THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE PAST

YEAR 11

PAMELA BRADLEY

Contents

About the author

Pamela Bradley has over 40 years' experience in teaching history. She is the author of 13 books on ancient cultures, including five popular secondary history textbooks: *Ancient Egypt: Reconstructing the Past*; *Ancient Greece: Using Evidence*; *Ancient Rome: Using Evidence*; *Cities of Vesuvius: Pompeii and Herculaneum*; and *The Ancient World Transformed: Societies, Personalities and Historical Periods from Egypt, Greece and Rome*.

About the cover

The Franco–Tuscan archaeological expedition to Egypt (1828–1829), by Giuseppe Angelelli (1803–1846), oil on canvas, 19th century.

Permissions acknowledgements

PERMISSIONS ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

This course is designed to:

1   introduce some of the methods and issues involved in investigating the past
2   show the process involved in a historical investigation
3   present a number of in-depth case studies that provide a historical context within which to investigate relevant sources, methods and issues
4   focus on a number of key features of selected ancient societies.

The processes involved in carrying out a historical investigation are addressed, reviewed and integrated throughout the text. Suggested topics for a historical investigation associated with material treated in the book can be found on page 392.

Throughout the text there are also many opportunities for students to analyse ancient and modern texts and material remains; to recognise bias – particularly gender bias – and perspective; to express empathy and use their imaginations; to discuss such things as the use of film in history and the way ancient individuals and events are depicted in popular culture; to research; to consider and discuss controversial questions; and of course to communicate information in extended answers (essays) as well as in diagrammatic and digital formats.

The process of a historical investigation

This involves:

- planning and conducting historical investigations using historical concepts
- formulating historical questions and hypotheses relevant to the investigation
- locating and interrogating a range of sources
- identifying different perspectives evident in sources
- analysing sources for their usefulness and reliability for the question(s) asked
- developing and/or examining historical interpretations
- using sources to develop a view about a historical issue
- selecting and organising relevant information
- synthesising evidence from a range of sources to develop and support a reasoned historical account or argument
- using historical concepts and terms appropriately
- presenting and communicating the findings of a historical investigation using appropriate and well-structured oral, written and/or multimedia forms, including ICT.

How to use this resource

1

Part openers are designed to give you an overview of the chapters to come and preview the key idea behind each chapter.

Chapter openers feature:

- **Map** gives geographic context for the chapter
- **Where are we headed?** Syllabus information box broken into:
  - **Focus** content focus statement from the Year 11 Ancient History syllabus
  - **Key issues** content from the Year 11 Ancient History syllabus.

Chapter openers feature:

- **Critically See, Think, Wonder** an engaging image designed to provoke curiosity and help kick off class discussion
- **Key Idea** summary of the main idea of the chapter
- **Why it matters today** summary of why the topic relates to our modern lives
- **Key terms** a list of the main concepts and personalities introduced in the chapter
- **Inquiry question** presents a guiding question for students as they work through the chapter
- **Painting the picture** offers some background historical context ahead of the main chapter content.

2

3

Subject content is unpacked with the aid of a variety of historical sources, activities and focus questions:

- **Activities** offer engagement with primary and secondary sources, both visual and text-based
- **Research tasks** pretty well do what they say they do!

All activities are available as downloadable documents.

4

Feature boxes help develop your historical knowledge and skills:

- **Comments on events and historical figures** help unpack major ideas, historical figures and key events
- **Glossary terms** are bolded in the text, defined in the margins and collated at the end of the textbook for easy reference.

5

Chapter review materials are designed to help you revise and prepare for assessment tasks:

- **Chapter summaries** review the main ideas of the topic to consolidate what you have learned
- **Key terms** encourage you to keep your own glossary to help your understanding through defining key concepts, events and personalities in your own writing
- The **Historical concepts** section features a range of activities to test your knowledge, based around the historical concepts required by the Stage 6 Ancient History syllabus
- The **Historical skills** section includes a range of activities to apply your skills, based around the requirements of the Stage 6 Ancient History syllabus.

6

In the Interactive Textbook and PDF edition, **an additional elective chapter** is available.

Video and audio enrich the learning experience.

Interactive activities (e.g. drag and drop or multiple-choice questions) assist recall of facts and understanding of concepts.

Additional support materials may become available from time to time on **Cambridge GO**.

For a list of links to all the websites referred to in this book, go to www.cambridge.edu.au/ancient11.

PART 1
Investigating ancient history

CHAPTER

Chapter 1   The methods and issues involved in an investigation of the past

2
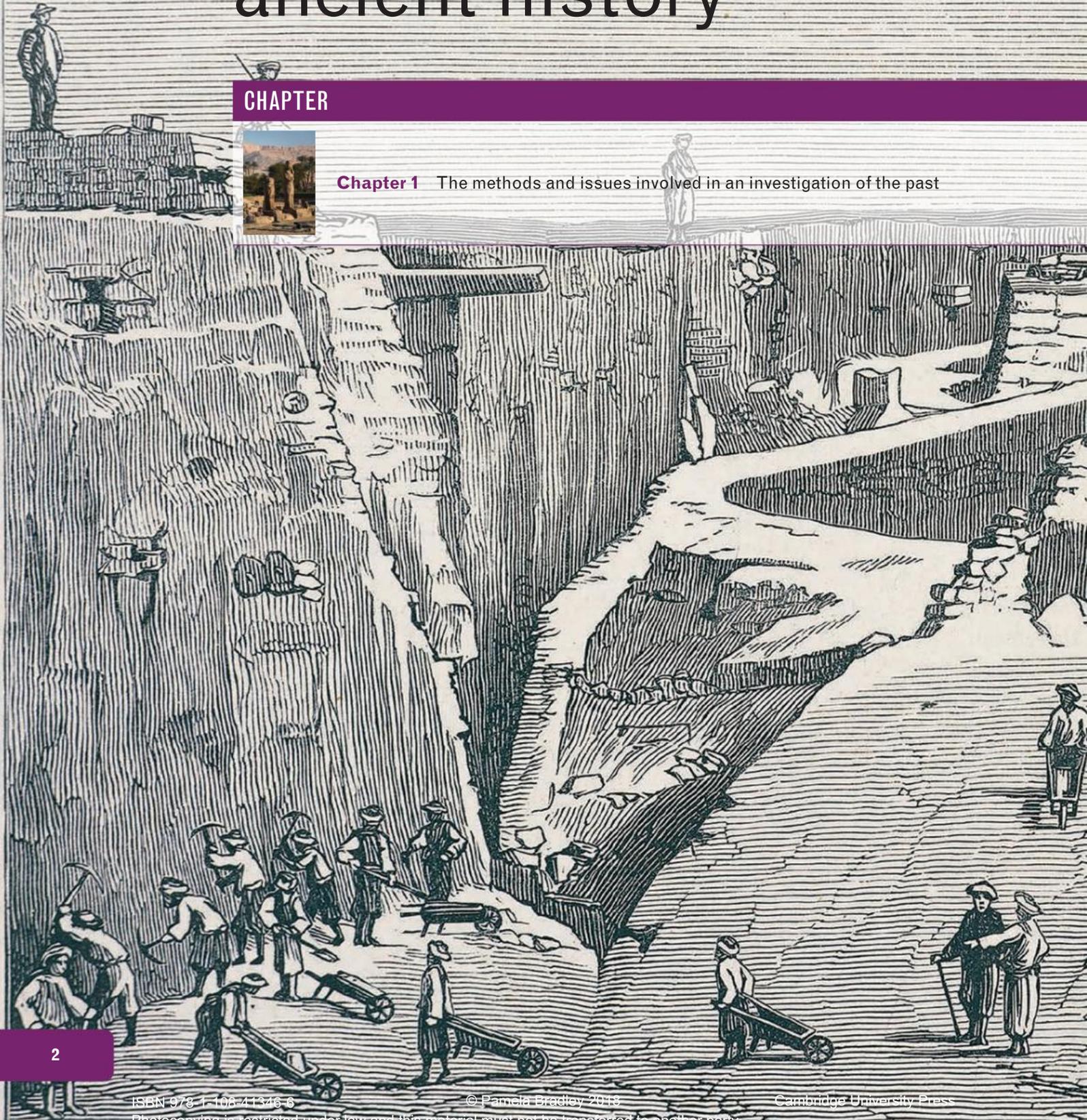
> *A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.*
>
> Marcus Garvey

PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

In order to investigate the past and to present a picture of what life was once like, historians use processes of historical investigation and inquiry.

CHAPTER 1
The methods and issues involved in an investigation of the past

FIGURE 1.1 Archaeologists at work
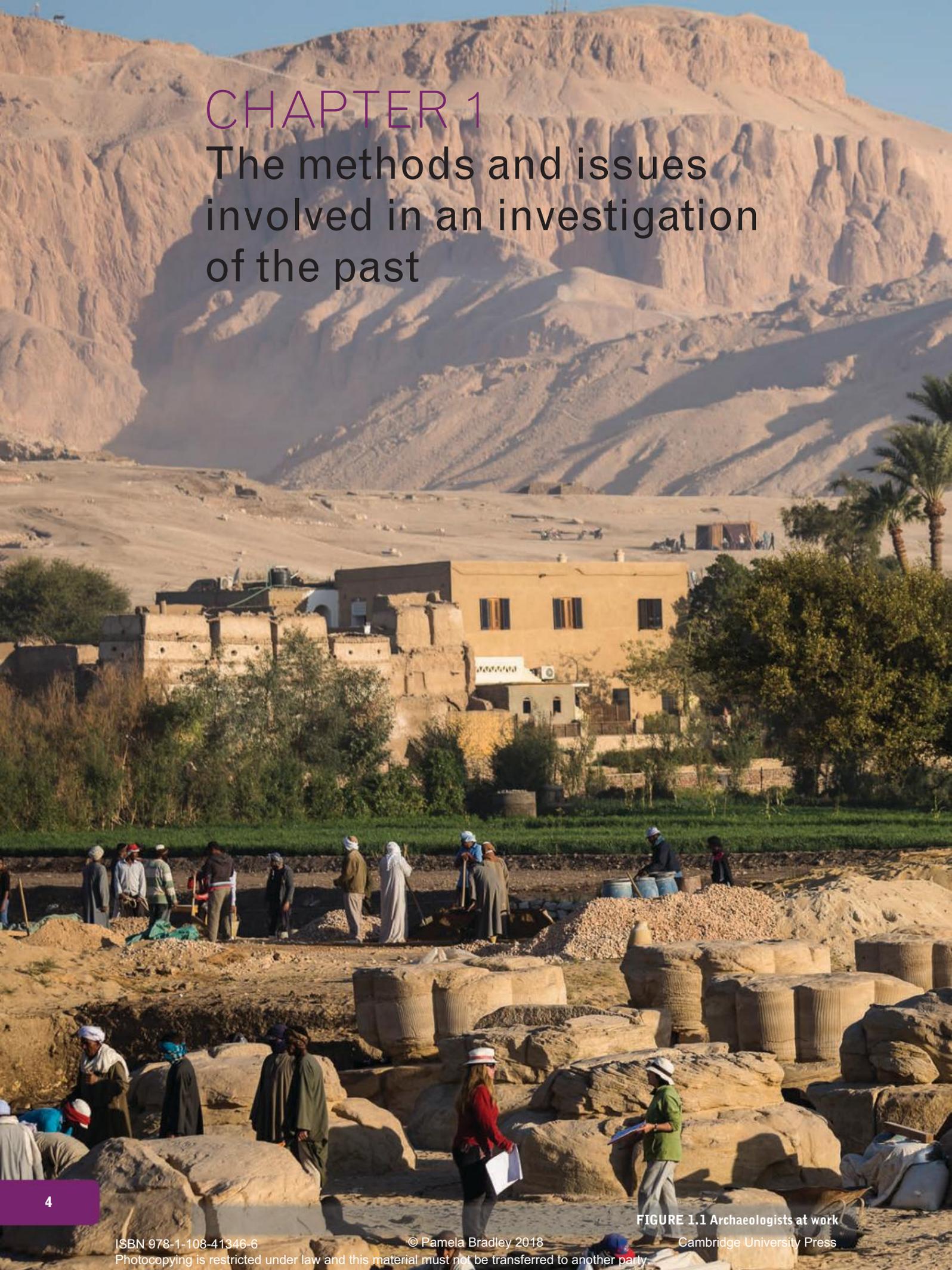
FOCUS Using different historical sources, you will investigate relevant issues and methods associated with the study of ancient history in order to develop your own understanding. You will also learn the process for a historical investigation using the knowledge gained from the chapter.

KEY ISSUES In this chapter, you can explore one or more of the following options:
- the contribution of history, archaeology and science in reconstructing the past – sites and sources
- the role of ancient texts and iconography in understanding the past
- representations of ancient events and individuals
- historical authentication and reliability
- conservation, restoration and reconstruction
- cultural heritage and the role of museums
- the treatment and display of human remains.

History gives answers only to those who know how to ask questions.
SOURCE 1.1 Hajo Holborn, mid-20th century German–American historian

5

CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER
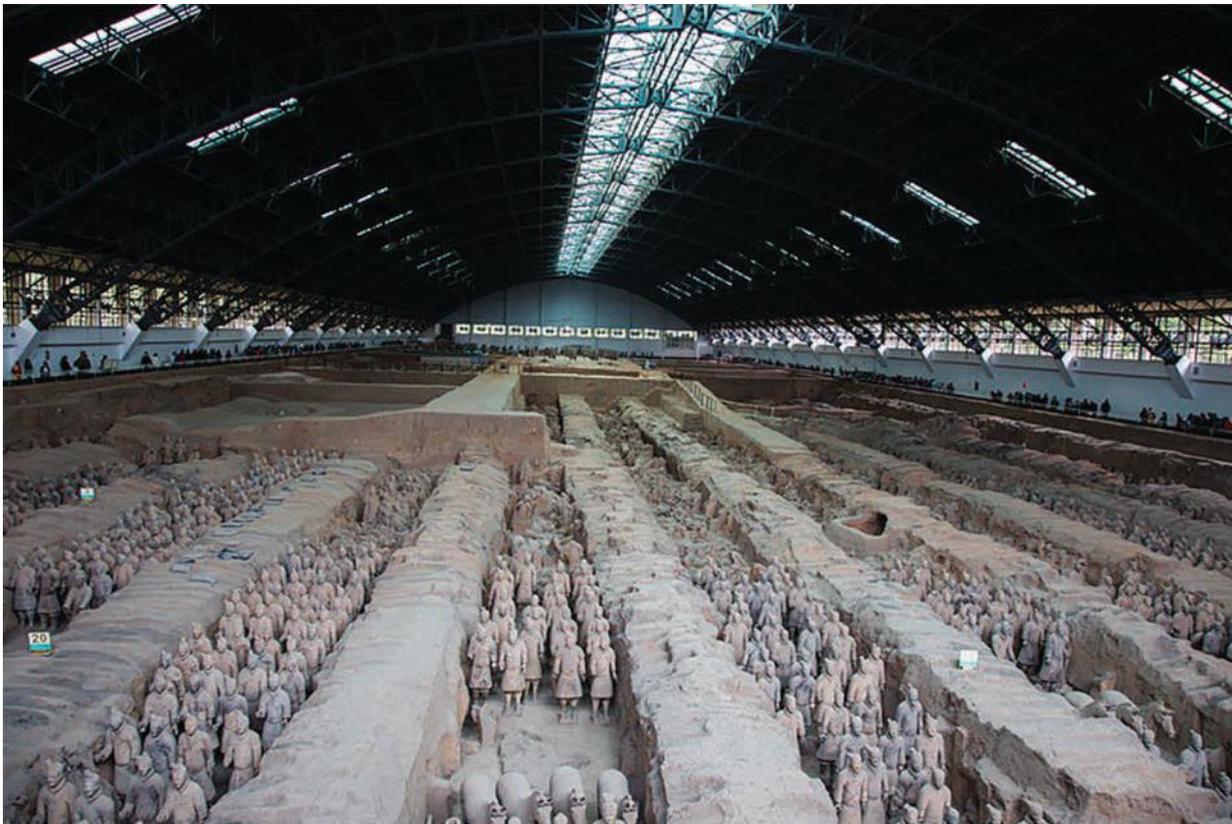
FIGURE 1.2 The Terracotta Warrior site at Xian in China

Based on the images provided, as a class consider the following questions for discussion:

- Describe in your own words what Figures 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 say about the discipline of archaeology in building up a picture of the past.

