

Three days after Anguo became king, he was dead and Yiren, the former hostage son, became ruler, his son Ying Zheng the new heir and Lü Buwei the Chief Minister of Qin, who was given the title of Marquis of Wenxin 'to enjoy the revenues from 100 000 households in Hunan and Luoyang'.[6]

Not only had Lü Buwei benefited economically, but he was now in a position to play a political role in the new government. However, in no more than five years Yiren was dead. The question is: Was this a natural death or did someone have a motive for getting rid of him?

Some sources say the new king was only 10 years old (some suggest 13) when he came to the throne. He needed a regent. The candidates for this role were his mother Zhaoji, and her former lover, the Chief Minister, Lü Buwei.

While Lü Buwei ruled in Ying Zheng's name, the boy king was taught the art of kingship, the importance of ancestry, ritual, **almanacs**, historical precedent and his role as the Son of Heaven by the best scholars available who followed the Confucian tradition.

almanacs annual calendars that contained important dates and statistical information such as astronomical data

However, he also had another teacher: Li Si, who was a native of the state of Chu. Li Si had started life as a civil servant and been trained for political office. Unlike those who followed the theories of Confucius, he was more concerned with the realities of the world that were the basis of the Legalist philosophy. He saw Qin as the best opportunity for advancement, for 'at the present time, when 10 000 chariots are on the verge of combat, itinerant advisers are in control of affairs'.[7]

While Lü Buwei was busy with state matters, Li Si became the advisor of the king. From the beginning he made known his views to the teen-king about how he should rule. He was a great believer in unification.

> The ordinary person misses his chances. The completion of great enterprises consists of taking advantages of weaknesses and ruthlessly exploiting them ... now if one takes into account the strength of Qin and the Great King's own fine qualities, it will be capable not only of wiping out the feudal states just as easily as sweeping the top of a stove, but also of completing the imperial heritage and making all under Heaven into a unity. This is the one opportunity in 10 000 generations. If you are idle and do not press ahead, the feudal states will combine with each other ... and you will not be able to unify them.

SOURCE 7.4 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 24

Problems at court

Beyond the intrigues of neighbour states, there were internal problems.

1 It is apparent that Lü Buwei and the king's mother, Zhouji, had either resumed their affair or had never given it up. Whatever the case, it seems to have been harder to keep it secret. Lü Buwei, relishing his role as regent and held in such high regard by the young king, would not want any suspicion to be cast on the paternity of the king. The records claim that Zhouji was sexually insatiable and demanded too much of her lover's time. Perhaps she threatened to expose him. It is said that he hatched a plan to keep her occupied. He supposedly found for her a well-endowed official, Lao Ai, to satisfy her. For appearances sake, Lao Ai went through a fake castration and was regarded as a eunuch. He and Zhouji were installed in the old Qin capital further up the Valley far away from court. However, it seems that Lao Ai soon had ambitions of his own.

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2 It was nearing the time for the king's official ceremony of manhood (the **capping** ceremony) when he was given an adult cap to wear and was expected to take an official wife. This would mean that it was time for Lü Buwei to step down as regent, so he delayed the manhood ceremony for as long as possible, perhaps trying to think of a way to replace Ying Zheng with a younger candidate who would depend on a regent. However, significant deaths in the family (Ying Zheng's grandmother and younger brother) that required a period of mourning delayed the capping, as did the appearance of an ominous tailed comet that suggested disasters. Ying Zheng was 22 before his manhood ceremony finally took place at the ancient capital of Yong.

capping an ancient Chinese manhood ceremony

The attempted coup of Lao Ai

Not long after the capping ceremony, Lao Ai (the lover of the king's mother) attempted to carry out a coup against the king.

Lao Ai had profited by his relationship with the dowager queen Zhouji. He lived in luxury in the palace in Yong and he is supposed to have had over 1000 servants. When the real nature of the relationship was revealed – that he was not in fact a eunuch, was sleeping with the king's mother and that they had two children together – he revealed his real ambitions. He began building up a faction to replace King Ying Zheng with one of his own children and is supposed to have falsely used the Dowager Queen's seal to issue royal orders calling to arms 'the palace guard, the elite cavalry and the watchmen of the capital as well as other groups to attack Ying Zheng's residence'.[8] Whether the king's mother was directly involved is not known.

It is likely that thousands were involved on both sides, although it is possible that some were innocents caught up in a plan that they didn't fully understand. There was fighting in the streets of the capital Xianyang between the revolutionaries and the king's loyal supporters.

Without popular support, military training and lacking real organisation, the rebels were defeated and Lao Ai took flight. The king put a price on his head of a million coins for his capture alive and half a million for him dead.

Once word spread that Lao Ai and his 'party' had attempted to kill the king, and with the offer of such a reward, they were soon rounded up.

- Lao Ai was dismembered by being pulled apart by four chariots.
- His immediate and extended family – whether they knew of the plan or not – were exterminated, including his two sons about whom the king had had no previous knowledge.
- Zhouji was confined to her palace and, via a stern decree, no one was permitted to discuss her possible involvement on pain of death by flaying. Twenty-seven people who ignored the decree were killed.
- The leaders of the palace guard were executed for treason and some offenders were given three years hard labour.
- Lao Ai's servants were sent en masse to the southern border to eke out a living by whatever means they could find.
- In the following year, the king dismissed Lü Buwei from court for arranging the affair between Lao Ai and the king's mother in the first place.
- The king then announced a purge on all foreigners in the kingdom.

This final action would have been disastrous, as some of the royal family were foreign as were many of the king's advisers. Perhaps he meant just foreign advisers like Lü Buwei and the hundreds of other scholars who had made Qin their home. Of course, this would have affected Li Si also.

In a remarkable speech to the king, arguing against the banishment of foreigners, Li Si pointed out that they were not the enemy, but had helped save the state. He then reminded the king that all the things he held dear were in fact foreign imports, and in a final move he pointed out something to the king that finally persuaded him to rescind the banishment order. He reminded the king of what would happen if he banished them.

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Now in fact you are getting rid of the black-headed people so as to provide a resource for enemy countries, and you expel aliens so as to build up the strengths of the feudal states. You are causing public servants from all under Heaven to hold back and ... to halt their feet and not enter Qin. This is what is called 'contributing weapons to brigands and presenting provisions to robbers' ... If you now expel aliens so as to provide a resource for enemy states and reduce your people so as to increase your foes, then you will not only be making yourself empty at home, but also sowing the seeds of resentment in the feudal states. If you aim for the state to be free of dangers, this cannot be achieved.

SOURCE 7.5 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 27

Li Si was soon promoted to Minister of Justice (eventually Chief Minister) and served at court for a further 17 years.

fief an estate of land, especially one held on condition of feudal service

However, Lü Buwei was not so fortunate. Having sent him away to his personal **fief**, the king – as if forgetting everything his former guardian, advisor, regent and minister had done for him – sent him a spiteful letter demanding that he and his family relocate to the same southern frontier lands where the king had sent Lao Ai's servants. 'Sensing that the letter was a death sentence in all but name, Lü Buwei took the hint and drank poison'.[9]

However, the purges continued even after his death, with the king's agents reporting on anyone who marked the passing of Lü Buwei, including those who attended his funeral, and all were exiled. Qin entered a new phase.

ACTIVITY 7.3

1. Why was the future Qin king, Ying Zheng, not born in the Qin capital of Xianyang, but in the city of Handan in the state of Zhao?
2. Describe in your own words what Sima Qian records in his *Historical Records* about the part played by the merchant Lü Buwei in gaining the throne for the future king's father?
3. What does Sima Qian insinuate about Ying Zheng's legitimacy?
4. How old was Ying Zheng believed to be when he became king and what significance did this have for Lü Buwei?
5. Who was Li Si and how did he come to be at the court of the young King Ying Zheng?
6. Analyse Source 7.4. What advice did Li Si impart to the teenage king?
7. Draw a simple diagram illustrating the problems that now beset the court, involving Lü Buwei, the king's mother Zhouji and Lao Ai.
8. How did the young king react to the attempted coup against him? Suggest how this might have impacted his future behaviour.
9. Analyse the speech (Source 7.5) made to the king by Li Si in the wake of the attempted coup. What advice does he give the king and what does this reveal about Li Si?

7.3 Key features and developments

Wars of conquest

'After decades of ascendancy, the time was now ripe for Qin to fill the vacuum left by the departed Zhou dynasty'[10] and deal with the states that Qin had not yet conquered: Han, Zhao, Wei, Chu, Yan and Qi.

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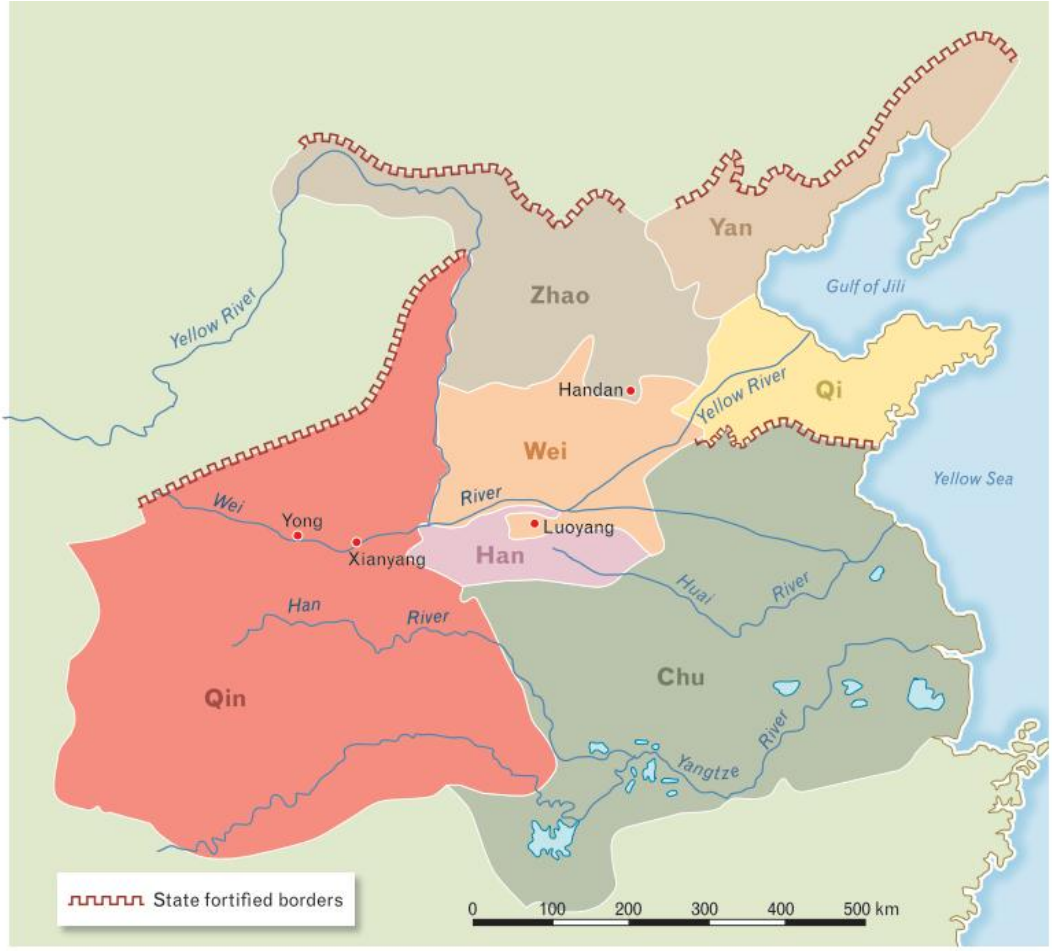

FIGURE 7.13 The territory of Qin and its rival states at the time the future 'First Emperor' was born

The Qin army

The Qin had a strong military tradition that linked military success with social mobility and with 'a finely graded system of honorary social ranks … that conferred various types of privileges on warriors: tax exemptions, government positions, land and so on … This was a great asset to a state about to launch a decade-long final push to supremacy'.[11] The following source describes some details of the Qin army prior to the wars of conquest.

> The soldiers' uniforms were not fancy but efficient. The same can be said for the standardized, mass-produced weapons. An army was organised into a composite body of units, each with its different weapons and tasks … groups of fighters became interchangeable, modular units. Discipline and absolute obedience were the supreme virtues of the soldier … The Commander directed all movements and actions of the mass army. He took all the credit for victory and all the blame for defeat. His authority was absolute, mirroring that of the ruler of the state … Members of one unit were held mutually responsible for one another's performance in battle.

SOURCE 7.6 Lother Ledderose, 'A Magic Army for the Emperor', p. 61 in *Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art,* 1998

Many scholars believe that the Terracotta Army is a representation of Emperor Qin's real army. The burial pits provide an incredible amount of information on the distribution and formation of military ranks, the use of weapons and the application of military tactics.

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FIGURE 7.14 Ranks of the Terracotta Army

FIGURE 7.15 A terracotta kneeling archer

FIGURE 7.16 Terracotta cavalrymen

FIGURE 7.17 A terracotta general

The success of the Qin army was based on excellent strategy, harsh discipline, well-trained soldiers and the skill of some of the generals, such as Wang Jian, his son Wang Ben and Meng Tian.

King Ying Zheng and his generals would have been familiar with the military strategy described in the manuals of warfare like Sun Tzu's military treatise *The Art of War*, which had been in existence for centuries. This 'book', in 13 chapters, is still popular today. However, to Sun Tzu, it was not always about the sheer ferocity of war. The following source is taken from the introduction to Book Three.

> 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 is not so good.

SOURCE 7.7 Lional Giles, Sun Tzu, *The Art of War, Bk. III, Attack by Stratagem*, p. 17

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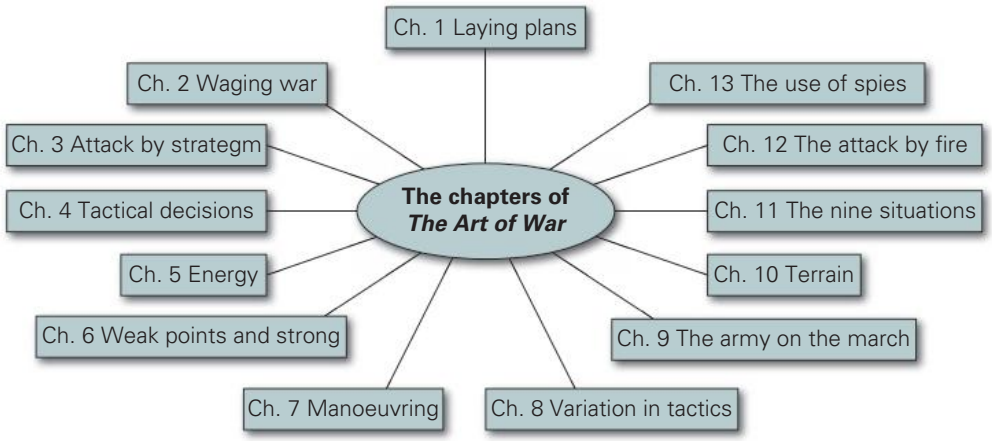

FIGURE 7.18 Diagram of the chapters of Sun Tzu's military treatise, *The Art of War*

Other methods used to undermine Qin's enemies

These included a variety of methods such as: making and breaking alliances, using intelligence, setting traps, spreading rumours and paying bribes. They even used their rival's natural features to their advantage.

> Bribes in high places ensured that the bravest and noblest of their rivals were discredited. Thanks to the whispers from Qin agents, many battles were won before the first arrow was shot.

SOURCE 7.8 Jonathan Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, pp. 72–3

> Much is made of the fact that Li Si implemented an extensive program of diplomatic bribery between 237 and the commencement of the conquest wars: hundreds of thousands of gold pieces were slipped into the pockets of high ministers in the eastern states to secure intelligence and policies friendly to Qin at other courts. These measures, coupled with a tightening of Qin administration, were essential to Qin's eventual success.

SOURCE 7.9 Dr Robert Eno, *Qin Dynasty and the Rise and Fall of the Qin State*, p. 9

Qin's rivals responded similarly and in fact during this series of campaigns an attempt to assassinate King Ying Zheng was organised by the Crown Prince of Yan.

The sequence of the conquests

According to Sima Qian, over a nine-year period between 230–221, King Zheng 'devoured his enemies as a silkworm devours a mulberry leaf'.[12] Unfortunately, the accounts of this almost decade-long series of campaigns are not recorded in great detail probably because of the 'social dislocations of the times'.[13] They are sometimes 'garbled and confused, the events presented out of order and sometimes contradictory'.[14]

1 The opening shot in the wars of conquest was the campaign in 230 to subjugate Han, the weakest of the six states. The preparation for this campaign was given to Li Si. The Qin army marched into Han, captured the Han king and took him as a prisoner to Qin, and the small state became nothing more than a place from which to launch future campaigns.

2 North of the Han across the Yellow River was Zhao. The Qin launched a three-pronged attack in 228 but faced fierce opposition. General Wang Jian bribed someone close to the king of Zhao to suggest that

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his generals were about to change sides. The king replaced them – unfortunately with weaker leaders – and within three months Zhao fell to General Wang Jian.

3 The Qin then embarked on their next objective: the state of Wei. Because the rule of the Qin Dynasty had adopted the power of water as its symbolic element, General Wang Ben, son of Wang Jian, used water in his assault on Wei's capital city. He ordered the destruction of the dykes that protected the capital from the surge of the Yellow River. Three months later, the capital under water, Wei surrendered in 225.

4 The state of Chu was next in line. When the retired general Wang Jian suggested that the they would need an army of 600 000 men to defeat such a tough opponent as Chu, King Ying Zheng ignored his experienced general's warning and the Qin army was defeated, losing face. Wang Jian was called out of retirement with a larger army and progressed slowly, taking town after town by siege until the Chu king was captured in 223.

5 Wang Ben was then sent north to deal with the remnants of the state of Yan in 222, eventually capturing the king, father of the prince who had once plotted the assassination of King Ying Zheng. This was the end of another royal dynasty.

6 All that was left was the state of Qi, which had once been a great threat to Qin. But due to the placement of a Qin agent as the state's chief minister, it was in no position to resist and exchanged a treaty with Qin in 221.

Refer back to the map in Figure 7.2 for the unification of the warring states in 221 BC.

In Sima Qian's *Historical Records*, there is an account of the conquests supposedly in the king's own words. It appears that he rewrote the series of conquests as if the rival kings were rebellious and in need of discipline and punishment. He spoke the following words as he addressed his chief ministers in 221 about finding a suitable new title for himself, which he believed he needed in recognition of his achievements.

> The king of Han offered us his territory and handed over his seal, requesting to become a frontier vassal, but having done so he turned his back on the agreement and formed a north-south alliance with Zhao and Wei to rebel against Qin, so we raised troops to punish them and took their king. ... The king of Zhao sent his chief minister Li Mu to come and arrange a treaty with us, and therefore we returned his hostage-son. But having done so, he turned his back on the treaty, rebelled against us and therefore we raised troops to punish them, and took their king ... The King of Wei first of all guaranteed to surrender and come over to Qin, but having done so he plotted with Han and Zhao to make a surprise attack on Qin, and officers and soldiers of Qin went to inflict punishment and subsequently defeated him. The King of Chu presented us with the land to the west of Xianyang, but having done so he rebelled against the agreement and attacked us in the Nan province, and so we set our troops to inflict punishment and took their king, and then restored order to his territory. The King of Yan was stupid and iniquitous, and his crown prince Dan even gave secret orders to perform a dastardly deed, but the officers and soldiers inflicted punishment and wiped out his state. The King of Qi ... broke off diplomatic relations, intending to create chaos, but our officers and soldiers inflicted punishment and took the king prisoner and restored peace to the territory of Qi ... the six kings have all admitted their crimes, and order is magnificently restored in all under Heaven. Now if the title is not changed there will be no means of praising these achievements and transmitting them to later generations.

SOURCE 7.10 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, pp. 61–62

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A new title

Li Si, Minister of Justice, Chief Minister Wang Wran, Imperial Secretary Feng Jie and others were invited to debate what to call Ying Zheng as he was now clearly more than an ordinary king. They eventually decided to combine the old terms 'huang', meaning 'August Ones' and 'di' meaning 'supreme being', creating the final term 'huangdi': Supreme August One, that even to this day means 'emperor'. Ying Zheng announced that he would be known as the 'Initial Emperor of the Qin' (not 'First Emperor' as he is called in English) while those who came after him would be simply numbered: Second Emperor, Third Emperor and so on. Little was he to know that his dynasty would end with the Second Emperor, and not last for 10 000 generations as he hoped.

ACTIVITY 7.4

1. Make a dot-point summary of everything you can find in the text about the Qin army on the eve of the decisive military conquests between 230–221.
2. Why is it hard to learn much about this transformative period in Chinese history?
3. Even though there is no evidence of King Ying Zheng ever fighting in a war, what is meant by the quote that he 'devoured his enemies as a silkworm devours a mulberry leaf'?
4. Analyse Source 7.10.
   - What was the purpose of this speech by the future First Emperor?
   - In what way does it reflect royal propaganda about the wars of conquest?
   - Make a list of the things he claims caused Qin to go to war against the neighbouring states.
   - Consider the part that the concept of the Mandate of Heaven would have had on his pronouncement.
5. Explain the significance of his new title.

FIGURE 7.19 Two representations of the First Emperor

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The establishment of imperial power

Although the territory now under Qin control was vast and unified into an empire, it seems that most officials, except for Li Si, were expecting the Emperor to continue to rule in the traditional manner: that is, in a feudal form, whereby he would install his many sons and male relatives in fiefdoms all over the empire. However, this did not fit the Legalist way of ruling, as Li Si pointed out. It would simply repeat the mistakes of the past. Over time, the emperor's offspring and descendants might become over-confident, raise armies and fight among themselves, gradually undermining the central authority. The Emperor had to transform Legalist theory into practice by creating a single, well-organised, centralised and hierarchical system that was 'sustained by laws, regulations, ranks, titles and offices'.[15]

In attempting to control an empire made up of diverse peoples and different lifestyles, the Emperor aimed to make all under heaven of one mind. This was the moment for him to prove that he was worthy of the Mandate of Heaven by securing a lasting peace.

He embarked on a policy of disbanding the old feudal system, and introduced standardisation to achieve political, commercial and cultural unity. According to Dr Robert Eno, it was Li Si who helped the Emperor 'to channel his megalomaniac talents', establishing 'the largest successful tyranny ever seen'.[16]

Organisation and administration of the empire

Most of the reforms of the First Emperor were not only conceived, but implemented by Li Si.

An initial change included the abolition of the old states and their noble houses and the introduction of a two-tier administrative system by dividing the country into 36 commanderies (*jun*), each in turn divided into counties. He appointed skilled administrators to put in place a centralised government and dispatched government appointees, chosen for their suitability for the job, to administer these new units: a governor, an army commander and an inspector, all served by district officers and clerks selected from the local populace. These men were controlled by a mass of regulations and reporting requirements, as well as penalties – and possible removal – for inadequate performance.

The civil administration at court included the powerful Chief Minister, the Chief Censor who investigated all office holders and reported directly to the Emperor, Imperial Secretary and Minister of Justice. There were also Nine Chamberlains and their staffs. Some Chamberlains were close to, and could influence, the Emperor.

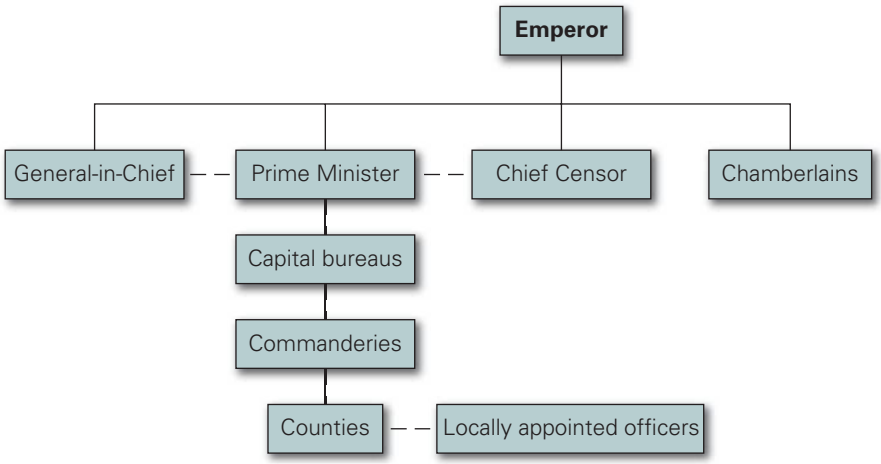

FIGURE 7.20 Diagram of Qin government organisation (adapted from R. Eno, *The Qin Revolution and the Fall of the Qin*)

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The Emperor also:

- ordered the walls dividing the former independent states demolished and all roadways – where feasible – to be interconnected, and ordered the building of new roads for royal, imperial and official use (see p. 734)
- created a unified population by registering every citizen as *qianshou* or 'the black-haired ones' rather than identifying them by ethnicity or state
- abolished all feudal titles and introduced the use of ranks based on military success or courage, not on birth
- declared private possession of weapons illegal in order to prevent local uprisings. Via an amnesty, these were to be handed in, brought to the capital, melted down and the bronze used for casting bells, bell stands and 12 massive metal statues
- relocated hundreds of thousands of noble or wealthy families from conquered states to the capital, another safeguard against rebellions
- maintained agriculture as one of its major priorities. This involved an audit of grain stores and of tools for losses and breakages, regular reports on variations in climate and rainfall, and punishments for farmers who 'allowed granary roofs to leak and vermin to flourish'.[17] There were also regulations for organising the countryside. See p. 734.
- standardised weights, measures and coinage
- simplified the Chinese script, which made it easier to read and communicate across the empire
- standardised axle lengths so that carts and chariots would have their wheels the same distance apart.

> He [Emperor] razed the city walls in provinces and districts and melted down their weapons to demonstrate that they would not again be used. He ensured that there would be no fiefdom in Qin, even of a single foot of territory, and he did not set up his sons and younger brothers as kings or successful ministers as feudal lords, to ensure that in future there would be none of the disasters of warfare.

SOURCE 7.11 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, pp. 27–8

> He erases doubt and establishes laws, so all will know what to shun. Local officials have their respective duties; order is achieved with ease. Decisions are certain to be just, none not clear as a drawing. The August Emperor in his enlightenment, scrutinizes the four quarters.

SOURCE 7.12 Burton Watson, trans. Sima Qian, II: *The Emperor's Stone Inscription*, *Langya Terrace*

TABLE 7.2 Standardisation and regulations throughout the empire

Type	Details
Standardised weights and measures and units of capacity	Bronze and iron weights, and Qin-approved grain scoops issued to merchants, all had the emperor's edict either inscribed on them or an engraved copper plate set into them. They have been found widely scattered in various provinces controlled by the Qin. The size of a 'unit' of gold was also standardised. These reforms facilitated trade and tax collection throughout the empire.
Uniformity of coinage	Prior to the reforms of the First Emperor, there were many types of 'coins' in use. Some states used square or circular coins, while others used money in the shapes of knives, spades and seashells. The traditional Qin coin, cast in bronze, was round with a square hole punched in the middle. They were all of one denomination indicated by their inscriptions: 'One half *liang*' (*ban liang;* 7 grams). The square hole in the centre allowed the insertion of a string to tie the coins together in units, perhaps of a hundred.

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TABLE 7.2 *(continued)*

Type	Details
A simpler script and uniformity of characters	The emperor called on Li Si to create a new simplified script to replace the many different forms of writing in use at the time in various parts of the country. Li Si's 'small seal script' made it easier to read the ancient pictographs and to communicate with others throughout the empire. This was in turn replaced by the *li shu*, which was even simpler to write and was the forerunner of modern Chinese characters.
Standardisation of axle width	The regulation that all carts carrying trade commodities as well as chariots should have the same axle width was due to the fact that many unpaved paths/roads up and down hillsides and along river flats were heavily grooved due to different wheel widths. With the same axle width (set at 1.92 metres) these forms of traffic could use the same ruts. Even the amount of oil that could be used to lubricate axles was regulated.
Regulation of different economic activities	In 1975, archaeologists digging a drainage channel discovered the tomb of a man named Judge Xi containing a complete set of bamboo sheets of Qin legal codes (crimes, sentences, punishments) and administrative documents which detail the duties of public officials in regulating economic activities in different areas. For example, there were sets of rules regarding: • agriculture, for the storage and inspection of grain • the use of certain articles or commodities of exchange such as bolts of cloth • the organisation of government-supervised markets, and the nature and quality of goods • the qualification of craftsmen from apprentices to skilled workmen, and the roles of foremen • the erection of tamped earth embankments • the requirements for efficient correspondence and rules for the dispatch of official documents.

There were many hundreds of other forms of state control, even to the extent of implementing the official veneration of water throughout the empire, which the emperor regarded as his divine protector. Together with water, its alchemical number six was used 'as the common denominator in state calculations and measurements', while water's ruling colour, black, became 'the defining hue of the empire'[18]: of flags, uniform adornments, hats and bandanas.

Many of these regulations, meant to help the smooth running of the Qin state, were often ruthlessly implemented since the Legalists prized their laws above all else. Occasional purges were carried out against those who even 'whispered' words of criticism or resistance.

FIGURE 7.21 A Qin iron counterweight engraved with a 40-character imperial edict about unifying the weights and measures

FIGURE 7.22 Knife- and spade-shaped coins of some pre-unification states

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FIGURE 7.23 A *ban liang* coin (used by Qin) which became the standardised coin throughout the empire

FIGURE 7.24 A mould for making *ban liang* coins

FIGURE 7.25 A stone slab with 12 new small seal characters

FIGURE 7.26 A bronze edict using the new imperial script

ACTIVITY 7.5

1. Why didn't the previous decentralised feudal-style organisation of vassal kingdoms fit the Legalist way of ruling?
2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the Legalist approach to government and the reforms introduced by Li Si with regard to:
   - continuing peace and order
   - administration
   - the economy, including agriculture and communication
   - the status of the elite
   - the labouring classes
   - crime and punishment.

Relationship of the First Emperor with his court officials

Despite his unification of the previous warring states into one centralised empire, Qin Shi Huangdi was suspicious of subjects from conquered nations at court. After all, he had already experienced an attempted coup and assassination attempts (see p. 746). There were hundreds of officials in the capital of Xianyang, but despite their value to the emperor, he did not allow most of them into his inner sanctum. Sima Qian (somewhat biased) reveals the relationship of the First Emperor with his officials at court.

> He only puts his trust in the law officers, and it is they who win his intimacy and favours. Although there are seventy scholars of broad learning, they are only to make up the number and he does not take their advice. The Chief Minister and the other important officials all accept business which has been already dealt with and they depend on the decisions being made by the Supreme One. The Supreme One enjoys using punishments and executions
>
> *continued...*

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...continued

as a sign of his authority, and since all under Heaven hang onto their salaries in fear of punishment, nobody dares to fulfil his loyal duties. Since the Supreme One does not hear about his faults, he grows daily more arrogant and his subordinates, cringing in terror, practice duplicity in order to win his forbearance.

SOURCE 7.13 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 77

The Emperor's inner circle

The emperor's most trusted inner circle comprised Li Si, the eunuch Zhao Gao, and the brothers Meng Tian and Meng Yi.

Li Si

Lis Si, a Legalist, had formed a powerful union with the young king, Zheng, which brought greater efficiency to Qin's institutions than ever before. We have already seen how Li Si, at first as a scribe, then as Minister of Justice, was able to influence the King/Emperor to adopt policies that he believed were in the best interests of Qin. He played a role in the conquests of the six rival states, discussed the imperial title, was instrumental in implementing the unification of the empire and in forging its administrative structures. He was finally made Chief Minister by Qin Shi Huangdi, a position he held until the death of the emperor and into the reign of the Second. Under him, law and order were the Qin state's major values, which relied heavily on the army to maintain.

FIGURE 7.27 An artistic representation of Li Si

Burning of the books

Within the Qin court were others who were political advisers to the emperor: the 'Seventy Scholars of Broad Learning' or 'Seventy Erudites'. At a banquet given by the emperor, the chief administrator of the scholars – knowing what was expected of him – gave a complimentary toast to Shi Huangdi. However, another rather drunken scholar (a follower of the Confucian philosophy) was critical of the present system and 'its wilful ignorance of tradition'.[19] He pointed out that in former days, rulers divided the land into fiefdoms and gave them to members of the royal family and those who had served them faithfully. 'That an enterprise can survive for long if it is not modelled on antiquity is not anything I have heard about.'[20] It is almost certain that he was mouthing the secret concerns of many of his fellow scholars and even some of the emperor's children. The emperor asked Li Si to respond and, since he was the chief organiser of the present administration, and 'one of the foremost minds of the age',[21] he was easily able to demolish the critical scholar's arguments with disdain, pointing out that:

- it was the Legalist system that had conquered the other states
- at the present time it had proved to be the best system that the world had ever seen
- if the ancient kings and their ways were so perfect, then what had gone wrong
- as far as he could see, it had taken the First Emperor to realise what Legalists had always known: that the ancient legends were lies
- future generations would need to be protected from such propaganda
- such ideas 'had to be removed from the minds of scholars'.[22]

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Those who have studied privately collaborate with each other to reject the laws and teachings, and when people hear ordinances promulgated everyone criticises them in accordance with his own studies. Indoors they mentally reject them and outside they make criticisms in the byways. They brag to their sovereign in order to make a reputation. Disagreement they regard as noble, and they encourage all the lower orders to fabricate slander. If such things are not prohibited, then the sovereign's power will decline, and below, factions will form. To prohibit this would be expedient.