FIGURE 1.3 A stone suit of armour from the mausoleum of China's first emperor

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CHAPTER 1 Overview

<table>
<tr><th>KEY IDEA</th><th>WHY IT MATTERS TODAY</th><th colspan="2">KEY TERMS</th></tr>
<tr><td>In order to investigate the past and to present a picture of what life was once like, historians use processes of historical investigation and inquiry. However, they are dependent on the work of archaeologists and other experts in many specialist fields and utilise all the latest developments in technology while prioritising conservation and taking into account various ethical issues.</td><td>The study of the past helps in understanding our place in history, in seeing patterns in human affairs, so that hopefully we will not repeat some of the mistakes of the past, in developing empathy and being reminded of our humanity, and protecting what remains of our cultural heritage.</td><td>hypotheses
bias
perspectives
artefacts
ecofacts
context
propaganda
historiography
stratigraphy
midden
geophysics
relative dating
absolute dating
ethnographic</td><td>glyphic 'writing'
symbology
epigraphy
numismatic
iconography
authentication
provenance
repatriation</td></tr>
</table>

Painting the picture

The word 'history' comes from the Greek word *historia* meaning 'research' or an 'inquiry'. In order to investigate the past and to present a picture of what life was once like, historians use a process of historical enquiry, during which they:

- ask questions such as how, when, where and why something happened.
- formulate **hypotheses** (proposed explanations made on the basis of limited evidence as starting points for further investigation)
- locate and analyse a range of sources
- evaluate the reliability of the sources particularly with regard to various forms of **bias** (having an unfair or unbalanced opinion)
- distinguish between fact and opinion
- look for patterns – such as what has changed and what has remained the same and what are the causes and effects of an action – and different **perspectives** (particular views on something)
- develop an informed explanation of the past based on all the available evidence.

INQUIRY QUESTION

How have recent developments in technology and science helped in interpreting the past?

hypotheses ideas or explanations for something that is based on known facts but have not yet been proved

bias the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, by allowing personal opinions to influence judgements

perspectives particular ways of considering something

1.1 The contribution of history, archaeology and science in reconstructing the past – sites and sources

Historians also rely on the material remains excavated by archaeologists, and both disciplines use the expertise of a multidisciplinary body of specialists, predominantly in the sciences, to solve problems and answer questions that would have once been impossible.

The role of archaeologists

TABLE 1.1 The role of archaeologists

What archaeologists do	The questions they ask

The word archaeology comes from *archios* and *logia* meaning a 'study of that which is old or ancient'.
 	
Today, it is described as the scientific study of the human past.
 	
Archaeologists focus on physical objects, such as **artefacts**. They:
• locate archaeological sites
• decide if it is appropriate to excavate or not, and if so how much of the site to expose depending on their overarching goals, plans and resources
• uncover physical remains hidden underground, in tombs, underwater, and below the ruins of other settlements, then record, date and interpret what they find. These material remains include:
  – the places where people lived, travelled (trade routes) and worshipped (sacred landscapes)
  – their skeletal remains, which can reveal their physical condition, how they died, and how they disposed of their dead
  – what they ate, the crops they grew, the animals they raised and what they discarded as rubbish. **Ecofacts** are evidence for the local environment and resources and can include things like snail shells, seeds and butchered bones
  – what they made, built or modified such as towns, houses, fortifications, temples and tombs; boats; all forms of pottery containers, household and religious items; tools and weapons; coins; funerary inscriptions; wall paintings and sculptures.
	1 What is the artefact and what was its condition when found?
	  • Some objects are difficult to identify due to deterioration.
	2 How was it found?
	  • accident or chance – ploughing, road construction, digging wells
	  • metal detectors
	  • scientific methods such as remote sensing
	  • excavation.
	3 What was the **context** in which it was found?
	  • the exact location of the find, and the other objects in close proximity can often provide answers to its nature and purpose.
	4 Was the context in which it was found different from its place of origin?
	  • coins, pottery and luxury items are often found far from their point of origin due to trade or conquest.
	5 How old is it?
	  • there are two forms of dating: relative and absolute (see further information on p. 23).
	6 What material is it made from?
	  • timber, brick, stone, clay, metal (gold, silver, bronze, iron), precious stones, textile.
	7 What was its purpose?
	  • religious/cultic, domestic, entertainment, warfare, trade.
	8 Who made it and for whom was it made?
	  • in many cases the 'who' is not known.

artefacts objects that are made by a person, such as a tool or a decoration, especially one that is of historical interest

ecofacts any flora or fauna material found at an archaeological site; non-artefactual evidence that has not been technologically altered but that has cultural relevance, such as a shell carried from the ocean to an inland settlement

context the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it

The following sources provide clues to the strengths and weaknesses of archaeology in reconstructing the past.

One of the great strengths of archaeology is that it can act as independent evidence to history. History is often based on the text and interpretations of the victors. This has led to numerous biases and problems. History can be skewed to favour a specific perspective or to support a cause and is often revamped as **propaganda** ... Archaeology can be used to challenge history since it is the study of actual remains of behaviour rather than interpretations or personal perspectives of behaviours.

propaganda information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions

SOURCE 1.2 Katherine Meyers Emery – *A Paleo-Forensic Study of an Assyrian Captive*, Nov. 27, 2012

We also need to be careful about ascribing too much to archaeological finds. While many people seem to believe that an excavation is going to turn up something that 'proves' an event that appeared in the literary sources, this is not how real archaeology works. Real archaeology recognizes the fact that most sites have been continuously inhabited for centuries, some for millennia, and that trying to narrow down a particular find to a particular event is almost impossible. As such, we need to take a cautious middle road in regards to archaeological findings, and not be eager to write off events as unhistorical simply because the physical record does not corroborate it.

SOURCE 1.3 Alexander Stille, *The Future of the Past*, p. 91

We are now much more aware that archaeology does not necessarily give answers to historical questions. It has its own story to tell; but when related to history it gives something more like a series of snapshots: mute frames from a lost film. To recover the script you need documents.

SOURCE 1.4 D. F. Easton, 'Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud?', *The Classical World*, Vol. 91, No. 5, 'The World of Troy' (May – June 1998), p. 341

ACTIVITY 1.1

1 Identify the protective methods against harmful and damaging factors visible in Figure 1.2 (on p. 6).
2 Explain their necessity at this particular site.
3 Research the artefact in Figure 1.3 (on p. 6), outlining anything unusual about its discovery, protection or purpose.
4 Describe what Sources 1.2–1.3 say about the discipline of archaeology in building up the past.

Types of archaeology

Originally, archaeology was divided into classical archaeology, Egyptology and Biblical archaeology. However, the list has grown over time and now includes many specialised branches, including the following:

1 **Underwater or maritime archaeology**
Maritime archaeologists use special techniques to study the material culture related to human interaction with the sea, such as shipwrecks, submerged structures (cities, ports, temples), maritime identities and
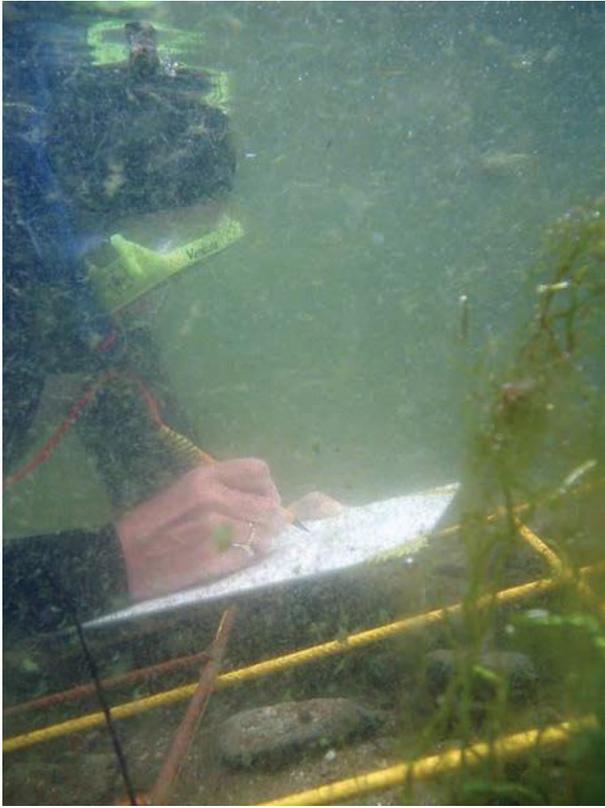
FIGURE 1.4 A maritime archaeologist

human remains. The Mediterranean is a rich source of ancient artefacts. This branch of archaeology relies on sophisticated diving, excavating and salvage equipment – even robotic divers with strong lights and cameras – as well as techniques for preserving artefacts that have been underwater sometimes for thousands of years. Refer to the case study on ancient Alexandria (Chapter 3) for modern examples of maritime archaeology.

2 **Rescue or preventive archaeology (crisis or commercial archaeology)**

This grew out of the destruction and rebuilding of cities caused by the Second World War. In the modern world, with the rapid growth of population and development (highways, parking areas, factories, high-rise housing developments etc.) it has taken on an even greater significance. Where people choose to live today is often where people of the past also lived. This form of archaeology is marked by a sense of urgency and crisis management as archaeologists rush to prevent the loss of valuable remains before bulldozers cause unrecoverable damage, and contractors lose patience with work stoppages. In some areas, there are laws to allow rescue

FIGURE 1.5 An example of rescue archaeology

archaeologists to perform pre-development survey work before heavy machinery moves in. In other cases, speed is of utmost importance and a mobile group of amateur archaeologists, directed by a skilled professional, with only a short window of time in which to carry out their work, descend on the site to measure, take notes and photographs, make sketches and remove small finds. The fate of large remains needs to be negotiated with the developing authority. Sometimes, a site will be regarded as so valuable that it will be extensively excavated, in which case it is no longer rescue archaeology. Refer to the case study on Alexandria.

ACTIVITY 1.2

1 Identify the maritime archaeologist's activity in Figure 1.4.
2 Research the Reiss Warrior bronzes found at the bottom of the Mediterranean.
   • Identify where, how and by whom they were discovered.
   • Describe their condition when found.
   • Explain how they were dated.
   • Explain the processes involved in their rescue and display.
   • Identify where are they now located.
3 Present your findings in either an oral or written format.
4 Explain how rescue archaeology differs from other forms of the discipline.

Representations of archaeologists

Throughout history archaeologists have been represented in many different ways.
   The following figures and sources illustrate some images of them.

FIGURE 1.6 A painting by Leon Cogniet of Napoleon Bonaparte's arrival in Egypt in the late 18th century

FIGURE 1.7 An early 19th-century sketch of Italian pioneer 'archaeologist' Giovanni Battista Belzoni

FIGURE 1.8 Image from a photo archive devoted to Gertrude Bell: traveller, archaeologist and photographer in the Middle East before World War I (Photograph Courtesy of The Gertrude Bell Archives, Newcastle University)

FIGURE 1.9 A cinematic image of one of the best-known film archaeologists, Indiana Jones

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

A COMMENT ON REPRESENTATIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN VARIOUS VISUAL FORMS

- 'Historical painting' is the painting of scenes from secular history, whether specific episodes or generalised scenes. They are not generally meant to be a 'realistic' picture of the past.
- Up until the beginning of the early 19th century the Orient, including Turkey and Egypt, exerted its allure on Western artists' imaginations, and those who travelled there often adopted the local exotic dress. This was part of a movement called Orientalism.
- Despite the fact that throughout history women have been underrepresented in archaeology, there were a number of very successful female archaeologists working in hostile environments. Unfortunately, there were very few photographs taken of early archaeologists on site and even fewer of women.

Recent films featuring archaeologist protagonists such as the *Indiana Jones* franchise (male archaeologist, set between 1935–57) and *The Mummy* series (female archaeologist, set between 1923–46) are non-stop action escapist, adventure and fantasy depictions of archaeologists, the purpose of which is not to depict reality, but to simply entertain. However, a cinematic representation has the potential to stimulate interest in a historical individual, group, or event, and hopefully to lead to questioning and discussion.

ACTIVITY 1.3

1 Identify the type of visual representation seen in Figure 1.6 (on p. 11).
2 Examine the image carefully and identify all the things you can see in it.
3 Identify the evidence in the scene that suggests that Napoleon's campaign might not bode well for the future of Egyptian antiques.
4 Explain why an Italian archaeologist (Figure 1.7) is depicted in exotic dress.
5 Look closely at the photographic image of Gertrude Bell (Figure 1.8). Identify a feature that immediately strikes you.
6 Investigate Gertrude Bell and describe two of her major achievements.
7 Explain why this image of Gertrude Bell is so valuable.
8 Discuss how Indiana Jones has been depicted in the various movies in the franchise.
9 Evaluate how realistic the use of weapons is, in terms of modern archaeology, in the Indiana Jones movies.
10 Explain why you think the film makers chose the time frame of the Nazi regime in Germany for several of their films. A clue: type into the internet 'Nazis and hidden/stolen treasure'.
11 Examine the views expressed by Kevin McGeough and Professor Peter Hitchcock in Sources 1.5 and 1.6 about the modern perception of archaeologists in popular culture. Critically discuss your view.

In popular culture the job of an archaeologist is depicted as a romantic adventurist occupation. To generalize, the public views archaeology as a fantasized hobby more than a job in the scientific community.

SOURCE 1.5 Kevin McGeough, 'Heroes, Mummies, and Treasure: Near Eastern Archaeology in the Movies', *Near Eastern Archaeology*, 69: 174–185

Archaeologists are portrayed in movies as dangerous. They are driven by self-interest and are ruthless in their quest to attain an object of power, willing to steal, hurt or even kill people in their pursuit of treasures or knowledge of the past. They endanger humanity by releasing evil spirits or reawakening the dead or monsters. They are seen as playing with dangerous contexts that shouldn't be interfered with. This is incredibly consistent over the last 80 years of cinema history … There are some very vocal archaeologists who believe all publicity is good publicity and use Indiana Jones as a marketing tool to recruit students but there is another group, myself included, who believe we should think twice before making Indiana Jones a pin-up boy for archaeology.

SOURCE 1.6 Professor Peter Hiscock, cited in 'Indiana Jones no pin-up boy for archaeologists', *Sydney Morning Herald* (Oct. 12, 2014), by Elissa Blake

Specialists who work alongside archaeologists

Much of archaeology is now carried out in the laboratory as well as on-site, and specialists in a wide variety of fields are constantly adding to our understanding of material and human remains. Refer to p. 22 for an elaboration of the use of scientific methods in archaeology.