SOURCE 7.14 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 74

FIGURE 7.28 A depiction of a Confucian scholar

Sima Qian records that Li Si requested that:

- the records of the historians apart from those of Qin should all be burnt
- apart from those copies which the scholars of broad learning are responsible for in their official capacity, anyone else who dares to possess and hide away *The Songs*, the *Documents* and the sayings of the hundred schools should hand them over to a governor or commandant and they should be indiscriminately burnt
- if there is anyone who dares to mention the *Songs* and *Documents* in private conversation, he should be executed
- those who are using the old reject the new, and will be wiped out together with their clan
- officers who see and become aware of such cases but do not report them should be convicted of the same crime with them
- if 30 days after the ordinance has been promulgated the books are not burnt, then the culprit shall be branded and sent to do forced labour on the walls
- there should be exemption for books concerned with medicine, pharmacy, divination by tortoiseshell and **milfoil**, the sowing of crops and the planting of trees.
- if anyone intends to take a study of the laws and ordinances, he should take the law officers as teachers.

milfoil a water plant used in one of two forms of Chinese divination: shapes on the stalks of milfoil plants and cracks on burnt tortoiseshells

This proposal was sanctioned by an imperial decree. It has been suggested that this might have coincided with the emperor's impatience at the failure of his 'immortality specialists', and hoped that banning useless literature would get them to focus their minds on his quest for eternal life. (See p. 748.)

However, this extension of government control 'into the very minds of its citizens'[23] meant that debate – something that Legalists prided themselves on – was restricted to only that which the Emperor approved.

Zhao Gao

Li Si's ally at court was the powerful eunuch, Zhao Gao, whose father had died saving the life of the Emperor's father. He had proved his value to the First Emperor as a result of his forceful nature and expertise in law. The Emperor promoted him and made him Director of the Palace Coach-houses. He served Prince Hu Hai [second son of the Emperor] and instructed him in the laws, and there were times when he travelled with the Emperor on royal tours that he was given charge of the royal seal. However, he

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was a man at court to be feared and there were many with whom he had private grievances, especially the Meng family. His power increased until he became the most powerful man in the land during the reign of the Second Emperor. (See p. 758 for the aftermath of the death of the First Emperor.)

The Meng brothers

Meng Tian and Meng Yi enjoyed high status because of their family's long military service to the Qin royal family over three generations, and they were friends with the First Emperor's first-born son, Prince Fu Su.

Meng Tian was a general and the man to whom the First Emperor entrusted two of his greatest achievements: the first version of the Great Wall and the networks of roads and canals, while Meng Yi was involved in internal planning for the Emperor.

> The First Emperor held the Meng family in highest esteem. Having confidence in them and so entrusting them with responsibility, he regarded them as men of quality. He allowed Meng Yi to be on terms of close intimacy, and he reached the position of senior minister. When he went out he took him in his carriage, and within the palace he was constantly in the imperial presence. Tian was given responsibility for matters outside the capital ... They were reputed to be loyal and trustworthy, so that none, even of the generals or leading ministers dared take issue with them in these matters.

SOURCE 7.15 Raymond Dawson trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 54

Despite the loyalty of each of these advisors to the First Emperor, they quarrelled among themselves. They began to polarise into two factions: one of Zhao Gao and Li Si; the other comprising the Meng brothers and their friend, Prince Fu Su.

It seems that at some point in the past the Meng brothers had uncovered some unspecified major crime involving Zhao Gao for which he was tried by Meng Yi, who had not been in favour of letting him off the charge and had sentenced him to death. He removed him 'from the register of officials, but because of Gao's estimable performance in the conduct of affairs, the Emperor pardoned him and restored his office and rank'.[24]

Throughout the reign of the First Emperor, these two men were continually at each other's throats, and this hatred had serious consequences for the succession after the Emperor's death and for the Meng family in particular.

ACTIVITY 7.6

1. Analyse Source 7.13 and list the criticisms of the relationship between the Emperor and his officials outlined by Sima Qian.
2. What influence did Li Si have at court?
3. Who were the 'Seventy Scholars of Broad Learning'?
4. What criticism did one of these scholars level at the imperial regime?
5. Analyse Source 7.14 for Li Si's response to the criticism.
6. List his recommendations to the Emperor.
7. What was the significance of the empire-wide imperial edict in 213 to burn all the records of the historians of the past except for those needed by scholars in their official capacity?
8. Describe the influence of Zhao Gao and Meng Yi at court and the factions that divided the Emperor's inner circle.

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FIGURE 7.29 Part of a pre-imperial 'sky-ladder' plank path

Roads and tours of inspection

There was already a long Chinese tradition of road building before the imperial age. For example, under the First Emperor's ancestor, King Heiwun, an amazing 500-kilometre plank road was built over the mountains to Sichuan. This incredible engineering feat, often referred to as a 'sky ladder', was 'built along sheer cliffs high above mountain torrents and waterfalls … constructed by driving the timber brackets into the rock face, sometimes using fire to crack the rock'.[25] There was a later saying that 'it would be easier to climb to Heaven than to walk the Sichuan Road',[26] and yet it was over this road that a Qin army travelled to conquer Sichuan.

However, the imperial roads of the First Emperor were intended predominantly for effective administration and trade, as well as for royal tours for inspection of the empire and for specific sacred and ritual purposes.

As with everything else, there were regulations that applied to the types of roads needed and these were associated with the rules for organising the countryside.

> These are the general rules for organizing the countryside. Between each lot of land there is a ditch. Beside the ditch there is a pathway. After every ten lots there is a small canal with a paved path beside it. After every hundred lots there is a canal with a road beside it. After ten thousand lots there is a river or a large canal, with a broad road beside it. In this way transport in the imperial kingdom is established.

SOURCE 7.16 E. Biot, 'Le Tcheou-Li', cited in E. Burman, *Terracotta Warriors*, p. 50

So, within the countryside there were:

- pathways – broad enough for a cow or horse to pass along
- wide-paved paths suitable for a cart
- a road for a four-horsed cart or chariot
- a broad road for two such carts or chariots to pass each other.

In the cities, however, the roads were wider: main avenues were wide enough for nine chariots abreast, and roads around the wall were seven-chariots wide.

Qin Shi Huangdi ordered the building of post roads all over the empire ,which like everything else were governed by engineering regulations such as choosing natural communication routes if possible.

These straight, paved imperial highways radiated from the capital and ran from Gansu in the west, to the Bohai Sea in the east and to the South China Sea in Guangdong. There were eight of them built over 15 years, covering an estimated distance of between 6700–8000 kilometres. They:

- were built on raised beds, were 30 paces wide and smooth
- featured central lanes reserved for imperial traffic

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- had staging posts, inns and other facilities at varying intervals (every 5–30 kilometres) along the way
- were controlled by inspection posts and tax officials.

A COMMENT ON...

The Straight or Direct Road, the greatest of the imperial highways

- It was laid out in a straight line for 1000 kilometres from just north of the capital to Jiuyuan in Inner Mongolia, beyond the great loop of the Yellow River.
- According to Sima Qian, 'Hills were hollowed out and valleys filled in to make it run straight'.[27]
- Despite making the northwest more accessible, both the starting and ending points had 'ritual, cultural and political significance'.[28] The starting point was the site of a palace, an ancient ceremonial centre. Its terminus marked a strategic pass and was an important ancient sacrificial site.
- By crossing the Ordos Plateau (refer to p. 713) the First Emperor was also displaying his power.

Qin Shi Huangdi's tours of inspection

These imperial highways were essential for the comfort of the Emperor and members of his entourage during the various grand tours the First Emperor made of his empire.

Shortly after the last of the rival six states had fallen, the First Emperor with his entourage left the capital of Xianyang in 220 to see the empire for himself, as most of the areas he is credited with conquering were in fact carried out by others. These tours of inspection were a long-standing Chinese tradition and the First Emperor is believed to have made at least five during his reign.

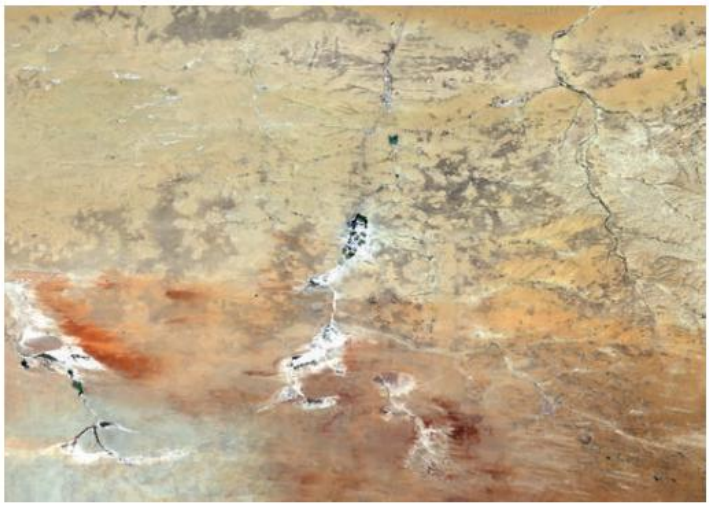

FIGURE 7.30 A satellite image of the Ordos Plateau over which the great Qin Straight Road ran

They appear to have served the following purposes:

1 To note the features of his empire, its people ('the black-haired ones'), their customs and practices, and to gauge the empire's security and potential for assessing taxes.

2 To follow in the footsteps of the semi-legendary figure Yu the Great (ancestry and myth were important) and of earlier kings who visited the sacred mountains of China, to make the appropriate sacrifices at each one, and erect inscribed stelae to announce the First Emperor's achievements and proclaim his ambitions.

3 To search for 'supernatural' advisers, an elixir of life and magical artefacts as he became increasingly obsessed with death and immortality later in his reign. See p. 748 on his search for immortality.

His first tour was to see the so-called 'wall region' and he headed up the Wei River into the highlands. See p. 740 for the Emperor's wall-building program.

His journey took him up past the former capitals of Qin when it had been nothing but a military outpost, and up beyond the source of the Wei river where his grandfather had constructed an earlier wall to mark Qin's eastern frontier. At Long-xi, the First Emperor

continued...

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...continued

could stand on a rammed earth rampart and gaze towards the west ... The First Emperor then travelled west along the old wall, before turning back down one of the Wei tributaries ... The journey [only a few hundred kilometres]... appears to have been more arduous than expected. On his return, the First Emperor ordered for the construction of better roads ... and announced that his next tour would be considerably farther ranging taking in the eastern shores where his domain fell into the limitless ocean. On the way, he would visit the gods themselves, and let them know that he was the ruler of the world.

SOURCE 7.17 Jonathan Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, pp. 109–10

His second tour in 219 was aimed at making a pilgrimage to China's most sacred mountain: Mount Tai. On the way, he would be able to examine some of the more outlying areas of his empire. He left a memorial inscription on Mount Yi – the first in Li Si's small seal script.

A COMMENT ON...

Mount Tai, the most sacred of the five sacred mountains in China

- This holy mountain, located in Shandong, was said to preside over the East which is the origin of all life. As well as the sun, all life begins in the East.
- It was the site of the *Fengshan* ceremony dedicated to heaven and earth, so important that Sima Qian devoted an entire chapter to it in his historical records.
- These Feng and Shan sacrifices were essential to the legitimacy and success of the Mandate of Heaven.
- Because the details of the *Fengshan* ceremony were kept secret, not much is known about the nature of the sacrifices, but each new ruler was meant to construct an altar terrace on its summit and sacrifice to Heaven (*Feng*) and then return to its base to a small hillock and offer similar prayers and sacrifices to the Goddess of Earth (Shan).
- In the ancient chronicles there are references to at least 72 emperors travelling east to visit Mount Tai.

However, when the First Emperor was performing the ceremony on the summit, a storm struck with fierce winds, thunder and a torrential downpour, which forced the ceremony to be curtailed. The emperor must have thought this was a bad omen, although he continued with the *shan* ceremony at the base of the mountain when the storm passed and set up an inscribed stone tablet.

The Emperor then proceeded to Mount Langye, overlooking the sea, which was noted for its beauty and where he stayed for some time supervising the rebuilding of an ancient tower, turning it into something impressive and more suitable for an emperor. 'He also ordered the transfer of families to found a new city there.'[29] He returned to this site from time to time as a summer resort. It seems that during this journey, the First Emperor began to worry about his own mortality. See p. 748.

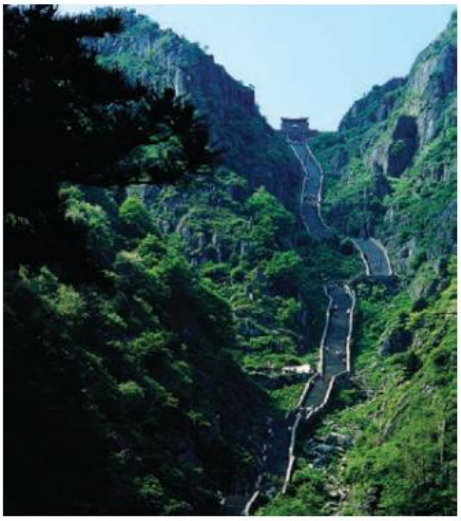

FIGURE 7.31 The access to Mount Tai today

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FIGURE 7.32 Sunrise from the viewing platform on Mount Tai

When the August Emperor came to the throne, he created regulations and made the laws intelligent, and his subjects cherished his instructions. In the 26th year of his rule he for the first time unified all under Heaven, and there were none who did not submit. In person he made tours of the black-headed people in distant places, climbed this Mount Tai, and gazed all around at the eastern limits. His servants who were in attendance concentrated on following his footsteps, looked upon his deeds as the foundation and source of their own conduct, and reverently celebrated his achievements and virtue. As the Way of good government circulates, all creation obtains its proper place and everything has its laws and patterns. His great righteousness shines forth with its blessings, to be handed down to later generations, and they are to receive it with compliance and not make changes in it. The August Emperor is personally sage, and had brought peace to all under Heaven, and had been tireless in government. Rising early and retiring late, he has instituted long-lasting benefits, and has brought especial glory to instructions and precepts. His maxims and rules spread all around, and far and near, everything has been properly organised, and every one receives the benefits of his sagely ambitions. Noble and base have been divided off and made clear, and men and women conform in accordance with propriety and carefully fulfil their duties. Private and public are made manifest and distinguished, and nothing is not pure and clean, for the benefit of our heirs and successors. His influence will last for eternity, and the decree he bequeaths will be revered, and his grave admonitions will be inherited forever.

SOURCE 7.18 The inscribed tablet at Mount Tai, Raymond Dawson trans. *Sima Qian, The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, pp. 65–6

In another tour of the east the following year (218), his entourage of soldiers and 36 carriages were attacked by a would-be assassin (see p. 747) and he made no more tours until 215.

In 215, he set out on his fourth inspection tour, heading along the road to his birth place of Handan, before heading north to the former state of Yen where he left another memorial tablet and built a palace. However, it seems that he was looking for a wise man that he believed could put him in touch with an

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'immortal'. He sent out several of his advisors to search for the Elixir of Life and then proceeded north to travel along the line of Ming Tian's Great Wall.

In 210, the Emperor made another tour of inspection, his last as it turned out. With Li Si, Zhao Gao and his second son, Prince Hu Hai, they headed far to the south to the Yangtze River on which they sailed in a flotilla of boats to the sea. He sacrificed in the Jiuyi Mountains and again at Mount Kuaiji. It appears that 'he was going in search of one last scheme to prolong his lifespan'.[30] He was frustrated in his attempts and at some time on this tour he became ill and died. (See p. 758.)

> These tours of inspection are significant for an understanding of the Mausoleum, since the peaks and rivers he visited throughout his empire mapped the universe that he wished to replicate in his burial chamber ... it was a sophisticated cosmological, geographical and geopolitical vision, creating a harmony which should continue to exist after his death.

SOURCE 7.19 Edward Burman, *Terracotta Warriors*, p. 56

ACTIVITY 7.7

1. How were the strict legalist regulations applied to the building of roads?
2. Using the text and Figure 7.30, describe the features and extent of the Emperor's straight imperial highways.
3. What does the evidence suggest were the main purposes of the five great tours of inspection taken by the Emperor?
4. Why was the Emperor determined to visit, climb and sacrifice at Mount Tai?
5. Analyse the memorial inscription (Source 7.18) the Emperor erected at Mt Tai. List the personal qualities he wanted to be remembered for, and the achievements he mentions in this inscription.
6. How valuable would these memorial inscriptions be to historians?

The First Emperor's building program

> In just ten years he built 6,800 kilometres of roads, around 2,800 kilometres of Great Wall, two major canals, palaces and buildings for the 120 000 noble families who were moved to Xianyang after their own states had been conquered, as many as 700 palaces and temples for himself (including Epang, one of the largest ever envisioned, though never completed), terraces and palaces during his inspection tours, and large mausoleums for his grandmother and himself.

SOURCE 7.20 E. Burman, *Terracotta Warriors*, p. 194

Labour forces

Massive numbers of craftsmen and labourers were required to carry out the ambitious building program of Shi Huangdi. According to Sima Qian, 300 000 men were used by Meng Tian on the Great Wall and an equally large labour force was supposedly employed on the Emperor's Mausoleum and the Epang Palace.

- It seems that a large percentage of these forces were made up of foreign prisoners and criminals who were transferred all over the empire and forced to work all year round. Those who were undesirables had a choice of slavery on the frontiers or death.

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- Thousands of households were moved to other areas to work on these building programs. Sima Qian records that 30 000 households – which could mean up wards of 100 000 people – were moved to work on the Mausoleum. 'Such forced movements of large numbers of people were facilitated by the existence of an efficient household registration system',[31] whereby all members of a household were itemised. This allowed entire families to be moved permanently, or just an individual to work on a temporary task.
- There was a huge reservoir of labour provided by soldiers no longer needed for war, who were conscripted for large-scale building tasks
- There was a **corvée** for part of the year, possibly made up of farmers, although they could not afford to be away from their farms during the sowing and harvesting season.

corvée forced recruitment of farmers to work on buildings and community tasks such as major water and land management schemes

The records indicate that there was an official (obviously a senior man) called the Controller of Works, responsible for both conscripts and convicts.

But how were the skilled craftsmen recruited?

They were probably transported from all over the empire and it appears that they – as far as the Mausoleum was concerned – were employed in government-owned factories and workshops off-site. The imperial administration also had a well-developed apprentice system, which indicates that it 'was geared to turning out the workers needed for large-scale construction projects'.[32]

The mobilisation of such vast numbers 'displays powers of control, logistics and organisation beyond present-day imagination'.[33]

Qin Canal and irrigation projects

For centuries before the unification by the First Emperor, individual states were involved in numerous schemes to control local water supplies by means of dams and dykes. These schemes were for irrigation and to prevent the frequent disastrous floods that plagued the area.

There were three great hydraulic engineering projects during the Qin period between 256 and 214:

1 In 256 the Qin state constructed the Dujiangyan irrigation and flood control system on the Min River (the largest tributary of the Yangtze). When it was completed, no more floods occurred and irrigation made Sichuan the most productive agricultural region in China. This system is still used today to irrigate over 5300 square kilometres of land.

2 In Qin at the end of the Warring States period, the Zhengguo Canal was started under the control of a Han engineer, Zheng Guo. The canal connected the Jing River and Luo River – northern tributaries of the Wei – covering a distance of 300 *li* (in today's terms about 150 kilometres). According to Sima Qian, it was originally part of a ploy by the Han Dynasty against the Qin.

> Ostensibly the purpose was to provide irrigation for the fields, though in fact Zhen Guo and the rulers of Han hoped thereby to wear out the energies of the state of Qin so that they would not march east and attack Han ... halfway through [the project] the real aim of his mission came to light. The Qin ruler was about to kill him, but Zheng Guo said, 'It is true that I came here originally with underhanded intentions, but if the canal is completed, it will profit the state of Qin as well'.

SOURCE 7.21 Burton Watson trans, *Records of the Han Dynasty II, by Sima Qian II*, p. 54

The Zhengguo Canal irrigated c. 27 000 sq km of previously useless arid country, transforming it into one of the most fertile agricultural areas in China and, according to Sima Qian, its fertility allowed the Qin to increase the size of its army and conquer its rival states. To this day the land surrounding the Zhengguo Canal is extremely fertile.

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3 After unification, the First Emperor assigned Shi Lu to build a canal for grain transport. The resulting Lingqu Canal – completed in 214 – was 36.4 kilometres in length, and linked the Xiang River, which flowed into the Yangtze, with the Li Jiang, which flowed into the Pearl River. This canal connected two of China's major waterways, allowing water transport between north and south China. It was a complex project that included many hydraulic features: locks and weirs, overflow dams, dykes and canals as well as existing waterways. It remained the chief water route for over 2000 years, is considered one of the greatest feats of ancient engineering and is a UNESCO World Heritage site.

FIGURE 7.33 Dujian Weir

FIGURE 7.34 The original site of the Zhengguo Canal

FIGURE 7.35 A section of the Lingqu Canal in use today

The Great Wall

For hundreds of years before the First Emperor, many states had marked their borders and protected their territory from enemies by building networks of short walls that linked river defences to impassable cliffs. In the 3rd century BC, the grandfather of Shi Huangdi had built a wall to the north and west of Qin lands from Lanzhou in the west across Shaanxi, up to Xian and north to Yulin and on to the Yellow River. However, it was not a continuous wall but one that utilised stretches of an older wall, and made use of natural features such as ridges and ravines, as well as separate walls and forts to block river valleys. Little remains of this wall today. Refer back to Figure 7.2 for location of older walls.

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There was not one 'great wall, but a thousand, forming a network of largely redundant barriers. ... With the ascendancy of the First Emperor, almost all the walls became superfluous to requirements and fell into ruin.

SOURCE 7.22 Jonathan Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, p. 101

As the existing Qin Wall only protected Qin, the First Emperor, with an empire to defend on its northern frontier, initiated a massive undertaking to link the walls of Qin, Zhao and Yan. Meng Tian was put in charge of the wall project with power to recruit up to 300 000 men 'to serve as a standing army of construction workers. The logistics of the task were forbidding'.[34] This project involved constructing a road across the Ordos Plateau providing easy access to the upper reaches of the Yellow River, which gave the First Emperor control over some of the territory of the so-called barbarian tribes (known collectively as the Hu) north of the river.

The Qin 'Great Wall', built to keep out the northern nomads and to mark the edge of the Qin Empire, occupied a labour force for the rest of the emperor's life.

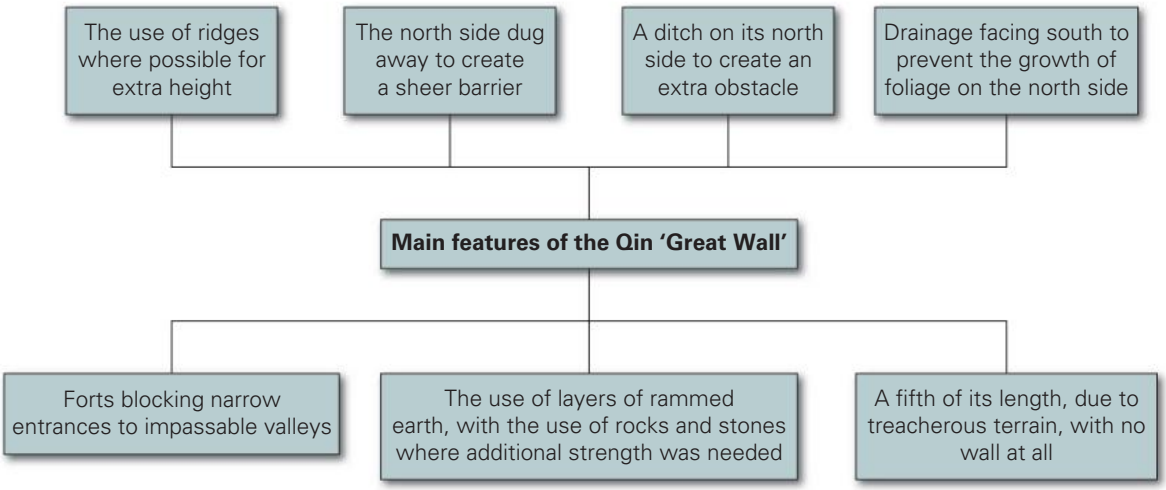

FIGURE 7.36 Diagram of the main features of the Qin 'Great Wall'

Incredible and fanciful folk tales were told for centuries about the way the wall was created, such was the sheer disbelief that such a wall could have been constructed by ordinary men, and the mortar used in the wall was believed to have magical powers. (See comment on p. 742.)

Although, there are no surviving historical records indicating the exact length and course of the Qin 'Great Wall' – much has eroded away – Qin Shi Huangdi's achievements anticipated what was to become the Great Wall of China. However, the Great Wall we see today disappearing across the mountains north of Beijing is a modern rebuilding of the Ming Dynasty wall (1368–1644 AD) which, in turn, had been built on top of Qin and Han foundations.

FIGURE 7.37 The First Emperor mapping the 'Great Wall' in sand

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FIGURE 7.38 A rebuilt section of the Ming Dynasty Great Wall

A COMMENT ON...

Women, wall mortar and magical properties

Not all the workers on the wall were men. Women charged with crimes were sent to the Wall as 'rice-pounders', spending their days chained together, not milling grains, but pounding buckets of rice to make the rice paste used in the mortar of the Great Wall. Because later generations could not reproduce the qualities (hardness and sticking power) of this Qin cement, they believed it had some alchemical properties. They prised lumps of it from the remains of the wall to grind into a powder which they maintained healed wounds (cuts and burns) and stomach problems.

Adapted from J. Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, pp. 107–8

Palace building

The First Emperor extended and rebuilt the capital Xianyang 'in his own image'.[35]

> On the slopes above the city, he built replicas of the halls and palaces of the six states he had subdued which were filled with everything he had taken from them ... These new buildings looked down across the capital to the ancestral palaces to the south of the river, and in the distance ... to the east where his Mausoleum was under construction. ... For in this way Qin Shi Huangdi 'sought to focus and concentrate at his own capital the vital forces that had previously been channelled through rival capitals'.[36]

SOURCE 7.23 Edward Burman, *Terracotta Warriors*, p. 58

The Epang palace complex

According to Sima Qian, the First Emperor believed that the capital city was too crowded and the palaces of the former kings were far too small for an emperor, so he conceived a new palace in the form of a terraced pavilion for himself and his court in the Shanglin park on the opposite side of the Wei River from the capital. Construction began in 212 on a dwelling mapped to the stars and fit for a supreme deity.

Sima Qian says that he began on the front hall, Epang, which 'was 500 paces from west to east and 500 feet from north to south. In the upper part it could seat a myriad people, and in the lower part one could erect a 50-foot banner'.[37] Scholars believe that it was the largest and most ostentatious palace ever conceived (it was unfinished at his death), a two-storey wooden structure built on terraces of rammed earth. Its foundation platform has been estimated as 1320 metres east to west, 420 metres north to south, and 8 metres in height with a throne room about 693 metres long by 116.5 metres wide. Its upper storey could hold 10 000 seated guests, while battle standards 11 metres high could be raised in the lower storey.

For transport around, Sima Qian says that 'there was a screened highway from below the hall straight to the Southern Mountains. The summit of the Southern Mountains was put on show and treated as the entrance gate'. Also, an 'elevated walkway extended from Epang across the Wei River to connect the

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palace with Xianyang, in imitation of the way in which, in the heavens, a corridor leads from the Heavenly Apex star across the Milky Way to the Royal Chamber star'.[38] Like his Mausoleum, this building featured cosmological correspondences.

There were 270 other palaces and towers built within a 100 kilometres of the Epang, which were all supposedly linked by elevated walkways so that the emperor could move between them without being seen. He is also believed to have lined the gateways of his palaces with magnetite so that no one could enter with hidden iron weapons.

> The First Emperor ordered that his various homes and palaces around the capital were to be connected by a series of walkways and covered arcades. The result was a citywide maze of tunnels and closed corridors, linking 277 locations. Each palace was fully furnished for the First Emperor's pleasure, with cooks, girls and guards, none of whom was permitted to leave. This situation allowed the First Emperor to choose his place of rest each night completely at random, turning up at one of the palaces without warning. Initially it seemed like a relatively harmless, although costly bit of fun. The First Emperor was able to disappear from public life for prolonged periods, only making himself available to Li Si and the other ministers when he wished it so.

SOURCE 7.24 Jonathan Clements, *The First Emperor of China*, p. 133

The Epang palace remained unfinished and was destroyed by fire (since it was a timber structure) during the rebellion that brought the Qin Dynasty to an end.

FIGURE 7.39 A painting of the Epang palace

ACTIVITY 7.8

1. Describe the nature of the massive labour forces employed on the First Emperor's vast building program.
2. Summarise the building program in a table of four columns with the following headings:
   - Type of building
   - Construction features
   - Contemporary benefits
   - Survival.

The impact of personality on his career

As with most individuals in the past, it is virtually impossible to understand the First Emperor's real personality due to the bias in the sources, the fragmentary nature of them and the time frame in which he lived. 'Chinese historical texts, for all their voluminous records, are among the world's most barren when it comes to the personal character of rulers. It is difficult to find significant information concerning the character of the First Emperor prior to the Qin conquest; his role in the politics of Qin is unclear and there is little specifically relating to his personal conduct'.[39]

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The lenses through which we try to gauge an understanding of the First Emperor's real character are two-fold:

1 The *Historical Records* of Sima Qian, who is the chief source for Shi Huangdi and the Qin period. His account is negative, reflecting his Han background (see Section 7.5 for more details).
2 The other lens is what the First Emperor wanted others to think of him and what he wanted to pass onto the future, expressed in his repetitive mountain inscriptions placed all over his empire.

TABLE 7.3 A summary of Shi Huangdi's personality traits revealed in Sima Qian and the First Emperor's inscribed stelae

Sima Qian *The Historical Records*	Mountain inscriptions of the First Emperor
The following are some of the comments about Shi Huangdi in The *Historical Records*: • 'by nature obstinate, cruel and self-willed' • 'delighting in showing his authority by punishing and killing' • 'growing daily more arrogant' • 'greedy and short-sighted and self-obsessed' • 'placing priority on deceit and force' • 'lacking humanness and rightness' • 'favoured violence and cruelty over benevolence and propriety' • 'lacking in sincerity' • 'ruthless when crossed' • 'possessed the mind of a tiger or wolf' • 'failed to recognise ritual'	The following are some of the qualities Shi Huangdi recorded about himself: • 'he spreads righteousness, bestows blessings and is compassionate' • 'no one does not receive the benefit of his virtue • 'with sagacity, wisdom and humaneness he had made manifest all principles' • 'fixes laws so that all understand what to do' • 'brings concord to father and son' • 'felt pity for the multitude' • 'has brought glory to the ancestral temples, embodies the Way and practices virtue' • 'tireless in seeing and listening' • 'punished the unprincipled and those who perpetuated rebelliousness were wiped out' • 'punished justly and with authority' • 'his great rule cleanses morality' • 'criminals who spread disorder were wiped out' • 'punished justly with authority'

Trying to read between the lines of the sources, and taking into account the historical context of Shi Huangdi's life and career, some of the following may approach the truth about his personality. He seems to have been:

- vulnerable and malleable when young
- insecure
- scholarly
- aloof
- authoritative
- determined
- stubborn
- impatient
- ruthless and often cruel when punishing those who opposed him
- self-obsessed
- later, he became superstitious, obsessive, anxious, secretive and paranoid.

Jonathon Clements described him as 'a shadow'.

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In his own lifetime he was aloof and hidden from view, protected by distance from killers and admirers alike. When none dared look at him or speak his true name, it is unsurprising that we have little idea of his facial features or character. There is little in ancient accounts about his personality, instead, all we have are the bold architectural statements and the brutal political decisions.

SOURCE 7.25 Jonathan Clements, preface to *The First Emperor of China*

A COMMENT ON...

An analysis of Shi Huangdi's personality based on modern social and behavioural science

- Beyond Shi Huangdi's strategical merits, by which he fulfilled the ancient dream to unify the Chinese states, we can assert that he had a tenacious sense of personal rights, being self-determined to accomplish his great purposes in life.
- His main political and historical contributions reflect psychological traits such as activism, self-determination and a high level of liberalism (taking into consideration that he contested the values of the Confucianist culture).
- Shi Huangdi was a strategic thinker because he accomplished great things, the most important being the unity between Qin state and the other six rival states.
- Taking into consideration his decisions and actions, we can underline that he had an authoritarian personality, acting as The Supreme One.
- He was vengeful and unforgiving – being the adept of punishments and executions.
- His obsessive need for power and desire for immortality reflect a defensive mechanism. In order to compensate for his suspected illegitimacy, he tried to delete the social memory of the former rulers, and to write a new history, whose first hero would be himself.
- Other psychological characteristics related to the need for power are: omnipotence, inflated sense of self-esteem and overestimation. We suppose that the latter could have the role of hiding a fragile or vulnerable self.
- He doubted the trustworthiness of others and in his social relationships he was very tough, using capital punishment with those people who represented a threat to his authority.
- Psychologists agree that people who have a great distrust of others experience other difficulties such as anxiety. Shi Huangdi developed a great fear of death, resorting to many ways of protecting himself from possible murderers and his obsession to find an elixir of immortality.

To summarise, a psychological portrait of the First Emperor would include:

- Dominance (authoritarian personality)
- Strategic intelligence
- High levels of liberalism (he contested the Confucian values)
- Self-reliance, tenacious sense of personal rights
- Anxiety (leading to anger, depression, vulnerability to stress revealed in fear of being murdered and a tendency to isolate himself)
- Consciousness (ambition, perseverance, high level of cautiousness)
- Obsessive need for power
- Low level of agreeableness (uncooperative, suspicious, absence of modesty).

Adapted from Daniela Zaharia et al., *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences* 140 (2014) 212–20

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ACTIVITY 7.9

1. Explain why it is difficult to gauge the First Emperor's true personality and its effect on his career.
2. Review the life of the First Emperor so far treated in this study and make a list of the possible personality traits that might have affected his actions.
3. As you proceed to study him further, add to the list of traits that seem to have affected his various decisions.