TABLE 1.2 Categories of specialists who frequently work alongside archaeologists

Category of specialists	Areas of expertise
Architects, cartographers, photographers, artists and urban designers	• draw plans, cross-sections and maps • photograph sites • create impressions and analyse paintings and mosaics • study the urban fabric of sites
Geophysical surveyors	• locate something underground or underwater
Chemical and physical scientists	• analyse the composition of glass, ceramics and metal, mortar, plaster, pigments and organic remains • date objects
Anthropologists	• study behaviours and customs of human societies, as well as the composition and diversity of populations
Forensic pathologists, biologists, osteologists and radiologists	• analyse skeletal remains and living organisms to solve crimes or mysteries • interpret evidence from bones, mummies and other ancient bodies
Geneticists (DNA)	• map a living thing's unique genes and use these to explain historical events
Seismologists, vulcanologists and geologists	• study earth movements, eruptions, and other seismic effects on buildings and people

TABLE 1.2 (*Continued*)

Category of specialists	Areas of expertise
Mechanical scientists and hydraulic engineers	• trace the circulation of surface water and study the collection and drainage systems of ancient sites
Botanists, zoologists, agricultural scientists and dendrochronologists	• study natural environments and the species of flora and fauna in them • analyse types of timbers and date wooden remains
Archaeoastronomers	• measure the alignment of buildings with astral bodies and events such as solstices
Sociologists, geographers and ethnographers	• study social behaviour, the environment, social institutions and their people and cultures
Linguists and cryptographers	• specialise in language and symbols, and decode unknown or secret writing
Computer scientists and program developers	• record, store, analyse, create plans and digital models
Conservators and curators	• safeguard sites and artefacts
Palaeontologists	• study fossilised remains of plants and animals
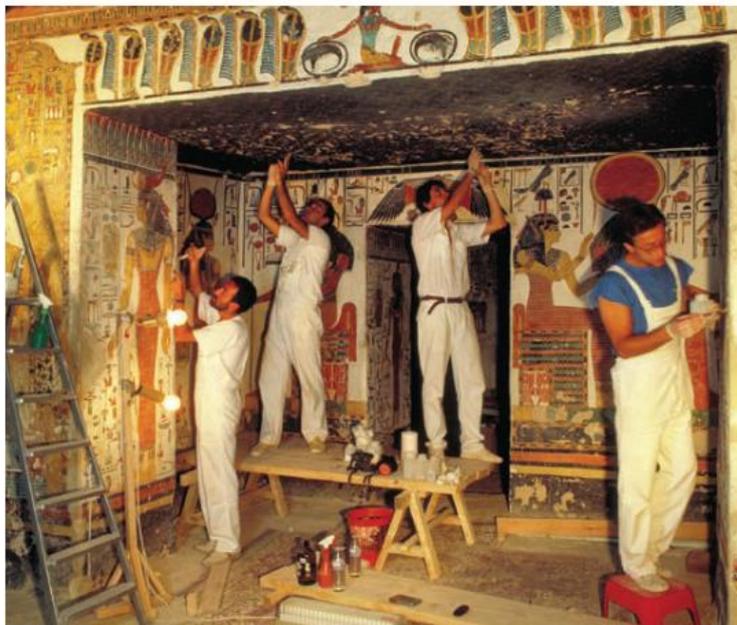
FIGURE 1.10 Working inside the tomb of Nefertari in Egypt

ACTIVITY 1.4

1 Identify the occupation and expertise of the people in Figure 1.10.
2 Choose one of the experts in Table 1.2 and research more details about what they do to help archaeologists and historians. Present your findings in a short piece of writing.

The changing nature of archaeology over time

Just as there have been different ways of writing history over time (**historiography**), so too have the methods of, and approaches to, archaeology changed during the last 150 years.

Treasure hunting

During the 18th to 19th centuries 'investigating' the past was little more than looting and state-sanctioned treasure-hunting, where nations and individuals (who tended to be wealthy, often unconventional and mostly European males) were given permission by the ruling authorities in countries such as Egypt and Greece to remove antiquities, either for private collections or to enhance the prestige of the nation's museums. The same applied when European powers had a mandate over foreign territory. In most cases these men ignored the archaeological context of the artefacts and caused extensive damage as they removed them, often undocumented – or poorly recorded – from the sites. Many of the artefacts found in national museums worldwide, such as the 'pillaged' sculptures from Athens' Parthenon in the British Museum, have 'the taint of looted goods'[1] about them. See p. 66 for details of looting and issues of cultural property.

FIGURE 1.11 Soil layers

Early archaeology

The guiding principle of early excavation was, and still is, **stratigraphy**, the study and interpretation of strata or layers that have accumulated over thousands of years and which vary in composition, colour, texture, thickness and associated cultural material. Each stratum represents a discrete period of time, and artefacts within the layer can be used to date the entire layer.

Since all excavation is destructive, and the site can never be seen again as it once was, it is the task of the archaeologist to carefully distinguish these layers at the time of excavation. However, this is not always an easy exercise since strata fade into each other

historiography the study of history and how it is written

stratigraphy in reference to archaeology, it is the analysis and position of layers of archaeological remains

and are not always completely distinct and, sometimes, natural events (floods, erosion, earthquakes), burrowing animals and human activities (digging of a pit or well) re-deposit and mix up strata and their contents.

A profile of an early archaeologist: Heinrich Schliemann and the excavation of Troy (1870–90)

Heinrich Schliemann, a German amateur archaeologist and wealthy entrepreneur, believed in the historical accuracy of the city of ancient Troy mentioned in the *Iliad*, an epic poem of the Trojan War by the Greek poet, Homer. In 1870, fuelled by his unwavering faith and determination to prove that Homer's Troy had actually existed, the middle-aged Schliemann, with a fortune accumulated during his business career, and his Greek wife Sophia set off for Turkey. It is often said that Schliemann discovered the site of ancient Troy and the impression is that he was the first to dig on the Hill of Hissarlik. This is inaccurate: 'he was the first to dig it on a large scale'.[2]

FIGURE 1.12 A bust of Heinrich Schliemann in the Neues Museum in Berlin

> He did not bring to the task much initial knowledge of the literature, or much sophistication of thought. He came into archaeology in an intuitive rush, in a mid-life crisis, and the scholarship, reasoning and excavation technique all had to be developed later.

SOURCE 1.7 D. F. Easton, 'Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud?' *The Classical World*, Vol. 91, No. 5, 'The World of Troy' (May – Jun., 1998), p. 399

FIGURE 1.13 The location of ancient Troy

Unscrupulous in getting what he wanted – fame and treasure – and without permission initially from the Turkish government, Schliemann recklessly rushed to dig two long trenches into the hill. He was rewarded immediately with evidence of settlement.

He was eventually forced to seek permission to dig, and from 1871 began a process that has been referred to by some as 'strip-mining' and 'bull-dozing'. There is no doubt that his early methods were crude: 'he used winches, crowbars and battering rams'.[3]

> In an act of archaeological vandalism egregious even by the standards of the day, Schliemann ploughed an enormous trench, 79 metres wide and 14 metres deep right through the middle of the north–south axis of the mound, shifting in the process some 78 000 cubic metres of earth – destroying much of the level now considered to correspond to the date of the Trojan War.

SOURCE 1.8 Cathy Gere, *The Tomb of Agamemnon*, (2006) p. 70

To give him his due, he was aware of the various strata identifying seven cities superimposed on one another, but the mound was very difficult to excavate. Also, he was in a hurry to locate Homer's Troy and Priam's Treasure, which he believed would be found at the bottom of the mound. He ruthlessly cut through successive settlement layers destroying the site and losing valuable data forever. He admitted himself, 'I was forced to demolish many interesting ruins in the upper stratas.'[4]

Towards the bottom of the mound was a settlement layer (later referred to as Troy II-g) that appeared to have been destroyed by a ferocious fire that Schliemann believed had been caused by the Greeks and which he had once seen in a book when he was a child. Schliemann unearthed the remains of a fortress-city with towered gateways in brick and timber, and outer walls with powerfully buttressed substructures, a tower and a **megaron**, which appeared to be residential quarters clustered around a paved road over five metres wide. There were also signs of ash deposits, some as thick as 2–3 metres, and partially **vitrified** fragments of brick and stones.

> **megaron** the central hall of a large Mycenaean house
>
> **vitrified** refers to something changed into glass, or into a substance that is like glass, usually with the use of heat

'This was the only period whose architecture he recorded fully. Most of the rest was swept away.'[5] Later, in 1882, he had the sense to employ a meticulous and talented architect: Wilhelm Dörpfeld.

However, after three years of digging, there was no sign of the 10 talents of gold, two shining tripods, four cauldrons and a very lovely cup mentioned in the *Iliad*. He was just about to give up when he supposedly saw

a glint of gold in the soil. To prevent the Turkish workmen learning of his discovery, he used the pretext of his birthday to give them time off. In their absence, he recorded that he and Sophia dug beneath the fortified wall.

> … this involved great risk since the wall of fortification, beneath which I had to dig, threatened every moment to fall down upon me. But the sight of so many objects, every one of which is of inestimable value to archaeology, made me restless, and I never thought of any danger. … It would have been impossible for me to remove the treasure without the help of my dear wife, who stood at my side, ready to pack the things I cut out in her shawl and carry them away.

SOURCE 1.9 Heinrich Schliemann (1874), *Trojan Antiquities*

FIGURE 1.14 Sophia Schliemann wearing part of 'Priam's Treasure'

That his wife was there and witnessed the whole discovery was a lie which he later corrected.

Among the collection of precious objects were two magnificent diadems. The larger of the two was made from 16 353 separate gold pieces in the form of tiny gold rings and leaves, comprised of a gold chain from which hung 74 short chains of heart-shaped gold plates that rested on the wearer's forehead. Apart from the two diadems, the hoard included six gold bracelets, 60 earrings, a gold goblet weighing 601 grams, large vessel of silver, ritual axes of jadeite and lapis lazuli, and 8700 gold trinkets.

It is Schliemann's initial sketchy and contradictory accounts of the finding of this treasure that has thrown suspicion on the authenticity of the hoard.

Heinrich and Sophia smuggled the finds out of Turkey where they hid them in baskets and chests, in barns and stables, in the homes, and on the farms of Sophia's many relatives. When the Turkish government discovered the situation, Schliemann paid them off for a fraction of what the treasures were worth. In 1881, he donated them to the Berlin Museum of Prehistory and Early History. The Trojan treasure remained in Germany until the last day of World War I, when it was spirited away to the Soviet Union where it remains to this day. This issue will be discussed later in cultural property and repatriation of finds.

Although Schliemann believed that the Troy he discovered was the one mentioned in Homer's *Iliad*, it was Wilhelm Dörpfeld who identified two more cities, and Troy VI as the Troy of the Trojan War. Many other archaeologists who followed, such as Carl Blegan and Manfred Korfmann, conducting more scientific and methodical excavations, revealed that there were 40 settlement layers on the site. Although Blegan believed that Troy VII was the Troy of Homer, scholars disagreed with him and still believe that Troy VI best fits the description of Homer.

The great fire that burnt Troy II (c. 2600–2150 BCE) – the one believed by Schliemann to be Homer's Troy – was part of a widespread catastrophe throughout the eastern Mediterranean (possibly meteor swarms) that brought an end to many other early Bronze Age settlements.

Unfortunately, no written material has been found on the site before the Classical era and the physical remains have little to tell us about the people who built and rebuilt the fabled city of Troy. Even to this day, scholars are still debating if there really was a one-off memorable Trojan War during the Bronze age as described in Homer, or if there is more likely to have been 'several armed conflicts distilled in later memory into the Trojan War'.[6]

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED
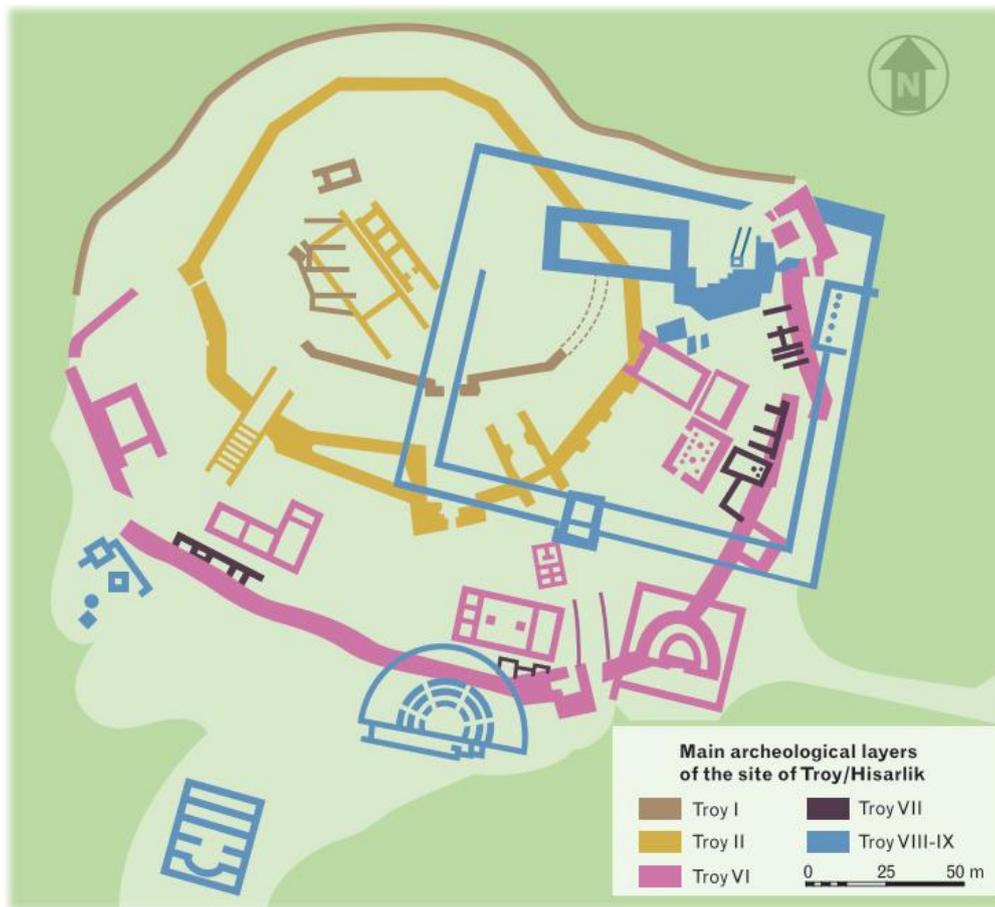
FIGURE 1.15 An archaeological plan of the Hill of Hissarlik

FIGURE 1.16 The remains of Troy today

Views and controversies

In 1973, in a TV interview, the ageing archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler said, 'We may be grateful to Schliemann because he showed us what a splendid book had in fact been buried there (Troy): but he tore it to pieces in snatching it from the earth, and it took us upwards of three-quarters of a century to stick it more or less together and to read it right.'[7]

Schliemann was a controversial personality even in his own day and he has had many opponents since, none more so than classics Professor William Calder and historian Professor David Traill, who began questioning Schliemann's work from the 1980s. In his 1995 book, *Schliemann of Troy: Treasure and Deceit*, Traill claims that Schliemann – a man of 'ferocious determination, and extraordinary gifts, whose ruthless business instincts often trumped his scholarly integrity'[8] – perpetrated one of the greatest frauds of modern archaeological history. Using previously unpublished sources, Traill accused Schliemann of being a pathological liar and cheat, even going so far as to create a personal fiction and to doctoring his 'fieldwork' and journals to prove his theories. Traill also questioned the authenticity of the treasure hoard. He believes that Schliemann probably did find a hoard, but no more than a few bronzes on 31 May 1873, which he fleshed out with gold and silver items, found previously on the site and salted away for this purpose. He goes so far as to suggest that other pieces may have been added in from illicit excavations on other sites or brought from antiquities dealers.

D. F. Easton in *Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud* (1998) admits that Schliemann did not discover Troy, nor 'did he prove the historicity of the Trojan War'; that he was 'not a pioneer of a new science' as some have claimed; he was certainly 'no model of honesty' and his motives 'were not unmixed', but he does not believe that Schliemann 'faked his finds' or 'cooked his results'. His 'lasting achievement was to open up Aegean prehistory, and to create a world-wide enthusiasm for archaeology.'[9]

ACTIVITY 1.5

1 Define stratigraphy.
2 Explain why the site of Troy would have been hard to excavate.
3 Examine the evidence for the charge of 'archaeological vandalism' against Schliemann at Troy.
4 Describe how Schliemann is depicted by D. F. Easton, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, and David Traill.
5 Assess the impact of Schliemann on future archaeology.
6 Imagine you are a Turkish labourer working on the site with Schliemann. Write a conversation you might have with a member of your family about what you saw happening on the site.

Ancient and modern representations of the Trojan War
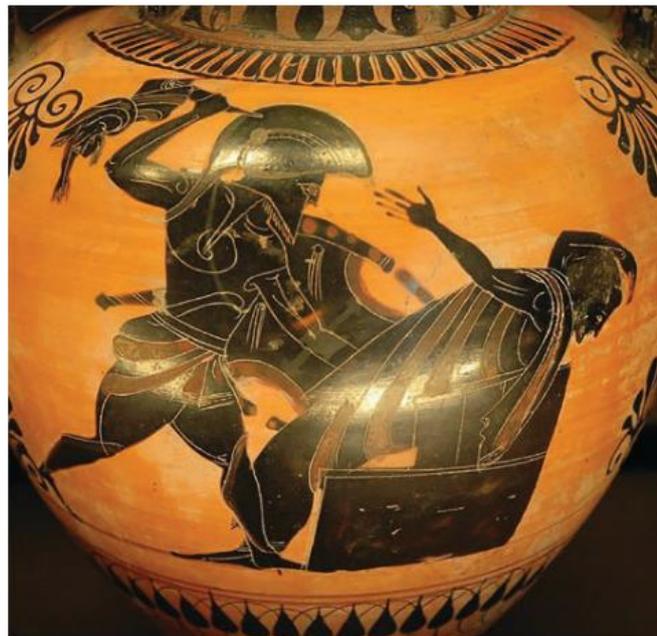
FIGURE 1.17 The death of Priam on a black-figured Greek vase

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

Cambridge University Press

FIGURE 1.18 The earliest depiction of the Trojan Horse on the 7th-century BCE Mykonos Vase
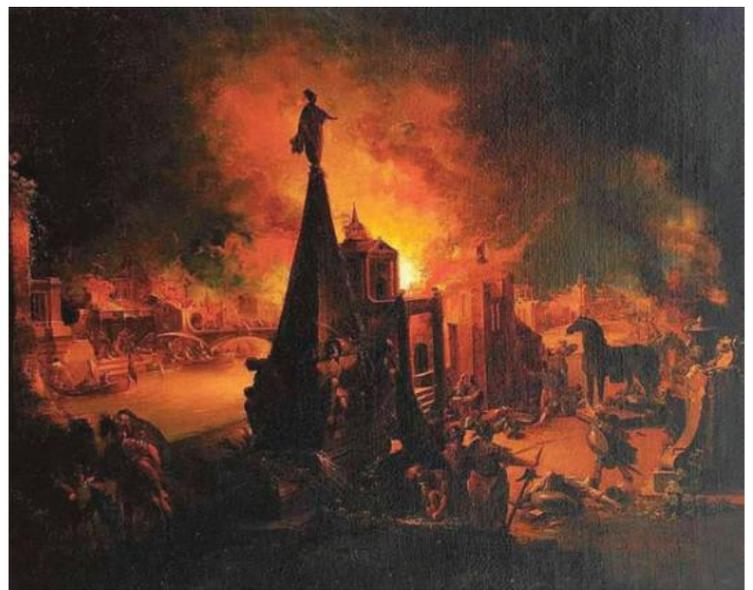
FIGURE 1.19 *The Burning of Troy (1759–62)*, by J. G. Trautmann

FIGURE 1.20 A panoramic view depicting Achilles dragging Hector's lifeless body in front of the Gates of Troy. From a fresco from the main hall of the Achilleion Palace in Corfu called *The Triumph of Achilles* by Franz von Match (died 1942).

ACTIVITY 1.6

Research scenes from the 2004 movie *Troy* on YouTube and write a short paragraph discussing how the historical figures have been represented.

Archaeological innovators

Men such as Augustus Pitt-Rivers, Sir William Flinders Petrie and Sir Robert Mortimer Wheeler revolutionised archaeological excavation and methods of recording.

> An ill-considered excavation is liable to develop into a chaos of pits and trenches, difficult to supervise and record, and often embarrassed by intrusive spoil-tips that eventually control the work or are in a constant and costly process of secondary removal.

SOURCE 1.10 R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, *Archaeology from the Earth*, 1956, p. 80

ACTIVITY 1.7

1 Research these early excavators and identify ways in which they revolutionised:
   - excavation (box-grid and open area excavation)
   - dating (**seriation**)
   - collection and recording of artefacts.
2 Collect images of some of these methods, which were in use up to the 1960s and even still until today.

FIGURE 1.21 Maiden Castle, first investigated by Augustus Pitt-Rivers in the 19th century and later by Mortimer Wheeler between 1934–37

The impact of technology and science on archaeology

The second half of the 20th century ushered in a golden age of technology that gave archaeologists new scientific 'tool kits' that made site discovery, recording and dating much easier and more effective.

Targeting prospective dig sites

Modern archaeologists now understand that the material remains are a fragile, finite and non-renewable resource, so they must be able to justify the need to excavate as well as work for the future. Fortunately, archaeologists now have the techniques and tools to create more targeted and efficient digs, or to make the decision not to excavate at all.

Remote sensing

This allows archaeologists to identify dark soil stains that indicate the rich organic material of ancient **middens**; abnormal crop marks and vegetation that can point to possible underground walls, ditches and roads; and slight nuances in shadow that may point to elevation differences and ancient structures.

However, the following developments have taken remote sensing to a whole new level:

1 **Google Earth, Microsoft's Bing and NASA's World Wind** – These can zoom into even the most remote corners of the globe and identify things like settlement mounds and various types of enclosures. They are universally available, although some satellite images are difficult to interpret except on the ground. Google Earth claims to have discovered thousands of tombs in the Saudi desert.
2 **LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging technology)** – Operated from a plane, laser beams are directed to the ground and detect the reflected light. Connected to an accurate GPS they produce detailed three-dimensional maps of the Earth's surface, even 'seeing' through sites otherwise obscured by forests.

seriation a relative dating method in which assemblages or artefacts from numerous sites, in the same culture, are placed in chronological order

midden a rubbish heap

LIDAR a detection system which works on the principle of radar, but uses light from a laser

3 **Drones** – Used for filling the gap between aerial photography and images from the ground, drones are capable of taking photographs in low light, particularly in frost and snow conditions when features on the ground can be best seen.

Geophysics

Sophisticated **geophysical** prospecting devices include:

1 Soil resistivity meters that work by passing an electrical current through the soil to measure its resistance. These can uncover differences in soil moisture to reveal buried structures up to about 1.5 metres in depth; but it is slow, because probes have to be inserted into the soil at regular intervals, although it does produce highly detailed results.

FIGURE 1.22 Satellite imaging over the Giza Plateau

2 Magnetometers measure changes in the Earth's magnetic field due to buried buildings and artefacts or natural fluctuations. Subtracting the natural variability from the rest of the magnetic field reveals a map of the archaeological features. These are particularly suitable for desert areas such as Egypt. More sensitive magnetometers with multiple sensors and linked to GPS are fast and capable of surveying large areas in a day.

3 Soil geochemistry and XRF (portable X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy measurers) – It has long been known that by recording patterns of heavy metals in the soil it is possible to locate ancient sites even when no artefacts remain. Soil samples were originally analysed in the laboratory, but now a portable machine like a sci-fi ray gun has been developed. It works by emitting X-rays that the atoms in the soil absorb, and can provide rapid in-the-field recording and measuring.

Ground penetrating radar

This is a non-destructive technique in which scientists bounce high-frequency radio waves off the ground and reflected signals reveal objects or structures in the ground. Previous weaknesses in the radar instruments and the associated computing power technique have been vastly improved.

Dating artefacts and events

There are two categories of dating that archaeologists rely upon.

1 **Relative dating** methods – (sometimes called archaeological dating or historical chronology). This type of dating is based mainly on the principles of stratigraphy and typology to establish approximate dates for archaeological sites and artefacts and can only provide approximate dates. Although these forms were used prior to the introduction of scientific methods, they are still used today to supplement and cross-reference the information provided by absolute dating.

2 **Absolute dating** – This is based on science and produces more accurate or exact dates. However, it must be done in a laboratory, is relatively expensive and requires the destruction of at least part of the object.

Radio carbon dating

One of the most common forms of absolute dating is radiocarbon (C-14) dating, developed in 1949, and a more sophisticated version known as AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) radiocarbon dating, developed in the 1970s.

geophysics the study of the rocks and other substances that make up the earth and the physical processes happening on, in and above the earth

relative dating type of dating based mainly on the principles of stratigraphy and typology to establish approximate dates for archaeological sites and artefacts

absolute dating the process of determining an age on a specified chronology in archaeology and geology

All living things absorb Carbon-14 from the air, but as soon as the organism dies the process stops and the C-14 begins to decay at a constant and known rate. Scientists can measure the emissions of carbon in a sample and the missing amounts can be determined to know how long it took to be lost. C-14 dating can only be carried out on organic material such as charcoal, wood, shell, seeds, pollen, animal remains, bone, hair, blood residue, leather, cloth, paper and parchment, resins, glues and much more.

Whereas the earlier form of C-14 dating was able to date material between 50 000–400 years old, AMS dating is more accurate, faster, requires smaller samples (such a single hair) and can date as far back as 70 000 years.

TABLE 1.3 A profile of a decades-long dating debate

The Thera (Santorini) volcanic eruption of the mid 2nd millennia BCE in the southern Aegean was the largest known during the last 12 000 years, destroying the Bronze Age town of Akrotiri on the island of Thera and disrupting established trade and communications networks in the region. However, when it occurred precisely has been a hotly contested and sometime virulent scholarly debate since the mid-1970s between those who used relative dating (material culture and stylistic traits of Egypt, the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean) and those who agreed with the absolute dating of Thera and surrounding areas.	
Those who claimed a date for the eruption of around 1500 BCE (16th century), based their evidence on Egyptian history, and queried the scientific evidence as not working since volcanic carbon dioxide could have affected the samples.	Those who based their dating on the radio carbon analysis claimed a date for the eruption late in the 17th century BCE. In 2010, they refuted the objections as irrelevant and claimed that radio carbon dating could give a similar date for Egypt, and that if it worked for Egypt, it should also be able to work in the Aegean. Further radio carbon dating supported their view.
An olive branch found in the eruption pumice on Thera was tested but led to further disputes.	
This undermined the historical dating and led to claims by its supporters that there were no rings and that the branch was probably already dead by the time of the eruption.	Radio carbon dating from the oldest to the most recent part of the branch showed up as late 17th century BCE. A test on a second olive branch associated with the eruption, with evidence of leaves associated with it, proved their view.
Further scientific work, in Turkey, on Tell Megiddo in Israel and in the Egyptian delta city of Avaris found little sound basis for the archaeological dating. Also, new finds undermined this conventional date of early 15th century BCE. As Stuart Manning says:	
It will take time for such new realities to seep, drift, or sweep over the academic field of Aegean and east Mediterranean archaeology.	
Why is this new date so important?	
It will mean the necessity to re-date the Hyksos world, their occupation of Egypt and their conquest by King Ahmose of Thebes, as well as a whole new chronology for Middle and New Kingdom Egypt.	
The Thera debate has come full circle.	

Source: Based on Stuart W. Manning et al. (2014), 'Dating the Thera (Santorini) Eruption: Archaeological and Scientific Evidence Supporting a High Chronology', *Antiquity* 88, pp. 1176–9
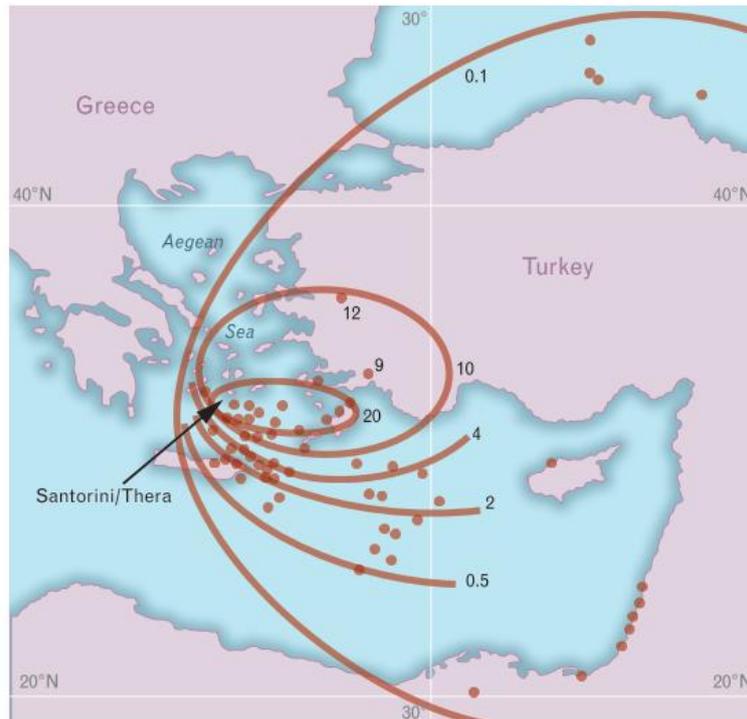
FIGURE 1.23 A sketch map of the area affected by the ash fall-out of the four-phase eruption (numbers indicate depth of ash in cm)

ACTIVITY 1.9

1. Identify the dates originally suggested by archaeological dating and Carbon-14 dating for the Theran eruption.
2. Explain the objection made by the relative dating group to the use of an olive branch found in the pumice of the eruption. Describe how the scientific group overcame this objection.
3. Discuss the problems facing Egyptologists after these dating results.
4. Analyse what Stuart Manning is suggesting by the statement 'It will take time for such new realities to seep, drift, or sweep over the academic field of Aegean and east Mediterranean archaeology'.
5. Check out video clips on You Tube and report what you learned from them about the Theran eruption.

Science and documentation

Computers must have seemed like the 'holy grail' to archaeologists when they were first introduced in the 1960s, with their ability to record, store and analyse huge sets of data such as excavation reports, photographs, plans, maps and tens of thousands of finds.

Today, they are the essential tools of archaeologists both in the field and in the laboratory where they perform detailed spatial analyses, discover patterns and correlations not seen by the naked eye, display site topography and create 3D virtual reconstructions of buildings (using CAD – Computer Aided Design software) and modelling of terrains and artefacts.

With the speed of technological change, archaeologists are now expected to be computer literate and most carry around tablet computers (such as iPads) and other digital tools such as GPS, relational data bases, digital cameras and 3D laser scanners. After high-quality digital data has been recorded, it can be shared over the internet with researchers, and with the general public as well.

Two ambitious digital recording projects

1 The Theban Mapping Project (TMP) on the west bank (Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens) of modern Luxor in Egypt.

The original purpose of the Theban Mapping Project, established in 1978 and the brain-child of Egyptologist Dr Kent R. Weekes, was to create an archaeological map of the Valley of the Kings and a comprehensive data base of every archaeological, geological, and **ethnographic** feature in Thebes.

ethnographic relating to the scientific description of peoples' customs, habits and cultures, including their mutual differences

When the project first started, it used tools such as surveyors' theodolites, graph paper, cameras and, later, hot-air balloons, but a revolution in technology, such as ground-penetrating radar, LIDAR-based 3D mapping toolsets and mapping software, has enabled the project to produce:

FIGURE 1.24 Model of KV 5, the largest tomb in the Valley of the Kings

- two three-dimensional online atlases
- an 8000-image database with Zoomify technology
- an archaeological site database with 5000 monument locations
- educational materials including a glossary, bibliography and timeline
- a management plan, financed by the World Monuments Fund, which takes into account tourism, conservation and further research.

These technological advances also led to the discovery of the largest tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 5) with 130 rooms – the tomb of the sons of Ramesses II.

According to Dr Weekes, the mapping project's adoption of new technology 'was not the result of deliberate, organized planning, but the fortuitous discoveries of techniques that seemed applicable to current questions, or that generated new questions that seemed important to answer'.[10]

2 The Million Image Database, initiated by the Institute for Digital Archaeology (IDA), is a joint venture between Harvard and Oxford Universities, which involves an ambitious attempt to 'crowdsource' a Million Image Database. This will be particularly necessary to record vulnerable heritage sites such as those in places like Iraq and Syria where the archaeological sites of ancient Nineveh and Kahlu (Mosul and Nimrud), and Aleppo and Palmyra have not only been damaged by warfare but deliberately desecrated by IS (Islamic State). (Refer to cultural property and looting, as well as the Case Study: Palmyra and the Silk Road.)