Assassination attempts

There were three unsuccessful assassination attempts against the First Emperor's life between 227–218.

The following table summarises these, two of which occurred at the Qin court (one during the Wars of Conquest in 227, and one a year after the unification in 220) and one while the First Emperor was on one of his tours of inspection in 218.

TABLE 7.4 Assassination attempts

Attempt	Assassin	Reasons	Methods
1 227	Jing Ye	Came originally from the state of Wei, but moved to Yan to which the Crown Prince had recently returned by escaping from Qin where he had been held a hostage and treated badly. The Crown Prince planned to assassinate King Zheng of Qin (later First Emperor) before he could conquer Yan. Jing Ye, an expert swordsman, was given the task of assassin.	The plan was for Jing Le to gain an audience with King Zheng, who still entertained foreign visitors. The problem was how to get close enough to the king's platform to kill him, and also how to get a weapon into the palace. There was a fugitive Qin general, Fan Yuquito, in Yan at that time consumed with hatred for the Qin king who had killed all his family. He offered to kill himself so that Jing Lee could present his head to the Qin king and so get close to him. The Crown Prince of Yan provided a small sharp dagger coated in poison, hidden inside a rolled map that had been prepared, ostensibly showing territories that Yan was prepared to cede to Qin in return for better relations. At the Qin court, Jing Ye ascended the throne dais and when the king rose to check if the head was really that of his former general, Jing Ke unrolled the bamboo scroll. He grabbed the blade hidden inside and with his other hand, made a reach for the king's arm to draw him into range. Jing Ye clutched at Ying Zheng's silken sleeves but the king backed off, out of his wits with fear. No one in the court had dared make a move and it took some time until the king gave the command to permit his soldiers onto the dais and drew his own sword and regained his composure. He struck Jing Ye, eight times maiming him before re-sheathing his weapon.

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TABLE 7.4 *(continued)*

Attempt	Assassin	Reasons	Methods
2 220	Gao Jianli	Was a musician from Yan and friend of Jing Ye. He escaped after Jing Ye's failed attempt but after years on the run resumed his lute playing and was invited to the Court of the First Emperor who was moved by his music. When he was recognised, the king did not send him away but blinded him by putting out his eyes. Gao Jianli planned his revenge.	For some time he played for the king who praised his music, biding his time until he could get closer to him. Then he weighted the lute with lead and when next he got close he raised the lute to strike the king but missed. The emperor had Gao Jianli put to death and 'for the rest of his life did not again allow anyone from the feudal states to come close to him'.[40]
3 218	Zhang Liang	Came from an aristocratic family in Han which had served the Han rulers. When Han was annexed by Qin, Zheng Liang failed to inherit his family's legacy and planned revenge on the First Emperor, spending his entire fortune trying to find a suitable assassin.	He managed to find a man with great physical strength to help him, and had an iron anvil weighing roughly 72 kg forged for the strongman. In 218 BC, Zhang Liang heard that the emperor was due to pass by Bolangsha as part of his inspection tour. He and his strong man lay in ambush and waited for the emperor's convoy to approach. Assuming that the most decorated carriage in the middle held the emperor, the strongman hurled the assassination weapon towards it and the heavy projectile crushed the carriage, killing its occupant. The emperor was actually not in that carriage and survived the assassination attempt. Zhang Liang fled from the scene during the ensuing chaos, but his strongman was captured by guards, and taken to Li Si and Zhao Gao for interrogation. He managed to elude them and killed himself by smashing his head into a nearby column. Zhang Liang was forced to spend several years as a fugitive, and although there were imperial investigations in the region to teach the locals a lesson, it appears that the incident might have been covered up.

ACTIVITY 7.10

1. Describe the method employed in each assassination attempt.
2. Explain why they were unsuccessful.

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Search for Immortality and the First Emperor's Mausoleum

The First Emperor came from a family – even generations before his famous ancestor King Huiwen – that had an obsession about personal immortality. It seems that in other states, according to the philosopher/adviser Han Fei, there were men teaching the art of achieving material immortality as early as 320 BC, which had something to do with a form of **alchemy**, and educated nobles and rulers were willing to listen to them. The writings of Han Fei – though sceptical of personal immortality – refer to a 'drug of deathlessness'. It is no wonder that the First Emperor – 'despite being educated by a man whose disdain for the supernatural was legendary'[41] – also hoped to overcome death and achieve immortality.

alchemy a seemingly magical process of transformation, particularly in regard to the transmutation of matter

> He survived assassination attempts, constantly feared conspiracies and insisted on secrecy in his movements to the extent of building walls and corridors to disguise them from public view – and to render them invisible to malign spirits. After years of military conquests and bloody massacres he had good reason to fear revenge from victims whose spirits would also continue to live after death and lie in wait for him.

SOURCE 7.26 Edward Burman, *The Terracotta Warriors*, p. 67

He became increasingly obsessed with death; would allow no one to speak of his demise, would not write a will or discuss the question of succession; he listened to every so-called wise man he could on his many tours around his empire; employed a large body of learned men – some who turned out to be charlatans – to look into the question of achieving immortality; sent endless expeditions to find the legendary home of the Immortals, the Elixir of Life; and searched for supposedly supernatural artefacts. Divination and the work of his court alchemists or 'recipe gentlemen' were part of this search.

A COMMENT ON...

Jade, mercury and the 'herb of deathlessness'

- To the ancient Chinese the first task in achieving immortality was to prevent bodily decay and there were readily-available materials that were believed to enhance preservation: jade and mercury.
- Jade, used since legendary times for sacred tomb artefacts and to cover the corpse, was also taken in a dissolved form internally by emperors before communicating with the spirits. It represented continuity, signifying that there is no break between life and death.
- Mercury, as the only metallic element in liquid form, was an integral part of ancient Chinese alchemy. Alchemists called it the 'immortal elixir' and it is believed that the First Emperor imbibed a medical potion of arsenic and mercury, which ironically is believed to have contributed to his death.
- As well as these, there are references in legends and mythology of a plant-based elixir of immortality found on a chain of three spirit mountain-islands of Penghai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou (the Shifu Islands), a day's sailing off the northeast coast where fairies or immortals were said to live. This elixir was supposed to have used a special herb that had such qualities that only a single stalk of it could raise a man from the dead.
- Sima Qian records that when the First Emperor heard of these islands from a man named Xu Fu – a self-professed sorcerer – who claimed that there was a magic pill on the islands, he ordered him to search for it. However, the islands could only be approached by a qualified wizard and pure youths and maidens.

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- The First Emperor left Xu Fu with an impressive budget to raise a fleet and find 1000 male and female virgins to take on his quest. By 212 he had heard nothing from Xu Fu about his search or the 'herb of everlasting life', although Sima Qian tells of three occasions when the Emperor himself is supposed to have visited the Mountain of Immortality in northeast China and left a memorial tablet.

FIGURE 7.40 *The Immortal Island of Penglai*, by Chinese artist Yuan Jiang (1708)

FIGURE 7.41 A statue of Xu Fu in Weihai, Shandong

FIGURE 7.42 A representation of the ships sent in search of the elixir of life on the immortal island of Penglai

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While he sent others out looking for the elixir of immortality, he decided to follow in the footsteps of the great Taoist, Lao Zi and his devotees, who lived a simple life of contemplation in nature, until they rid themselves of all earthly issues and achieved immortality. However, instead of taking off into the wilderness, the First Emperor built his own 'wilderness' close to his palace, a place of landscaped gardens and a huge pond with water diverted from the Wei River; but he soon became impatient that he did not attain enlightenment.

He was becoming increasingly superstitious and his search for a way to live forever was getting nowhere. Those who had boasted of knowing the secrets of immortality were now in fear of their lives because if the Emperor ever suspected them of lying, they would be executed. They came up with ever-more excuses for their failures.

> Master Lu said to the First Emperor: 'Your servant and others search for magic fungus, rare elixirs, and immortals, but we constantly fail to come across them. There seems to be something which is harming us. One of the arts of magic is that the sovereign should sometimes travel about in secret in order to avoid evil spirits, for if evil spirits are avoided a true being will come. ... I wish that people were not permitted to know the palace where the Supreme One is staying, for only then may the elixir of everlasting life perhaps be found. ... As a result of this nobody afterwards knew where he was when he travelled about.

SOURCE 7.27 Raymond Dawson, trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor; Selections from the Historical Records*, pp. 75–6

Eventually, the supernatural consultants, with no more excuses to offer, expressed an opinion that the Emperor would not find immortality while he was so concerned with worldly things. The Emperor, sick of their time-wasting and excuses, ordered an investigation into the so-called supernatural powers of his advisers, and as they wilted under the interrogation they turned on their colleagues. Those who could offer no evidence of their powers were put to death. Sima Qian records that there were 460 scholars buried alive. Could this have been Shi Huangdi's ploy to see if they really did have supernatural powers? (See p. 768 for the reliability of Sima Qian.)

Only Fu Su, the Emperor's eldest son, spoke out against his father's excesses, saying that it was unfair for him to punish them for simply repeating ancient knowledge and that it would cause restlessness throughout the empire. His father reacted by sending him to the northern frontier – virtually exiling him from court – to help Meng Tian with his military campaigns beyond the Great Wall.

During his last tour of inspection, the Emperor finally located Xu Fu, who claimed he had found the magical islands but his passage was hindered by giant sea creatures. The Emperor was supposed to have hired a fishing fleet and gone himself. After days of drifting, they found nothing except a 'large fish'. The Emperor shot one with his crossbow and then declared to Xu Fu when he returned that the supernatural guardians had been defeated, probably hoping that Xu Fu would make another attempt.

ACTIVITY 7.11

1. Explain why, 'despite being educated by a man [Li Si] whose disdain for the supernatural was legendary', the First Emperor was obsessed with searching for a way to live forever.
2. Draw a mind map summarising all the ways in which he went about his quest for immortality.
3. How did the First Emperor eventually react to his quest 'going nowhere'?

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The First Emperor's Mausoleum

Work had begun on the future Emperor's tomb the moment he ascended the throne as a boy of 13 in 246, but after the unification of China in 221, the plan for his Mausoleum expanded as one fit for an emperor under the direction of Li Si. It was probably then that work began on his Terracotta Army. This massive project was only completed several years after the Emperor's death.

A Chinese tradition

From the earliest dynasties down to the 20th-century mausoleum of Mao Zedong built in 1976, tombs for their rulers have been a major concern of the Chinese. In building his massive mausoleum at the foot of Lishan Mountain, the emperor was simply continuing a long Chinese tradition.

A COMMENT ON...

A Qin tradition of royal mausoleums

- Recent archaeological excavations in Quanqui in southwestern Gansu (now known as Lixian) have revealed many early Qin settlements, including three walled cities. It was here that the earliest Qin capital city was built, and significantly for any study of the 'First Emperor', archaeologists have found a tomb and sacrificial pits that predate those of Qin Shihuangdi by 600 years. This tomb is '88 metres long with two ramps aligned on an east-west axis, and which includes a musical-instrument pit and four pits for human sacrifice and another tomb 110 metres long with east-west ramps'.[42]
- Also, the huge and remarkable tomb of one of the Qin dukes has been excavated, comprising a funerary chamber 24.5 metres underground and around it 72 coffins of officials who had to commit suicide, plus 94 coffins of artisans, musicians and instrument makers and 20 coffins of workmen. The coffins were made of massive cedar beams. These show the real rise to power of the Qin at this stage as it would have required a huge workforce to fell, transport and shape these coffins, a task 'comparable in proportion to that of the duke's famous descendent fourteen generations later'.[43]

However, methods of tomb construction and contents had changed since those times.

1 Vessels made specially for burials began replacing bronze vessels that had actually been used in ritual.
2 Objects of lesser quality or cheaper copies in clay became as acceptable as burial items. These substitutes were called spirit utensils (*mingqi*).
3 Real humans and horses were sometimes replaced by figures of humans and horses. Most early examples were made of wood.
4 Tombs began to acquire features of dwellings used by the living, such as palaces.

A COMMENT ON...

What a mausoleum at the time of Qin Shi Huangdi might have been like according to *The Annals of Lü Buwei*

'The towers and courtyards that are erected, the chambers and halls that are constructed, and the "guest stairway" that is fashioned make the burial site a city'.[44] 'Such burials now include pearls put in the mouths of corpses, jade suits that cover their bodies like fish scales, silk cords and bamboo documents, jewels and trinkets, bells, tripods, wine pots, coolers, carriages and horses, robes and coverlets, halberds and swords, all too numerous to count. Every utensil required to nurture the living is included'.[45]

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The problem with assessing the First Emperor's Mausoleum is that he was now an emperor of a unified empire and not a king, so it is hard to compare his with those of his ancestors.

According to Sima Qian, workers from every province of the empire toiled unceasingly to construct a subterranean city within a gigantic mound with an original height of 115 metres, and that this force were conscripts released from army duty, as well as criminals punished by castration and sentenced to slavery.

> They dug through three springs, and poured down molten bronze to make the outer coffin; and replicas of palaces and pavilions, all the various officials. And wonderful vessels, and other rare objects were brought up to the tomb, which was then filled with them. Craftsmen were ordered to make crossbows and arrows which would operate automatically, so that anyone who entered what had been excavated was immediately shot. Quicksilver [mercury] was used to represent the various waterways, the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers, and the great sea, being made by some mechanism to flow into each other, and above were ranged the heavenly constellations and below was the layout of the land and set to flow mechanically. Above were representations of the heavenly constellations, below, the features of the land. Candles were made from whale fat for it was reckoned that it would be a long time before they were extinguished.
>
> The Second Emperor said: 'It would not be right that any of the previous Emperor's concubines should emerge from this place unless she has a son.' They were all ordered to accompany him in death, and those who died were extremely numerous. After the burial had taken place someone mentioned the fact that the workers and craftsmen who had constructed the mechanical devices would know all about the buried treasures would be immediately disclosed. Consequently, when the great occasion was finished and after the treasures had been hidden away, the main entrance to the tomb was shut off, and the outer gate lowered so that all the workers and craftsmen who had buried the treasure were shut in, and there were none who came out again. And vegetation and trees were planted to make it look like a hill.

SOURCE 7.28 Raymond Dawson, trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 83

It is believed that the whole complex was a symbolic representation of the Qin Empire centred on Shi Huangdi's palace as his seat of power for the afterlife, all aligned to the cosmos with him at its centre which would guarantee his continual influence over his earthly world.

What do we know of this UNESCO Heritage site today?

Between 1974 to the present day, and with the use of modern archaeological and scientific methods, we have a greater idea of the possible extent of the First Emperor's necropolis complex, although it is believed that it is even greater than previously understood. The work is ongoing with new discoveries all the time and new theories proposed. However, 'each new discovery brings with it new questions, and each interpretation creates fresh mysteries'.[46]

> The grave mound survives to a height of 51.3 meters within a rectangular, double-walled enclosure oriented north-south. Nearly 200 accompanying pits containing thousands of life-size terra cotta soldiers, terracotta horses and bronze chariots and weapons – a world-renowned discovery – together with burial tombs and architectural remains total over 600 sites within the property area of 56.25 square kilometres.

SOURCE 7.29 Mausoleum of the First Emperor, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, https://whc.unesco.org

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FIGURE 7.43 The First Emperor's burial mound today

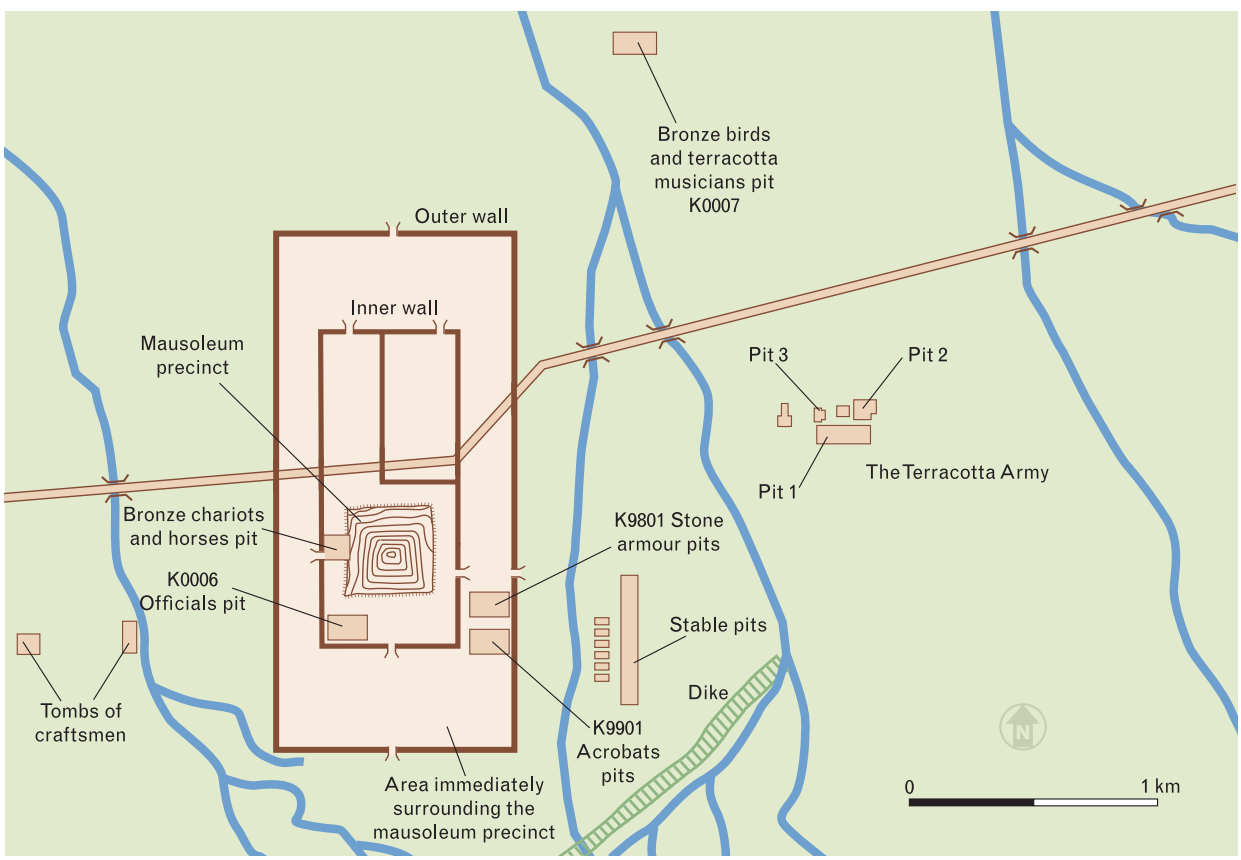

FIGURE 7.44 An overview of the present site

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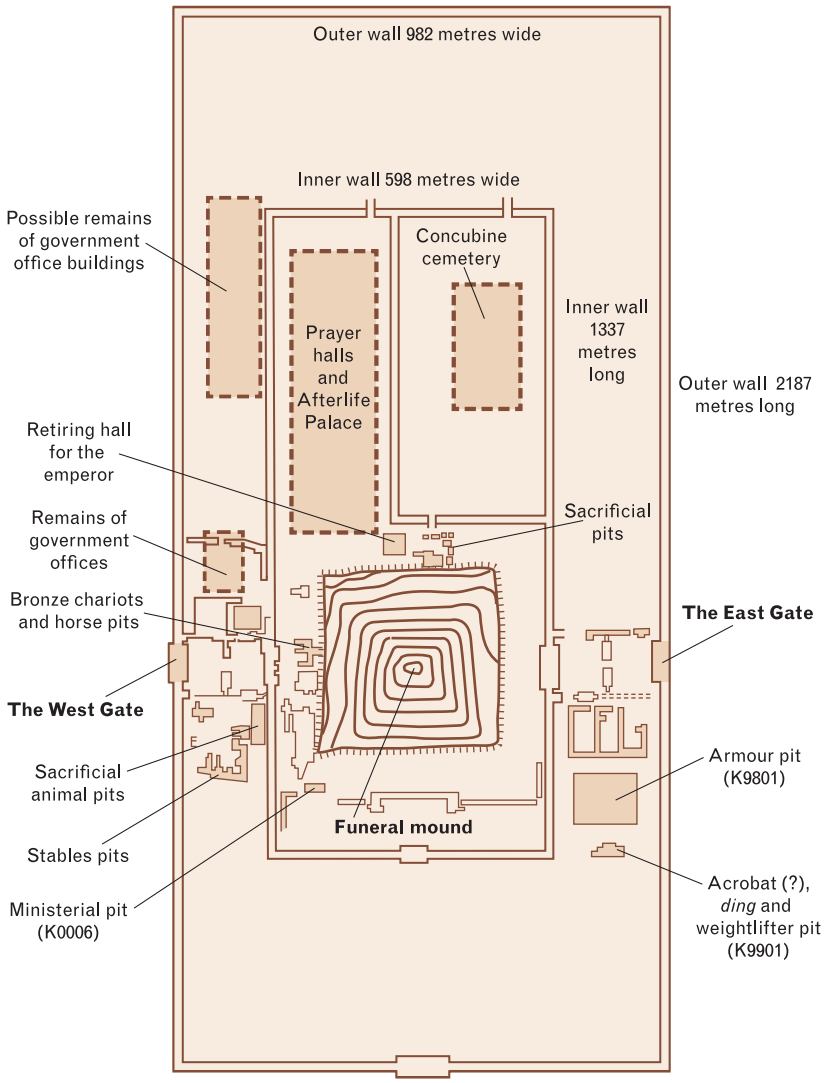

FIGURE 7.45 Plan of the enclosed Mausoleum area

TABLE 7.5 A summary of the chief features

Features of the necropolis site	
Rectangular walled enclosure	• Inner walls and outer walls made of pounded earth 8 metres wide, 8–10 metres high with watch towers at each and four gates on each side.
The burial mound	• This artificial hill, that has suffered from erosion over the years, still exists and is clearly visible today covered in bushes and trees even though the rectangular palace-like walls and halls around it have decayed. In the past it was mistaken for a natural hill. • Various techniques such as remote sensing, ground-penetrating radar and core sampling have revealed that the burial chamber lies 30–40 metres below the original ground level; measures 80 by 50 metres and is 15 metres high; its plan is rectangular with a cross-section like a truncated upside-down pyramid; there is a multiple-step soil structure beneath the mound; it is lined with bricks to a height of 4 metres, and has a mercury content, measured at 1440 parts per billion. • It was designed with a sophisticated drainage system which has kept the tomb completely dry even after 2000 years. • It has never been excavated and, although it would prove to be one of the most amazing archaeological discoveries in the world, it is unlikely to be excavated in the near future.

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Features of the necropolis site	
Within the inner wall	• The inner wall which encloses the burial tumulus was 1337 metres long and 598 metres wide. • The people and objects buried within the inner wall are believed to have been essential to the Emperor's life and his work in the afterlife. • A pit 20 metres from the tomb just inside the west gate of the inner wall contained magnificent half-size bronze chariots and horses, believed to be an imperial war chariot and a royal chariot for the Emperor's spirit (a spirit carriage). There are also horse pits with remains of real as well as terracotta horses. • A pit of individuals in wooden coffins, of high rank, judging by the remains of jade, gold and silver and fragments of silk. It could be the burial place of those royals killed by one of the First Emperor's many sons to gain the throne. The skeletons are mostly male, their limbs are severed and the tip of an arrow splits one of the skulls. • A building labelled the Retiring Hall for the Emperor may have been what in real life would have contained all the Emperor's garments and accessories. • A cemetery with mutilated skeletons and body pieces near doorways is believed to have been the burial place of the royal concubines. • There are buildings believed to be prayer halls and another palace.
Between the inner and outer walls	• The outer wall measured 2187 by 982 metres. • Between the two walls were four satellite pits. • In one, 1300 sq m – but only partially excavated – were found 87 complete sets of armour and 43 helmets on stands, plus a complete suit of armour for a horse. The armour was composed of hundreds of stone plates sewn together. One consisted of 612 pieces and weighed 18 kilograms. It is believed that there could be as many as 6000 in total and that the pit represented a royal armoury. • Another pit which has created great interest among scholars was found to contain 11 terracotta figures – although only six have been restored – wearing short garments over bare legs and with bare torsos, suggested as acrobats, wrestlers or gymnasts. These figures do not have the usual build and appearance of the rest of the figures in the Mausoleum. • The stable pits contained the remains of real horses and bones of probable grooms, stable workers or court officials. It has been estimated that 300–400 real horses still remain buried there. • Sacrificial animal pits contained wild animals and birds found in their own clay coffins, perhaps part of a private menagerie or to do with hunting. • There are the remains of what are believed to be government buildings.
Beyond the wall enclosure	• More stable pits • Burial of craftsmen • A 9000-sq-metre pit about a kilometre northeast of the Mausoleum, and built beside an artificial lake, contained bronze waterfowl, and in a separate trench, 15 sitting and kneeling terracotta figures on mats, one barefooted, one believed to be a bird catcher, others perhaps weavers making nets for bird catching. Another suggestion is that they were musicians. • Probable town for workers near the artificial lake. • The famous Terracotta Army (Entombed Warriors) pits with an estimated 8000 life-like and life-size terracotta statues of infantrymen, archers, cavalrymen with horses, charioteers, petty officers and commanders, all set out in battle formation. They were buried in three subterranean pits. See comment on p. 757.

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It is unlikely that the tomb of the First Emperor will be opened any time soon because:

1 our present technology would not be adequate to deal with the sheer scale of the underground complex and the preservation of the excavated artifacts.
2 there are supposedly booby traps, mentioned by Sima Qian, and despite being over two millennia old, they are still likely to be as effective as when they were installed.
3 the presence of mercury, also mentioned by Sima Qian, would be deadly to anyone who entered the tomb without appropriate protection.

FIGURE 7.46 A bronze swan

However, scholars proposing to explore the underground palace use the argument that the complex is in an active seismic zone, and that the cultural relics need to be unearthed for protection and against possible robbery.

FIGURE 7.47 A terracotta chariot driver undergoing preservation

FIGURE 7.48 Stone armour

FIGURE 7.49 A model chariot from the First Emperor's mausoleum

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A COMMENT ON...

Purpose and features of the Terracotta Army

- The Terracotta Army is believed to have been created to:
  - safeguard and serve Qin Shi Huangdi in his afterlife
  - be endowed with the same military power and imperial status in the afterlife as he enjoyed during his earthly lifetime, when he had triumphed over all other states.
- If the First Emperor's replica army was to be a convincing fighting force in the next life, it needed to be as realistic as possible and equipped with real weapons that had proven their usefulness in earlier battles. Probably only insofar as the army looked 'real' could it successfully fulfill its magical function.
- The entombed warriors (Terracotta Army) were:
  - life-size – average height 180 metres and average weight 160 kilograms
  - have individual facial features, expressions, gestures and hairstyles
  - dressed in correct military uniforms with all the normal indications of rank
  - modelled with great care even down to the stippled sole of a kneeling archer, armour that looked like leather as in real life, and geometric patterns to represent textiles
  - painted in vivid colours to make them more majestic and lifelike
  - armed with real, fully-functional weapons: long spears, daggers, halberds and crossbows. Many weapons in the pits are in such a pristine state of preservation that they would still be lethal today.
  - accompanied with life-like horses and chariots
  - arrayed in the correct battle formation.
- The First Emperor's army had to be finished in a reasonable time. It appears that in just 11 years his craftsmen managed to finish 8000 warriors, producing more than 700 per year. Chinese replica makers today, using modern technology, can only produce around 200 per year, not even a third of what the ancient sculptors produced.
  - The quickest method of production, and a way to ensure standardisation, was to use moulds for the various parts, such as heads, ears, forelocks and heads of horses.
  - For cylindrical parts such as legs and arms, they rolled slabs of clay into tubes like pipes.
  - For other parts such as torsos they built up the circular forms from coils of clay (coiling). Although this was a slow process, it was easier to make different shape bodies, fat or thin, short or tall.
  - The pits provide an incredible amount of information on the distribution and formation of military ranks, the use of weapons and the application of military tactics. The Terracotta Army faces east, the direction from which the emperor believed any attack would come.
  - Almost all of the figures were found in fragments, the pit ceiling rafters were burnt, and missing weapons from infantry and headless soldiers in Pit 3 indicate looting.

See the restored Terracotta Army in Figures 7.14–7.17 and 7.50–7.51.

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FIGURE 7.50 The restored Terracotta Army in Pit I

FIGURE 7.51 Recreated terracotta warriors painted as they are believed to have once existed.

ACTIVITY 7.12

1. In an extended piece of writing, explain what the evidence from ancient Chinese tradition, the written records of Sima Qian and modern archaeology and science reveal about the nature of Shi Huangdi's concept of immortality and the afterlife as expressed in his Mausoleum.
2. Use the following question as the basis for a class discussion: What benefits would be gained on a national and international level by excavating the tomb mound of Shi Huangdi? Is it better off left untouched?

The manner and impact of the First Emperor's death

It is likely that Shi Huangdi experienced signs of his own mortality as he moved into his forties. He lived a life of excess and laziness, appears to have suffered from increasing anxiety as his supernatural consultants failed to find the elixir of life he so desperately wanted, and he was apparently taking dangerous medical potions (a mix of arsenic and mercury) which could not fail to affect his health.

Also, as he became more superstitious and fell further into paranoia, he was apparently affected by various negative astrological omens.

- In 211, his astrologers observed that Mars, known as the 'Dazzling Deceiver', moved into the constellation known as the Heart, which supposedly represented the empire. This was an astrological portent of great significance and could not be ignored. It apparently signified some catastrophe that might befall the ruler if Mars did not quickly move on. Unfortunately, Mars stayed in the Heart constellation and the First Emperor thought that perhaps his life was over.
- There was another omen. A meteorite struck the earth in some part of his empire and when his officials arrived to inspect the stone, they discovered it had been inscribed with a message that implied that the First Emperor would die and his empire revert to the kingdoms of the pre-Qin conquests. An investigation failed to find the person responsible for writing the prophecy.

In 210, he left for another tour of inspection to the east with Li Si, Zhao Ghao and Prince Hu Hai in his entourage. It seems that 'with curses written in the sky and falling to earth',[47] he wanted to make one last effort to locate the charlatan sorcerer, Xu Fu, and demand to know why he had not found the elixir of life. Refer back to p. 748.

On the way home, he intended visiting Handan, the place of his birth, but fell sick. Perhaps, at last, realising that he was going to die he called for Zhao Ghao to dictate a letter for him to his son, Prince Fu

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Su away in the north with the army of Meng Tian. Perhaps it was an attempt at reconciliation. According to Sima Qian, it said: 'Leave Meng Tian in charge of the troops, take part in my funeral at Xianyang and see to the burial'.[48]

The letter was already sealed but had not been handed to the messenger when the First Emperor died. The Chief Minister, Li Si, believing that the Emperor had passed away without leaving an heir, decided that his death should be kept secret for the time being except for Zhao Gao, Prince Hu Hai and a few favourite eunuchs. The deceased Emperor was kept in his sleeping-carriage, with food and business sent to him as before with the eunuchs handling all business from within the Emperor's compartment.

The aftermath of the First Emperor's death

To prevent Fu Su taking charge of the state, Zhao Gao approached the young Prince Hu Hai who was travelling with the imperial entourage and, in a risky move, told him about the letter and proposed a plan by which he could succeed to the throne in his brother's place. He had advised the young prince in the past and hoped that as emperor he would be easily manipulated. His plan was to rewrite the First Emperor's letter since he still had control of the royal seal.

To give him his due, Prince Hu Hai objected.

> 'To get rid of an elder brother and set up a younger brother – this is unrighteous', said Huhai. 'Not to accept a father's mandate but be in fear of death – this is unfilial. To depend for one's strength on the achievements of others since one's ability is weak and one's talents are shallow this is incompetent. ... My own person would probably fall into danger, and the spirits of the land and grain would not accept my sacrifices.'

SOURCE 7.30 Raymond Dawson, trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. 31

However, Hu Hai was no match for the cunning Zhao Gao who provided examples of similar behaviour for the good of the country, and then frightened him with the statement that the death of the First Emperor would mean the death of someone and he should make sure it was not him. Zhao Gao continued to put pressure on the young prince until he agreed. He then approached Li Si with his plan, but the Chief Minister wanted to support the First Emperor's wish to appoint his son, Fu Su, although he probably suspected he would not fare well under his rule. Zhao Gao finally persuaded Li Si (he was now about 70) to agree to send the rewritten letter, emphasising that if he didn't side with the plan, he would be replaced as Chief Minister by Meng Tian who 'enjoyed the long-standing confidence of the eldest son.'[49]

A letter was written accusing Fu Su of not being a filial son and of Meng Tian of showing disloyalty. 'Fu Su was to be presented with a sword so that he may dispatch himself' and the general was 'to be presented with death'.[50]

Fu Su killed himself but Meng Tian was suspicious and refused to commit suicide. He was handed over to the law officers and imprisoned. Within a short time he was dead.

With the news of Fu Su's death, the entourage continued on its way to the capital but because it was summer, the corpse of the Emperor within the imperial carriage began to rot. So that the smell would not alert anyone of the plot, Zhao Gao ordered a cart of fish to be placed close to the imperial carriage to hide the stench.

Once back in the capital, the First Emperor was interred in his Mausoleum, the Crown Prince was set up as Second Generation Emperor and Zhao Gao was appointed Director of Palace Gentlemen. 'He was constantly in attendance and in control of whatever happened at the palace.'[51]

Although the Second Emperor is believed to have been a young pampered prince with little knowledge of warfare or government, he tried, apparently, to live up to his responsibilities by focusing on completing his father's great plan. In doing so, however, he turned the capital into a building site, and 'was said to have

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starved the people of the countryside surrounding the capital in order to pay for 50 000 crossbowmen that he recruited for his own protection'.[52] He is believed to have become arrogant, demanding that he be equipped with, and followed, by 10 000 chariots, so that his title as Supreme One was not an empty one.