'A 3D digital record of such sites would at least mean that they were in some sense accessible to scholars and virtual "visitors" around the world.'[11] There are many websites that explore this project further.

> The documentation of cultural heritage in areas affected by conflict or natural disasters, including through the new digital technologies, is a critical step to preserve the memory of our past and mitigate the risk of possible damage or loss of precious cultural assets. Initiatives such as the Million Image Database project of the Institute of Digital Archaeology, which is based on the support of numerous volunteers on the ground, also testify to the importance attributed to their cultural heritage by local communities.
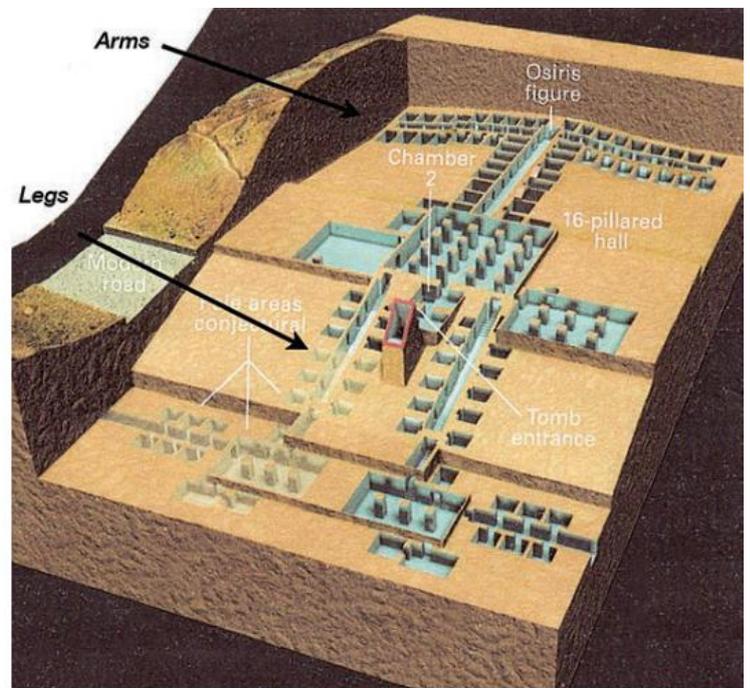
SOURCE 1.11 Francesco Bandarin, Assistant Director-General for Culture, UNESCO, The Institute of Digital Archaeology

1 Describe the main purpose behind the Million Image Database
2 Discuss the significance of the following statements written in 2002 by Alexander Stille in his book *The Future of the Past*, on the future of archaeology.

> 'One of the great ironies of the information age, is that, while the late 20th century will undoubtedly have recorded more data than any other period in history, it will almost certainly have lost more information than any previous era.'[12]
>
> 'As the pace of technological change increases, so does the speed at which each new generation of equipment supplants the last.'[13]

The use of forensic examination and DNA analysis in archaeology

Although people once thought that there was little new information that could be learnt about the distant past, that is certainly not true today, especially with vast and ever-changing technology, the amazing advances in **forensic science** and the recent use of DNA analysis of **mummies**.

forensic science the application of scientific methods and techniques to matters under investigation

mummies bodies preserved either naturally – in desert sands, ice or peat bogs – or artificially by embalming

Forensic science

As most people know from TV shows and films, forensic scientists collect, preserve and analyse scientific evidence during the course of a criminal investigation. Some go to a crime scene to collect the evidence themselves and others work in laboratories analysing objects collected by others.

In regards to their role in archaeology, some might be asked to use their expertise:

1 When an ancient burial site or body is located, especially if there is evidence of some form of foul play, or even ritualistic death such as in the cases of the numerous Iron Age Bog Bodies found in Scandinavia, Britain and Ireland.

2 To find the causes of death in other types of preserved bodies such as the long-standing investigation into whether the 19-year-old Egyptian pharaoh Tutankhamun, was murdered, died by accident or from disease at the end of the 18th dynasty, and what killed the Neolithic Iceman found in the Tyrolean Alps in 1991. Forensic science techniques can:

- determine if grave sites are recent or ancient
- tell how old a body is and how long it has been in the ground
- identify cause of death – accident, disease, murder, sacrifice, and whether any injuries occurred before or after death
- determine various preservation/mummification processes
- analyse such things as a person's last meal, or body decoration (tattoos), personal items, such clothing, tools or weapons, that might throw some light on the history and death of an ancient individual
- identify bones as human or animal
- examine internal organs, bones, hair, teeth, DNA
- gauge skeletal maturity, determine age, sex, height, build, general health, lifestyle and whether any injuries occurred before or after death
- identify genetic mutations, familial relations, migration patterns, blood groups and infections in ancient remains
- provide evidence about what materials are used in artefacts and where these materials came from

- determine how materials buried for a long time degrade or decompose over time
- confirm or refute previously held theories or beliefs about something, such as the process of Egyptian mummification
- reconstruct ancient bodies.

Types of scientific techniques used in forensic investigations

This section links with the questions of ethics and the treatment of human bodies on p. 74.

endoscopes a long, thin medical device with camera attached to a TV screen that is used to examine the hollow organs of the body such as the lungs

CT/CAT scanning computerised axial tomography scan: a medical test that involves using X-rays to create a three-dimensional image of the inside of the body

DNA deoxyribonucleic acid, present at the centre of the cells of living things, which controls the structure and purpose of each cell and carries genetic information during reproduction

FIGURE 1.25 US navy preparing a CT scan of a Peruvian mummy

In dealing with human bodies, the days of the full autopsies are long-gone, as they are far too invasive. Although the use of **endoscopes** to look inside the body and take small tissue samples is also invasive (inserted through natural body orifices or holes caused by mummification), it is less so than autopsies.

For most modern investigations, the non-invasive methods include:

- X-ray analysis
- **CT/CAT scanning**, which uses several X-ray images of structures inside a human's or animal's body and converts them into pictures on a monitor. With the new generation of CT scanners, it is possible to carry out a virtual autopsy as a basic step in examining mummified remains.
- MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) uses a magnetic field and pulses of radio wave energy to make pictures of organs and structures inside the body.
- **DNA** testing.

For studying artefacts buried with the body, mass spectrometry and gas chromatography are often used together as GC-MS to allow substances in a sample to be separated, then identified.

The archaeological value of a human specimen must always be a primary concern, especially when on display. When mummies are completely wrapped, fully dressed and accompanied by funerary equipment, the prospect of a full autopsy threatens their integrity, whereas CT imaging requires only careful transportation of the mummy. Invasive examination is more complex but can potentially be performed in a manner that respects the integrity of the corpse … Equally significant is the ethical issue concerning the lack of respect for a human body. A mummy is a deceased person, not an artefact, and burial customs should not be ignored. If this assumption is followed, no sampling, or limited sampling should be allowed in order to respect the deceased, and it is equally true that presenting 3D virtual renderings of undressed dead bodies to a lay public also raises ethical concerns.

SOURCE 1.12 Despina Moissidou et al., 'Invasive Versus Non Invasive Methods Applied to Mummy Research' (2015), *BioMed Research International*, published online, Aug. 2015, p. 4

General problems associated with forensic investigation

1 Some methods require the use of medical specialists to administer and interpret, and tests can only be carried out in dedicated laboratories.
2 Problems with restrictions to access of samples make it hard to carry out checks on suspect tests. For example, Egyptian authorities have imposed a ban on removing any archaeological samples from Egypt.
3 Even non-invasive inspections of museum specimens are often not allowed by museum curators due to the sensitivity around handling human remains.
4 Correct diagnoses are often only able to be carried out correctly through direct examination of the corpse, which concerns curators and some archaeologists.
5 MRI analysis is not satisfactory on dehydrated embalmed bodies.
6 Absence in many places of correct protocols in carrying out tests can lead to misdiagnoses and controversies.
7 Lack of multidisciplinary teams in interpreting data.

Specific problems associated with DNA analyses of mummies

1 Each mummy is a unique case. Artificial mummification processes vary and many are clearly badly preserved.
2 Natural preservation varies according to environmental factors – temperatures, humidity, soil acidity and time which can all cause cell modification.
3 DNA testing is harder in hot climates like Egypt than in cold or frozen environments. DNA breaks down over time at a rate that increases with temperature.
4 DNA is hard to sample as it survives in very small amounts and these are often made useless by damage and decay.
5 Contamination of DNA is hard to prevent as bodies from the past have usually been handled by many people before strict protocols were introduced.
6 Contamination from modern humans is extremely hard to detect.
7 Some DNA experts believe that Egyptian mummies are unlikely to contain enough DNA to test and are unlikely to contain microbacteria.
8 These same experts believe that in those preserved bodies where microbacteria are present it is difficult to prove that microbial sequencing are from ancient DNA and not from modern sequencing.

Having said all this, a new DNA sequencing technique has proved more effective – for example, in analysing Otzi the Iceman.

A COMMENT ON THE NATURAL PRESERVATION OF BOG BODIES AND WHY THEY APPEAR SO LIFE-LIKE

bogs wet, spongy ground, or an area of this

putrefaction the state of decaying

sphagnum a type of peat moss and a sugar released when it decays

Bogs are ideal places for preserving bodies because:
- they are cold, acidic, and lacking in oxygen, which produces a hostile environment for **putrefaction** (decomposition of organic matter by microorganisms, resulting in production of foul-smelling matter)
- **sphagnum** (a kind of sugar) released during the decay of sphagnum moss, has a natural tanning effect and turns the body's tissues into the consistency of leather. This is why bog bodies look so brown.
- sphagnum also immobilises decay-inducing bacteria in the digestive enzymes.

FIGURE 1.26 The head of a 4th-century bog body: Tollund Man

A forensic analysis of Otzi, the Iceman

The chance discovery in 1991 by two hikers of a body in the melting snow of the 3210-metre-high Otzal Alps, between Italy and Austria, gave modern science the chance to carry out a long and detailed forensic investigation into the intact and preserved body. The 'Iceman' – the most studied of all ancient human bodies – was found face down with his arms outstretched in a protected depression near the top of the Tsenjoch Pass between two forested valleys, an area that for thousands of years had been covered in glaciers. Alongside the Iceman, judged to be around 45 at his death, were his possessions: items of warm clothing such as leggings, a fur cap and upper jacket-like garment, and a cloak made from woven grass; containers (a birch bark container, a fur sack and belt pouch) and supplies; and weapons (a copper-bladed axe, a flint dagger, a quiver with 12 blank arrow shafts, and two completed arrows with stone heads).

FIGURE 1.27 Examination of the body of Otzi

FIGURE 1.28 A replica of Otzi's axe

Forensic tests on the body and equipment

1 Carbon-14 dating carried out by four separate institutes indicated that he lived between 3350–3100 BCE.

2 A thorough external examination was done in 1991, along with X-ray radiography images. These showed signs of:

- a cut to the back of the right hand in the process of healing
- breaks to the left ribcage which were fresh at the time of his death
- a depression in his skull which was thought to have been caused by the compression from the snow
- evidence from the lines (like rings in trees) in his remaining fingernail of several periods of stress to his immune system, the last one was eight weeks before his death
- tooth decay, gum disease and worn joints (arthritis)
- 61 separate tattoos made by incisions and the insertion of charcoal, some consistent with well-known acupuncture points not discovered for another 2000 years by the Chinese.

No definitive cause of death was found.

3 An endoscopic examination in 1998 to look at his internal organs was carried out using titanium probes inserted through small incisions in Otzi's back to take evidentiary samples, all recorded by a high-definition camera providing a map of the body's chest and abdomen area. This revealed:

- the presence of a variety of pollens in his lungs and stomach believed to have been ingested via the food he ate, the water he drank and the air he breathed
- the pollens in the lower gastronomical tract were from species found in the valleys and those in the upper tract from those higher in the mountains
- the broken ribs were bent out of shape post-mortem (after death).

4 In 2001, with the use of improved X-rays, the forensic scientists identified:

- a small arrow head in Otzi's left shoulder
- a two-centimetre slash in his back that established the arrows' path – from a rear and lower position.

5 In 2003, a DNA analysis on blood samples was carried out on Otzi's equipment. These indicated that:

- the blood on the knife, axe and upper garment came from four different people
- the blood on an arrow head found beside Otzi came from two individuals.

6 In 2007, a high-resolution CT scan identified :

- a 1-centimetre lesion in Otzi's subclavian artery (carried blood from the lung to his left arm)
- a large haematoma (bruise) indicating massive internal bleeding that would have led to death within minutes
- serious bleeding to the base of the brain caused by a head injury at the time of his death.

> Otzi's paternal lineage, G2a, is part of an ancient substrate that arrived in Europe from the Near East with the migrations of the first Neolithic peoples some 8000 years ago. Additional migrations and other demographic events occurring after the Neolithic Age in Europe then partially replaced G2a with other lineages, except in geographically isolated areas such as Sardinia. In contrast, the Iceman's maternal branch originated locally in the eastern Alps at least 5300 years ago. The same migrations that have replaced only in part his paternal lineage caused the extinction of his maternal lineage that was inherited in a small and demographic stationary population.

SOURCE 1.13 Findings of the genetic history of Otzi the Iceman provided by the European Academy of Bolzano and published in early 2016, cited in 'New Discoveries Concerning Otzi's Genetic History' (2016), *Phys.org 2003–2017*, Science X network

Use the clues summarised on the previous page to pose your own theory about the manner of, and probable reason for, the death of Otzi.

1   Briefly outline your theory and explain what evidence you used.

2   You can see if your theory agrees with a retired homicide detective and forensic coroner. Access the Interactive Textbook for the article.

3   Investigate where Otzi the Iceman's paternal ancestors came from originally.

4   Discuss where you might be likely to find people today carrying some of the same genetic information as Otzi.

5   Identify where his maternal family originated and explain why is it believed his maternal lineage died out.

A DNA analysis carried out on Egyptian royal mummies in 2010

Between 2007–09, Tutankhamun and 10 other royal mummies underwent a detailed investigation, which finally included a DNA analysis carried out by two notable DNA experts, Carsten Pusch and Albert Zink, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) in 2010.

FIGURE 1.29 Bone tissue being removed from a royal Egyptian mummy

It was the first ancient DNA study on royal mummies and the country lacked the necessary expertise. So Hawass (Zahi Hawass – Director of Antiquities at the time) asked Zink, a prominent researcher at the EURAC Institute for Mummies and the Iceman in Bolzano, Italy, and Pusch of the University of Tubingen, Germany to act as consultants. The pair designed and oversaw the study, including the building of two dedicated labs in Cairo partly paid for by the Discovery Channel, which filmed the project. The researchers deny that the television involvement put them under any pressure to produce dramatic results. 'But working for the cameras did make a challenging project even tougher', says Pusch. 'Each time they came into film, we had to close the lab for a week to clean.' Eventually the TV crew was banished and the lab scenes reconstructed.

SOURCE 1.14 J. Marchant, 'Curse of the Pharaoh's DNA' (April 2011), *Nature*, Vol. 472, p. 405

1   Discuss the problems associated with carrying out forensic investigations on Egyptian mummies, especially those housed in Egypt.

2   Explain what Source 1.14 indicates about the possible integrity of the DNA testing on the royal mummies.

3 Using what you consider a reliable source (e.g. the report on the website of the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*), research what was supposedly revealed by the 2010 DNA study of the Egyptian royal mummies':

- familial links
- inherited health issues of Tutankhamun
- evidence of malaria
- the possible death of Tutankhamun.