In the meantime, as unrest increased and brigands and potential enemies occupied parts of the empire, Zhao Gao began settling old scores. His terrible purges included the executions of:

- Meng Yi
- 12 of the Second Emperor's brothers on trumped-up charges, and 10 of his sisters whose properties were confiscated. Members of the royal family were probably added to the graves surrounding the Mausoleum
- many of his personal rivals and their families.

He convinced the Second Emperor to spend most of his time isolated in the palace. The 'laws and punishments day by day became increasingly harsh, and each one of the ministers felt himself to be in danger, and there were many who wished to rebel'.[53]

For a while Li Si ruled alongside Zhao Gao, but he found it difficult to gain access to the Emperor (frustrated by Zhao Gao) and, within two years, due to the intrigues and lies of the conniving eunuch, Li Si was charged with plotting rebellion with his son and 'it was ordered that he, his wife and children should be hacked in half at the waist, in full public view of the market place of the Qin capital'.[54]

Zhao Gao played mind games with the young Emperor, convincing him that he was having delusions, and kept him in relative isolation for three years until, frustrated with the news of continued revolts, the Second Emperor 'flexed his muscles' with Zhao, who realised he was too dangerous to continue and had to die. How this happened is not really known, although one suggestion is that Zhao Gao waited until the Emperor moved to his country retreat, ordered the palace guards to disguise themselves as bandits and feign an attack on the palace, whereby the Emperor fled to a tower and jumped to his death rather than face capture by the 'bandits'. However, the version in Sima Qian maintains that when alone in his retreat, the Second Emperor was confronted by archers and guardsmen who read out accusations against him: 'You sir are proud and wilful … The empire has joined together to rebel against you, and now you had better make plans for yourself'.[55] He was being accused of losing the Mandate of Heaven and the sentence was death. As the guards approached, the Second Emperor killed himself.

With rebellions all over the empire, 'former vassal states in revolt and at least six pretenders now claiming to be king'[56] in their respective areas, Zhao Gao made one last attempt to save his position. He announced to the council that the empire was finished and proposed a young prince – background unknown – named Ziying as king of Qin. However, the young king, knowing of the great eunuch's personal ambitions, ruthlessness and conniving, kept to his quarters in fear that Zhao Gao would manufacture some charges against him if got in the way. When Zhao Gao came to supposedly pay his respects, Ziying stabbed him to death and ordered the executions of all his relatives.

A rebel force was already marching on the capital. After only 46 days on the throne as king of Qin, Ziying marched out to surrender to the forces of the Han rebel leader Liu Bang, who had once been in charge of a gang of slaves who worked on the First Emperor's Mausoleum.

Liu Bang led his forces into Xianyang, killed any remaining defenders, enslaved the children and razed the capital to the ground in a fire that supposedly burnt for months. There is evidence that the Mausoleum suffered a degree of burning and looting, the great Epang palace was engulfed, as well as the Qin archive of banned books.

With the collapse of the Qin dynasty in 207 BC, China was engulfed once more in a gruelling civil war which lasted five years, but Liu Bang would return to build a new capital city on the opposite bank of the Wei River from where he would rule as Emperor of China, the first in a new Han Dynasty.

Unlike the Qin Empire, which lasted as little as 15 years, the Han Dynasty survived for 422 years from 202 BC to 220 AD.

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ACTIVITY 7.13

1. Consider why the First Emperor's letter to his son Fu Su, after he was taken ill, was bad news for Zhao Gao. Think of a number of reasons why he might have been unwilling to accept the Emperor's change of heart.
2. Where did the Emperor die? Suggest some possible causes of his death.
3. Describe the ploy used by Zhao Gao to replace Fu Su as heir with his younger brother Hu Hai.
4. What does Source 7.30 reveal about Hu Hai?
5. Make a list of the steps in the downfall of the Qin Dynasty.
6. To what extent do you think the First Emperor himself was responsible for Qin's downfall?

7.4 Evaluation of Qin Shi Huangdi

Impact and influence on his own time

Despite the surprisingly brief Qin wars of conquest, and short-lived nature of the subsequent imperial dynasty, the reign of King Ying Zheng/First Emperor had a critical impact on the years 246–210, but more particularly between 221–210. Some refer to the latter period as the Qin Revolution.

The impact of the wars of conquest

This was a time of intrigue, massive armies in the field, devastating losses of life and extreme social dislocation, 'viewed as a catastrophe by the people of the time'.[57]

> The decade had begun with the dissolution of the old state of Han by the armies of Qin. The event surely shook the security of the elite in every state in eastern China. ... One after another, the 500-year old ruling houses of the Eastern Zhou states fell before the armies of Qin – the state that had been least regarded as a possible heir to the Zhou and the sage kings of antiquity.

SOURCE 7.31 Dr Robert Eno, *The Qin Revolution and the Fall of the Qin*, *EALC*, Spring 2008, Indiana University, p. 3 [online pdf]

The impact of the adoption of Legalism, a revolutionary new theory of government

Although Legalism had been introduced into the ruling House of Qin by Lord Shang in the 4th century BC, it was not until the 3rd century when the young king Ying Zheng came under the influence of Li Si – but more particularly after 221 when he became an emperor with absolute power – that the real impact of Legalism was felt.

When relative peace was restored, a program of Legalist reforms was introduced which impacted the people (the old feudal elite, Confucian scholars, officials, the labouring masses), the economy and the culture of the new empire in the following ways:

- Social order was no longer based on the Confucian belief that rule should be by virtue and ethical example.
- Feudalism, which had existed for 800 years, was abolished, as were the old feudal titles and the elite were no longer entitled to their own fiefdoms.
- A new administrative map of China was drawn, as the old states were swallowed up and their fortress cities and outer walls demolished.
- Power and prestige were no longer based on hereditary privilege, but on merit and suitability for the job.

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- All weapons were confiscated and melted down to avoid any threat to the new regime.
- Massive relocations occurred as noble families and their entire households were removed from their localities and resettled in the capital, where they were closely supervised. China lost much of its heritage, including local traditions as a result of these resettlements.
- A unified code of laws was instituted that allowed people to know exactly how they could and could not behave and the exact punishments they could expect for each offence. Strict regulations governed every aspect of society from the division of the countryside, to the duties of officials, to the way agriculture was run.
- Weights, measures, coinage and even the axle width of carts and carriages were standardised across the empire, which improved the economy by making trade, exchange, the collection of taxes and transportation easier and more efficient.
- An entirely new Chinese script was initiated by Li Si to overcome the problems associated with the numerous different versions already in existence that had made documents unintelligible from one state to another. The new form became the only legal standard across the empire.
- Court scholars and officials who even whispered against the prevailing Legalist approach were punished severely, and as a way of preventing any further debates over the old traditional ways of doing things, any non-Qin books (mainly Confucian works) were burnt and access to the remaining archives limited.
- Punishments for opponents of the Emperor were often brutal: castration, tattooing, torn apart by chariots. Others were exiled to the furthest frontiers where people were forced to scrounge a living as best they could. Even the first-born son of Shi Huangdi, Fu Su, was sent to the northern border for speaking out against his father's treatment of scholars.
- Huge movements of labourers conscripted from the land and from the army, as well as massive labouring forces composed of criminals and prisoners, some as many as 300 000 strong, were transferred from one building site to another. The pressure put on these labourers to complete massive building projects in as short a time as possible was intense, considering that thousands of kilometres of roads, the Great Wall, palaces and the First Emperor's Mausoleum were being built at the same time.
- Resettlement programs became part of colonisation to increase the empire's wealth and territory in line with Legalist ideology. For example, Qin laid claim to the territory of the nomadic tribes within the great loop of the Yellow River, but the greatest resettlement projects 'were designed to extend the borders of China far to the south, where Chinese administration was established south of the Yangzi in the fertile rice-growing areas along the branches of the West River'.[58]

ACTIVITY 7.14

Draw a mind map illustrating the impact of Qin Shi Huangdi's reorganisation of the empire on the:

- elite families from pre-unification states
- intellectuals
- the labouring masses
- the economy
- the imperial administration
- Chinese culture.

Assessment of the career and achievements of Shi Huangdi

Although the Qin dynasty was short-lived, lasting no more than 15 years, its achievements under the First Emperor were astonishing, and yet 'he has traditionally been regarded as a failure and his ambitions mocked as the grossest form of megalomania'.[59]

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Any assessment of the career of the First Emperor and the extent of the part he played in China's transformation cannot be made without seeing him:

1 in terms of his own time: a warlike period, where violence was perpetrated against one's enemies and where assassination attempts were part of life
2 as the holder of the Mandate of Heaven
3 as the beneficiary of:
   - his predecessors' actions in weakening Qin's rival states and adopting an early form of legalism under Lord Shang, which 'held the key to effective state governance'[60]
   - his advisors Lü Buwei and Li Si, in whom he gave his trust and from whom he absorbed elements of their own Legalist philosophy
   - the massive reform program conceived and carried out by Li Si as his Chief Minister after unification
   - the support of the Meng family, particularly the abilities of the general Meng Tian, who was responsible for the extensive road works and the Great Wall.

It is possible as a young king, despite having the Mandate of Heaven, that he was vulnerable, easily manipulated and lonely, especially after having to banish his own mother for her part in a sex scandal and possible part in a coup against him, as well as banishing his trusted advisor Lü Buwei for his knowledge of the sex scandal. He had his mother's lover Lao Ai, the instigator of the coup, killed in the most horrific way and also executed the two sons his mother had with Lao Ai.

Was it this challenge that produced the Emperor's later suspicious nature, ruthlessness and supposed cruelty as a leader?

There is no evidence that he ever took part in any battles and yet by the time he was 38 in 221, the Qin armies had defeated and unified the previously warring states in 'the most dramatic social and political revolution in human history', one that completely 'reshaped the Chinese state'.[61] Also, the Emperor redesigned his title. It was a sign of his self-aggrandisement that he insisted that he would be called the *Initial Emperor*, and all others after him would be given numbers (even though he is commonly called First Emperor in English). This was to make sure that he would be the only one whose name would stand out in a list of succeeding generations of Qin emperors.

We know that it was Li Si who, in the face of some opposition from other officials, conceived and implemented the progressive policies that produced the strong, centralised, bureaucratic form of government. However, according to Legalist philosophy, the ruler was absolute and nothing could be done in his name without his approval. Also, the success of this new form of government was – according to the records – the Emperor's determination to manage every detail of his government himself. He set quotas for the weight of documents he would read and dispose of each day, not resting until he had finished his paperwork.

Qin Shi Huangdi's unbelievable achievements in the organisation of an empire and in internal improvements – intended to modernise China and facilitate commercial and military strength (the standardisation of writing, weights, measures and coinage; canal, road and wall building) – revealed his excessive ambition to prove himself as greater than the 'Five Emperors of the past', as he wrote in his inscribed tablet at Mount Tai. However, they also required strategic thinking, resolve, an understanding of the forbidding logistics involved, as well as a total lack of concern for the toll they took on those conscripted to carry them out as fast as possible.

In stark opposition to these magnificent achievements were the Emperor's orders to burn the books (due to the influence of Li Si), and the burying of hundreds of Confucian scholars supposedly for their lies about knowing the secrets of immortality and then not being able to deliver on their promises. Although, 'the first of these was probably far more limited in scope than the histories suggest' and 'the second may never have occurred',[62] the First Emperor was a ruthless autocrat who would brook no opposition unless it could be pointed out that it was in the best interest of himself or the state.

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Despite the peace and wealth he brought to the empire, there were always those who resented the success of Qin and the changes that the Emperor introduced, judging by the three recorded assassination attempts against his life which seemed to traumatise him so that he never trusted foreigners at court and became more paranoid about his safety and the security of his palaces.

The First Emperor's religious obsession as the founder of a new dynasty with the Mandate of Heaven led him to take at least five arduous tours of inspection of the empire – with large entourages – to signal to the people that he was determined to revive the customs of some of the most venerated of past heroes and the seriousness with which he regarded his role as dynastic founder by performing sacrifices at sacred sites, and then advertising what he had done in a series of memorial tablets constantly reiterating his virtue, righteousness and the blessings he bestowed on his people.

His fixation with finding a way to live forever led him to spend enormous amounts of imperial funds in pursuing his superstitious goals, employing scholars who claimed to know the secrets of immortality and then punishing them when they failed to provide him with what he so desired.

While the construction of his Mausoleum continued apace supposedly using a labour force of 300 000, his refusal to contemplate death meant that he gave little time to preparing his sons to succeed him. This led, after his death, to the forced suicide of the one who might have made a good emperor, and the manipulation of another by the court officials in whom the First Emperor had put his trust.

This self-centredness and the overreach of his building projects were possibly responsible for the downfall of the Qin Dynasty by a popular rebellion, of unprecedented scope and ferocity, a mere three years after his untimely death.

Legacy

Due to the negative account of the life and career of Qin Shi Huangdi in the *Historical Records* of Sima Qian, a tradition of vilification – particularly based on the accounts of the burning of the Confucian books, and the doubtful story of the burial of 460 live Confucian scholars – developed over the millennia. 'Qin darkness and barbarism came to be directly contrasted with Confucian light and civilisation'.[63] This bad press continued until the 20th century, with each dynasty contributing their own stories about the First Emperor.

- Following the destruction of the Qin, Liu Bang's Han Dynasty continued the imperial system and structures created by the First Emperor and Li Si. Its leaders 'retained Qin's principal weapon against the old aristocracy, namely direct administration of localities appointed by the court for their merit, not their birth, and subject to dismissal, transfer and discipline'.[64] However, they learnt from Qin's mistakes and rather than use Legalist methods to control officials, they returned to the Confucian belief of the moral basis of the ruler–subject relationship. This enabled the Han, unlike the Qin Dynasty, to last for approximately 400 years. However, the Qin imperial system continued – with just a few interruptions – until the Manchu's Qing Dynasty was finally overthrown in a revolution in 1911, replaced with a Republic in 1912 and then by the Communists in 1949.
- The Great Wall of Meng Tian was the precursor of the present wall rebuilt during the Ming Dynasty, parts of which have been recently restored and which attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors anxious to walk along at least a small part of its 8851.8-km length.
- Although history has been unkind to the Legalists, at the turn of the 20th century Legalism was rediscovered by new generations of intellectuals who were frustrated by the failure of China to transform itself into a powerful modern state with a strong army. They were looking for something that was non-traditional and found it relevant since the Qin had used it in a practical way to depart from past patterns.
- The greatest legacy of the First Emperor is of course his burial complex. In Ming times it was regarded as a place of legend. The discovery of the Terracotta Army, forgotten since it was first interred, came to light in 1974, and work on the site is continuing to surprise scholars with its size and quality of the finds. It is now designated a UNESCO World Heritage site with millions of visitors a year. Qin Shi Huangdi has finally gained the immortality that he so desired, even though his tomb is still something of a mystery.
- The Qin Dynasty (pronounced 'chin') lives on in the country's name.

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FIGURE 7.52 Museum complex of the First Qin Emperor's Mausoleum

FIGURE 7.53 A statue of Qin Shi Huangdi outside the tourist complex at Lintong

Ancient and modern interpretations

Ancient views

Traditional Chinese history writing has portrayed Qin Shi Huangdi as a ruthless and tyrannical ruler who delivered punishments of unparalleled cruelty to those who opposed his views and actions, as well as 'a madman who lost his grip on reality in the last years of his reign'.[65]

- Sima Qian's written account of the Qin and the reign of the First Emperor, the closest source to Shi Huangdi's time, left what in Latin was known a *damnatio memoriae* on the Emperor, a 'condemnation of memory', and this remained virtually unchallenged in the following Chinese dynasties in a culture dominated by Confucianism.
- Although the Emperor's own view of himself was of a cosmic unifier and a virtuous, humane ruler who bestowed blessings on the people of the empire, Sima Qian regarded the Qin as barbaric and savage and the First Emperor as an opportunist, who delighted in exhibiting his authority by punishing and killing.
- Jia Yi, another Han writer, poet and politician, wrote that the First Emperor was 'too greedy, short-sighted and self-obsessed, playing the part of a ruler, than truly becoming one'.[66]

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bastinado a form of punishment or torture that involved caning the soles of someone's feet

The king of Qin ... waved his long whip and drove the contents of the cosmos before him, swallowing up the two Zhou courts and eliminating the feudal lords. He stepped into the highest honour and subdued all in every direction around him; he brandished his staff and club to whip and **bastinado** all under Heaven, his might causing everywhere within the four seas to quake.

SOURCE 7.32 Jia Yi, *Shiji*, 6.280

- Du Mu, a leading Chinese poet of the late Tang Dynasty (581–907) epitomised what appears to have been the general feeling about the First Emperor: 'If the Qin could have loved its people / Then the Qin dynasty could have lasted not only three but thousands of generations'.[67]

  Every dynasty had its own particular stories of the First Emperor.

ACTIVITY 7.15

Analyse Source 7.32 and list all the words that Jia Yi uses to depict the violence and cruelty of the Qin Emperor's martial might. How justified do you think this is?

Modern views

Chinese views in the 20th century

- The latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century were a time of weakness in China.
  - Some scholars began to see Confucian traditions as an obstacle to China's entry into the modern world and opened the way for a change of perspective on Qin Shi Huangdi.
  - Kuomintang historian Xiao Yishan emphasised the role of the First Emperor in repulsing the northern barbarians.
  - The historian Ma Feibai published a full-length revisionist biography calling the First Emperor one of the greatest heroes of Chinese history and seeing parallels with the Nationalist leader, Chiang Kai-shek.
- The coming of the Communist Revolution in 1949
  - A Marxist approach was applied, essentially critical of the First Emperor.
  - Described the Emperor's steps towards unification and standardisation as corresponding to the interest of the ruling class.
  - The downfall of the Qin Dynasty seen as a manifestation of the class struggle.
- The early 1970s saw a new official Maoist view emerge, perhaps as the Terracotta Warrior site was discovered and excavated from 1974.
  - Chairman Mao Zedong suggested that Qin Shi Huangdi's ultimate achievement had been to unite the workers of China for greater good. Although giving credence to the First Emperor's image as a despot, Mao maintained that the First Emperor had the country's best interests at heart.
  - A biography of the Emperor by Hong Shidi presented him as a far-sighted ruler who destroyed the forces of division by establishing a centralised state and rejecting the past.
  - The Communists approved of his use of violence to crush counter-revolutionaries.

However, later Chinese historians criticised him as a cruel, arbitrary, impetuous, suspicious and superstitious megalomaniac.

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The views of some modern Western scholars

- Jack Dull in *The Legitimation of the Ch'in* (1975) said 'the Qin effectively created an ideology of the emperor rather than an ideology of the empire'.[68]
- Yuri Pines et al. in *Birth of an Empire: The State of Qin Revisited* (2014) called Qin Shi Huangdi a person 'whose Messianic qualities and fervor for his imperial projects revealed a truly extraordinary mind'.[69]
- Peter K. Bol, Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, believes that there would not be a China without Qin Shi Huangdi.
- Dr Robert Eno believes that the First Emperor was a passive beneficiary of the system within which he ruled and the talents of his ministers and generals.

The First Emperor in popular culture

Plays and films about the First Emperor have been popular in China and Japan since the 1950s, and today TV series, videos, documentaries, digital games and even an opera abound. What is it that makes a short-lived Chinese Dynasty from 2400 years ago so fascinating to the modern world?

Perhaps it is because of some of the following:

- the number of 'cinematic' elements: war and conquest, violence, intrigue, assassination attempts, mystery, sex, sorcerers and magicians, and a megalomaniac ruler, in the story told by Sima Qian
- the spectacular discovery of the Terracotta Army not far from present-day Xian, and the ability now for millions of middle-class Chinese and overseas visitors to visit the UNESCO site
- an increasing historical awareness on the part of the Chinese
- a perceived unity in modern China – once regarded as an outsider, like the Qin, now conscious of its growing power and world leadership.[70]

1 Films produced include:
   - *The Emperor's Shadow* (1999)
   - *The Emperor and the Assassin* (2000)
   - *Hero* (2002)

   Some of these draw loosely on stories in Sima Qian's text, some present the Emperor in a negative light and others have little to do with the Emperor himself. In 2006, an opera *The First Emperor* based on *The Emperor's Shadow* was performed at the New York Metropolitan Opera House.
   - There are also some bizarre movie depictions, such as *The Myth* (2005) and *The Mummy: The Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008)

2 TV series/ DVD
   - *The Qin Emperor* TV Series (1984)
   - There is also a science fiction TV series (2001) involving a time traveller – with suggestions of reincarnation – who returns to the past and plays a part in the unification of the feudal states under the Qin.
   - A two-hour TV film (2006) called *The First Emperor: The Man Who Made China* is advertised as a straightforward, no-nonsense, dramatised documentary of the life of the extraordinary Qin Emperor.

3 Computer games include the exploration of the Emperor's tomb in *Qin: Tomb of the Middle Kingdom*, a strategy game for building an empire and another featuring Fu Su facing off against possessed terracotta enemies.

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FIGURE 7.54 Cover of 2002 DVD series *The First Emperor*

FIGURE 7.55 Movie poster for *The Emperor and the Assassin*

ACTIVITY 7.16

Research and explain the interpretation of the First Emperor in popular culture.

7.5 The 6th Book of Sima Qian's *Shiji* or *Historical Records*

Sima Qian's *Shiji* (*Records of the Grand Historian* or *Historical Records*) has been cited frequently throughout this study as it is regarded as the most famous of all Chinese 'historical' works. Without some of its contents – particularly Book 6: *The Annals of the First Emperor of Qin* – we would know virtually nothing about the short-lived Qin Dynasty and Shi Huangdi, apart from the archaeological discoveries carried out since the 1970s to the present day.

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A COMMENT ON...

The background of Sima Qian

- Sima Qian was born c. 145 BC at Xiayang in modern Shaanxi province.
- He was the son of Sima Tan, the grand historian/astronomer at the Han court during the period 140–110 BC. This position included responsibility for astronomical observations and for the regulation of the calendar, with the duties of keeping a daily record of state events and court ceremonies.
- Sima Qian travelled extensively in his youth and entered court service, sometimes accompanying military expeditions and sometimes as part of the Han Emperor's entourage.
- When his father became ill, he promised him to undertake his father's unfulfilled ambition to write a history of China's past. Since Sima Qian had grown up in a Confucian environment, he 'regarded his historical work as an act of Confucian filial piety to his father'.[71] After his father's death he succeeded him in the post of Grand Historian, but at some time he was charged with defaming the Emperor by supporting a disgraced general. However, instead of execution, due to his value to the Emperor he was punished with castration.

FIGURE 7.56 A painting of Sima Qian

The *Shiji* has a complex structure, unlike any historical work with which we are familiar. It was intended to cover Chinese 'history' from the mythological times to Sima Qian's own day during the reign of the famous Han Emperor Wu (141–87 BC). It was a massive undertaking, written first on bamboo strips collected in bundles, later transferred to silk and then paper. About 40% deals with the Qin, and these are the only sections translated into English.

Never intended to be a narrative, the *Historical Records* are divided into five parts:

1 The Annals including Book 6: *The Annals of the First Emperor of Qin* (see p. 770 for the annalistic approach). These follow the traditional pattern of court-based histories.

2 Chronological tables. These itemise the important political events of the period covered.

3 Treatises are essays that deal with some of the important issues relevant to rulers such as astronomy, music, hydraulic engineering and state religious practices.

4 Hereditary Houses, including the history of the various states that existed before the Qin unification.

5 Biographies of famous men and accounts of some foreign people. Sima Qian included the lives of others apart from rulers, such as bureaucrats, merchants, assassins and rebels. In this section he includes biographies of Lü Buwei, Li Si, Meng Tian, a collective biography of assassins and a number of rebels against the Qin.

In Book 6, Sima Qian devotes a little over 50% to covering the 11 years of the First Emperor's reign, and just under 50% devoted to the four-year-aftermath of the First Emperor's death and the end of the Qin Dynasty. Although some things are treated rather sketchily, Book 6 is a valuable record of:

- how Shi Huangdi explained the wars of conquest
- his new title
- the various imperial tours of inspection, the Emperor's visits to sacred mountains, the performance of sacrifices and rituals such as that of the *fengshan* ceremony
- a third assassination attempt
- the First Emperor's growing obsession with immortality and increasing paranoia

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- the inscribed memorial stelae erected by the Emperor at each of the sacred sites and how he wanted to be remembered
- the crucial 'burning of the books' episode
- the reaction of the First Emperor to opposition
- the tomb of the First Emperor
- the succession issue, the intrigues of Zhao Gao and the numerous purges during the reign of the Second Emperor.

The following are some things that must be taken into account when trying to assess the reliability of Book 6:

1 the Chinese history-writing tradition
2 the use of sources
3 the effect of the Confucian tradition adopted by the Han Dynasty
4 Sima Qian's individual approach when writing about the First Emperor.

The Chinese history-writing tradition

The Chinese historical style was to preserve traditions rather than to get at the truth. Confucius, the tradition claimed, had viewed history writing as a means of conveying the 'Way' or 'Path' rather than as a means of preserving facts. The historical process was to record the traditions about the deeds (especially the filial piety) of great men to bring credit to their ancestors. These records often comprised a collection of anecdotes 'that had as much to do with story-telling and literature'[72] and that often provided material about rulers and officials that tended to support the arguments of philosophers.

Book 6 utilises the annalistic approach which, unlike history, records events (rather drily, and often with just a brief mention) 'leaving the entries unexplained and equally weighted'.[73]

However, 'Sima Qian did not see himself as heir to a distinctive history-writing tradition'[74] and broke new ground in his material by not restricting himself to the traditional court-based histories.

The use of sources

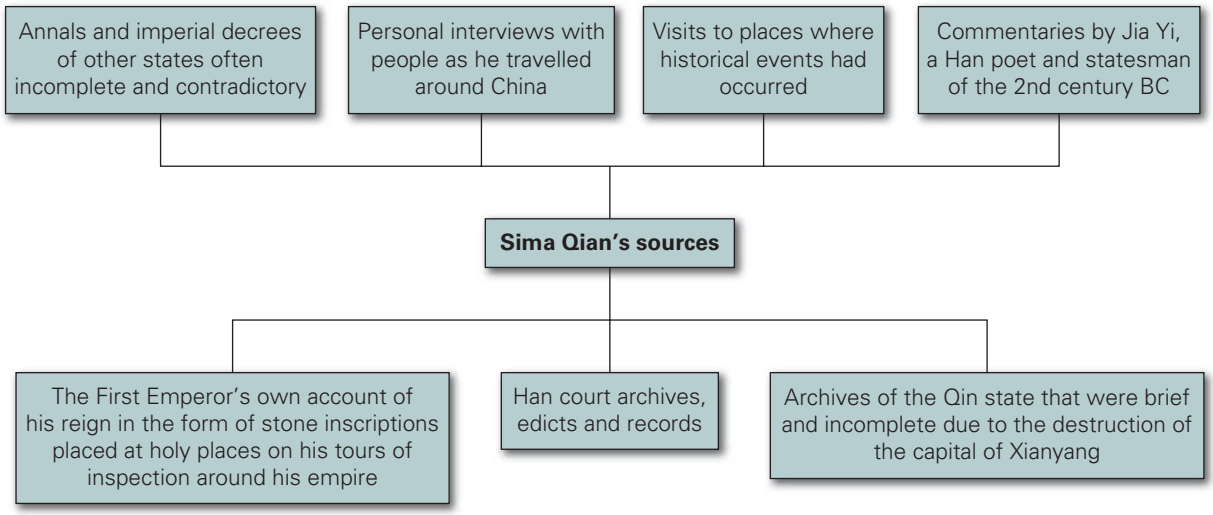

FIGURE 7.57 Diagram of sources used by Sima Qian

The effect of the Confucian tradition adopted by the Han Dynasty

It seems that Sima Qian's negative, disparaging attitude towards the Qin (barbarianism, coarseness and lack of culture) and the defamation of the First Emperor originated in the Han distaste for the Qin's Legalist philosophy.

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The Qin were notorious for several episodes which made them synonymous with tyranny in the eyes of their successors [Han]. One event which stood out among all others as the target of vilification is the so-called 'burning of the books' in 213. The purpose of this destruction of literature was to monopolise learning for the benefit of the court. ... This episode obviously provided rich material for anti-Qin propagandists in later decades and centuries ...

SOURCE 7.33 Raymond Dawson, trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. xxii

Although the emperors of the Han retained a great deal of Qin's organisational structure, laws and practices, it was vital for them to establish a clear ideological distance between themselves and the dynasty they had supplanted. This led to an enduring smear campaign about the alleged excesses of the Qin Empire.

SOURCE 7.34 Jonathan Clements, Preface of *The First Emperor of China*

His individual approach when writing about the First Emperor

Sima Qian:

- is believed to have sifted his sources for reliability, maintaining that wherever he found contradiction and disagreement, he recorded only what he was certain about and where in doubt, he left a blank. According to Confucian tradition, Confucius praised historians who were prepared to leave gaps in their work if they were doubtful about the truthfulness of their sources. However, Confucius was also believed to have altered the completed annals of the court of Lu, by changing some of the words so that readers could see through to the truth. It is quite possible that Sima Qian may also have altered the facts.
- did not write objectively and made moral judgements. There is evidence in the text where he inserts phrases to convey a particular judgement of the people and events about which he writes.
- occasionally turned mythology and folklore into historical fact and explained traditions about people rather than historical facts.
- was inclined to record what made for a good story. It is possible that in doing so he might have deliberately falsified some material. According to Professor K. E. Brashier, the cinematic elements in many of the 'stories' in Sima Qian's *Historical Records* – sex, violence, mystery and intrigue – 'should alert us to the possibility of invention.[75]
- seems to have been selective in his choice of material to illustrate his theme about Shi Huangdi: that he was an opportunist.
- viewed the First Emperor with suspicion.
- seems to have included some improbable information in his text perhaps based on rumour and gossip, such as the First Emperor's supposed illegitimate birth, and the burying alive of 460 Confucian scholars.

This story [about the illegitimacy of the birth of the First Emperor] found its way into the *Historical Records* with other improbable anecdotal material, which infiltrated into the account either through the surprising gullibility of its author, or through insertions by later malicious [Han] hands. ... no true account of his life survives; instead we have a collection of stories of the kind one would expect to be associated with tyrants.

SOURCE 7.35 Richard Dawson, trans. Sima Qian, *The First Emperor: Selections from the Historical Records*, p. xxviii

Yuri Pines, in *Biases and Their Sources: Qin History in the Shiji,* admitted that the work is 'significantly flawed, and it should be treated with utmost caution'. The reasons for the biases could be due to a 'hidden

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agenda' but this is still problematic. He admits that Sima Qian 'struggled with his disparate, contradictory and flawed sources and the result is not always satisfactory for the modern critical historian'.[76]

The value of other sources for gauging the reliability of Book 6

The First Emperor's inscribed stelae

'These [inscriptions] are full of the grandiose language one would expect from the scribes of a supreme monarch traversing his vast empire'.[77]

Although the First Emperor would be expected to promote his achievements, the tone of these texts seem to be rather Confucian-sounding. For example, 'Abroad he taught the feudal lords, gloriously bestowing the blessings of culture, and spreading enlightenment by means of the principles of righteousness'.[78] Perhaps he did not want to show himself as a hardened Legalist. Perhaps he wasn't, in fact, the ruthless, cruel and oppressive Legalist tyrant as depicted by Sima Qian.

The burial of Judge Xi

In 1975, workers digging a drainage canal in China's Hebei province discovered the grave of a Qin court judge named Xi, buried with a huge library of Qin legal codes and administrative documents. He is not mentioned in Sima Qian's text and, apart from his grave, there is no other evidence of his existence. The discovery of Judge Xi's archive has thrown new light on Qin Legalism. The codes of law show that it was not as harsh as once thought. In fact, it seems that there were some compromises made in its practice, and by the time of the First Emperor, it had developed a more practical form. For example, 'criminals were allowed, indeed encouraged to buy their way out of sentences, since the payment of a fine was of more use to the state than a vengeful punitive injury such as castration, mutilation or tattooing'.[79] Also, if an enslaved man could find four others to take his place or the price of four others, he would be freed. There were many ways of avoiding the punishment. This code of laws seems to throw into doubt some of the excessive cruel punishments recorded in Sima Qian's work.

The discovery of the First Emperor's Mausoleum

Sima Qian is our only written source for the First Emperor's Mausoleum but surprisingly he, and other sources, make no mention of the massive Terracotta Army. The accidental discovery of the entombed warriors, however, would seem to justify Sima Qian's image of King Zheng 'devouring his enemies as a silkworm devours a mulberry leaf'[80] and of Jia Yi's image in Source 7.32. This Terracotta Army also reveals the organisation, armour and weaponry of the Qin army.

Although the tomb mound has not been excavated and is unlikely to be in the near future, modern scientific methods have confirmed some of Sima Qian's description of the tomb, particularly, the presence of mercury to represent the sea and rivers. Scholars maintain that the highest levels of mercury in the mound correspond to the location of the waterways on a scaled map of the Qin Empire.

Also, within the Inner Wall is an area believed to be the cemetery – with mutilated bodies – of the First Emperor's concubines, supporting Sima Qian's description of the Second Emperor ordering the concubines to accompany Shi Huangdi in death.

However, recent excavations in Shi Huangdi's Mausoleum have provided a different perspective on the Qin Emperor than that presented both in Sima Qian and by the Terracotta Warriors. The various pits have revealed detailed statues of acrobats, wrestlers, musicians and civil officials with the utensils of scribes, as well as beautifully crafted bronze waterfowl such as geese, ducks and storks.