FIGURE 1.30 Reconstruction of Otzi the Iceman

Forensic facial reconstructions

Unlike the reconstructions of archaeological sites, that are generally criticised for attempting to return a place to a known or even unknown earlier form by the introduction of new materials, forensic facial reconstructions (or forensic facial approximation) do not build on the actual face of a preserved human. Forensic artists use 3D images of the mummy's skull and infrared and tomographic images, an amalgamation of anthropology, osteology and anatomy, as well as artistry. This is not an exact science as there is a certain amount of subjectivity on the part of the forensic artist.

FIGURE 1.31 Another reconstruction of Otzi

ACTIVITY 1.15

1 Would you prefer to look at a facial reconstruction of a mummy or the real thing? Explain your reasons.
2 Check out the video clips on YouTube of the Lord of Sipan and the reconstruction of his head.

Problems associated with relying solely on archaeological sources

Ideally, an understanding of the past is best achieved where both archaeological and deciphered written material is available and the sources can be cross-referenced. Although there are some cultures, such as the Celts, that have no written record of their language, we still know something of their possible beliefs due to the works of ancient Greek and Roman historians, despite their considerable biases.

> Without the descriptions and speculations of Greek and Roman writers, our understanding of the Celtic Iron Age communities of central and western Europe would be very different. Alone, the mute archaeological evidence would allow us to simply sketch a warrior society through elaborately equipped burials.

Unfortunately, many cultures are only known to us from their archaeological remains and this makes it difficult to build up a picture of everyday life, customs and particularly spiritual/religious beliefs. For example:

glyphic 'writing' inscribed or painted symbols intended to represent a readable character for the purposes of writing

proto-writing a formative form of writing based on earlier traditions of symbol systems

- There are cultures with scripts yet to be deciphered: such as the **glyphic 'writing'** of the culture that developed at Teotihuacan in Mexico (see the Case Study on Teotihuacan in Chapter 5); and the mysterious Easter Island Rongorongo script, which appears to be some form of **proto-writing**.
- There are still many cultures where there is no evidence of a written language at all, such as the Nazca and Moche cultures of southern and northern Peru, and the Laotian culture that left thousands of huge stone jars scattered around the upland valleys and the lower foothills of the central plain of the Xieng Khouang Plateau.

How are religious rituals and beliefs gauged?

Archaeologists have to use anthropological and sociological theories of religion as a form of social practice and link these to the material culture and landscapes. This enables any type of artefact to be interpreted as embodying religious ideas. The types of artefacts that can be used to study religion in these cultures include:

- Human remains and burial assemblages. Burial types, cremations, state of the body, its positioning, the arrangement of artefacts and the presence of any ecofacts can all reveal beliefs about death and the afterlife.
- Religious buildings such as temples. The way buildings are aligned to astral bodies and events such as solstices and equinoxes

FIGURE 1.32 The burial assemblage of the 'Lord of Sipan'

can reveal beliefs; the structure of a temple can indicate unequal access to the building and types of rituals carried out; the presence of religious iconography can provide insight into the significance of religious **symbology** in their practices.

symbology the study or use of symbols

obsidian a type of almost black volcanic rock that is like glass

- Sacred landscapes. Landscapes are imbued with special meaning for many cultures and often associated with mythical events; the modifications to landscapes can point to religious practices.
- Ceramics, and sculptures can provide clues to religious beliefs and rituals.
- Preference for special materials can also indicate sacred meaning such as the ritual use of pine among the Maya, and jade and **obsidian** among some cultures.

The Nazca lines

Archaeologists are reasonably certain they know who created the vast geometrical designs and figures stretched across the high arid plateau between the towns of Nazca and Palpa in southern Peru, as well as how they were made. It is 'why' they were made that has remained an enduring mystery, despite years of study by scholars since they were first discovered when commercial airlines began flying over the Peruvian desert in the 1920s.

They are among the most enigmatic examples of landscape architecture in the world. Originally more than 750 straight lines were documented, some overlapping and expanding into geometrical shapes; others radiating from 62 ray centres. There are spirals and 30 stylised images of animals and plants. The most spectacular are a hummingbird, a spider, a monkey, a killer whale, a lizard and a six-petal flower.

FIGURE 1.33 A map of the location of the Nazca Lines

Some of the themes on Nazca pottery match these glyphs. These communal projects probably took hundreds of years to complete. The dark red iron-oxide stones and pebbles were removed to expose the lighter-coloured earth beneath, into which they carved their designs.

FIGURE 1.34 The Nazca Lines – the Hummingbird
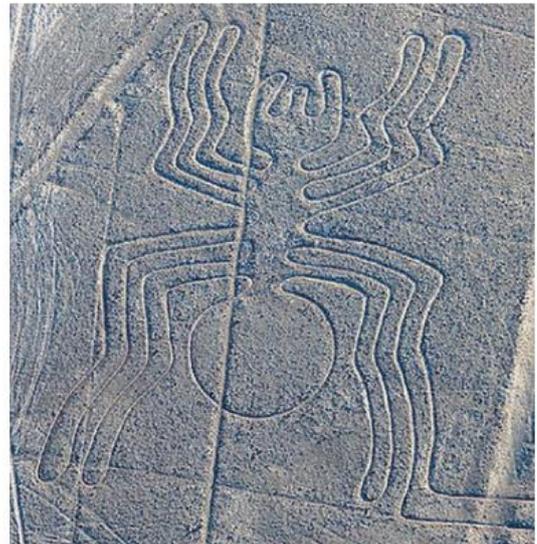
FIGURE 1.35 The Nazca Lines – the Spider

Archaeologists have long puzzled over the purpose of the Nazca glyphs, and come up with a number of theories such as:

1   They lined up with constellations in the sky and were perhaps an astronomical calendar.
2   They represented the birth and death of the sun god during the solar eclipses.
3   They had something to do with a water cult and indicated subterranean water routes revealed during shamanistic 'flights' over the area, or that they symbolically represented the underground cisterns built by the Nazca in that dry barren plateau.
4   They were totems or symbols of various clans or groups who lived or visited the area.
5   They were part of some ritual pilgrimage to the religious centre of Cahuachi, during which the Nazca walked these sacred pathways making them 'living icons' to their gods.

1. Watch the excellent documentary on YouTube, called 'Peru's City of Ghosts' (May 26, 2014), during which you can accompany archaeologists as they uncover Cahuachi. This is a great example of trying to interpret religious beliefs and practices of a people with no written language: pottery, textiles, temples, naturally preserved mummies and strange treatments of the dead.

2. Make a list of all the things that you can learn about this important ritual centre overlooking the Nazca Lines.

3. Despite all the recent discoveries, discuss what they still do not tell us about the Nazca Culture.

Recently, archaeologists from the University of Yamagata in Japan have discovered more glyphs ranging from 1.8–20 metres tall carved into the sides of the hills. The archaeologists needed the use of a 3-dimensional scanner to highlight the images on the ground which are estimated to be older than the well-known glyphs, and are different in content and construction from those first discovered.

It is possible that the purpose of the glyphs changed over time. Professor Masato Sakai believes that there were two groups of people who carved out these glyphs, one that lived in what is called the Formative Period (which lasted until 200 CE) and the other from the Early Nazca Period (which ended c. 450 CE). He maintains that the early group of glyphs were meant to be seen on the hills from the ritual pathways as the people made a pilgrimage to the cult complex of Cahuachi, while the other later group used them in religious ceremonies during which they broke pots at the corners of the glyphs or where they intersected.

The Plain of Jars

This mysterious region in Laos' central province of Xieng Khouang has over 90 jar sites, one containing 400 stone jars mostly arranged in clusters.

Facts

- The jar sites all share elevated locations and commanding views over the surrounding area.
- The area is rich in metallic minerals due to granite intrusions and associated geothermal activity in the area.
- The Xieng Khouang Plateau provides relatively easy passage from north and east to south and west.
- The sites show superficial regional differences: material, shape and number of jars per site.
- The jars have been dated to the Iron Age (500 BCE – 500 CE).
- Some weigh up to 10 tonnes and vary in height and diameter.

FIGURE 1.36 Sketch map of Xieng Khouang Plateau

FIGURE 1.37 Plain of Jars, Site 1

FIGURE 1.38 Hmong girls on a large jar

- They are cylindrical – the bottom wider than the top, but some have apertures smaller than others.
- All except for one are undecorated.
- Most are carved from sandstone dragged from quarries 10 km away, although some are of limestone and harder granite.
- The jars have rims, but no in-situ lids have been found although some sites feature stone discs and markers.
- Coloured glass beads, burnt teeth and bone fragments were found embedded in black organic soil inside some jars.
- The bones and teeth found in the jars showed signs of cremation.
- Human bones, pottery fragments, iron and bronze objects, glass and stone beads were found around the jars.
- There are burial pits associated with the jars and of the same age.
- Recent excavation (2016) using ground-penetrating radar, 'uncovered varied burial methods, including internment of whole bodies, the burying of bundled bones and bones placed inside ceramic vessels and buried'.[14]
- There are no known sites that offer any evidence of the identity or ethnicity of those who made the jars.

Theories about their purpose

The following are some of the theories presented by a number of archaeologists who worked intermittently at the sites, which unfortunately are still not cleared entirely of unexplored ordinance left from the heavy bombings during the Vietnam War.

1 French archaeologist, Madeleine Coloni (1930s) concluded the jars were associated with prehistoric cremation burial practices and suggested that they might have been in some way connected with the trade routes (in particular, the salt trade) and the people who passed along them.

2   In 1994, a Japanese member of a joint Japanese and Lao archaeological investigation, Professor Eiji Nitta, suggested the jars were symbolic monuments marking the surrounding burials.

3   Between 1994–96, an expedition supported by the Australian National University interpreted the stone jars as primary or secondary burials for the highest-status member of a family, surrounded by the burials of other family members.

4   In 2001, R. Engelhardt and P. Rogers suggested the jars functioned as 'distilling' vessels during the early stages of a burial.

Clues from other megalithic cultures and present Southeast Asian mortuary practices

1   The Dravidians of southern India, up until 200 CE, used huge urns known as 'burial-pots-of-the-old-people' to dispose of their dead during the early stages of funeral rites. These urns were buried with the body – placed in a sitting position – and their ornaments and equipment.

2   The Black Thai people who have been in the area for almost 1000 years cremate members of the upper classes, while commoners are buried.

3   The corpses of contemporary Laotian, Thai and Cambodian royalty are initially placed in an urn to allow for the gradual transformation of the deceased's soul from the earthly to spiritual sphere. This ritual decomposition is followed by cremation and a secondary burial.

ACTIVITY 1.17

1   Watch the following short videos on the Plain of Jars:
   • 'Drone Flights Over the Plain of Jars' (November 2015)
   • 'Plain of Jars Mystery', Archaeological TV, which features the Australian National University's excavation.

2   Prepare an oral presentation of what you discover about:
   • the impact of the Vietnam conflict in the 1970s on the site
   • the possible purpose of the jars judging from the human remains.

3   Make a list of questions you would like to ask archaeologists working at the site.

4   Assess the damage done to fragile archaeological sites during modern conflicts from the 1970s to the present day. Explain the long-term impact they have had and what is being done to counter any further destruction.

A COMMENT ON A SUGGESTION FOR A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION: THE IMPACT OF MODERN WARFARE ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The Plain of Jars and many other vulnerable archaeological sites in places such as Iraq and Syria have been seriously impacted by modern warfare. You might like to carry out a historical investigation into one or all of these vulnerable sites.

1.2 The role of ancient texts and iconography in understanding the past

You have already seen some of the artefacts used by historians in building up a picture of the past and you have been introduced to some of the images that represent and reflect the work of archaeologists. But what of the contributions of written sources?

These include:

1 literary sources such as histories, annals, biographies, orations, letters, plays, poetry, legends and hymns, as well as official documents (codes and decrees, contracts and wills), medical treatises and even lists (e.g. the various king lists of Egypt).

2 inscriptions engraved on clay, stone and metal. The particular study of these is referred to as **epigraphy**.

3 coins that include a symbol, an individual, a legend and often a date are known as **numismatic** sources.

Historians, particularly art historians, also rely on images, particularly paintings (ancient and modern) and photographs. The study of these is known as **iconography**.

epigraphy study of inscriptions engraved on clay, stone and metal

numismatic the study of coins, paper money and medals

iconography the use of images and symbols to represent ideas, or the particular images and symbols used in this way by a religious or political group

FIGURE 1.39 Dead Sea Scroll – the Great Isaiah Scroll

FIGURE 1.40 An 'Athenian Owl' – a tetradrachm coin
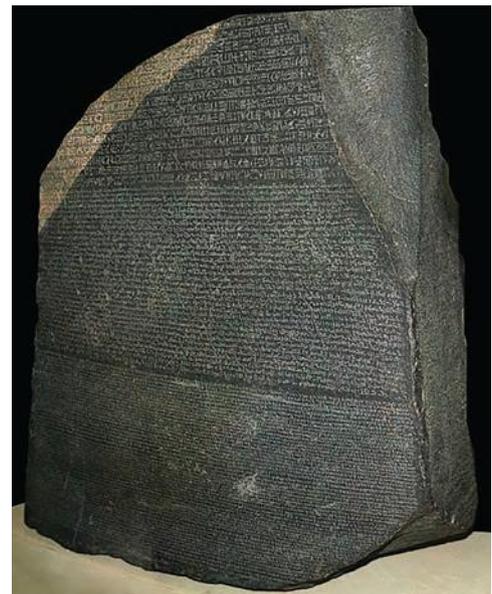
FIGURE 1.41 The Rosetta Stone inscribed in hieroglyphic script, demotic script (a popular form of ancient Egyptian writing) and ancient Greek

> To Atticus (at Athens) Rome, July, 65 BC
>
> I have to inform you that on the day of the election of L. Julius Caesar and C. Marcius Figulus to the consulship, I had an addition to my family in the shape of a baby boy. Terentia doing well.
>
> Why such a time without a letter from you? I have already written to you fully about my circumstances. At this present time, I am considering whether to undertake the defence of my fellow candidate, Catiline. We have a jury to our minds with full consent of the prosecutor. I hope that if he is acquitted he will be more closely united with me in the conduct of our canvass; but if the result be otherwise I shall bear it with resignation. Your early return is of great importance to me, for there is a very strong idea prevailing that some intimate friends of yours, persons of high rank, will be opposed to my election. To win me their favour I see that I shall want you very much. Wherefore be sure to be in Rome in January, as you have agreed to be.

SOURCE 1.16 Written by Cicero, a leading orator in Rome

ACTIVITY 1.18

1 Identify the type of written source in Source 1.16.
2 Determine when it was written.
3 Discuss what can you learn about Cicero from this.
4 Explain what it tells you about Roman politics.

The contributions and limitations of written sources and visual images in understanding the past

TABLE 1.4 The contributions and limitations of written sources and visual images

Contributions	Possible limitations
Literary	
They: • provide the 'who, what, where, when, how and why' of an event, or of the life of an ancient personality • can reveal aspects of social, economic, legal, political, religious and cultural life of a society • are sometimes based on the author's own eyewitness accounts or experiences • offer insight into an author's particular perspective on his own times • can lead historians to other less well-known sources • reveal the way history has been written over time (historiography) • provide a historical context for archaeological finds.	They: • are often fragmentary or second-hand accounts of lost originals • were generally written by men from the upper classes about things that men controlled, such as wars and politics • tend to ignore the lives of women or present them from a man's point of view • often give unbalanced opinions and unfair perspectives due to selection of material and use of language • can be used as sources of propaganda, some written to put themselves in a favourable light • often rely on oral sources with self-serving motives • may be based on tradition rather than truth.

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TABLE 1.4 (*Continued*)

Contributions	Possible limitations
• can be used to authenticate an ancient artefact and help in the identification of fakes (see next section).	• may include eyewitness accounts which are suspect • can be poor translations from original manu-scripts leading to misinterpretations • can lack the author's name and sources • are able to be forged or corrupted • are often difficult to read because of handwriting or due to unfamiliar words and phrases that have changed over time • often reflect an overactive imagination.
Inscriptions	
They: • can provide the only source for treaties, decrees edicts, calendars and lists of politicians that help provide a chronological outline for historians • provide evidence for the daily life of ordinary people, such as the inscribed ostraca found at Deir el-Medina (see this Case Study, Chapter 2) • can reveal the achievements of kings, notable and not-so-notable people (Egyptian and Assyrian wall and stelae reliefs, Greek and Roman funerary inscriptions) • provide a means to authenticate other written sources (see below for Dead Sea Scrolls).	They: • are often fragmentary and severely damaged making them difficult to read • are often sources of self-promotion • reflect deliberate propaganda to serve a purpose (see Chapter 7 on Power and image in ancient Egypt and Chapter 8 on Weapons and warfare in Assyria).
Iconography	
Ancient coins with their images, symbols and legends were a valuable source of information.	
They: • provide valuable information about important events such as wars and triumphs and changes in a person's political or religious status • can indicate aspects of domestic politics and administration • provide details of types of buildings and monuments and religious practices • indicate by their style, material and legend where they were minted and by whom • tell historians about a particular form of currency such as the 'Athena Owls' and the extent of their use, which might tell a historian about a city's currency policy (e.g. their standardised use of coinage) • provide evidence of trade and the movements of people.	They: • contain very little information and can be misinterpreted • are often used as a form of as propaganda, such as those minted in the time of Julius Caesar • are sometimes meaningless without a historical context provided by ancient writers • pose problems when found in contexts far from their point of origin • are often so worn, damaged or corroded when found, that they are difficult to 'read'.

TABLE 1.4 (*Continued*)

Contributions	Possible limitations
Where there are other images of the ancient past, such as paintings and sculptures, they:	
• provide a visual record of a particular moment in time • can convey a variety of details about people, places, objects and events • can reveal information about everyday life and behaviour best communicated by visual means (hair, clothing, interior decoration) • can reveal the way the painter or photographer interprets the past • can reveal attitudes to women • can help in studying people who did not leave many written records • can stimulate the involvement of the viewer in the event or individuals of the past.	• are usually subjective/idealistic, particularly in the way they depict women • can be biased in terms of subject choice, timing and manipulation of people and objects • are sometimes not dated • are sometimes anonymous • are static and often do not reflect the emotions of the subjects • are no indication of the way people thought • must be studied with other types of sources.

The reliability of written sources

In assessing the reliability of a written source, historians ask the following questions:

1 Is it a primary or secondary source?

2 Who is its author?

3 When was it written?

4 Are there details of the author's social background, education, political and religious views, and life experiences?

5 What was its purpose?

6 Who was the author's intended audience?

7 What are the sources used by the author? These might include: oral or eyewitness accounts; personal experience; contemporary or past accounts; political or legal archives.

gender bias unfair difference in the way women and men are treated

8 Are there substantial gaps in the information?

9 Are there instances of bias and what form does it take? For example, **gender bias**.

A COMMENT ON GENDER BIAS

When consulting the ancient Greek and Roman sources, be aware of the degree of gender bias.
- Its most common form is that women are either absent or anonymous.
- Where they *are* mentioned, they are usually described as stereotypes rather than as individuals. For example: the seductive schemer, the evil, ambitious mother.
- When they are described as 'beautiful' and 'good conversationalists' like Cleopatra, they are obviously using these traits to ensnare a man.
- When a woman leads a rebellion, such as Boudicca, or is in a position of influence, like Agrippina, they exhibit masculine traits, 'go beyond the bounds of traditional decency', or are unlike most women.

- There are no ends to the ways the sources suggest negative views of women. Sometimes it is subtle; at other times, as in Tacitus, it is quite blatant. It all depends on the purpose of their work.

Bad press for Messalina, the one-time wife of the Roman emperor Claudius

- She was depicted as a woman who was ruthless, sexually insatiable and whose husband was unaware of her numerous adulterous escapades.
- Sexual excesses 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 (Agrippina the Younger) as the wife of Claudius wanted her own son 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'.
- As far as Tacitus' account of her is concerned, it was written in a period that was hostile to the imperial line. It is also likely that he consulted the imperial archives of Agrippina for his *Annals*.
- Suetonius' work was mostly full of scandal.

Find images of Messalina and note the way she has been depicted.

A COMMENT ON RELEVANCE AND CURRENCY

When carrying out any historical investigation, as well as checking for reliability, you must also assess the sources for:

- relevance – whether the source provides enough detail for your topic; that it is not too basic; is an appropriate source (primary or secondary)
- currency – whether the information is up to date and takes recent research into account.

The reliability of three ancient historians

The extracts and table on the next page focus on a number of Greek and Roman writers who are the chief sources for a number of transformative periods in ancient history:

1 Herodotus – often referred to as the 'father of history' – wrote his *Histories* or *Researches* that focused on the conflicts between the Greeks and Persians between 490–479 BCE, often known as the Persian Wars.

2 Thucydides – believed to be the first to approach history with a well-developed method – wrote *A History of the Peloponnesian War* that raged between Athens and its allies and Sparta and its allies between 431–404 BCE.

3 Tacitus – considered one of the greatest Roman historians – wrote the *Annals* and the *Histories*, major sources of information for the reigns of the emperors of the Julio-Claudian Period from Augustus to Nero, and those who reigned in what is called the 'Year of the Four Emperors' of the 1st century CE. He also wrote an account of the life of his father-in-law, Agricola, who was the Roman general involved in the conquest of Britain.
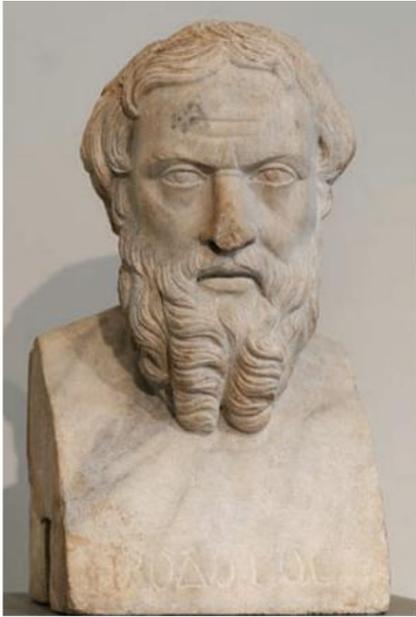
FIGURE 1.42 A bust of Herodotus
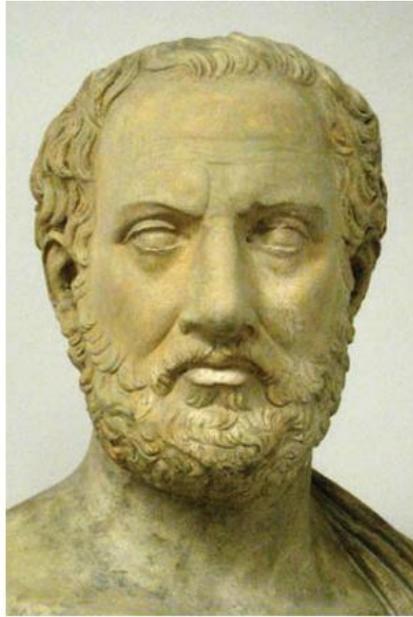
FIGURE 1.43 A bust of Thucydides
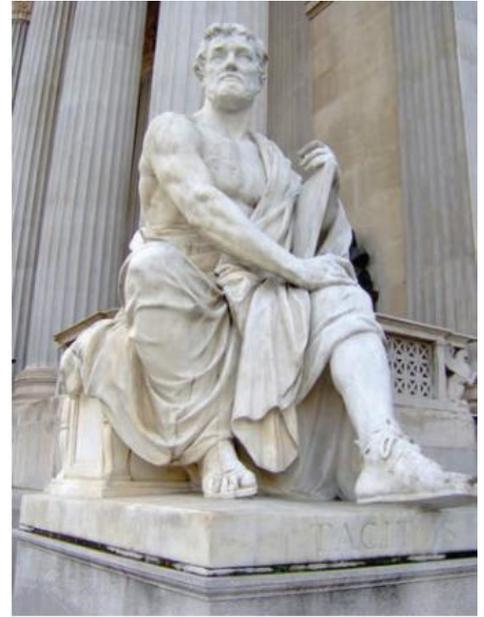
FIGURE 1.44 A statue of Tacitus

Herodotus of Halicarnassus, his *Researches* are here set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of our own and of other peoples; and more particularly, to show how they came into conflict.

…

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.

SOURCE 1.17 Herodotus, *The Histories* (trans. 1954) Bk 1, 1; Bk 7, 152

Thucydides the Athenian wrote the history of the war fought between Athens and Sparta, beginning the account at the very outbreak of the war, in the belief that it was going to be a great war and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past

…

As with regard to my factual reporting of the events of the war, I have made it a principle not to write down the first story that came my way, and not even to be guided by my own general impressions; either I was present myself at the events which I have described or else I had heard them from eye-witnesses whose reports I have checked with as much thoroughness as possible. Not that even so the truth was easy to discover; different eye-witnesses gave different accounts of the same events, speaking out of partiality for one side or the other, or else from imperfect memories. And it may well be that my history will seem less easy to read because of the absence in it of a romantic element. It will be enough for me, however, if these words of mine are judged useful by those who want to understand clearly the events which happened in the past and which (human nature being what it is) will, at some time or other, and in much the same ways, be repeated in the future. My work is not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last forever.

SOURCE 1.18 Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, Bk 1, 1; Bk 1, 22

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> A historian's foremost duty is to ensure that merit is recorded and to confront evil words and deeds without the fear of posterity's denunciation. But this was a tainted, meanly obsequious age.

SOURCE 1.19 Tacitus, *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, III. 64

No matter what these ancient historians claim, they were all biased for personal reasons, and in fact all history is biased in some way.

ACTIVITY 1.19

1 Identify what Herodotus, Thucydides and Tacitus claim their purpose in writing was.
2 Explain how these differ substantially.
3 Describe the chief method used by Herodotus.
4 Use Source 1.18 to list the reasons why Thucydides is often referred to as the first objective historian.
5 Deduce what Tacitus' statement in Source 1.19 'But this was a tainted, meanly obsequious age' indicates about his possible treatment of his material despite his stated purpose.

ACTIVITY 1.20

1 Research Herodotus, Thucydides and Tacitus and find out the following about each historian:
   • When he lived
   • Where he was born
   • His early experiences, such as family background, social status, education, political and life experiences, all of which might have affected his perspective on the events he described
   • His sources
   • His weaknesses
   • His particular biases.
2 Draw up a table of three columns and fill in the relevant information for each man.

A COMMENT ON SOME OF THE BIASES THAT CAN BE FOUND IN THUCYDIDES' *PELOPONNESIAN WAR*

Thucydides' attempts to be objective sometimes failed.
1 He revealed a partiality to the Spartan leader, Brasidas.
2 He was openly hostile to the Athenian leader Cleon because:
   • he believed that Cleon had something to do with his banishment from Athens
   • he hated the type of politician that Cleon represented: a demagogue, which is a political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of the common people.
3 He was bitter towards the regime, following the death of the leader Pericles, which allowed demagogues such influence.

A COMMENT ON THE USE OF SPEECHES IN THE ANCIENT SOURCES

Information in the literary texts is often presented in the form of speeches, which in ancient Graeco-Roman historiography (the writing of history) were not what a person actually said, but what writers thought a particular person was likely to have said. They were usually written in a dramatic, emotive or persuasive way, and often to teach a moral lesson.

A COMMENT ON THE CRITICISMS OF HERODOTUS

This is based on Professor Livio Catullo Strecchini's *Herodotus and His Critics*, cited on the website of the Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies (CAIS).

For a long time, Herodotus has been subjected to insults, by critical historians. He's been labelled the 'father of lies', and regarded as 'a gullible simpleton' who was inclined to accept what people 'who believed in ancient religions, mythology and oracles' told him, and then 'without eliminating all that was colourful, dramatic or unusual', presented the data 'without any general principle of historical causation or development'. They further scoffed at his belief in 'fairytales', mythical events, versions of events coloured by emotional reactions, and picturesque and doubtful tales, as well as his poetic and 'imaginative constructions'.

According to the critical approach to history, a historian should only be concerned with facts – that is, data that exclude all subjective elements, even though, when they proceed to interpret and organise the facts they rely on personal introspection and insight.

These same historians ignore the fact that 'history deals with human actions' …'what people thought, whether right or wrong', any ideas, beliefs, or even misconceptions that might have played a part in determining actions.

Although it is true that Herodotus included these things in his *Histories*, he was a storyteller, a poet of sorts whose work was meant to be spoken in public. The critical historians seem to forget when charging Herodotus of being 'unscientific', that 'every step in the process of scientific generalisations is of a poetic or imaginative nature'.

Herodotus' geographical, anthropological and ethnographical accounts of cultures – that are a long introduction to the last three books (about the Persian Wars) – led to the rediscovery of ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. It was the influence of Herodotus that led to the expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt in the late 18th century, which initiated the rediscovery of ancient Egyptian civilisation and even ultimately led to the discovery of the Rosetta Stone, which was the key to the deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphs.

ACTIVITY 1.21

Discuss these controversial questions:

1 What part can imagination play in understanding the past?
2 What, in fact, is the past? Is it a 'construction' whereby large amounts of data are pulled together, or constituted by some larger theory or vision?

1.3 Representations of two ancient battles and individuals

1 Leonidas and the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BCE)
2 Arminius and the Battle of the Teutoberg Forest (9 CE).

Leonidas and the Battle of Thermopylae

The Greeks at Thermopylae had their first warning of the death that was coming with the dawn from the seer Megistias, who read their doom in the victims of sacrifice; deserters too came in during the night with news of the Persian flank movement … in council of war their (Greeks') opinions were divided, some urging that they must not desert their post, others the opposite. The result was that the army split: some dispersed, contingents returning to their various cities, while others made ready to stand by Leonidas. It is said that Leonidas dismissed them to spare their lives, but thought it unbecoming for the Spartans

FIGURE 1.45 The site of Thermopylae today, although the coastline is now further away than it was in 480 BCE.

under his command to desert the post which they had come to guard. I myself am inclined to think that he dismissed them when he realised that they had no heart for the fight and were unwilling to take their share of the danger; at the same time honour forbade that he himself should go. And indeed, by remaining at his post he left a great name behind him … right at the outset of the war the Spartans had been told by the Delphic Oracle that either Sparta must be laid waste by the foreigner or a Spartan king be killed …I believe it was the thought of this oracle, combined with his wish to lay up for the Spartans a treasure of fame in which no other city would share that made Leonidas dismiss those troops …

The Greeks, who knew that the enemy were on their way round by the mountain track and that death was inevitable, put forth all their strength and fought with fury and desperation … in the course of that fight Leonidas fell, having fought most gallantly and many distinguished Spartans with him, … I have learned the names of all the three

hundred – there was a bitter struggle over Leonidas' body; four times the Greeks drove the enemy off, and at last by their valour rescued it …they withdrew again into the narrow neck …near where the stone lion in memory of Leonidas stands today. Here they resisted to the last, with their swords, if they had them, and, if not with their hands and feet until the Persians … closing in from behind, finally overwhelmed them with missile weapons … The Spartans had a special epitaph; it runs:

Go tell the Spartans, you who read:
We took their orders, and are dead.

SOURCE 1.20 Herodotus, *The Histories* (trans. 1954) Bk 7, 220–227

ACTIVITY 1.22

Analyse the extract in Source 1.20 and consider whether this is a biased account or not. Find two examples where Herodotus expresses his personal opinion.

Herodotus' version is the only detailed account of Leonidas and the Spartan force of 300 that he led in a last-ditch stand against the massive Persian force at the Battle of Thermopylae. You can read more detail if you are interested in Bk 7.