ACTIVITY 7.17

Evaluate the usefulness of Sima Qian's *Historical Records* for an understanding of Shi Huangdi.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

7.1 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The geographical setting for the Qin and the cradle of Chinese civilisation includes the fertile valley of the Yellow River, its tributaries including the Wei River, plus the enormous loess plateau (640 000 sq metres). The Qin capital was at Xianyang on the Wei River.
- The Qin originated in western China where they bred horses and honed their military skills by continual fighting against neighbouring nomads. They became vassals of the ruling Zhou Dynasty from whom they acquired lands and the title of 'Dukes'. When the Zhou moved their royal domain 500 kilometres further east, they left the Qin to protect the west.
- During the Zhou period the Qin benefitted from the technological and intellectual developments of the time (better weapons, massive armies, better strategy) and the Legalist philosophy (as opposed to the Confucian ideas), a new way of looking at how a ruler should govern his state.
- In 361 BC, a refugee Legalist (Lord Shang) arrived in Qin and succeeded in creating an effective but harsh form of government and a machine of conquest.
- Two of the most effective of the future First Emperor's predecessors were Huiwen (the first to be called King) and Zhao, who overthrew the ruling Zhou dynasty.

7.2 BACKGROUND AND RISE TO PROMINENCE

- King Zhao's long reign laid the basis for the eventual rise to power of the First Emperor, although his immediate successors, including the future First Emperor's father, died after short reigns.
- Ying Zheng, the future emperor, was born in 259 BC while his father was a hostage in a rival state, and came to the throne at the age of 13. A wily merchant, Lü Buwei, had helped his father become the heir to the throne and now became the regent for the young king. The King's mother is believed to have been the lover of Lü Buwei.
- While Lü Buwei became Chief Minister, another Legalist arrived in Qin, an exceptional man named Li Si who grew close to King Ying Zheng and advised him on the way to be a strong ruler.
- The young king was faced with several challenges in his early years, including a coup against him by Lao Ai, with whom the king's mother had several children. The coup was unsuccessful, Lao Ai and his family were brutally excecuted, the King's mother was put under house arrest and Lü Buwei was exiled and later killed.

7.3 KEY FEATURES AND DEVELOPMENTS

- Under the guidance of Li Si and the military skill of several of his generals, King Ying Zheng now carried out a nine-year war of conquest between 230–221 BC, unifying all former rival states under the Qin and the king then assumed a new title: Qin Shi Huangdi (August Emperor), known in English as the First Emperor.
- Under Li Si, a new form of administration was set up. The feudal system with its vassals, fiefdoms and titles was done away with and position was given on merit rather than heredity. Every aspect of society was closely regulated: laws and punishments were strict; previous elites were moved to the capital for security reasons; weapons were confiscated; and weights, measures, coinage and the writing script were standardised to make communication and trade across the empire easier.

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- The Emperor's inner circle comprised Li Si, Zhao Gao, Meng Yi and Meng Tian, although these men were in factions, each supporting one of the Emperor's sons. Scholars at court were not always in favour of the Legalist approach and the Emperor was suspicious of foreigners at court.
- The Emperor began a massive building program utilising huge labour forces from all over the empire. The projects included new imperial highways that covered the empire and the joining of the old state walls into one continuous frontier wall in the north. Both of these projects were entrusted to the general Meng Tian. There were also irrigation and flood control projects, numerous palace constructions, including the Epang, and the Emperor's Mausoleum.
- Throughout his reign, the Emperor went on five great tours of inspection of his empire to emulate his ancestors, to make sacrifices at sacred places, to find out about his people and their ways, to gauge the potential for taxes and to seek out those who claimed to know the secrets of immortality.
- As his reign progressed, he became paranoid about his safety, as there had been three assassination attempts on his life. He became more isolated, hiding away, and his obsession to find an elixir of life increased.
- His death was the beginning of the end for the Qin. His eldest son and heir had been forced to commit suicide in favour of a more malleable younger son, and power was in the hands of the ambitious Zhao Gao, who carried out purges against other members of the royal family and against the famous Meng family. He kept the Second Emperor isolated, convincing him he was delusional, eventually managed to remove and kill the faithful Li Si and forced the death of the Second Emperor.

7.4 EVALUATION

- The Emperor's impact on his own times has to be looked at in terms of the wars of conquest, the adoption of Legalism and its effect on all aspects of society and all groups, as well as the impact of the Emperor's personality.
- Assessment of his career and achievements must be looked at against the background of his time; as the holder of the Mandate of Heaven; and as the beneficiary of his predecessors' achievements, and of those of his advisors and Chief Ministers, particuarly Li Si, and of men like Meng Tian, who carried out his building program.
- Despite the short-lived Qin Dynasty, the imperial system established by the Qin continued until the overthrow of the Manchu Qing Dynasty in 1911; the mausoleum is probably the First Emperor's greatest legacy and the Qin (Ch'in) gave its name to the country.
- In the traditional histories, the First Emperor has been portrayed as a ruthless tyrannical ruler, but in modern times, he has been seen differently by whoever was in power (Kuomintang or Communists). Today, the First Emperor has taken on another image due to the discovery of his Mausoleum and as a pop culture icon.
- Ancient and modern interpretations vary and interpret source differently.

7.5 THE 6TH BOOK OF SIMA QIAN'S *SHIJI* OR *HISTORICAL RECORDS*

- Sima Qian's *Historical Records*, particularly Book 6, is our major written source for the Qin. However, it is biased against the First Emperor (a later Han Confucian perspective) and there are certain flaws in the book so that it has to be treated with caution. Other sources, such as the law codes found in Judge Xi's tomb, the Emperor's own words in his inscribed tablets (royal propaganda) and new discoveries at the Emperor's mausoleum, can be used to support or moderate some of Sima Qian's judgements.

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these terms.

- Mandate of Heaven
- loess
- concubine
- regent
- Legalism
- capping
- alchemy

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study:

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What changes occurred in the status of:
- the Qin state down to 221 BC
- Ying Zheng from 259–220 BC?

2) What significant role did the following individuals play in the life and achievements of the King/Emperor?
- Lü Buwei
- Li Si
- Meng Yi
- Meng Tian
- Zhao Gao

3) What was the significance of:
- the military treatise of Sun Tzu's *Art of War* on the Qin's wars of conquest between 230–221 BC
- the name assumed by King Ying Zheng after the wars of conquests
- the 'burning of the books' episode
- the five great tours of his empire
- the various assassination attempts against King Zheng / Shi Huangdi
- the mountain inscriptions of Shi Huangdi
- the discovery of the Emperor's mausoleum?

4) Outline the perspectives of early 20th- and 21st-century Chinese scholars on Qin Shi Huangdi.

5) What factors might have been responsible for Sima Qian's perspective of Shi Huangdi?

6) What caused the downfall of the Qin Empire within 15 years of its inception?

Historical skills

1) What is meant by the following sources recorded in Sima Qian's *Historical Records*:
- The First Emperor 'aimed to make all under Heaven of one mind, single in will.'
- 'He ensured that there would be no fiefdom in Qin, even of a single foot of territory.'
- 'He erases doubt and establishes laws, so all will know what to shun.'
- The August Emperor in his enlightenment scrutinises the four quarters.'

2) Assess the increasing paranoia and obsession with immortality that marked the latter years of Qin Shi Huangdi's reign.

3) Comment on the view expressed by Dr Robert Eno that the First Emperor was a passive beneficiary of the system within which he ruled and the talents of his ministers and generals.

4) To what extent was the unification of the previously warring states into one empire a dramatic social and political revolution, one that completely reshaped China?

5) Explain how – despite the First Emperor's untimely death – he finally gained the immortality that he so desperately desired.

6) Assess Qin Shi Huangdi's success as a ruler.

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CHAPTER 13
The Augustan age
44 BC–14 AD

FIGURE 13.1 A relief of the Praetorian Guard

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FIGURE 13.2 Map showing the Roman Empire at the start of the principate of Augustus

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Students develop an understanding of the Augustan age 44 BC–14 AD through a range of archaeological and written sources.
KEY ISSUES	• The chronological and geographical context • The establishment of the principate • The Augustan principate • Augustus and the empire

> *Augustus had put the state in order not by making himself a king or dictator but by creating the Principate.*
>
> **SOURCE 13.1** Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, Bk I.8

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 13.3 Augustus as imperator

FIGURE 13.4 The Temple of Janus (depicted on a coin) with its doors closed by Augustus in 29 BC after centuries of remaining open

Study Figures 13.1, 13.3 and 13.4 carefully. Note the details in each image. What do they indicate about the Augustan age?

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CHAPTER 13 Overview

KEY IDEA

Augustan Rome emerged from years of upheaval in the late Roman Republic, as powerful men waged war across its empire for control, without an awareness that the Republic was no longer a functioning entity. Augustus created a blueprint for a new form of government (rule by the 'first man' or principate) while at the same time appearing to retain Republican forms to prevent hostility among the leading groups in the state. His principate was based on efficiency, justice, old virtues, prosperity and fairness. The army, under his direct control and the real basis of his power, kept the provinces relatively secure.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

In a world where we are faced constantly with the way power corrupts, perhaps Augustus' relatively successful long reign as the 'first citizen in the state', based on his belief in traditional values, his apparent attempts to share power, general concern for the welfare of others and prudent use of the army, deserves some consideration in our modern world. However, like all those in power, he did resort to propaganda to advertise his rule.

KEY TERMS AND NAMES

- Imperator
- principate
- *maius imperium*
- tribunician power
- *pax Romana*
- Janus
- Romanised
- vassal
- client-kings
- autocracy
- *magister equitum*
- triumvirate
- deified
- legates
- lictors
- *pater patriae*
- proscriptions
- sesterces
- equestrian class
- *aediles*
- Praetorian Guard
- *modii*
- *Circus Maximus*
- *Lupercalia*
- *Lares*
- *Campus Martius*
- *auxilia*

Painting the picture

With the murder of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, his adopted son and heir, Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus, was thrust into the political and military upheaval that followed. He avenged his 'father's' death at Philippi in 42 (see p. 788) and in the same year, together with Mark Antony and Lepidus, became part of the Second Triumvirate by which they divided the Roman world.

Tensions within the Triumvirate eventually led to civil war between Octavian and Antony for control. Octavian's victory against Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC and their deaths the following year left him in sole command. He returned to Rome in 29 BC and his immediate task was to restore order and confidence, and to normalise his own position within the state.

In 27 BC he was granted the name 'Augustus' by the Senate and it is from that date that the new political order known as the **principate** came into being. Augustus as commander of the imperial army with ***maius imperium*** was the master of the state, but with **tribunician power** and the use of compromise and constructive statesmanship from 27 BC to 14 AD, he brought relative peace (***pax Romana***) to the empire, as well as law, order and good government.

INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did Augustus use propaganda to justify and maintain his principate?

principate a form of government led by a princeps or 'first man/citizen'. The term was used to describe Roman rulers from the time of Augustus

maius imperium the power to command, including an army, but outranking all others with *imperium*: supreme power

tribunician power right of veto by a tribune against the election and actions of magistrates and against the laws and decrees of the Senate

pax Romana Roman peace

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He made use of all forms of propaganda (literature, buildings and the introduction of an imperial cult) to promote his rule, which after a hundred years of political violence, bloodshed and various civil wars was described as a 'Golden Age'.

Although the principate was not hereditary, he hoped that a Julian (direct descendant of himself as the 'son' of Julius Caesar) would succeed him, but it was eventually his adopted son, Tiberius (a Claudian), who eventually became princeps when Augustus died in 14 AD.

TABLE 13.1 A summary of major developments in the Augustan Age between 44 BC–14 AD

44 BC	Assassination of Julius Caesar
43	Formation of the Second Triumvirate between Octavian, Antony and Lepidus
42	End of the Republican party with the deaths of Brutus and Cassius at the Battle of Philippi
37	Marriage of Antony and Cleopatra
33	End of the Triumvirate; civil war inevitable
31	Defeat of Antony and Cleopatra at the Battle of Actium
30	Annexation of Egypt after suicide of Antony and Cleopatra; demobilisation of troops and reduction of number of legions
29	Re-establishment of peace for first time in 200 years
27	So-called 'restoration of the republic' by the First Settlement. Octavian adopts the name 'Augustus' and is referred to as princeps (first citizen)
23	Constitutional position altered by Second Settlement: gains *maius imperium* and *tribunician potestas*
22	Augustus' refusal of dictatorship
21	Marriage of Agrippa to Augustus' widowed daughter Julia
17	Secular Games as celebration of a new 'Golden Age'. Augustus' adoption of grandsons Gaius and Lucius as his heirs
12	Augustus becomes Pontifex Maximus on the death of Lepidus. Death of Agrippa
11	Forced marriage of Tiberius and Julia
2	Proclamation of *pater patriae* ('Father of the country'). Exile of Julia
2 AD	Death of Lucius Caesar at Massilia
4	Death of Gaius Caesar in Lycia. Adoption of Tiberius and Agrippa Postumus as Augustus' 'sons'
9	Loss of three Roman legions (20 000 men) by Germans in the Teutoberg Forest
14	Death of Augustus

Janus in ancient Roman religion, Janus is the god of beginnings, gates, transitions, duality, doorways, passages and endings. He was usually depicted as having two faces, since he looks to the future and to the past

13.1 The chronological and geographical context

Conquest, civil wars and the downfall of the republic of Rome

Rome had been involved in wars of conquest and widespread civil wars on and off for over 200 years: from the moment the Romans 'first crossed the sea with an army'(Polybius) in 264 BC to face the western empire of Carthage, until Augustus closed the doors of the Temple of **Janus** in 29 BC.

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[Janus] also has a temple at Rome with double doors, which they call the gates of war; for the temple always stands open in time of war, but is closed when peace has come. The latter was a difficult matter, and it rarely happened, since the realm was always engaged in some war, as its increasing size brought it into collision with the barbarous nations which encompassed it round about. But in the time of Augustus it was closed, after he had overthrown Mark Antony ...

SOURCE 13.2 Plutarch's *Lives, Life of King Numa*

During the 2nd and 1st centuries BC, Roman armies had come in contact with Mediterranean powers and peoples, and began a path of ruthless imperialism that involved destruction and annexation. Those areas annexed as provinces, such as Gaul, eventually underwent **Romanisation**.

Others became **vassals** or **client-kings** friendly to Rome. Those in the east acted as buffer zones against those powers on the edges of the growing empire. Those areas outside the empire, like the Germanic tribes in the northwest, Scythians in the northeast and Parthians in the east, had a significant impact on the empire, often causing difficulties for those administering and guarding its borders.

Romanisation the adoption of Roman culture by conquered people within the empire

vassal a person or country in a subordinate position to another to whom they owe allegiance

client-kingdoms those who aligned themselves with the Roman Empire

A COMMENT ON ...

Egypt and Rome prior to 44 BC

- Rome had long realised Egypt's potential as a large grain supplier, and as early as the mid 60s BC, Crassus, a wealthy Roman politician, had put forward a proposal to annex Egypt, claiming that an earlier king had bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. It was refused by the Senate.
- It seems that Egypt, although an independent kingdom, may have been under Roman protection (like a de facto protectorate). When Ptolemy XII, Cleopatra's father, was driven into exile by the Alexandrians, it was the Romans who restored him to his throne.
- When Julius Caesar defeated Pompey in the Civil War of 49–44 BC at Pharsalus, Pompey fled to Egypt. However, he was murdered by the soldiers of King Ptolemy XIII, who hoped to get Caesar's support in his dynastic quarrel with his sister-queen, Cleopatra.
- When Caesar arrived in Egypt and discovered Pompey was dead, he became involved in the dynastic intrigues of the Egyptian court, siding with Cleopatra against her brother, Ptolemy XIII, who he defeated and killed in the Alexandrine War.
- Caesar settled Cleopatra and her younger brother on the throne. During his interlude in Alexandria, Cleopatra gave birth to a son by Caesar named Ptolemy Caesar. Caesar returned to Rome.
- After Caesar's assassination in 44 BC, Egypt become involved in a civil war between Antony and Cleopatra on one side and Octavian (Caesar's heir) on the other. See pp. 788–92 for this conflict and its significant repercussions.

He [Julius Caesar] eventually summoned Cleopatra to Rome, and would not let her return to Alexandria without high titles and rich presents. He even allowed her to call the son she had borne to him 'Caesarion' ... Mark Antony informed the senate that Caesar had, in fact acknowledged Caesarion's paternity and other friends ... were aware of this.

SOURCE 13.3 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Julius Caesar*, 52

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TABLE 13.2 Possible threats to Rome from outside the empire

Germania	Parthia
• Germania extended from the Danube in the south to the Baltic in the north, and from the Rhine in the west to the Vistula in the east. • It was inhabited by many Germanic tribes, as well as others like the Celts and Scythians, although the ethnicity of the population changed over time due to assimilation and migrations. • Contact between the Germanic tribes and the Romans did take place and was not always hostile, although Roman attitudes of superiority would have considered the Germans 'barbarians'. • Julius Caesar's army was the first to confront the Germans when he crossed the Rhine River twice during his Gallic campaigns, and in 57 BC annihilated several tribes who were possibly of mixed Germanic/Celtic origin. • This area posed a threat for later Roman armies and settlements in Gaul.	• Relations between Rome and Parthia, across which ran the great caravan routes east and west, went back to the late Republic, and in the record of Roman-Parthian warfare during the 1st century BC the balance of advantage lay distinctly with Parthia. • The Parthians had aspirations in the west and extended their rule into Mesopotamia and Armenia, which brought them into conflict with Rome. • In 53 BC, Crassus commanded an army to confront the Parthians but was defeated at the Battle of Carrhae where he lost his life. It was a humiliating defeat for the Romans: 30 000 out of 42 000 men killed or captured and the Roman legionary 'Eagles' lost. • Caesar was planning a massive invasion of Parthia when he was assassinated. • Antony, in the east, during the 2nd Triumvirate with Octavian, led a massive army into Parthia, but like those before him suffered a defeat and had to withdraw.

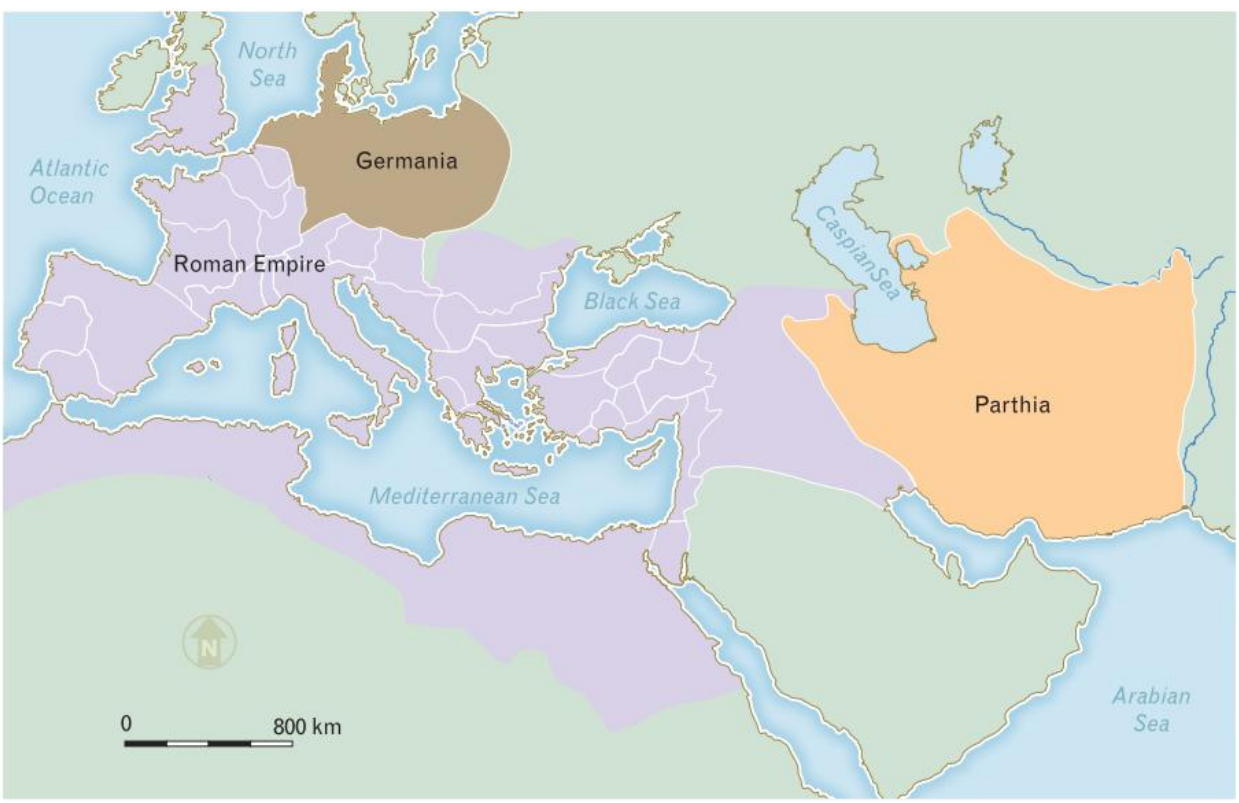

FIGURE 13.5 Sketch map of the location of Germania and Parthia

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The customs of the Germans are entirely different [from the Gauls]. They have no Druids to control religious observances and are not much given to sacrifices ... They spend all their lives in hunting and warlike pursuits, and inure themselves from childhood to toil and hardship.

SOURCE 13.4 Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, VI.21

ACTIVITY 13.1

1. Refer to Figure 13.2 and make a list of the Roman provinces in 44 BC.
2. What part did client-kingdoms play in the empire at this stage?
3. Describe Rome's influence in Egypt prior to the Augustan age.
4. Why did Germania and Parthia pose the greatest threats to Rome during this period?

Developments that led to the downfall of the republic

Julius Caesar had long realised that the old republican form of government was finished and made no attempt to hide his opinion in the latter part of his career. However, its downfall was a gradual process.

- After Rome's wars of conquest in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, the Senate – a purely advisory body – became the dominant force in Rome, but failed to see the many negative effects Rome's conquests had on the Roman people, and failed to put the welfare of the republic before its own interests.
- When the power and control of the Senate was challenged by a number of magistrates of the people (tribunes), the Senate reacted to this attack on its privileges with violence.
- The urban mob (a large number of unemployed) became more and more dependent on the state for support throughout the 1st century and unscrupulous magistrates used the mob for their own ends.
- Legions were recruited from volunteers who relied on their generals to reward them at the end of their term of service, which meant loyalty to a general replaced loyalty to the state.
- Ambitious generals (Marius, Sulla, Pompey and Julius Caesar) with their 'private armies' became a threat to the very existence of the state, and – together with powerful individuals and factions trying to gain control – this resulted in a number of disastrous civil wars.
- Julius Caesar, who emerged triumphant from the Civil War of 49–46 BC with Pompey, knew that the days of senatorial government were over. His acceptance of powers from a subservient Senate indicated that he was prepared to accept a more permanent form of **autocracy**.

autocracy a system of government by one person with absolute power

- He held successive consulships, and accepted the dictatorship in 49 BC for 11 days, in 48 for one year and in 46 for 10 years. In 44 he accepted it for life. However, most of the senatorial class were not yet ready to accept one-man rule and they became frustrated with Caesar's apparent intentions to retain absolute control.
- He was assassinated in 44 BC and his death threw the Roman world into yet another civil war that ranged across the empire, and eventually led to the one-man-rule the nobility had once feared.

ACTIVITY 13.2

Draw a simple diagram showing the main factors that contributed to the decline of the Roman Republic prior to the rise of Augustus to power.

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13.2 The establishment of the principate

The impact of Caesar's death and the early career of Octavian

The future Augustus, born Gaius Octavius in 63 BC, came from a wealthy and respected family (Octavii). His grandmother was Julia, the aunt of Julius Caesar and wife of the great general, Marius. His mother was Caesar's niece.

- He first attracted the attention of Caesar when, at 11, he made a speech at his grandmother's funeral recalling the impressive ancestry of the Julian clan.
- Soon after, Caesar made Octavius heir to his extremely valuable estate, although the will made no mention of Octavius as successor.
- Caesar had him elected to the college of pontiffs (priests) and allowed him to take part in his African triumph when he was only 16.
- Octavius further impressed Caesar with his initiative and enterprise when he followed Caesar to Spain in 46 BC.
- Caesar also appointed him at age 17 to his staff as ***magister equitum***. He sent him to Macedonia with his school friend, Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, to complete their education and receive military training for the dictator's planned campaign against the Parthians.

magister equitum 'master of horse', assistant to the dictator

When Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC by 60 senatorial conspirators, Mark Antony gained Caesar's will from the safekeeping of the Vestal Virgins, unsealed it and read it.

> Caesar left three-quarters of his estate to Gaius Octavius, afterwards Augustus ... he also adopted Gaius Octavius into the Caesar family, left the Commons his gardens on the banks of the Tiber for use as a recreation ground and three gold pieces a man.

SOURCE 13.5 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Julius Caesar*, 83

When Octavius – who was only 18 – became aware of his status, he:

1 changed his name to Gaius Julius Caesar Octavianus (now referred to as Octavian)
2 aimed to carry out his sacred duty to avenge his adopted father's death and 'keep his decrees'[1]
3 was determined to prove himself a worthy heir, and if possible, surpass Caesar's achievements.

When Octavian returned to Rome from Macedonia, Mark Antony – Caesar's best friend and someone on whom the young man was counting for support – gave Octavian a hostile reception and attempted to block him from legalising his adoption and securing his inheritance. Perhaps Antony was disappointed with the will and wanted to appropriate some of Caesar's funds to prosecute the war against the conspirators, although Plutarch infers that he could have been in personal debt from a life of 'pleasure and debauchery'.[2]

However, Octavian gained prestige and popularity with the people by honouring Caesar's requests to pay bequests of 75 dinarii each to the people, and by giving games to Venus Genetrix, the divine mother of Aeneas, considered the ancestor of the Julian clan. To do this he sold his own property and borrowed money.

> Antony was at first inclined to despise Octavius as a mere boy, and told him he must be out of his mind, adding the warning that a young man who possessed few influential friends and little experience of the world would find it a crushing burden to accept the inheritance and act as Caesar's executor. Octavius was quite unmoved by this argument and continued to demand the money, while Antony for his part did everything possible to humiliate him.

SOURCE 13.6 Plutarch, *Makers of Rome: Antony*, 16

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To carry out his other plans, he needed 'stronger authority' and so 'announced his candidature for a tribuneship',[3] but was opposed by Antony who was consul at the time.

He then raised a considerable army (wholly illegal) from among Caesar's veterans stationed in Campania, and seduced two of Antony's Macedonian legions. Cicero, who 'still commanded more influence than any other man in Rome … devoted all his efforts to arousing public opinion against Antony',[4] and wooing Octavian to the republican side.

> Look at young Gaius Caesar [Octavian] – he's scarcely more than a lad but he has raised a devoted army of those veterans of Caesar's who have never known defeat … He is an astonishing, I might say superhuman, quality of mind and spirit; … we must give him our formal support, so that the defence of the *res publica* [republic] may be not just his own private enterprise but a commission from us [senate].

SOURCE 13.7 Cicero, 'Third Philippic', in. E. E. Judge, *Augustus and Roman History*, p. 11

When Antony's term as consul expired, the Senate intended him to become governor of Macedonia. However, Antony preferred the nearer province of Cisalpine Gaul, and in December 44 BC he and his remaining legions marched north and took it by force. The Senate granted Octavian *propraetorian imperium* to use his armies against Antony. Although Cicero knew that this was wholly illegal, he was prepared overlook this in the interest of the safety of the republic.

However, like Antony, Cicero underestimated the young man as a political rival. Octavian demanded a consulship (illegal at his age) and when this was consistently refused, he brought his forces back to Rome, seized the treasury to pay his troops and arranged for consular elections.

In August 43 BC, he was elected to the first of his consulships, even though he was still underage for the position.

> At the age of twenty, he created himself Consul, marched on Rome as though it were an enemy city, and sent messengers ahead in the name of his army to demand that the appointment should be confirmed. When the Senate hesitated to obey, one Cornelius, a company commander, opened his military cloak, displayed the hilt of his sword, and boldly said: 'If you do not make him Consul, this will!'

SOURCE 13.8 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 26

A COMMENT ON …

Octavian's early illegal acts

To understand the illegality of the young Octavian's early acts, it is essential to understand the political requirements for advancement in Rome. Even Julius Caesar followed the correct procedure in the first part of his career.

Entry into the senate was via the position of quaestor, which could not be achieved until the minimum age of 30, while a candidate for the top two magistracies, praetors and consuls, could not stand until the minimum ages of 39 and 42. Also praetors (plus pro-praetors or governors of provinces) and consuls were the only positions which had *imperium*, the right to command an army. Of course, there had always been exceptions to the rule, but Octavian was extremely young (20) when he gained his first consulship in 43. Certainly, since the assassination of Caesar, the Roman world had changed dramatically.

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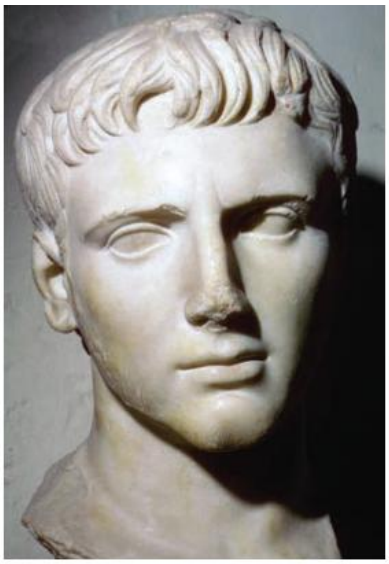

FIGURE 13.6 A bust of a young Octavian

Caesar's assassins, who had fled Rome, were tried in their absence and Octavian prepared to meet the ringleaders, Brutus and Cassius, in battle. He realised that Cicero 'was determined to restore the liberties of the old Republic and he now sent his friends to Antony and invited him to come to terms'.[5] To Octavian, 'restoring the old republic' meant one in which a small group of senators (*nobiles*) controlled the state, a situation that Julius Caesar had long realised was ineffective.

Octavian arranged a meeting with Antony and they reconciled their differences, made arrangements for their immediate futures and together marched on Rome, where a tribune introduced a law in the assembly recognising Antony, Octavian and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus as triumvirs. Lepidus had been Caesar's 'master of the horse' (*magister equitum*) during his last dictatorship in 44 BC.

ACTIVITY 13.3

1. How did Octavian benefit from Caesar's death?
2. How did Mark Antony attempt to thwart Octavian's ambition to prove himself as a worthy heir to Caesar?
3. What does Source 13.7 reveal about Cicero?
4. Explain the illegal acts carried out by Octavian in 43 BC.

triumvirate a political regime ruled or dominated by three powerful individuals, known as triumvirs

proscription the act of announcing the name of a person as condemned to death and subject to confiscation of property

The Formation of the Second Triumvirate 40 BC

The following table outlines the original formation of the Second **Triumvirate** by which the triumvirs divided the Roman Empire between themselves. There had been a controversial 'First Triumvirate' between Caesar, Pompey and Crassus from 60–53 BC, but it had originally been a 'secret' agreement between the three men and was never officially recognised. This latest one was different.

TABLE 13.3 The Second Triumvirate

Members	Antony, Lepidus and Octavian
Official title	*Triumviri Republicae Constituendae*
Length of appointment	Five years
Purpose of alliance	To set the state in order and to attack the republican armies of Brutus and Cassius in the east
Powers of triumvirs	• Absolute – the powers of a dictator without the name • The right to nominate all magistrates in advance
Territory controlled	• Antony – Transalpine and Cisalpine Gaul • Lepidus – Narbonese Gaul and Spain • Octavian – Africa, Sicily and Sardinia
First task undertaken	A savage campaign of **proscription**

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TABLE 13.3 (*continued*)

Purpose of proscriptions	• To confiscate estates in order to have money and land for their troops • To destroy their enemies, as Caesar had found clemency did not pay
Results of proscriptions	• Death of 300 senators, including Cicero, and 2000 *equites* • Those republicans who escaped joined Sextus Pompeius (son of Pompey the Great)
Further activities	• Julius Caesar was officially **deified** • Lepidus appointed consul for 42 BC • Preparations made to face Brutus and Cassius (Caesar's assassins) and their armies in Macedonia

deified treated like a god or goddess

FIGURE 13.7 Coins showing two of the triumvirs: Antony and Octavian

A COMMENT ON ...

The proscription of Cicero

Cicero (one of the greatest orators in Rome) had continued making speeches against Antony so it was not surprising that his name was included among those proscribed by the triumvirs. His attempts to 'restore the republic' cost him his life. When he was caught by the triumvirs' agents attempting to escape from his country estate, his throat was cut and on Antony's orders his head and hands were removed and taken to Rome. There they were fastened up on the public platform in the Roman Forum. It is also believed that Antony's wife, Fulvia, pierced Cicero's tongue with a pin.

A COMMENT ON ...

The deification of Julius Caesar

Four months after Caesar's death, when Octavian was holding games in Caesar's honour, a bright comet appeared in the skies for seven successive days and nights. The Romans interpreted it as the soul of Caesar, and a sign of his deification. This comet became a powerful symbol in the political propaganda that Octavian used in his early career. In 42 BC, he had a temple to the *divus iulius* (deified Julius) built in the Roman Forum. This was dedicated by him in 29 BC and coins were issued with him as Augustus on one side and the comet with the legend 'deified Julius' on the other.

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FIGURE 13.8 A coin depicting Augustus and the comet of the 'deified Julius'

FIGURE 13.9 The Plain of Philippi today

The Battle of Philippi 42 BC and its aftermath

Brutus and Cassius, the leaders in the assassination of Julius Caesar, had fled Italy and taken over the eastern provinces of the empire. They now marched westward with 19 legions to face Antony and Octavian, who had control of 28 legions. The forces eventually faced each other on the Plain of Philippi in the Roman province of Macedonia. In two engagements about three weeks apart the republicans were defeated; both Cassius and Brutus took their own lives. Antony was given the credit for the victories, as Octavian was ill and took little part in the action. (Read Plutarch, *Brutus* 38–52 and *Antony*, 22)

At the Battle of Philippi, Octavian had avenged the death of his adoptive father Julius Caesar and marked the effective end of the republican party, as most had died fighting. Those who escaped fled to join Sextus Pompeius (the son of Pompey, Caesar's former opponent in the Civil War of 49–45).

There was now a change in the division of the empire and the respective tasks of the triumvirs.

1 Lepidus' position in the triumvirate became that of a minor member, as he allowed himself to be ordered about by the other two. According to A. H. M. Jones, he 'lacked the ruthless qualities needed for success, or indeed survival in these troublous times'.[6] He was given Africa.

2 Antony had control of all of Gaul but was to take the majority of the legions to the east, to settle the provinces that had been disrupted since the assassination of Caesar and the occupation of the east by the legions of Brutus and Cassius. Antony also needed to raise money. It was while there that he accepted an invitation from Cleopatra to visit Egypt. He wanted some of the wealth of the Ptolemies (Graeco/Egyptian rulers of Egypt after Alexander), while she needed his help to maintain control of Egypt.

3 Octavian received Spain and Sardinia but was to return to Italy to settle large numbers of veterans. While Antony was in the east, Octavian attempted to battle Sextus Pompeius in the west. He had seized Sicily and was threatening Rome's grain supply.

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FIGURE 13.10 The division of the Roman Empire between the triumvirs after Phillipi

For the next decade 42–31 BC, tensions within the triumvirate increased, as both men were building up clients and furthering their own careers.

TABLE 13.4 Octavian vs Antony

Octavian in the west and in Italy	Antony in the east and in Egypt
• Octavian was faced with further problems in Italy as Antony's brother, Lucius, and Antony's wife, Fulvia, raised legions against him. These actions caused political and social unrest. According to Appian, Fulvia, jealous of Antony and Cleopatra's affair in Egypt, may have escalated the tensions with Octavian in order to draw back Antony's attention to Italy. • Lucius waited for Antony's legions in Gaul to come to his aid but, unaware of the war, Antony was still in the eastern provinces, and his legions were unsure of his commands. • Octavian laid siege to them for two months at Perusia, Lucius surrendered and Fulvia took her children and fled to Greece. • Antony's **legates** in Gaul went over to Octavian, who now controlled the western empire, except for Sicily (occupied by Sextus Pompeius) and Africa (under Lepidus).	• While Antony was settling the east, he supposedly fell under the spell of Cleopatra. Whether he initially knew of his wife and brother's actions against Octavian is not known. • Appian writes that Fulvia met Antony in Athens, and he was upset with her involvement in the war. Fulvia died in Greece of some unknown complaint. • Antony then sailed back to Rome to deal with Octavian. • Plutarch says that Antony was ready to blame the tensions between the two triumvirs on Fulvia's actions, which made the time ripe for a reconciliation. This occurred at Brundisium in 40 BC, during which Octavian organised the marriage of his sister Octavia the Younger to Antony.

legate high-ranking officers in the Roman army, in charge of a legion

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TABLE 13.4 *(continued)*

Octavian in the west and in Italy	Antony in the east and in Egypt
• While Antony was away in the East, Octavian, with his friend Agrippa, defeated Sextus Pompeius in 36 BC. When Lepidus tried to seize Sicily he was deposed from the Triumvirate and sent into exile. Octavian took over Lepidus' legions, returned to Rome and was given many honours. • He kept his troops busy in a campaign in Illyria, gaining military prestige and the support of the Roman people. • It was Antony's treatment of Octavia, in recognising Cleopatra as his wife, that finally severed the alliance. A war of propaganda began. • Octavian had the upper hand since he was in Rome, and the inhabitants of the Italian towns and cities swore an oath of allegiance to him. • Octavian obtained Antony's will from the Vestal Virgins with whom it was lodged and made it public. Apart from Antony's recognition of Ptolemy Caesar as the true son of Julius Caesar, and the extravagant legacies to his children by Cleopatra, the aspect that most horrified the Roman people was his instruction, should he die in Rome, to send his body to Alexandria to be buried. • The Senate passed a decree declaring war on Cleopatra and depriving Antony of the authority.	• Antony sent his new wife to Rome with Fulvia's children and he returned to Syria to prepare for a war against Parthia. • He summoned Cleopatra to meet him in Antioch. • While married to Octavia, he openly lived with Cleopatra and fathered three children by her. • Antony overstretched himself in Parthia and was forced to retreat with considerable loss of life, but he turned his attention to Armenia, where he seized the king and occupied the territory. • It was while in the east that he made an announcement referred to as the 'Donations of Alexandria' by which he divided up the east between Cleopatra and her children: she and her son by Julius Caesar (Ptolemy Caesar) were declared Queen and King of Kings, controlling Egypt and Cyprus, while Antony's three children by Cleopatra were to share Armenia, Media, Syria, Phoenicia, Cilicia and Cyrenaica. • Antony's supporters made a speech in his favour, but Octavian entered the Senate with an armed guard, and all pro-Antony senators fled to join him in the East. • Antony sent notification of his formal divorce of Octavia.
During the winter of 33–32, both sides prepared for a war to decide the leadership of the Roman world.	

FIGURE 13.11 A bust believed to be of Cleopatra (Berlin Museum)

FIGURE 13.12 A 19th-century painting of Cleopatra by John William Waterhouse

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FIGURE 13.13 Cleopatra and Antony on the eve of the Battle of Actium by Lawrence Alma Tadema

The Battle of Actium 31 BC and its aftermath

At the naval battle off Actium in north-west Greece, the combined forces of Antony and Cleopatra – one of the greatest fleets ever assembled – faced Octavian's smaller fleet commanded by Agrippa. Plutarch says that Antony's fleet numbered over 500 ships, of which 60 were contributed by Cleopatra, and that many of Antony's vessels 'carried eight or ten banks of oars,and were fitted out with elaborate decorations as though they were intended for a triumph'.[7] Cleopatra is supposed to have also contributed 20 000 talents and vast supplies of grain. She accompanied the fleet despite Antony's supporters' attempts to persuade him to leave her behind.

Agrippa blockaded Antony's fleet in the bay of Actium and in a number of brilliant naval raids secured various strategic ports in Greece, cutting off Antony's supplies and communications. Antony's troops were weakened by hunger and malaria, and many leading Romans and eastern client-kings deserted him, particularly angered by Cleopatra's influence over him.

The blockade had to be broken and Antony and Cleopatra had a plan to force battle in the hope of breaking through and making for Egypt. During the engagement – which was no contest – Cleopatra with her royal squadron 'was suddenly seen to hoist sail and make through the very midst of the battle. They had been stationed stern of the heavy ships and so threw their whole formation into disorder as they plunged through'.[8] Once out of danger, she waited for Antony and a small number of ships – leaving the remainder of the fleet to be captured – and sailed back to Alexandria. Antony's troops, stationed in Greece, gave themselves up to Octavian.

You can read Plutarch, *Makers of Rome: Mark Antony*, pp. 61–68 for an account of the battle, the success of Octavian, the flight of Cleopatra and Antony to Egypt and the surrender of Antony's troops stationed in Greece.

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FIGURE 13.14 The naval Battle of Actium, painted in the 17th century by Lorenzo A. Castro

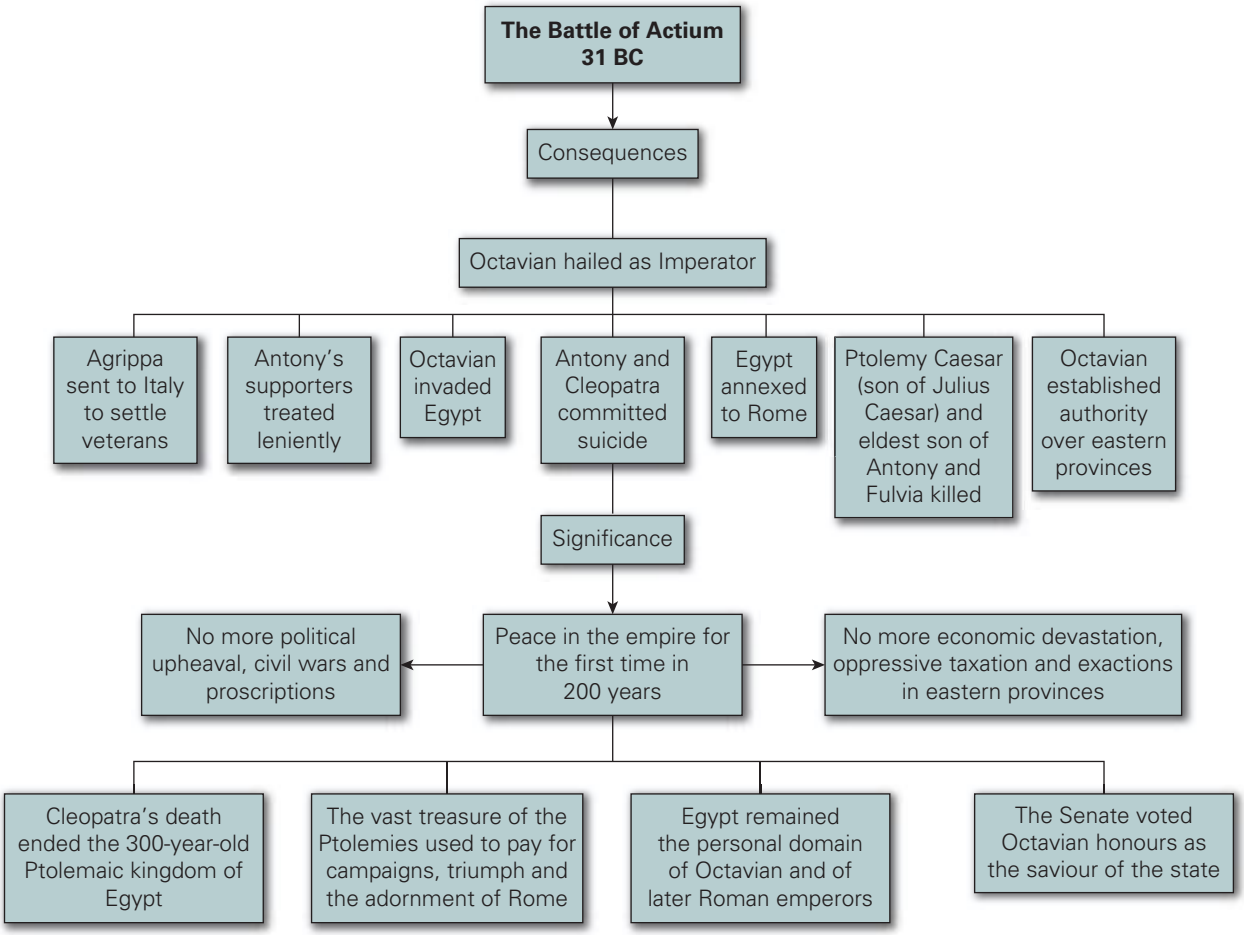

FIGURE 13.15 Diagram of the aftermath and significance of the Battle of Actium

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FIGURE 13.16 Reginald Arthur's 1892 painting, *The Death of Cleopatra*

ACTIVITY 13.4

1. What was the purpose of the formal arrangement between Octavian, Antony and Lepidus in 40 BC?
2. Describe the proscriptions, including that of Cicero, carried out by the triumvirs.
3. How did Octavian use the deification of Caesar as political propaganda?
4. What was the significance of the Battle of Philippi?
5. Describe the tensions that occurred between the triumvirs between 42–33 BC.
6. Who fought at the Battle of Actium?
7. Use Figure 13.15 to describe the aftermath and significance of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC for
   - Octavian
   - Antony and Cleopatra
   - Rome and Egypt.

Octavian's settlements of 27 and 23 BC

The restoration of order and confidence 29–28

When Octavian returned to Rome in 29, he celebrated a three-day triumph, then set about restoring order and confidence throughout the Roman world after a century of political upheaval, civil wars, proscriptions, economic devastation, oppressive taxation and continued exactions from the once-rich eastern provinces. In January 29 BC, the doors of the Temple of Janus on the Quirinal hill, which had remained open while the country was not at peace, were closed for the first time in 200 years. Suetonius says that they had been closed previously 'no more than twice since the foundation of Rome'.[9] Refer back to Figure 13.4 and Source 13.2.

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TABLE 13.5 How Octavian restored order and confidence

Indicated that peace was to continue
He closed the Temple of Janus. He reduced 60 legions to 28.
He settled 120 000 veterans in colonies in Italy and overseas with their pensions paid in full, and personally paid cash for the land provided.
Carried out no proscriptions against his enemies
He annulled all the illegal acts of the Triumvirate, issued an amnesty against those proscribed in 43 BC and brought an end to the injustices suffered by their families.
Created financial stability
He paid off all his own debts and ignored the debts of others.
He helped rehabilitate senators who had suffered financially. He reduced the interest on loans by two-thirds.
Emphasised traditional and conservative activities
He became an augur (priest) with the right to appoint members of the priestly colleges.
He re-established religious rites and ceremonies that had been neglected. He tried to restore respect for the Senate by removing unworthy members and expecting those who remained to take their task seriously.
Provided diversions and employment for the people
He spent lavishly on games and other forms of entertainment and used the traditional hand-outs of grain to keep the people happy.
He began a building program to provide employment.
Accepted no exceptional honours or powers
He held the consulship on equal terms with his colleague, and for the first time in 20 years, the consuls spent their full term in Rome.
Utilised propaganda to promote the new era of peace
Since 40 BC writers such as Virgil had been promising a 'golden age' of peace and stability.

Development of the principate

Octavian believed that the safety and wellbeing of the state depended on him. The Senate had failed in preventing ambitious commanders and their armies, including himself, from plunging the state into civil war. The only way to prevent this in future was to keep control of the armed forces himself. However, he:

- was conservative by nature and preferred constitutional government
- wanted to avoid the fate of Julius Caesar
- needed to avoid any hostility with his peers.

The First Settlement, 27 BC

It is believed that Octavian consulted with his friends and supporters as to how to normalise his position in the state.

- At the beginning of 27 BC, he renounced all his powers and provinces, claiming that 'I transferred the republic from my power to the dominion of the Senate and the people of Rome'.[10]
- The Senate protested and granted him pro-consular *imperium* over all provinces that required military defence. This gave him control over most of Spain, Gaul, Syria, Cyprus, Cilicia and Egypt, with the right to appoint legates, make war and conclude peace.
- He also continued to be elected consul every year, which gave him *imperium* in Rome and Italy.

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- The Senate conferred on him the name 'Augustus', meaning 'revered one', by which he then became known. This name increased his dignity without adding to his power. He was now princeps, or first citizen, a title that had been used before by leading men of the republic and implied authority, not power. It is from this date that the new form of government known as the principate began.

The Second Settlement, 23 BC

Between 27 and 24 BC Augustus was away in his provinces, but in 23 BC two events occurred which made him reconsider his constitutional position:

1 Two senators, Varro Murena and Fannius Caepio, organised a serious conspiracy against him by highlighting senatorial resentment of his continuing consulships, which limited their ambitions.

2 He became desperately ill and believed he was about to die; this may have encouraged him to give up the consulship with its tiring day-to-day business, or at least it was a convenient excuse to do so.

In 23 BC he resigned his consulship, but was compensated for the loss of consular *imperium* in two ways:

1 His pro-consular *imperium* was recognised as *maius* (superior), which gave him unlimited control of the army and all provinces.

2 He was granted tribunician power for life, which gave him the right to legislate in the Assembly, summon the Senate, veto proposals and help those oppressed by the magistrates. It was this authority that Augustus emphasised as the legal basis of his power.

Because the *maius imperium*, granted to him in 23 BC, applied only in the provinces and not in Rome and Italy, he was granted the *imperium* of a consul without actually holding the position of a consul. Other outward signs of this power were given to him between 22 and 19 BC, such as the right to be attended by 12 **lictors** and to sit between the consuls.

lictors attendants of magistrates who held *imperium*

Augustus' constitutional powers were now complete. Although other titles and honours were given to him after this date, they did not alter his real powers, which were:

- his *maius imperium* in the provinces of the empire
- his consular *imperium* in Italy and Rome
- his tribunician power (appeared on all inscriptions). Periodically he chose to share with a colleague in order to bestow honour.

A COMMENT ON ...

Augustus' claim to 'restore the republic'

Although Augustus is supposed to have claimed he 'restored the republic', some ancient writers like Dio Cassius saw this as a pretense.

This led many modern writers to develop the 'façade' theory: that Augustus created an elaborate façade behind which he hid his real powers while gradually establishing another form of government: the principate.

There are a number of different perspectives on Augustus' 'constitutional' position.

1 Velleius Paterculus was an ardent admirer of Augustus:

> After twenty years the civil wars were ended ... their force was restored to the laws, authority to the courts, its majesty to the senate, the rule of the magistrates was restored to its old form.
>
> Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History*, II, 89

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2 Suetonius, who had access to Augustus' *Memoirs*, wrote:

> Twice Augustus seriously thought of restoring the republican system: immediately after the fall of Antony ... and again when he could not shake off an exhausting illness ... On reconsideration, however, he decided that to divide the responsibilities of government among several hands would be to jeopardize not only his own life, but national security; so he did not do so.
>
> Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Augustus*, 28

3 Tacitus' aim in writing his *Annals* towards the end of the 1st century AD was to expose the evils of the principate of the Julio-Claudians and so he was not favourable to Augustus. He maintains that the position of Augustus was monarchical.

> Then he gradually pushed ahead and absorbed the functions of the senate, the officials and even the law.
>
> Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1

4 The modern scholar, Australian professor E. A. Judge, believes Augustus never claimed to have restored the republic, but was simply handing back the extraordinary powers he had held as triumvir.

> It is unlikely that so realistic a devotee of self-display as Augustus would have wanted or needed to lurk behind anything, or that the Roman people would have expected him to do so, or would have been taken in if he had.
>
> E. A. Judge, *Res Publica Restituta: A Modern Illusion*, pp. 172–3

Titles, honours and images of the princeps

Augustus held the consulship 13 times, the *tribunician potestas* for 37 years, and his *imperium maius* was renewed five times from 18 BC to 13 AD. The titles most commonly found in Augustan inscriptions by 14 AD were *Pontifex Maximus*, Consul, *Tribunicia Potestate*, Imperator and *pater patriae*.

TABLE 13.6 Titles and honours granted to Augustus

Imperator	First conferred as a military title but owing to its military nature, Augustus did not use it in Rome or Italy, only in the eastern provinces.	'I was 21 times saluted as imperator.'[11]
Princeps senatus	After Augustus revised the list of senators for the first time (28 BC), his name was placed at the head of the senatorial list and this entitled him to be the first to give his opinion in the Senate.	'Up to the time of writing I have been *princeps senatus* for 40 years.'[12]

imperator an honorific title proclaimed by the troops of a commander after a great victory

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TABLE 13.6 (*continued*)

Augustus ('one to be revered')	This was conferred by the Senate. It increased his dignity but not his power.	'Some senators wanted him to be called Romulus, as the second founder of the city; but Munatius Plancus argued that Augustus was both a more original and honourable title, since sanctuaries and all places consecrated by the augurs are known as august.'[13]
Princeps civitatis	This meant 'first citizen' and had been used to describe leading men of the republic and implied authority not power.	'While I was the leading citizen, the Senate resolved that it should be shut on three occasions.'[14]
Pontifex maximus	Augustus succeeded Lepidus on his death as head of the priesthoods and the state religion, through which he had control of political and judicial procedure.	'Some years later I received this priesthood … and such concourse poured in from the whole of Italy to my election as has never been recorded at Rome before that time.'[15]
Pater patriae	This title meant 'Father of the country' and was the title which Augustus inscribed on the monument set in the middle of his new Forum, opened in 2 AD.	'Fathers of the Senate, I have at last achieved my highest ambition. What more can I ask of the immortal gods than that they permit me to enjoy your approval until my dying day.'[16]

pater patriae 'father of the country'

In my 13th consulship the Senate, the equestrian order and the whole people of Rome gave me the title of Father of My Country, and resolved that this should be inscribed … in the Forum Augustum below the Chariot which had been set there in my honour by decree of the Senate.

SOURCE 13.9 The conferment of the title of *pater patriae* in Augustus' own words: Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, 35.1

The Senate instead of issuing a decree chose Valerius Messala to speak for them all when Augustus entered the House. Messala's words were: Caesar Augustus, I am instructed to wish you and your family good fortune and divine blessings … The Senate agree with the People of Rome in saluting you as 'Father of your Country'. With tears in his eyes, Augustus answered … 'Fathers of the Senate, I have at last achieved my highest ambition. What more can I ask of the immortal gods than that they may permit me to enjoy your approval until my dying day?'

SOURCE 13.10 The conferment of the title of *pater patriae* according to Suetonius: Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 58

FIGURE 13.17 Augustus as *Pontifex Maximus*

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FIGURE 13.18 Coins commemorating Augustus as *pater patriae*

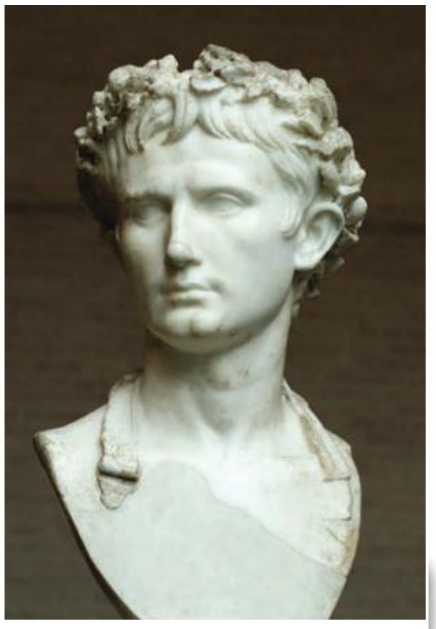

FIGURE 13.19 Augustus wearing the *corona civica* or civic crown, a chaplet of oak leaves woven to form a crown. It was the second highest military decoration.

ACTIVITY 13.5

1. Draw a diagram illustrating the methods used by Octavian to restore order and confidence in Rome when he returned from Egypt.
2. What was the meaning of the name, 'Augustus' conferred on him by the Senate in 27 BC, and why was this particular name chosen?
3. Give the sources of constitutional power granted to Augustus in 23 BC by the Second Settlement.
4. Discuss the views expressed in the comment box about Augustus' claims that he had 'restored the republic'.
5. What was the significance of the following titles and honours conferred on Augustus?
   - *Pontifex maximus*
   - *pater patriae*
6. What do Sources 13.9 and 13.10 indicate about how much importance Augustus placed on the conferment of the title *pater patriae*?

13.3 The Augustan principate

The principate was successfully maintained from 27 BC to 14 AD due to Augustus':

- *auctoritas* (personal influence)
- military power
- constitutional arrangements
- propaganda
- reforms and reorganisation that promoted efficiency, justice, old virtues, security, prosperity and prestige.

However, before looking at the principate in detail, it is worthwhile knowing something about the most important contemporary written source for this period: the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.

This is the first-person funerary inscription of Augustus. It is 'the achievements of the Divine Augustus, by which he brought the world under the empire of the Roman people, and of the expenses which he bore for the state and people of Rome'.[17] Since it is material written by Augustus, it is natural that he would want to present himself to posterity in a favourable light. However, despite his deliberately slanted account, it is significant because it gives an insight into the image he wanted to portray to the Roman people. The original

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inscription was on two bronze pillars at the entrance of his mausoleum but the surviving copy was found in a temple in Galatia. Table 13.7 summarises its main features.

TABLE 13.7 Main features of the *Res Gestae*

Purpose
To justify the position and power of Augustus – this followed the usual custom of influential Romans.
Content
The main divisions of the document include: • the magistracies and honours granted to him • the expenses he incurred for the people • his military and diplomatic achievements, which show the security of the empire • his qualities and relationship with the people of Rome.
Emphasis
Augustus' chief emphasis was: • his *auctoritas* or prestige • the title *pater patriae* (father of the country) • peace and what he did for the people • his 'restoration' of the republic by restoring powers to the Senate and people, the republican tradition of his titles and honours such as his tribunician power, and the fact that he declined any position that was 'un-republican' in character.
Omissions
He omitted: • his real power, which was his *maius imperium* • his relationship with Julius Caesar • his early actions, which included proscriptions and gaining a consulship by intimidation • part of his legislation and his foreign policy.
Value as a source
The *Res Gestae*: • is accurate, but selective. Augustus omits those things he wanted forgotten and so it is deliberately slanted • is not blatant propaganda • balances other views such as those of Velleius Paterculus and Tacitus.

Velleius Paterculus' *History of Rome* was also a contemporary source for the Augustan age. Velleius was an ardent admirer of Augustus. Although he devoted half of his history of Rome to him, it is rather naïve, and typical of other writers of the time with its excessive praise. Yet it is useful for the wars in the north, as Velleius had served in the military at stages in his career, and it balances the brief negative view of Augustus presented by Tacitus.

FIGURE 13.20 The *Res Gestae* inscription

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Tacitus, who lived about 55–120 AD, wrote his famous *Annals* from the end of Augustus' reign to the death of Nero. In his brief treatment of Augustus, he is not favourable to the principate in general, nor to Augustus in particular

ACTIVITY 13.6

1 What is the meaning of *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*? Where and when was it originally inscribed?
2 Assess the value of the *Res Gestae* as a source on the principate of Augustus.

Augustus, the Senate and magistrates

Three factors influenced Augustus in his relationship with the Senate and magistrates:

1 The experiences of Julius Caesar, who blocked the ambitions of prominent men by holding so many of the top positions himself, quite openly showing lack of respect for the Senate, and either failing to realise, or not caring, that his autocratic powers and behaviour gave offence.
2 His own conservative inclinations. He preferred to retain republican forms as long as they were efficient. Where change was needed, he showed political tact, so that he avoided offending the upper classes. He wanted it to be said that the Senate was performing its ancient functions.
3 His need for cooperation in running the vast empire. Maecenas, one of Augustus' most trusted friends, expressed the following view.

> The cause of our troubles is the multitude of our population and the magnitude of the business of our government: for the population embraces men of every kind, in respect both of race and endowment and both their tempers and their desires are manifold: and the business of the State has become so vast that it can be administered only with the greatest difficulty.

SOURCE 13.11 P. A. Brunt & J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, p. 37

The Senate

Augustus needed to share the workload in the empire with the senators, dividing legislative, executive and judicial functions between them.

Augustus wanted to raise the tone of the Senate, reduce its numbers, restore its former dignity, increase the responsibility of its members and improve its efficiency. To achieve these he:

- revised the senatorial roll several times, reducing its number from 900 to 600 by removing disreputable members who had secured admission by bribery or influence. He later encouraged the senators themselves to select those members who they considered should be removed. When he detected corruption, however, he made the choice himself
- changed the qualification for membership. As well as encouraging the hereditary nature of the senatorial class, he laid down a monetary qualification of one million **sesterces** and added worthy men from the **equestrian class**. He personally assisted some families without the required capital qualification to remain within the class

sesterces Roman coins made of bronze

equestrian class originally those who could afford a horse, but later wealthy Roman businessmen, tax collectors and bankers

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- increased fines for non-attendance and insisted that senators did not leave Italy without permission
- called on speakers at random rather than by seniority to make sure that they were alert, taking an interest in proceedings and responsible for making constructive contributions to the debates
- reduced the number of sessions of the Senate to two a month, and to make things more efficient, set up a Senate committee of himself, the two consuls, one of each of the boards of magistrates and 15 senators to prepare an agenda for the Senate.

TABLE 13.8 Legislative, executive and judicial functions shared by the Senate and Augustus

Functions	The Senate	Augustus
Legislative	• The Senate gradually developed into a legislative body – its *senatus consulta* (senatorial decrees) became law. • A Senate committee prepared material for the whole Senate, but the initiative and advice often came from Augustus, who was a member of the committee.	• Augustus could legislate by using his tribunician power to present measures to the people. • However, he normally did it in other ways: by edicts, judicial decisions, replies to petitions and instructions to officials.
Executive	• The Senate controlled the peaceful provinces. Augustus could interfere if he thought it was necessary by virtue of his *maius imperium*. • He also reallocated provinces to the Senate as conditions changed. • The Senate and the magistrates were in charge of many of the public services. • The Senate was in charge of the state treasury and had the right to mint copper and bronze coins in Rome. However, Augustus could still control the state treasury as he often added to it from his own personal wealth. He could also draw from the financial chests of the senatorial provinces if necessary. • The Senate had no control over foreign affairs except to occasionally exchange greetings with foreign embassies.	• Augustus was responsible for those provinces which needed a military presence. Egypt was his personal domain. • Augustus avoided taking over departments in the administration of Rome, entrusting the senatorial commissions, but he did recommend some candidates and employed talented *equites*. • Augustus alone had the right to mint gold and silver coins. • He kept departmental chests in his own imperial provinces from which he drew his expenses. • Augustus had the power to negotiate with client-kings, to sign treaties and to decide between war and peace since he had the real power in the state: control of the army.
Judicial	• The Senate, sitting with the two consuls, formed one of two new criminal courts (see p. 825). This tried important political cases and those involving senators and other prominent people. The Senate was more independent in judicial functions than in other areas.	• Augustus in council formed another court of criminal justice. Those cases that came before him were wider in scope than those handled by the senatorial court. 'Appeals to Caesar' against capital punishment decided by a magistrate increased in frequency.

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The magistrates

Augustus:

- retained the prestige and glamour of the consulship by opening the way for the more outstanding to govern in imperial provinces (those directly under the control of Augustus). Ex-consuls were also appointed to direct boards of senators in specific administrative areas: for example, highways, public works, grain and water supply. Augustus used them to hear appeals from the provinces and to listen to requests of foreign envoys in matters that did not require his or the Senate's attention
- provided for more senators to have the chance to become consuls by shortening the tenure from one year to six months and increased the functions for praetors to cater for increased competition for these positions. They were still in charge of urban jurisdiction but two were appointed to the state treasury, and three ex-praetors were in charge of the military treasury. After 22 BC they also took over the organisation of games and festivals from the **aediles**
- retained the quaestorship as prerequisite for entry into the Senate. Six served in the provinces and the others assisted Augustus and the consuls
- removed some traditional functions of the *aediles:* the corn supply and giving of games in 22 BC, water supply in 11 BC and fire control in 6 AD.

aediles Roman magistrates responsible for public works, markets and festivals

ACTIVITY 13.7

1. What were Augustus' aims with regard to the Senate?
2. It has been suggested that the Roman government at the time of Augustus was a dyarchy (a form of government in which the power is vested in two authorities). Look at Table 13.8 and see whether you agree or not. Consider the respective workload and the real power of the Senate and Augustus.
3. How did Augustus raise the tone and prestige of the Senate?

Significance of equestrians and freedmen in the principate

Equestrian class

As there had always been a certain amount of hostility between the senatorial and equestrian classes (*equites*), Augustus attempted to prevent further clashes by finding positions for *equites* in the new regime that did not compete with those held by senators. He also wanted to reorganise the equestrian order so that it was filled with men of talent as well as wealth.

- Many new posts were created which had never been part of the republican government, some of which involved doing jobs for Augustus. Members of the Senate would have been offended if he had asked them to carry out such duties as they were regarded as his equals.
- So began the civil service, which, although in its infancy, provided Augustus with the opportunity to employ talented *equites* who had vast experience in banking, tax collecting and business.
- Augustus also wanted to revive the ancient link between the equestrian order and the military, as the equestrian order had originated as a class of knights. Not only did this revive republican traditions, but it also emphasised the fact that if young ambitious members of the class wished to pursue an administrative career, they would first have to undergo real military service.
- Membership of the equestrian class was not only restricted to those of honourable character with a census rating of at least 4 000 000 sesterces, but it also depended on the approval of the princeps. Augustus controlled all admissions and carried out periodical revision of the rolls.

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- Membership entitled *equites* to wear a tunic with a narrow purple stripe and a gold ring, to occupy the first 14 rows at the theatre and to sit on the jury courts. They were each given a horse at public expense and Augustus revived the old annual march-past of knights.
- Ambitious and talented *equites* could advance through the military and civil service, although there was no regular pattern of advancement like the *cursus honorum* for senatorial magistrates.

Praetorian Guard an elite body of troops within the army that helped protect the city of Rome, the princeps and the imperial household

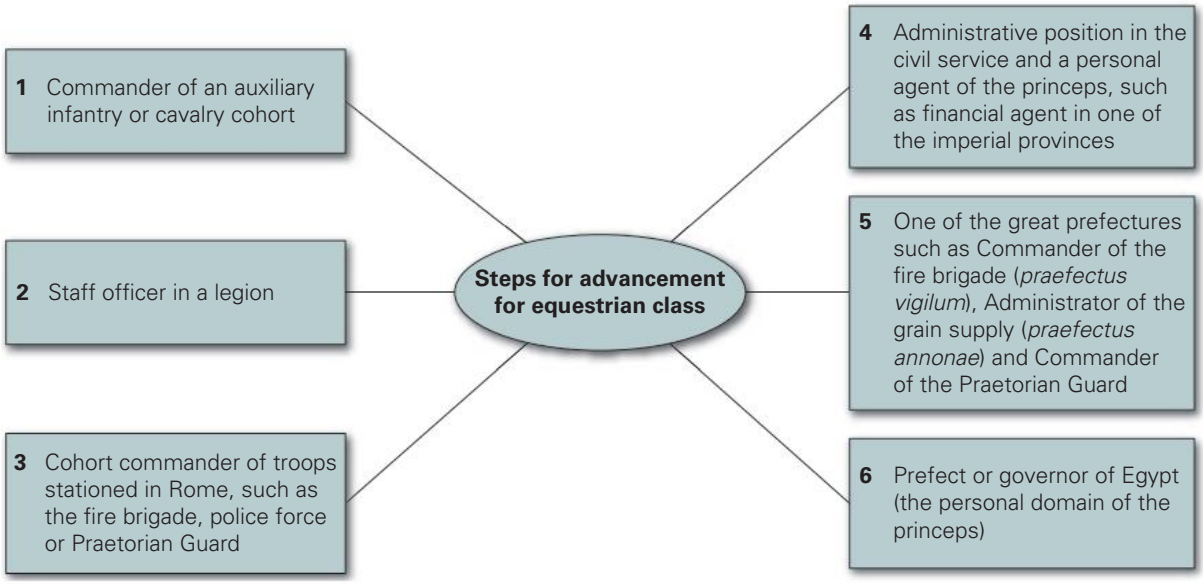

FIGURE 13.21 Diagram of possible steps to advancement for ambitious members of the equestrian class

FIGURE 13.22 A relief of the Praetorian Guard

A COMMENT ON ...

The significance of the Praetorian Guard

Augustus realised the need to have a protective force in Rome, but because he wanted to appear to uphold the republican image of the principate, he allowed the formation of nine cohorts (500, and later 1000, men each) of Praetorian Guardsmen. Three were on duty in Rome at any given time, and while they patrolled the palace and major buildings, the other six cohorts were stationed in surrounding Italian towns. The Praetorian Guard became a vital power force in Roman politics during the Julio-Claudian period after Augustus' death.

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Freedmen

Freedmen (*libertini*) were former slaves freed by their masters (manumitted). Although Augustus tried to limit their numbers by certain discriminatory legislation, the proportion of freedmen to free-born was rather high in Rome.

Once manumitted, they continued to owe their former masters certain obligations and could not hold any magistracy, but some became extremely wealthy and successful, especially those who were part of Augustus' household.

The princeps' personal freedmen (*liberti Caesaris*) were used to manage his private affairs and finances. Eventually these men formed a civil service and became extremely influential in the courts of Augustus' successors.

Freedmen:

- were admitted into guilds, as many were artisans and shopkeepers
- were permitted to intermarry with free-born (but not the senatorial class)
- could serve as *vigiles* (a body of freedmen organised by Augustus into seven cohorts to act as the fire brigade of Rome)
- monopolised the priesthoods of non-Roman deities
- played a prominent role in the cult of Caesar worship and were known as *Seviri Augustales*
- could gain the status of free-born if presented with a gold ring by Augustus, which made them eligible for equestrian status.

Augustus and the urban plebs

Over the years there had been riots and periodic unrest among the *plebs urbana* (common people of Rome). Many found it difficult to survive due to food shortages and unemployment as there was no real industry in Rome.

modii (pl. *modius*) an ancient Roman measurement for dry goods (about the equivalent of 8 dry litres)

When Augustus came to power, about two-thirds of the plebs were recipients of the grain dole (5 **modii** a month), not all of whom were unemployed idlers. This was a great strain on the treasury, so Augustus reduced the numbers eligible for the ration by about 50 000.

> Augustus revised the rolls of citizens, ward by ward; and tried to obviate the frequent interruptions of trade and businesses which the public grain-distribution entailed, by handing out tickets, three times a year, valid for a four-month's supply; but was implored to resume the former custom of monthly distributions, and consented.

SOURCE 13.12 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 40

Like other wealthy nobles, Augustus made frequent cash donations to the plebs as well as providing grain from his own granary in times of shortage. He mentions these in his *Res Gestae*. While Brunt and Moore suggest that these correspond to politically important events in his career, Suetonius cites a number of examples to 'show that he did all this not to win popularity but to improve public welfare'.[18]

However, on one occasion, in response to citizens' demand for largesse, he 'issued a proclamation in which he called them a pack of shameless rascals and added that though he intended to make them a money present, he would now tighten his purse strings'.[19]

Circus Maximus the venue for many forms of entertainment, such as chariot racing and gladiator contests

He also kept the people distracted by splendid shows, games and athletic contests in the amphitheatre, **Circus Maximus** and Forum. Many of these spectacles were presented in his own name, in those of his family and even on behalf of other magistrates who could not afford it.

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As well as providing 'bread and circuses', Augustus helped many plebs gain steady work through his extensive building program, and they regarded him as their benefactor.

Augustus mentions in his *Res Gestae* in regard to his estate that most of 'what came to me from my father, from my adoptive father, and from others, has been used to buttress the national economy'.[20]

> None of Augustus's predecessors had ever provided so many, so different or such splendid public shows. He records the presentation of four Games in his own name and twenty-three in the name of other City magistrates who were either absent or could not afford the expense.

SOURCE 13.13 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 43

FIGURE 13.23 The view of the Circus Maximus today with the Palatine Hill in the background

ACTIVITY 13.8

1. Use Figure 13.21 to describe the career opportunities Augustus provided for the equestrian order.
2. Explain the importance of:
   - the Prefect of Egypt
   - the Praetorian prefect.
3. Give three career options for freedmen.
4. Why did Augustus revise the rolls of citizens?
5. How did Augustus deal with the numbers receiving the grain dole?
6. What help did he provide for the urban plebs apart from the grain dole?

FIGURE 13.24 An artistic reconstruction of the Roman Circus Maximus

Augustan reforms

Augustus was aware of the decadence in the last years of the republic created by civil wars, increased violence and new cults introduced from the East. This decadence was expressed in the *Odes* of the poet Horace.

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... Romans you will pay for the sins of your ancestors, until you rebuild the temples and the crumbling shrines of the gods, and their statues foul with black smoke.

Generations fertile in guilt have befouled marriage and the family and the home.

SOURCE 13.14 Horace, *Odes*, III. 6, in A. H. M. Jones, *Augustus*, pp. 147–8

Religious changes

Augustus' religious policy showed his genuine conservative inclination. He believed it was necessary to return to the old Roman virtues in order to strengthen his new regime and, as the founder of this new era, he hoped to glorify himself and the Julian family, and promote loyalty and unity within the empire. He:

- revived the priestly colleges, paying particular attention to the Vestals, defunct brotherhoods and festivals (**Lupercalia**). He created new patrician families from which to recruit members of the colleges and became a member of each college himself. In 17 BC he celebrated the Secular Games – the greatest religious festival of his reign – to mark the beginning of the new 'Golden Age' by acclaiming peace, prosperity and the traditional virtues of the Romans.
- restored temples and shrines throughout Italy that had fallen into disrepair: in his sixth consulship he restored 82 temples in Rome alone.
- realised the propaganda value of religion by promoting those gods associated with the Julian clan and its divine nature, as well as those gods that glorified his own achievements.
- encouraged the worship of deities associated with the common people, such as the Lares that guarded the crossroads and the family home, and divided the city into 265 areas, each with its shrine and ward master. Also, he associated the worship of the Genius of Augustus (the spirit of his family and fortune) with the worship of the **Lares**, in order for the people to see him as their guardian.
- gave official status to the worship of deities that had emerged during the civil war, such as Fortune and Peace.
- restricted some of the more alien cults for Romans, but not for provincials, and approved of some, such as the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Lupercalia an ancient pastoral festival observed 13–15 February, to avert evil spirits and purify the city, releasing health and fertility

Lares deities worshipped as protectors of houses or particular localities

The cult of Caesar worship

After 12 BC there was a growth of Caesar worship, which took the form of the cults of 'Rome and Augustus' and 'Rome and the Deified Julius'.

Augustus could see the need for a common practice that would unite all the provinces in loyalty to Rome, but Eastern customs, such as the worship of a ruler, would never be accepted in Rome and Italy. Neither could he officially encourage personal worship of himself, particularly by Roman citizens in the provinces. However, he could adopt a compromise by:

1. linking the fortunes of his family with those of the state. In this way he could legitimately allow the worship of 'Rome and Augustus' in the provinces
2. combining the Roman reverence for dead ancestors with the Eastern practice of ruler worship. This would allow the worship of 'Rome and the Deified Julius' by Roman citizens in the provinces.

In Italy, Augustus had more of a problem. He could not condone worship of the imperial family or of himself, but he allowed municipal cults of the Genius Augusti associated with the worship of the Lares. A new college of priests called *Augustales*, drawn from freedmen, supervised this cult.

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FIGURE 13.25 The remains of the college and shrine of the *Augustales* in Herculaneum

FIGURE 13.26 The remains of the temple of Augustus and Rome in Pula (modern Croatia)

Morality and social legislation

Standards of morality among the Roman upper classes had declined, and Augustus appeared genuinely concerned that marriage was often taken lightly, adultery not only tolerated but even fashionable, divorce common and many people remained unmarried or childless.

He attempted to carry social legislation to legislate on public morality in the Julian laws of 18 BC, but these were always doomed to fail.

> ... the new ones [laws] that he enacted, dealt, among other matters, with extravagance, adultery, unchastity, bribery, and the encouragement of marriage on the Senatorial and Equestrian Orders. His marriage law being more rigorously framed than the others, he found himself unable to make it effective because of open revolt against several of its clauses.

SOURCE 13.15 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 34

His attitude seems strange considering his own behaviour and that of his daughter, Julia. Augustus married three times, taking his last wife, Livia, from her husband when she was pregnant with her second child. From his three marriages he had only one child, and she was notorious for her sexual immorality. He also forced his stepson, Tiberius, to divorce his much-loved wife Vipsania and marry Julia for reasons of succession.

His attempts to limit excessive luxury (sumptuary laws) proved a failure, and he faced opposition to his attempts to set age limits on marriage (25 for men and 20 for women) and impose penalties (unable to accept inheritances) on unmarried people.

Despite the fact that these laws generally failed to achieve their objectives, Augustus banished his own daughter – and later his granddaughter – 'for indulging in every sort of vice' and 'nothing would persuade him to forgive his daughter'.[21]

FIGURE 13.27 Julia, the only child of Augustus

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ACTIVITY 13.9

1. What does Horace cite in his *Odes* as evidence of the decadence in the last years of the republic?
2. Draw a diagram illustrating the three main motivating factors in Augustus' religious policy and provide examples for each.
3. What areas of public morality did Augustus try to address in his social legislation?
4. How successful was he in legislating for morality?

Administrative reforms in Rome and Italy

By his administrative reforms Augustus:

- addressed the problem of unemployment with an ambitious building program
- took over control of the grain supply from the *aediles* after a serious famine in 22 BC and later established an equestrian office of Curator of the Grain Supply
- relied on his friend, Agrippa, prior to 12 BC, to build and maintain the aqueducts, reservoirs and collection basins. Agrippa kept his own gang of 240 workers for this purpose. Agrippa left them to Augustus when he died. Augustus gave them to the state and established a permanent water board of three water curators from the senatorial class
- divided Rome into 265 wards, each with four magistrates for policing the city. Three semi-military cohorts (each of 1500 men) led by a consular prefect acted as a special police force
- introduced measures to prevent the Tiber River flooding the city by clearing the Tiber channel, which had become blocked by rubbish, and established a commission for the protection of the Tiber bank. Unfortunately these measures did not prevent a serious flood in 15 AD, one year after Augustus' death.
- in 6 AD, he organised a fire brigade of seven cohorts of freedmen (*vigiles*) under an equestrian prefect. The city was divided into 14 districts and each cohort looked after two districts
- promoted civic pride by setting annual magistrates over each of the 265 city wards
- divided Italy into 11 districts and improved the speed and safety of travel by building and repairing highways and roads, and controlling brigandage
- established strict regulation of slave gangs working in the countryside.

Financial reforms

By the end of the civil war, the public finances were in chaos. The treasury was temporarily bankrupt and there was no efficient taxation system, no budget and no reliable census records.

The revenue needed to run Rome and its empire was enormous:

- The army had to be paid and pensions provided to soldiers at the end of their terms of service.
- Grain had to be provided at reduced prices, and occasionally free, in times of scarcity.
- Public works, public religion, police and fire protection and shows for the people had to be provided.

After initially stabilising the financial conditions, Augustus developed a new systematic regulation of revenue over which he had either direct or indirect control. His financial reforms involved:

- taking periodic censuses of people and property throughout the empire
- publishing balance sheets regularly showing imperial income and expenses
- setting up an imperial mint in Gaul which produced all gold and silver coins for the empire
- introducing a much fairer tax system and new indirect taxes to tap new sources of revenue apart from tribute from the provinces: customs, sales, land and inheritance taxes; and taxes on the sale and manumission of slaves

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- dividing treasuries into two: the Public Treasury supervised by two annually elected praetors; the Military Treasury for provision of veterans' pensions, the actual control of which was in the hands of Augustus; and provincial *fisci* (war chests) used for military and administrative purposes in the provinces
- subjecting all financial operations in imperial and senatorial provinces to careful control and scrutiny.

Throughout Augustus' time as princeps, he gave enormous amounts of money from his own personal wealth.

> The expenditure that he devoted to dramatic shows, to gladiatorial exhibitions, and athletes and the hunts and the sea battle, and the money granted to colonies, municipia, towns destroyed by earthquake and fire or to individual friends and senators whose property qualification he made up, was beyond counting.

SOURCE 13.16 P. A. Brunt & J. M. Moore (eds.), *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, p. 37

Judicial reforms

Augustus' desire for just and efficient administration was reflected in his close personal supervision of all areas of the judicial system.

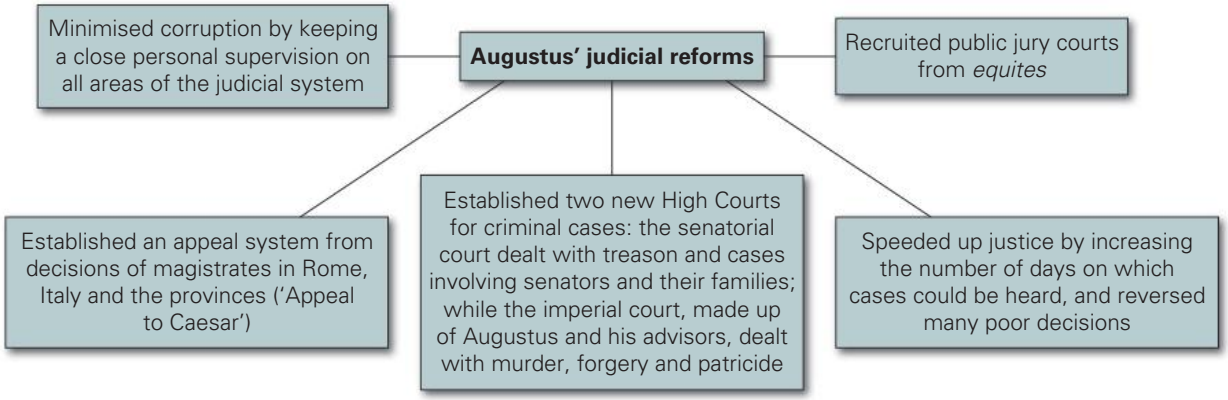

FIGURE 13.28 Diagram of Augustus' judicial reforms

ACTIVITY 13.10

1. Describe how life in Rome and Italy improved as a result of Augustus' administrative reforms.
2. Explain why the treasury was frequently bankrupt and how Augustus remedied this.
3. What does Source 13.16 illustrate about Augustus' generosity?
4. How did Augustus minimise corruption and speed up justice?

Opposition to Augustus

> Opposition did not exist. War or judicial murder had disposed of all men of spirit. Upper-class survivors found that slavish obedience was the way to succeed both politically and financially.

SOURCE 13.17 Tacitus, *Annals*, 1.1

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Augustus suppressed a series of sporadic riots and revolts; besides certain conspiracies, all of them detected before they became dangerous.

SOURCE 13.18 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 19

There must have been some underlying resentment from the families of the 300 senators and 2000 *equites* who were killed during the proscriptions of 43 BC. According to Suetonius, 'Under the Triumvirate many of Augustus' acts won him the hatred of the people'.[22] Also, there was bound to be some anger from those members of the senatorial and equestrian orders who were purged by Augustus to make both classes more dignified and efficient.

It is possible that there were some who were concerned by the increasingly monarchical tendency of the principate, as Augustus became obsessed with securing the succession through his own family, although there appears to be no direct evidence of this.

Suetonius makes reference to the fact that Augustus could not make his marriage law effective because of open revolt by members of the senatorial and equestrian classes.

He also mentions that among those involved in conspiracies against Augustus was the husband of his granddaughter Julia the Younger, and others who planned to rescue his daughter Julia the Elder and his grandson Agrippa Postumus 'from their prison islands where they were confined, and forcibly take them to the legions abroad'.[23]

Anthony Barrett, in *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, suggests there was a political motive behind Augustus' harsh treatment of his daughter's and granddaughter's immorality. For example, one of Julia's lovers was Julius Antonius, son of Mark Antony and Fulvia, a man of political prominence and a possible threat to the principate.

That there was opposition to Augustus is reflected in Suetonius' statement that Livia urged him to pardon many of his political enemies for circulating damaging libel against him, for boasting in public of wanting to assassinate him and for 'vilifying Caesar'.[24]

But many scholars insist that claims of sexual misconduct by members of the Julio-Claudian family were largely specious devices to conceal serious political threats, and that charges of adultery or moral depravity could be used to eliminate dangerous claimants or their supporters. The prominence of the men involved in Julia's case obliges us to consider the possibility of a political dimension, very carefully.

SOURCE 13.19 A. Barrett, Agrippina: *Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 18

ACTIVITY 13.11

1. How did Tacitus and Suetonius differ in their descriptions of opposition to Augustus?
2. List possible sources of resentment against Augustus.

Augustus' building program

Augustus' building program aimed at:

1 providing for the needs of the people

2 promoting the prestige of the empire

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3 glorifying his own and his family's name

4 making a statement about his leadership.

Augustus spent a huge part of his personal wealth on construction, with his best friend, Agrippa, until his death in 12 BC, supervising much of the Augustan building program.

Some of the temples and public works were built in Augustus' name and some in the names of others such as Agrippa, Tiberius (Augustus' stepson and eventual heir), Livia his wife, Octavia his sister, and his two grandsons Gaius and Lucius. Leading citizens also were encouraged 'to embellish the city … according to their means'.[25]

> Aware that the City was architecturally unworthy of her position as capital of the Roman Empire, besides being vulnerable to fire and river floods, Augustus so improved her appearance that he could justifiably boast: 'I found Rome built of sun-dried bricks; I leave her clothed in marble'.

SOURCE 13.20 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 66

Apart from these buildings, he carried out other building projects such as 'repaving the Flaminian Way as far as Arimium, at his own expense'[26], and improvements to the water supply by the construction of aqueducts, such as the Aqua Julia built originally by Agrippa in 33 BC and later repaired and expanded by Augustus between 11–4 BC, and the 20-kilometre-long Aqua Virgo completed by Agrippa in 19 BC.

> The extraordinary greatness of the Roman Empire manifests itself above all in three things: the aqueducts, the paved roads, and the construction of the drains.

SOURCE 13.21 Dionysius of Halicarnassus, 'Roman Antiquities' cited in *The Oxford Handbook of Engineering and Technology in the Classical World*. p. 552

A COMMENT ON …

Roman aqueducts

- A reliable supply of water, carried by aqueducts, had become an absolute necessity for Roman life (and in most urban parts of the Roman Empire).
- The water provided by these massive engineering feats was used for drinking (as the water from the Tiber River that ran through the city was polluted and carried waterborne diseases), for public fountains and thermae (public baths), for flushing out latrines and scouring the city's sewers and drains, and for watering domestic and market gardens.
- At the time of Augustus, it is believed that Rome's water supply served a population of around one million.

TABLE 13.9 Major building projects

Building associated with Roman forums (*fora*)	Buildings on or around the *Campus Martius*	
A forum was a public space in Roman cities which was a centre of business, justice, used for public meetings and also became a religious centre. There were three *fora* in Rome during the Augustan period: these were the sites of many of the city's most imposing temples and monuments.	The ***Campus Martius*** was an open space to the north of the city, originally outside the walls. During the time of Augustus it was adorned with a complex of public buildings.	***Campus Martius*** Latin for 'Field of Mars'; a 2-square-kilometre area of publicly owned open ground surrounded by public buildings during the time of Augustus

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TABLE 13.9 (*continued*)

Building associated with Roman forums (*fora*)	Buildings on or around the *Campus Martius*
1 The Roman Forum below the Palatine Hill underwent improvements. Augustus: • repaved it in travertine • completed the Basilica Iulia and the Curia Iulia • added a courtyard to the Senate House • restored the Basilica Aemilia • built a temple to Julius Caesar on the spot where he'd been cremated • erected a statue to the deified Julius. 2 The Forum of Julius Caesar, begun in 48 BC, was completed by Augustus. 3 The Forum of Augustus was inaugurated in 2 AD, the year he was awarded the title of 'father of his country'. Its features included: • the Temple of Mars Ultor (the Avenger) built as vengeance against Julius Caesar's assassins. Beside the statue of Mars in the temple were statues of Venus and the Divine Julius. • niches surrounding the main square with statues of Augustus and his family, illustrious Romans of the past and the legendary founders of the city. The inscriptions below the heroes of the past were meant to teach a lesson • in the centre of the Forum a statue of Augustus riding in a chariot bearing the title of 'Father of his country'.	1 On the southern side, Augustus: • dedicated a circular, three-storey theatre to the memory of his nephew/son-in-law, Marcellus: the Theatre of Marcellus. 2 On the northern side were: • Augustus' circular family mausoleum • the Portico of Octavia (Porticus Octaviae). This was built by Augustus in the name of his sister. The colonnaded walks enclosed two temples: to Jupiter and Juno. The enclosure also included a library dedicated to Octavia's son Marcellus, a *curia* (an assembly for official discussions) and a *schola* (school). Like other buildings in the *Campus Martius*, it was damaged in a fire in 80 AD. • the Pantheon, a temple commissioned by Agrippa in 17 BC ('Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, made [this building] when consul for the third time') to all the ancient gods of Rome. After a fire destroyed all of it except its façade, it was rebuilt under Hadrian. • large thermae (public baths and gardens) also built by Agrippa. These were the first of the great public baths in Rome. The Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct built by Agrippa, provided water for the baths. There was also a large ornamental pool and gardens. They were left to the Roman citizens when he died in 12 BC.

FIGURE 13.29 The Theatre of Marcellus

FIGURE 13.30 The Portico of Octavia

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FIGURE 13.31 The Pantheon originally built by Agrippa

FIGURE 13.32 The public baths and gardens of Agrippa

FIGURE 13.33 A Roman aqueduct

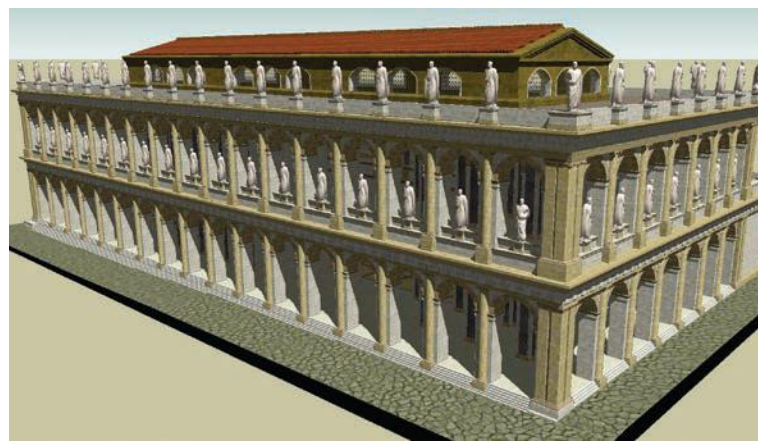

FIGURE 13.34 A model of the Basilica Iulia

FIGURE 13.35 The remains of the Temple of Mars Ultor

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Buildings and propaganda

1 The *Ara Pacis Augustae* (The *Altar of Augustan Peace*) is a sculptured altar to the Roman goddess 'Peace', commissioned by the Senate to honour Augustus' military supremacy and to celebrate the peace and prosperity he brought to the Roman Empire. It was dedicated in 9 BC. The sculptured marble walls that surrounded the Altar of Peace showed, more than any other monument, how Augustus wanted his principate to be seen and remembered: the traditional past, a promising future and the competence and achievements of the Julian family. The walls of the rectangular enclosure show:

- Augustus, members of his family, priests and magistrates in a procession to dedicate the Altar of Peace
- a procession of dignified senators and other Romans
- the legendary founding of Rome: Aeneas and the twins Romulus and Remus
- the goddess Roma with her weapons (the victory of Rome)
- a young woman with two infants and, at her feet, animals and plants (symbols of fertility and abundance).

2 The Augustan Forum was a wonderful piece of political propaganda. It expressed Augustus' political goals and placed his leadership of the Roman world in the context of his mythical and divine ancestors and those who had helped to make Rome great. It was inaugurated in 2 AD, the year he was awarded the title 'father of his country'. It reveals Augustus as a victorious general, a bringer of peace and a new 'Golden Age', and the reviver of the traditional Roman way of life. It is a statement about his place in Roman history and the model of leadership that the Roman people should look for in future leaders. It was meant to legitimise the principate by stressing the restoration of ancient Roman traditions on the one hand and the charismatic deeds of the Julian *gens* (ancestral family) on the other. It was the Augustan compromise.

> He built his Forum because the two already in existence could not deal with the recent great increase in the number of law-suits ... Augustus had vowed to build the Temple of Mars during the Philippi campaign of vengeance against Julius Caesar's assassins. He therefore decreed that the Senate should meet here whenever declarations of war or claims for triumphs were considered ...

SOURCE 13.22 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 29

FIGURE 13.36 The marble Altar of Peace (*Ara Pacis*)

FIGURE 13.37 Sculptured frieze showing the procession of the family of Augustus

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FIGURE 13.38 Sculptured frieze showing a procession of senators

FIGURE 13.39 A reconstructed view of the Forum of Augustus and the Temple of Mars Ultor

ACTIVITY 13.12

1 In an extended piece of writing, evaluate Augustus' building program in terms of providing for the needs of the people and glorifying his and his family's name.

2 Discuss Augustus' supposed boast, cited in Suetonius, that 'I found Rome built of sun-dried bricks; I leave her clothed in marble': consider the view that it was simply a metaphor for Rome's transformation under his rule.

Propaganda and literature

Augustus used many types of propaganda to promote his new regime apart from buildings:

1 imperial cults in Italy and the provinces

2 the *Res Gestae*: a favourable account of his own achievements

3 Latin literature.

Imperial cults and the *Res Gestae* were discussed earlier in this chapter.

Latin literature

Patronage of the arts was an important aspect of Roman life, and it applied equally to literature. Wealthy patrons often provided writers with material security, and poets and historians gave readings from their works in the homes of their wealthy patrons.

> Augustus gave all possible encouragement to intellectuals: he would politely and patiently attend readings not only of their poems and historical works, but of their speeches and dialogues; yet objected to being made the theme of any work unless the author were known as a serious and reputable writer ...

SOURCE 13.23 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars: Augustus*, 89

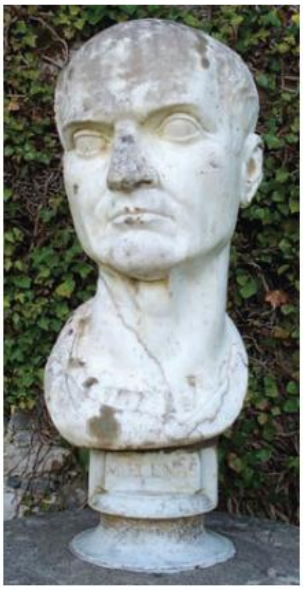

FIGURE 13.40 The Augustan writer, Maecenas

Augustus obviously realised the propaganda value of writers, but there was no need for him to pressure these men into expressing their approval of the new regime from which they gained their inspiration, since most of them were sincere supporters of it.

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Gaius Maecenas: patron of writers

The best-known patron of the new generation of Augustan writers at the time was Gaius Maecenas, born around the middle of the 1st century BC of a wealthy equestrian family. He was a political adviser and close friend to Augustus (even in the days when he was Octavian). In his early association with Octavian, Maecenas was used whenever issues needed to be diplomatically negotiated or reconciled. However, his reputation is based predominantly on the outstanding writers who became his protégés. Only men of worth, like the great poets Virgil (Publius Vergilius Maro) and Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), were admitted to his intimate circle and introduced to Augustus.

They in turn showed their appreciation of his patronage in their works. For many, he provided financial security and, in the case of Horace, bought him an estate in the Sabine hills.

Maecenas' chief aim as a patron was to use the genius of these poets as a way of reminding the Roman people of the glory of the new order under Augustus. This is revealed in the difference in seriousness of Virgil's *Georgics* from his earlier *Eclogues*, and the change in Horace's *Third Book of Odes* from his earlier ones where he states his indifference to affairs of state. Maecenas is believed to have guided Sextus Propertius to change from themes of love to those of public interest. However, had Maecenas' interest in the work of these men been simply political he would not have inspired such affection in them. When Maecenas died in 8 BC, he bequeathed his huge fortune to Augustus.

There were other great writers, such as the historian Livy (Titus Livius) who became a teacher in the imperial household, and Ovid (Publius Ovidius Naso), neither of whom needed a patron such as Maecenas as they came from wealthy families. Although much of Ovid's work reflected the immorality of Roman high society and displeased Augustus, he did attempt in his *Fasti* to promote patriotism, religion and respect for the past.

FIGURE 13.41 Polish artist Stefan Bakalowicz's depiction of a reception at the home of Maecenas

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FIGURE 13.42 A 19th-century painting by Russian artist Fyodor Bronnikov of Horace reading before Maecenas

Virgil (76–19 BC)

Virgil was born in Mantua in northern Italy but lost his farm as a result of the confiscations after Philippi. He was reimbursed by Maecenas and later lived on an estate in Naples that he received from Augustus. Despite his humble background, he was well educated, but was retiring, sensitive, religious and disliked city life.

His *Eclogues* or *Bucolics* are poems reflecting his great love of the Italian countryside. The theme of Italian agriculture in his *Georgics* was supposedly suggested to him by Maecenas.

The *Aeneid* is Virgil's masterpiece. It tells how the Trojan prince Aeneas, guided by his mother Venus, led a band of escapees from burning Troy to settle in Latium (territory of Rome). Aeneas' son Iulus married a Latin princess and founded the Julian clan.

Virgil showed that the ancient virtues, which Augustus was anxious to revive, flourished in the simple rural life of Italy. In the fourth poem of the *Eclogues*, written in 40 BC, he prophesied a new era that would herald the end of war. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil represented Aeneas as the ideal Roman who exhibits a sense of duty, loyalty and piety. He predicted the future greatness of Rome and alluded to Augustus and the Julian clan.

> And there shall be born, of proud descent from Troy, one Caesar to bound his lordship by Ocean's outer stream and his fame by the starry sky, a Julius, bearing a name inherited from Iulius his great ancestor. One day you shall welcome to Heaven with peace in your heart this Julius, coming weighted with the spoils of the Orient … Then shall our furious centuries lay down their warring arms, and grow kind … And the terrible iron-constricted Gates of War shall shut …

SOURCE 13.24 Virgil, trans. W. F. Jackson Knight, *Aeneid*, Bk I. 276–306

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Horace (65–8 BC)

Horace was the son of a freedman from Apulia but received the best education in Rome and studied philosophy in Athens. After Philippi he lost his farm in the resettlement, so went to Rome to become a clerk to the quaestors. Virgil was impressed with his poetic talent and introduced him to Maecenas.

His *Satires* and *Epistles* attack many of the weaknesses recognised by Augustus in Roman society. He wrote his *Carmen Saeculare*, which was sung at the Secular Games celebrated by Augustus in 17 BC. This ceremony ushered in the new age of peace and prosperity. His most famous works are his lyric *Odes* written in four books and in two stages between 30–23 and 17–13 BC. Apart from such themes as the simple life, frugality and love, he includes odes to Augustus and his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus.

The *Carmen Saeculare,* written by someone who had fought at Philippi with Brutus against Octavian/Augustus, and who later eulogised the New Age, indicated that old differences were settled. In Books III and IV of the *Odes*, Horace supported Augustus' religious and moral reforms and glorified the empire and Augustus' family.

Thy reign restores rich fruits to the countryside
Augustus; brings back safe to our Capitol
Crassus' long-lost standards ripped from
Arrogant Parthia's temple pillars.
Keeps Janus' temple empty of warfare and
Shuts tight the gates there; bridles the runaway
Beast, Licence, strayed far off the true road;
Banishes vice and recalls the ancient ...
While Caesar [Augustus] stands guard,
peace is assured, the peace
No power can break – not civil dissension or
Brute force or wrath, that weapon forger,
Misery-maker for warring cities.

SOURCE 13.25 Horace, *Odes*, IV, 15

Livy (59 BC–17 AD)

Livy was born into a well-to-do family at Patavium where he remained until he was about 30 years of age. He then moved to Rome, gained the friendship of Augustus and taught Claudius – Augustus' step-grandson – encouraging his interest in history. Livy's great work was his *History of the Roman Republic* in 142 books, which covered 700 years from the founding of Rome to the death of Drusus, Augustus' stepson, in 9 AD.

Livy contributed to Augustus' policy of patriotic and religious revival by aiming to show the past greatness of Rome and the virtues that great men – and the Roman people in general – exhibited during their history.

ACTIVITY 13.13

1 What part did Maecenas play in promoting the new age of Augustus?
2 Give several examples of literature used as propaganda.

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The role of Agrippa

Agrippa was a boyhood friend of Octavian. At the time of Julius Caesar's murder, the two youths were studying in Apollonia in Illyricum in preparation for the dictator's Parthian campaign. It was Agrippa who urged Octavian to hurry to Rome to secure his inheritance.

1 He remained a loyal friend and supporter to Augustus, who shared power with him on a number of occasions. He:
   - was granted the consulship in 37 BC as a mark of previous military successes
   - became *aedile* in 33 BC and did much to improve and adorn Rome
   - was consul for a second time in 31 BC, and in 27 BC consul for a third time, as well as chosen as censor
   - received tribunician powers for five years in 18 BC.

2 Agrippa was responsible for many military and naval successes. He:
   - played a leading role in the war against Lucius Antonius and Fulvia in 40 BC
   - was successful against the Aquitanians and trans-Rhine tribes
   - planned and won the important naval battle at Naulochus against Sextus Pompeius in Sicily in 36 BC
   - was chiefly responsible for the strategy which brought victory to Octavian at Actium in 31 BC against Antony and Cleopatra
   - was sent to the East with pro-consular powers in 23 BC.

3 He was an extraordinary man, responsible for much of Augustus' administrative and building programs. He:
   - played a part in reducing the numbers in the Senate
   - organised a fire brigade of 3500 men and a police force
   - surveyed the whole empire, had a map engraved on marble and exhibited in the Porticus Vipsanius and wrote a geographical book
   - supervised Augustus' building program
   - constructed a new aqueduct and public bath
   - built the temple now represented by the Pantheon
   - completed the buildings of Caesar.

4 He became part of Augustus' family with his second and third marriages, first to Marcella, Augustus' niece, and then to Julia, Augustus' daughter, with whom he had five children.

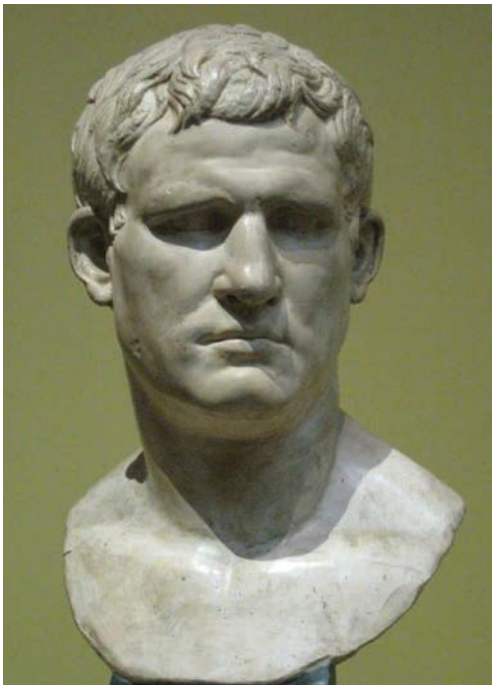

FIGURE 13.43 A bust of Agrippa

The imperial family and problems of the succession

Livia: Augustus' wife

Livia (Livia Drusilla), born in 58 BC, married her cousin Tiberius Claudius Nero (from the Claudii) and gave birth to her first son, Tiberius, at 16. She was 19 and pregnant with her second son, Drusus, when Octavian fell in love with her (38 BC) and ordered Claudius Nero to divorce her. Octavian already had a daughter, Julia, from his previous wife Scribonia, but his union with Livia produced no children. Suetonius says, 'Livia remained the only woman he truly loved until his death'.[27] She was a devoted wife to Augustus, who relied on her intelligence. In public she was an example of the dignity her husband expected.

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[Livia had] an influence over affairs of state to a degree unprecedented for a woman. Generally she appears to have conducted herself with great skill, as a discreet background adviser, with a good sense of how to tread the careful mid-course between docile passivity and unwelcome intrusion into spheres where women by law, custom or social climate would not be welcomed … She was in many respects [Augustus'] mental equal if not superior, and it is hardly surprising that he sought her advice and counsel in affairs of state. Her stature was close to that of an amici principis, a kind of privy councillor.

SOURCE 13.26 A. Barrett, *Agrippina: Sex, Power and Politics in the Early Empire*, p. 15

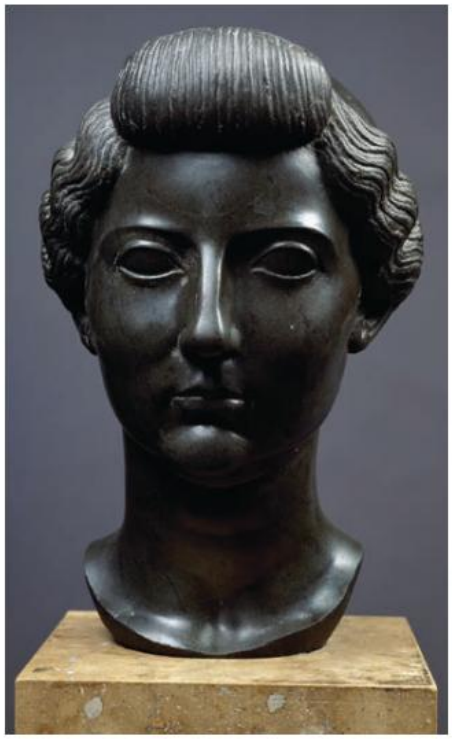

FIGURE 13.44 A basalt head of Livia

However, Tacitus and other writers were preoccupied with her as an 'obsessive mother of a potential successor, rather than with her role as consort of Augustus'.[28] Tacitus' aim in his *Annals* was to expose the evils of the principate under the Julio-Claudians and Livia is harshly treated by him as a ruthless manipulator, plotting the deaths of those who got in the way of the succession of her son Tiberius.

She survived Augustus by 15 years and was given the title of 'Augusta'. During the reign of her grandson, Claudius, she was deified. Read more about Livia in Tacitus' *Annals* 1.1–4, 19, 1.51.

Julia, Augustus' daughter

Julia, Augustus' daughter and only child (by Scribonia), was used as a political pawn, married first to her cousin, Marcellus, then to Agrippa and finally to Tiberius, to ensure a Julian succession.

Julia appears to have been 'highly intelligent, well-read and knowledgeable with a penchant for lively and witty company',[29] but her high spiritedness and provocative behaviour did not go down well with Augustus.

Although she provided Agrippa with three sons and two daughters, she is believed to have indulged in all kinds of immorality, taking lovers from the time of her marriage.

According to Seneca – whose account is probably exaggerated – while married to Tiberius, 'Julia had scores of lovers and roamed about the city looking for thrills, even prostituting herself with strangers in the forum'.[30]

Augustus, in disgust, eventually exiled her from Rome for the remainder of her life. She was prohibited in her father's will from being allowed into his mausoleum after her death.

Her only source of comfort during her exile was her mother, Scribonia, who voluntarily accompanied her. Julia's daughter was also exiled for similar misdemeanours.

Suetonius says that 'when members of his family died, Augustus bore the loss with far more resignation than when they disgraced themselves'.[31]

The succession

1 Augustus, like all Roman nobility, was concerned about the question of the inheritance of his political prestige, but he had no natural son, only a daughter. He therefore needed to secure a son through adoption if his prestige was to be maintained by his family. His recurring ill-health spurred him on to make arrangements to secure an heir.

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2 Although the principate could not be inherited, there were those in Augustus' lifetime who believed that some provision should be made for its transference when he died. There is evidence that Augustus found this difficult to reconcile with his insistence that the Roman state had not changed, and with his belief that each leader should win power in open competition and according to merit. However, he remembered the disastrous rivalry that occurred on the death of Julius Caesar, and he may have hoped that his authority would ensure the public succession of his private heir.

3 Augustus used the device of associating members of his family with him in the tribunician power and taking them as colleagues through a grant of *imperium* in order to endorse them. He always attempted to ensure the ultimate succession of someone with Julian blood, but due to his long life, and despite frequent illnesses, several of his chosen successors died before him. He was eventually forced to rely on his stepson, Tiberius – a Claudian – as the only one with sufficient experience, since other members of the family were still too young.

TABLE 13.10 Augustus' attempts to find a successor

Name	Relationship to Augustus	Political promotion	Outcome
Marcellus	Nephew, married to Julia in 25 BC.	Permission to take all offices 10 years before the legal age. Elected *aedile* at 18.	Died 23 BC.
Agrippa	Loyal friend, forced to marry the widowed Julia in 21 BC.	Granted pro-consular *imperium* and powers of a tribune in 18 BC for five years. Powers renewed in 13 BC.	Intended as regent for his sons Gaius and Lucius who were adopted by Augustus in 17 BC. Died 12 BC.
Tiberius	Stepson (elder son of Livia) who was forced to divorce Vipsania and marry Julia, whom he hated, in 11 BC.	Permission to take offices five years ahead of legal age in 24 BC; praetorian rank in 19 BC; given important Illyricum campaign. Received tribunician power for five years in 6 BC.	Intended as regent for Agrippa's sons, Gaius and Lucius Caesar. Retired to Rhodes in 6 BC until 2 AD.
Gaius and Lucius Caesar	Grandsons of Augustus, adopted as his sons in 17 BC.	Entered public life, aged 15, in 5 and 2 BC, respectively. Groomed to be Augustus' successors. Attended the Senate at 15, made priests and each proclaimed *princeps iuventuris*. To be consuls at 20.	Gaius went to the East in 1 BC; died in 4 AD in Lycia from a wound suffered in a campaign at the age of 24. Lucius died at 19 of an illness in Gaul, 2 AD; Tacitus suggested foul play by Livia.
Tiberius	Adopted as Augustus' son in 4 AD (at the same time as Augustus' other grandson, Agrippa Postumus, who was exiled in 7 AD)	Received tribunician power for 10 years, renewed in 13 AD for life. Reluctantly accepted by Augustus as possible successor.	Although having a son of his own, he was made to adopt Germanicus, son of his dead brother, Drusus.

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ACTIVITY 13.14

1 Assess the effect on the principate of:
   - Agrippa
   - Livia.
2 Why was Augustus so concerned with making arrangements to secure an heir?
3 Why was there no Julian heir when Augustus died?

FIGURE 13.45 The remains of Augustus' mausoleum

Augustus' death

Augustus died in 14 AD, about a month short of his 78th birthday. Four documents, which had been entrusted to the Vestal Virgins for safekeeping, were handed over and read to the Senate.

According to Suetonius, they were his will (naming Tiberius and Livia as heirs to the major part of his estate); instructions regarding his funeral; a statement of the military and financial condition of the empire; and a record of his reign (*Res Gestae*), which he wished to have engraved on bronze and posted to the entrance of the Mausoleum.

There were two eulogies given at his funeral: by Tiberius and his son Drusus. A group of senators carried his body to a funeral pyre on the *Campus Martius* where it was burned; his ashes were placed in the family mausoleum nearby.

After his funeral there was much discussion about him. According to Tacitus, 'intelligent people praised or criticised him in varying terms'.[32]

13.4 Augustus and the empire

The focus of Augustus' imperial policy was to:

1 create an efficient standing army to man the empire
2 gain defensible frontiers against 'barbarian invaders'
3 make provincial administration fairer and more effective.

Augustus and the army

The army was in need of reform because up to this time:

- there was no provision for the regular pay of soldiers
- troops depended on their commanders to make arrangements for their rewards at the end of their service
- loyalty of the troops was to their generals rather than to the state.

Demobilisation and veteran colonies

In order to bring the army under the control of the state, and to maintain his own position, Augustus, as first citizen, kept control of the armed forces through his *maius imperium*. He then carried out gradual reforms until 5 AD.

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His immediate task was to reduce the army to an effective size by two major demobilisations in 30 and 14 BC. The 60 legions involved in the civil war with Antony were reduced to 28; with the loss of three in 9 AD (see p. 827 for the Varian disaster) the final number was 25.

P. A. Brunt suggests that Augustus discharged 160 000 troops before 29 BC and 140 000 after that date. These soldiers were settled in veteran colonies in Italy and the provinces.

> I founded colonies of soldiers in Africa, Sicily, Macedonia, both Spanish provinces, Achaea, Asia, Syria, Gallia Narbonensis and Pisidia. Italy too has 28 colonies founded by my authority, which were densely populated in my lifetime.

SOURCE 13.27 P. A. Brunt & J. M. Moore, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, pp. 28

Augustus says he paid a total of 860 000 000 sesterces to the towns from whom he bought the land, but in the *Res Gestae* he does not mention the settlements founded on confiscated land.

The veterans settled between 7 and 2 BC were given cash rewards rather than land, and as there was not enough money to cover this cost, Augustus provided it from his own income. In the *Res Gestae* he explains, 'I paid monetary rewards to soldiers whom I settled in their home towns after completion of their service, and on this account I expended about 400 000 000 sesterces'.[33]

Military reforms

TABLE 13.11 Augustus' military reforms

Terms of service	• Introduced fixed terms of service: 20 years for legionaries, 20–25 for auxiliaries and 16 for Praetorians. • The army became a lifetime career with promotions from within, although Augustus did choose commanders.
State financial support	• Provided state financial support. He set up a military treasury with funds from two taxes – 1% sales tax and 5% inheritance tax – and 170 000 000 sesterces from his own income. • Soldiers were paid regularly (225 denarii a year for legionaries, unknown for auxiliaries and 790 denarii for Praetorians) and provided with food, clothing and weapons. • This development meant that the troops were no longer financially dependent on their generals and removed the connection between soldier and general that had proved so disastrous to the republic. Since the state now provided veterans' gratuities, their loyalty tended to be to the new government.
Use of provincial troops	• Used manpower from the provinces (***auxilia***) to supplement the legions. These were generally recruited from the more warlike peoples of the northern and western provinces where they served alongside the legions on the frontiers. • By showing trust in the provincials and by rewarding them and their families with Roman citizenship on discharge, he fostered loyalty to the empire. • The eventual army comprised legions of 5500 to 6000 men with 120 cavalry to each legion; *auxilia* of possibly 150 000 made up of cohorts of 500 and cavalry; and a Praetorian Guard of nine cohorts of 1000 each.

auxilia non-Roman provincial auxiliary contingents that fought alongside the Roman legions

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TABLE 13.11 (*continued*)

Naval bases	• Naval bases were maintained at Misenum (Bay of Naples) and Ravenna (the Adriatic Sea) in Italy, at Forum Iulii in Gallia Narbonensis, Alexandria in Egypt and Seleucia in Syria. • There were also flotillas on the Rhine and Danube rivers. • The sailors in these fleets were free provincials and served for 25 years, while the commanding officers were equestrian prefects.
The army in peace time	• The legionaries manned the frontier posts. • Were also used for building roads, canals, aqueducts and bridges.

FIGURE 13.46 Artistic representation of a Roman legionary during the time of Augustus

Provincial reform

The empire was divided into two provincial groups, both of which underwent administrative reform, which made life for the provincials much better.

1 Senatorial provinces: those that had been under Roman rule for a long time and were relatively peaceful such as Achaea, Macedonia, Africa and Asia.

2 Imperial provinces: those recently subdued or that were unruly and needed large military forces, such as Syria, Galatia, Illyricum, Aquitania, Lugdunensis and Belgica. These were under the control of Augustus.

Egypt was a special case and entry was restricted. It was never administered as a regular province because it was a vital source of grain for Rome and was strategically important in the eastern Mediterranean. It was controlled directly by Augustus and governed by an equestrian prefect. Its legion commanders were also equestrian.

> Augustus kept for himself all the more vigorous provinces – those that could not be safely administered by an annual governor – and nominated his own imperial procurators; the remainder went to proconsuls chosen by lot. Yes, as occasion arose, he would change the status of provinces from imperial to senatorial, or contrariwise, and paid frequent visits to either sort.

SOURCE 13.28 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus*, 47

With peace (*pax Romana*) came an end to the exploitation of provincials by Romans. Augustus introduced improvements in provincial administration. These included:

- greater care and selection of provincial governors. They were given large fixed salaries and provided with travel allowances, which did away with the previous practice of plundering their provinces. The gradual development of a civil service also provided a large body of experienced officials to assist the governors rather than depending on, as in the past, private contractors. Governors in imperial provinces (*legati propraetore*) were appointed for three years or as long as Augustus liked. In senatorial provinces, governors (pro-consuls) were officially appointed for one year.
- the introduction of an imperial courier service that provided Augustus with more reliable reports, and he undertook more frequent personal tours of inspection.

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FIGURE 13.47 The Roman Empire with senatorial and imperial provinces in 14 AD

- careful supervision of governors by Augustus' procurators who handled the financial affairs of the provinces and acted almost as provincial spies. These officials, independent of the governors, often moved between provinces. Occasionally Augustus used his *maius imperium* to send procurators into senatorial provinces as well as those under his immediate direction.
- the institution of provincial councils, set up to conduct the imperial cult, which kept an eye on governors.
- quicker punishment of corrupt governors. They were recalled immediately. Those from imperial provinces were punished by Augustus and those from senatorial provinces were brought to trial in the senatorial court.
- a fairer tax system. In imperial provinces, an equestrian procurator, independent of the governor and responsible to Augustus, collected all direct taxes, while carefully scrutinised contractors collecting indirect taxes. In senatorial provinces, carefully controlled quaestors collected the taxes.
- greater responsibility to local communities. This resulted in better cooperation of provincials with governors and loyalty to Rome.
- the increasing urbanisation of provinces. This speeded up the process of bringing Latin and Roman culture to the provinces (Romanisation). The provinces were provided with buildings and improved roads and services, thus ensuring loyalty to Rome.

Provincials expressed their gratitude by dedicating temples to 'Rome and Augustus' and erecting inscriptions thanking Augustus.

> Whereas the divine providence that guides our life has displayed its zeal and benevolence by ordaining for our life the most perfect good, bringing to us Augustus, whom it has filled with virtue for the benefit of mankind, employing him as a saviour for us and our descendants, him who has put an end to wars and adorned peace ...

SOURCE 13.29 A.H. M. Jones, *Augustus*, p. 94

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ACTIVITY 13.15

1 Why was the army in need of reform at this time?
2 How did Augustus:
   - bring the army under control
   - provide for those who were affected by demobilisation?
3 How did he:
   - provide the opportunity for a lifetime career in the army
   - secure the loyalty of the army to the principate rather than to individual generals
   - utilise the army during peacetime?
4 What was the difference between senatorial and imperial provinces?
5 Draw a diagram illustrating how Augustus made life better for those living in the provinces.
6 How did the provincials express their gratitude to Augustus?

Frontier policy

Although Augustus was not an outstanding general like Julius Caesar, he was responsible for adding a great deal of territory to the empire, predominantly due to his stepsons Tiberius and Drusus. Suetonius says of him that he 'never wantonly invaded any country'.[34]

In the later principate his aims were to:

- consolidate those areas within the empire that were not yet pacified or organised
- abandon the haphazard extension of Roman territory and to extend the empire to its natural and easily defensible boundaries
- follow a general policy of non-aggression in the East.

Pacification, consolidation and organisation of territory at both ends of the Mediterranean

TABLE 13.12 Consolidation of empire

Northern Spain	Had not been subdued and it took the Romans seven years to bring it under control. It was Agrippa who eventually suppressed the warlike tribes.
Further and Nearer Spain	Was divided into the two provinces of Baetica and Lusitania, while Nearer Spain became known as Tarraconensis.
Gallia Comata	Had not been completely organised since the time of Julius Caesar. The province was divided into three districts for ease of administration: Belgae, Aquitania and Lugdunensis. Agrippa developed a system of roads, radiating from the chief city of Lugdunum.
Africa	Was relatively peaceful, although there was intermittent fighting along the border with Mauretania. Augustus established Juba, the son of the last king of Mauretania, as a client-king. Juba had been brought up in Rome and had married the daughter of Antony and Cleopatra.
Egypt	To prevent any disputes on the Roman frontier in Egypt to the south (at the First Cataract), a military zone had previously been established between Roman Egypt and the Ethiopians.
Galatia	Augustus annexed the eastern kingdom of Galatia as a Roman province on the death of its client-king Amyntas.

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TABLE 13.12 (*continued*)

Cilicia	Was added to Syria to strengthen it
Judaea	Was enlarged under King Herod the Great, but on his death Augustus divided the kingdom between his three sons. However, one proved to be such a poor ruler that Augustus exiled him and annexed his portion. It became the imperial province of Judaea.

Gaining defensible boundaries

The frontiers of most concern were in the north, where German tribes and other 'barbarians' threatened Gaul and Italy.

The Alpine districts and the Danube

Augustus wanted to establish a strong, natural frontier between the Alps and the Black Sea, and to a large extent used the members of his own family – Tiberius, Drusus and Agrippa – to achieve this.

- Tiberius and Drusus (his stepsons) combined in a campaign to conquer the area north of the Alps as far as the Danube River between 16 and 15 BC. This area was organised into two provinces called Raetia (modern Switzerland) and Noricum (Tyrol part of Austria).
- Since tribes in the middle and lower Danube valley frequently attacked the provinces of Illyricum and Macedonia, it was essential for Augustus to gain control of this area. The Pannonians were subdued in 13 BC by Agrippa and in 9 BC by Tiberius. Although Rome's northern frontier now followed the Danube River, in 6 AD, an extremely serious uprising occurred among the Pannonians and Dalmatians south of the river. It took Tiberius three years to restore order in Illyricum.

The Rhine and the Elbe

The Rhine frontier in the north-west, established by Julius Caesar in his Gallic Wars, was the most dangerous of the empire's boundaries. Parts of Gaul were still restless, and in 29, 17–16 and 12 BC, Germanic tribes beyond the Rhine made several raids into the Roman province. Since Gaul was a vital part of the empire, Augustus hoped to campaign beyond the Rhine as far as the Elbe River. An Elbe–Danube frontier would be shorter and easier to defend with fewer troops.

Between 12 and 9 BC Augustus' stepson, Drusus, subdued the Germanic tribes and eventually reached the Elbe before he was tragically killed in a fall from his horse. His brother Tiberius continued his work by conquering the territory between the Rhine and Elbe, but his successful campaign was cut short by the revolt of the Pannonians and Dalmatians in Illyricum (mentioned above).

The Germanic tribes remained subdued until 9 AD, when the command of the Romans was entrusted to P. Quinctilius Varus. His lack of tact and insolence towards the Germans, and his stricter measures, resulted in a combined attack on the Romans between the Rhine and Elbe rivers. The Romans believed they were moving through friendly territory and were not on their guard. An alliance of Germanic tribes – who had deceived the Romans as to their motives – was led by a Romanised German leader, Arminius. The Germans ambushed and wiped out the 17th, 18th and 19th legions – 20 000 men – in the famous Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, or the Varian Disaster as the Romans referred to it.

Tiberius was once again sent to deal with the situation and after several successful campaigns beyond the Rhine, he withdrew to the original frontier at the Rhine and secured its fortifications.

The Varian disaster was a momentous event in both Roman and European history as it halted Rome's expansion beyond the Rhine and changed the shape of Europe for the future. The lost German territory was never regained.

After this date Augustus' frontier policy became more defensive.

This disaster was recorded by Tacitus and Velleius Paterculus, but it is Dio Cassius' account that is the most detailed. Source 13.30 describes a part of this attack.

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... they came upon Varus in the midst of forests by this time almost impenetrable. And there, at the very moment of revealing themselves as enemies instead of subjects, they wrought great and dire havoc. The mountains had an uneven surface broken by ravines, and the trees grew close together and very high. Hence the Romans, even before the enemy assailed them, were having a hard time of it felling trees, building roads, and bridging places that required it. They had with them many wagons and many beasts of burden as in time of peace; moreover, not a few women and children and a large retinue of servants were following them – one more reason for their advancing in scattered groups. Meanwhile a violent rain and wind came up that separated them still further, while the ground, that had become slippery around the roots and logs, made walking very treacherous for them, and the tops of the trees kept breaking off and falling down, causing much confusion. While the Romans were in such difficulties, the barbarians suddenly surrounded them on all sides at once, coming through the densest thickets, as they were acquainted with the paths. At first they hurled their volleys from a distance; then, as no one defended himself and many were wounded, they approached closer to them. For the Romans were not proceeding in any regular order, but were mixed in helter-skelter with the wagons and the unarmed, and so, being unable to form readily anywhere in a body, and being fewer at every point than their assailants, they suffered greatly and could offer no resistance at all.

SOURCE 13.30 Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, Bk 58.19–20

FIGURE 13.48 The Teutoburg Forest

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Non-aggression in the east

The powerful kingdom of Parthia was the greatest threat to the Romans in the east. Both Crassus in 53 and Antony in 36 BC had suffered defeats at the hands of the Parthians. Many Romans expected Augustus to attempt to avenge Rome's former losses, but he behaved prudently.

He regained Roman prestige in the area, secured Syria from attack and saved on the costs of stationing troops in the area by:

- using diplomacy rather than force
- promoting rivalries within the kingdom
- creating suspicions among the smaller neighbouring kingdoms
- disseminating propaganda
- creating a buffer zone by establishing a Roman nominee on the throne of neighbouring Armenia
- strengthening the imperial province of Syria
- developing a chain of client-kingdoms along Rome's eastern frontier
- negotiating with the new king of Parthia in 1 AD via his grandson Gaius.

FIGURE 13.49 The Gemma Augusta carved to commemorate the victory of Tiberius over the Pannonians. He is shown stepping down from his chariot. Augustus, depicted with the goddess Roma, is being crowned with the symbol of the civilised world; soldiers and captives are shown on the lower section.

ACTIVITY 13.16

1. What were the main features of Augustus' frontier policy?
2. What part did Augustus' stepsons, Tiberius and Drusus, play in extending the empire to its natural and easily defensible boundaries?
3. How significant was the Varian disaster in 9 AD?
4. What was Augustus' policy in the east and how did he keep the Kingdom of Parthia in check?
5. Assess Augustus' provincial and frontier policy.

Conclusion

It is very hard to get an accurate picture of Augustus and his principate since the evidence is biased. There are the hostile republican accounts of his earlier career, the extravagant praise of his contemporary Velleius Paterculus, the personal anecdotes and gossip of Suetonius, and the sinister insinuations made by Tacitus, whose *Annals* attempted to outline the vices associated with one-man rule. Added to these are his own forms of propaganda as expressed in the *Res Gestae* and the Augustan Forum.

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CHAPTER REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

13.1 THE CHRONOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

- During the centuries before Augustus, Rome had come in contact with Mediterranean powers and peoples and had begun on of a path of ruthless imperialism that involved destruction and annexation. Those areas annexed as provinces slowly became Romanised, others became vassals or client-kingdoms, friendly to Rome, some acting as buffer zones between Roman territory and threatening powers on the edge of empire, such as Parthia in the east.
- The 1st century BC was also a time of power struggles and civil wars that caused the old republican form of government to decline. This was obvious to Julius Caesar, who was forced into a Mediterranean-wide civil war against the small group in the Senate who had always been his enemy, determined to frustrate his ambitions. In 44 BC, at the peak of his power, they assassinated him in the Senate house, throwing the Roman Empire into yet another civil war that eventually led to one-man-rule under Caesar's nephew and heir, Augustus.

13.2 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRINCIPATE

- Caesar's death had a major impact on the Roman world. When he was killed, and his assassins fled Italy, it was left up to his heir, the 18-year-old Octavian (later Augustus) to avenge his death but he needed *imperium* to do this. Because he was far too young for a position with *imperium*, he committed a number of illegal acts until he got what he wanted. He allied himself with Mark Antony and Lepidus in a Triumvirate for five years to set the state in order and to attack the republican armies of Brutus and Cassius (the leaders of the assassination of Caesar). However, the triumvirs, after proscribing 300 senators, deifying Caesar and defeating the armies of Brutus and Cassius at Philippi, themselves became involved in a civil war for control of the Roman world. This was a struggle between Octavian and an alliance of Antony and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt.
- At the naval Battle of Actium (31 BC) the fate of the Roman world was decided. After the defeat of Antony and Cleopatra, who fled to Egypt, Octavian was hailed as *imperator* and invaded Egypt (30 BC). Antony, deserted by his troops, committed suicide, and Cleopatra, failing to win Octavian over to her cause to rule independently, also committed suicide. Octavian annexed Egypt as a province, then returned to Rome (29 BC) to restore order and confidence. He closed the doors of Janus as a symbol that Rome had returned to peace.
- In 27 and 23 BC ('The First and Second Settlements) he gained excessive honours, titles and powers, although he was conservative by nature and preferred any arrangement for his future to appear constitutional, wanting to avoid the fate of Julius Caesar and any hostility with his peers. However, it was imperative that he retain control of the army and ultimately all provinces, which he achieved by being granted *maius imperium.* His power within Italy was based on consular *imperium* and within Rome he had tribunician power for life. He adopted the name of Augustus ('one to be revered') and became princeps ('first citizen'), and his form of government became known as a principate. He also became *Pontifex Maximus* and in 2 AD, *pater patriae* ('father of the country').

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13.3 THE AUGUSTAN PRINCIPATE

- Augustus needed the support of the Senate in running the empire. He raised its tone, reduced its numbers, restored its former dignity, increased responsibility for its members, improved its efficiency and provided for more senators to become consuls by shortening their term of office.
- He reorganised the equestrian class so that it was filled with men of talent as well as wealth, and created new posts for them that had never been part of the republican government (such as the Praetorian Prefect), some of which involved doing jobs for Augustus. This allowed ambitious young equestrians to follow an administrative career. He improved the lot of freedmen (ex-slaves) and used them in his household to manage his private affairs and finances. Eventually these men formed a civil service. He revised the role of citizens, reduced the number of urban plebs who were recipients of the grain dole and made the distribution of rations more efficient. He made frequent donations to the plebs from his own money, and kept the people distracted by splendid shows, games and contests.
- Augustus carried out numerous other reforms: religious, social, judicial and financial. He attempted to return to the old Roman virtues; revived priestly colleges and festivals, and restricted some of the more alien cults in Rome; initiated the cult of Caesar in the provinces; attempted to legislate on public morality; addressed the problems of unemployment (building program), water supply, floods and fires; built and improved roads, controlled brigandage in the countryside and regulated slave gangs; developed a new systematic regulation of revenue over which he had either direct or indirect control; and initiated a just and efficient judicial system.
- Despite his *pax Romana* and reforms, he was not without some opposition: possible resentment and hostility from families of those he proscribed during the triumvirate, some who saw a possible monarchical tendency as he became obsessed with securing a successor from his own family, some opponents of his morality laws. Opposition also took the form of sporadic riots, revolts and incipient conspiracies, none of which appears to have got out of control.
- Augustus' building program provided for the needs of the people, promoted the prestige of the empire, glorified his own and his family's name, and made a statement about his leadership. Most of the new buildings were associated with the three Roman forums or located around the *Campus Martius*.
- Augustus realised the propaganda value of writers, but there was no need to pressure men such as the patron Maecenas, the poets Virgil and Horace and historians such as Livy to express their approval of the new regime from which they gained their inspiration, since most of them were sincere supporters of the new regime.
- Agrippa, a loyal friend of Augustus all his life, and a highly successful general, shared powers with Augustus on occasions; was responsible for many of Augustus' administrative and building programs; and became part of Augustus' family by his second and third marriages (Marcella, Augustus' niece, and Julia, Augustus' daughter, with whom Agrippa had five children).
- Although the principate could not be inherited, Augustus became obsessed with finding a successor within his Julian family. He used the devices of marriage, forced divorces and adoptions. Due to his long life, and the death of several of his chosen successors, he was eventually forced to rely on his stepson, Tiberius (son of Livia) who was a Claudian.
- Augustus died in 14 AD, a month short of his 78th birthday. His body was cremated on a funeral pyre in the *Campus Martius* and his ashes interred in his family mausoleum.

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13.4 AUGUSTUS AND THE EMPIRE

- The Roman army was in need of reform because up to that time there was no provision for the regular pay of soldiers, troops depended on their commanders to make arrangements for their rewards at the end of their service, and loyalty of the troops was to their generals rather than to the state. To bring the army under state control and to maintain his own position, Augustus took control of the forces with his *maius imperium*. He then reduced the size of the army and provided for those demobilised by settling them in veteran colonies, and then gradually introduced reforms (fixed terms of service and pay, state financial support, use of provincial *auxilia*).
- The provinces were divided into those controlled by the Senate appointees (more peaceful) and those under the control of Augustus' appointees (more recently subdued, unruly or which needed large forces to maintain control). Egypt was a special case, not administered like a normal province due to its strategic location and vital source of grain.
- Although more territory was added to the empire via his stepsons, Tiberius and Drusus, Augustus never wantonly invaded any country. The main aims of his foreign policy were: to consolidate those areas within the empire not yet pacified or organised, to find easily defensible boundaries such as rivers and to follow a general policy of non-aggression in the east (Parthia).

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Chapter summary questions

Key terms and names

Use the following in a sentence for each to show your understanding of these important historical terms.

- triumvirate
- proscriptions
- *mais imperium*
- principate
- imperator
- *pax Romana*
- *Circus Maximus*

Familiarise yourself with the following historical concepts and skills, and identify where they have been used throughout this study

- Causation; continuity and change; perspectives; significance and contestability
- Analysis and use of sources
- Historical interpretation and investigation
- Explanation and communication

Historical concepts and skills

Historical concepts

1) What was the cause of the Battle of Actium in 31 BC?

2) Make a list of the changes that occurred within the empire and Rome as result of the Battle of Actium.

3) List the changes that occurred in Augustus' foreign policy.

4) How significant were the following for the image and power of Augustus:
- the granting of pro-consular *maius imperium*
- the powers of a tribune
- the adoption of the name 'Augustus'
- the title 'princeps'
- the title *pater patriae*
- the cult of Caesar throughout the empire?

5) What are the perspectives on Augustus' claim to have 'restored the republic' expressed by:
- the ancient writers
- Australian professor E. A. Judge?

Historical skills

1) What do the following material remains reveal about Augustus:
- the *Forum Augustum*
- the *Ara Pacis Augustae*
- the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*

2) Research further and comment on:
- the quote by Suetonius, supposedly attributed to Augustus, that he found Rome brick and 'clothed her in marble'.
- the view of Dionysus of Halicarnassus that 'the extraordinary greatness of the Roman Empire manifests itself above all in three things: the aqueducts, the paved roads and the construction of the drains'.

3) Explain why and how Augustus established a new form of government.

4) To what extent did Augustus bring peace and prosperity to the Roman world?

5) Evaluate Augustus' relationship with the Senate and equestrians.

6) Explain the purpose of Augustus' building program.

7) To what extent did Augustus' religious policy reflect his conservative inclination and political acumen?

8) Assess the role of Livia and Agrippa in the principate.

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End notes (digital content)

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