A hero cult, devoted to Leonidas, developed at Sparta and lasted until 200 CE or so and his story has inspired:

- an epic poem, called *Leonidas*, written in nine books by an Englishman, Richard Glover, and first published in 1737 with four further editions.
- a 19th-century oil painting by Jacques-Louis David, *Leonidas at Thermopylae*. It was painted in 1814, after the French Revolution.
- a sculpture at the top of the monument to Felice Cavallotti in Milan, Italy, created by Ernesto Bazzaro in 1906.
- two bronze statues of the warrior king, one erected at Thermopylae in 1955 and another erected in Sparta in 1968, both with an inscription that reads 'Come and take', supposedly said by the Spartans when the Persians demanded they put down their weapons.
- a comic book series *300* created in 1998 by Frank Miller, in which Leonidas featured as the protagonist, and a feature film in 2006, also called *300*, based on it.
- several works of fiction: *Gates of Fire* by Steven Pressfield (2007) and the trilogy *Leonidas of Sparta*, by Helena P. Schrader (2010, 2011, 2012).

All of these sources provide their own perspective of Leonidas.

The Spartan chief
Now stands alone. In heaps his slaughter'd friends
All stretch'd around him lie. The distant foes 700
Show'r on his head innumerable darts.
From various sluices gush the vital floods,
And stain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
His brow is clouded, but those beauteous wounds,
The sacred pledges of his own renown,

And Sparta's safety, with serenest joy
His closing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brighter laurels round his glorious head,
His virtue more to labour Fate forbids,
And lays him now in honourable rest
To seal his country's liberty in death.

SOURCE 1.21 Richard Glover, *Leonidas* (1737), Bk 9, 705–710

FIGURE 1.46 Jacques-Louis David's painting of *Leonidas at Thermopylae* (19th century)

FIGURE 1.47 A sculpture of Leonidas at the top of the monument to Felice Cavallotti in Milan, Italy, created by Ernesto Bazzaro in 1906

Cambridge University Press

FIGURE 1.48 A sculptured monument of Leonidas at Sparta

1 Describe how Richard Glover depicts Leonidas in Source 1.21 (on p. 48–9).
2 Study carefully the oil painting by Jacques-Louis David, *Leonidas at Thermopylae*:
   • Comment on the details of the content. Remember this was not meant to be a realistic portrait.
   • What evidence is there of Jacques-Louis David's themes of Sparta and Leonidas as a model of civic duty and self-sacrifice, and a contemplation of loss and death?
3 Research Felice Cavallotti and suggest a reason for placing a sculpture of Leonidas on top of his monument in Milan, Italy.
4 Compare the 1906 sculpture created by Ernesto Bazzaro (Figure 1.47, p. 49) and the bronze of Leonidas in Figure 1.48.
5 Research the 2006 film *300*. There are video clips from the film on YouTube.
   • Describe how the film makers present the Battle of Thermopylae, Leonidas and Xerxes.
   • Suggest why they might have done it that way. See below for comment on film and history.

A COMMENT ON THE USE OF FILM AS HISTORY

(Based on Robert A. Rosenstone's, 'The Historical Film as Real History', *Film Historia*, Vol. V, No. 1 (1995): 5–23)

Robert Rosenstone states:

Our sense of the past is shaped and limited by the possibilities and practices of the medium in which the past is conveyed (printed page, spoken word, painting, photograph or moving image). This means that history in film will create a past different from the one provided by written history and that film will always violate the norms of written history.

Film will always be a more personal and quirky reflection on the meaning of the past than is the work of written history.

Neither history nor film can be an exact replica of what happened in the past.

Some questions to ask of a historical film, be it history as *drama*, as *document* or as *experiment*, are:

• What sort of historical world does the film construct?
• How does it construct that historical world?
• How and what does that historical construction mean to us?

Most of the most popular films are dramatised history or dramas set in the past. In some, the central plot and characters are fictional but the historical setting is important to the story. In others, fictional characters are placed alongside real individuals. Whatever format they use, filmmakers of necessity construct a historical world out of historical 'bits and pieces' then 'stick them together' or manipulate them according to some idea or vision they have.

Arminius and the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest

Four hundred and eighty years after the Battle of Thermopylae and the death of Leonidas, there was another momentous battle, another warrior hero, and another military disaster recorded by the historians Velleius Paterculus, Tacitus and Dio Cassius. This was the famous Battle of the Teutoburg Forest – or the Varian Disaster as the Romans referred to it – that occurred in 9 CE. During this battle, three complete Roman legions – about 20 000 men and one-third of the Roman legions – led by Publius Quinctilius Varrus, were ambushed and wiped out beyond the Rhine River by an alliance of Germanic tribes, led by a Romanised warrior known as Arminius. It 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

FIGURE 1.49 The Teutoberg Forest

for the future, as did the Greeks' ultimate defeat of the Persians centuries before. However, unlike Leonidas and the Battle of Thermopylae, this battle is generally not known by most people outside Germany.

ACTIVITY 1.24

1 Read Dio Cassius' account of this battle in Bk LV1, 18–24, which you can access online via the Interactive Textbook.
2 Analyse how reliable you think he would be as a source. Consider when he was born and lived.
3 Find an image of a monument and a painting of Arminius created at the beginning of World War I, and explain the significance of these dates for the Germans.
4 Describe how Arminius is depicted in each of these representations.

1.4 Historical authentication and reliability

Hoaxes, forgeries and fakes

There have always been archaeological hoaxes and faked artefacts, as well as forged ancient documents, due to people's fascination with the past and the money paid for antiquities. Today, eBay has spawned a host of fakes from Greek pottery and bronze statuettes to golden diadems. Many of these are obvious to any expert, and some hoaxes are easily debunked, but some have created endless debate among scholars, due to their cultural or religious significance, such as the Vinland Map, the Shroud of Turin – a rectangular piece of cloth with the imprint of a man claimed to be the shroud that covered the body of Jesus – and the James Ossuary: a limestone funerary box supposed to have had held the bones of Jesus' brother.

One of the most sensational hoaxes, which defied the experts of the British Geological Society and the British Museum for over four decades, were the finds made between 1908–12 of a skull and jaw bone believed to be the 'missing link' in the chain of human evolution. This hoax took academics until 1953 to make the announcement of the forgery.

Then there are the mysterious crystal skulls, like the one featured in the Indiana Jones movie (*Indiana Jones and the Crystal Skull*) found at times in many museums or institutions around the world. These have

been revealed as 19th- and early 20th-century fakes, and in most cases the institutions that held them have them stored away. However, the National Museum of Mexico continues to display them as pre-Columbian artefacts. Although the British Museum displays one, it is correctly labelled as a fake.

Finally, there are those artefacts that have been accused of *perhaps* being fakes, such as the famous Mask of Agamemnon, a major feature in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, and the Minoan Phaistos Disk in the Heraklion Museum in Crete. In both cases, museum curators will not allow them to be examined or tested for authentication, even by non-invasive methods.

On the next page is an account of one of the most controversial artefacts accused of being a fake: Yale University's famous Vinland Map and the problems associated with its authentication. It seems that no matter how many scientific tests are carried out on some of the more significant 'fakes', there are always objections, usually by other experts, leaving 'the jury still out'.

Why do people go to so much effort to produce fakes or carry out hoaxes?

- greed
- ambition to be recognised in some way
- as revenge against other academics
- to prove a strongly held theory
- to create a world-wide sensation
- to just cause mischief.

FIGURE 1.50 A painting by John Cooke (1915) of the Piltdown skull being examined by experts. Note the portrait of Charles Darwin on the wall: think about its significance in this image.
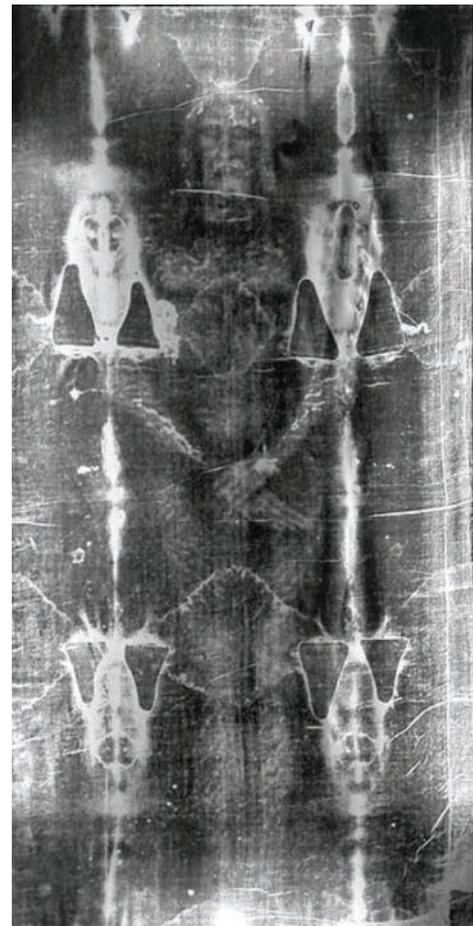
FIGURE 1.51 The Shroud of Turin

A COMMENT ON AUTHENTICATION

Authentication is the process or action of proving or showing something to be true, genuine, or valid. There are many processes involved in authentication such as comparative techniques, expert opinions and the results of scientific tests, but one of the most important is finding the provenance of an object.

Provenance (from the French *provenir* 'to come from') is the chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object.

Provenance is essentially a matter of documentation and is important in providing evidence for an object's original production or discovery and its later history. It is not just used for authenticating fakes, but genuine finds that were moved far from their place of origin by things such as looting, collecting, theft, or trade. As far as books or manuscripts are concerned it involves the study of the original ownership, and subsequent history of ownership.

It is a saying of curators that no artefact can be authenticated without a proper provenance.

> **authentication** to prove that something is real, true, or what people say it is
>
> **provenance** the chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object

The case of Yale University's Vinland Map

According to Icelandic and Greenland Norse sagas, explorers – starting with Leif Eriksson – travelled to North America about 1000 CE. He gave the name of Vinland to what is believed to have been Newfoundland. Archaeologists had been searching for evidence of a Viking landfall when a medieval-style map on parchment, with an odd-looking island labelled 'Vinlandia' was donated to Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library in 1957. It created quite a stir as it was believed to be the first known map of North America and proof that Europeans possibly knew of the Norse discoveries before Christopher Columbus set sail in 1492. Shortly after the Vinland Map was finally announced to the world, archaeologists found their evidence of a Viking way station (a short-lived settlement) in Newfoundland at a place now called L'Anse aux Meadows.

Whether the Vinland Map is authentically medieval or fraudulently modern has intrigued academics since it first came to light more than 50 years ago. The map has been studied, commented on and written about endlessly by cartographers, analytical chemists, mineralogists, experts in medieval manuscripts, Norse historians and linguists, but the question of authenticity seems to be still unresolved to the satisfaction of all.

The Vinland map originally came to light, bound together with another document called the *Tartar Relation*, a 13th-century account of the history and manners of the Mongols, in the possession of a shady Italian book dealer, Enzo Ferrajoli. Ferrajoli arranged to have it offered to the British Museum for authentication. Bertram Schofield, Keeper of Manuscripts at the museum, the first to examine the document and to question its authenticity, refused the offer because:

- the book's binding was not original
- the wormholes in both documents did not line up. Live bookworms who naturally cause holes over time are often used by forgers to suggest a fake is real.
- there appeared to be some discrepancies in the handwriting
- it lacked a proper provenance.

Ferrajoli sold the book, including the map, to an American book dealer named Laurence C. Witten II for $3500, who offered it to Yale University but it was first treated with suspicion. However, when Witton's friend, Yale librarian Thomas Marston, received a dilapidated medieval, but well-known volume *Speculum Historiale*, it was found that:

- all the wormholes matched when the three documents (two volumes plus map) were aligned in a certain order

FIGURE 1.52 The Vinland Map

- they bore the same watermark
- included the same unusual mix of vellum and paper pages.

It was concluded that they had all once been bound together, but Witten wouldn't reveal the provenance of the map. Yale contacted one of their alumnus, Paul Mellon, to buy it and donate it to the university if it could be authenticated.

The map was finally revealed to the public in 1965, after seven years of study, behind closed doors, carried out by two British Museum curators and the Yale librarian, and only after a scholarly book had been written about the map. The university announced the authenticity of the Vinland Map maintaining it had been made about 1440.

Despite Yale's claims of authenticity, there were individual features of the map that didn't seem right.

- The most obvious was the representation of Greenland, which was shown as an island with an extremely precise outline. In early maps, Greenland is depicted as part of an Arctic landmass or as a peninsula extending from Northern Russia. Greenland's realism was suspicious since it was not supposedly circumnavigated until 20th century.
- There appeared to be inconsistencies in the lettering and language on the map, and one of the captions referred to 'Bishop Erik of Greenland and neighbouring regions'; a title not found in any medieval reference to the bishop.
- There were superimposed lines on the map: faded black lines (perhaps soot or graphite) and over the top, yellowish lines.
- The ink used on the map didn't seem to be the same iron-gall ink as used on the other medieval manuscripts.
- The map parchment, unlike the two manuscripts, seemed to be coated in some substance but no one in the late 1960s was permitted to take a sample large enough to test.

Forensic analysis of the map

1   In the early 1970s, a well-known forensic chemist Walter McCrone analysed the map and announced that there were high amounts of anatase (titanium dioxide) particles in the map's ink, but not in the blank parts of the manuscript. According to McCrone, the form of anatase occurred only in modern pigments that were not manufactured until about 1920.

Yale conceded that the map might be a forgery, and demanded that Witton reveal its provenance. He refused.

However, one supporter of the map's authenticity was Jacqueline Olin of the Smithsonian Analytical Laboratory, who claimed that the anatase found in the map's ink could have been produced as a by-product

of the medieval process for making iron-gall ink, as long as the ink had been manufactured using titanium-rich ilmenite. Olin had obviously ignored detailed examination by a team of British Museum experts who revealed that the ink did not have the characteristic appearance of faded iron-gall ink and that in infrared photographs and under ultraviolet light the ink did not react as iron-gall ink normally did.

A mineralogist, Charles Weaver, then claimed that anatase in the form identified by McCrone occurred naturally in kaolin clays and that its presence in the ink could have come unknowingly from airborne clay dust. How was it that the pigment-quality anatase was found only in the ink and not on the rest of the parchment?

2   In 1987, Dr Thomas Cahill of the University of California, using an advanced particle-induced x-ray emission, found that there were only minute amounts of anatase in the ink and seriously challenged McCrone's interpretation of the map as a forgery.

On the basis of these three pro-authentic opinions (Olin, Weaver and Cahill), Yale decided that McCrone had made a mistake and rehabilitated the map, insuring it for $25 million.

3   In 1990, however, Kenneth Towe, a scientist with the Smithsonian Institute, reviewed the studies of McCrone and Cahill in *Accounts of Chemical Studies* and supported McCrone's original view that the map was a forgery.

4   Another analysis in 2002 carried out by two British researchers, using Raman spectroscopy, showed that there were significant amounts of a 20th-century manufactured anatase (post-1923) in the map, with traces of soot-type carbon – used in the Middle Ages – but how did a modern substance get into a genuine medieval ink?

5   In 2002, a full Carbon-14 dating, carried out on the map over six years, found that the parchment on which the map was drawn was genuinely medieval – from about 1425. This still did not prove, however, the age of the map itself. It is possible that the map was drawn on old parchment.

Perhaps a forger who knew the Icelandic sources acquired a genuine medieval map and decided to fill in the empty space with drawings of Vinland, Greenland and Iceland. This seems likely since the landmasses of Asia, Africa and most of Europe have been drawn in an oval outline which was part of the medieval tradition. Only Vinland, Greenland and Iceland fall outside the oval. It appeared that the map was a modern forgery but the parchment was genuine.

Source identification

In 2013, John Paul Floyd, a Scottish researcher, claimed to have found references to a 15th-century manuscript that is clearly identifiable as the *Seculum Historiale* and *Tartar Relation* in the Catalogue of an 1883 Exhibition held in the Spanish Cathedral of Zaragoza. However, there was no map. Is it a coincidence that Enzo Ferrajoli, who originally offered the map for sale, was convicted of having stolen manuscripts from Zaragoza Cathedral Library?

Who was the forger?

Kirsten Seaver, a Norse historian, points a finger at the German Jesuit priest Joseph Fischer, who died in 1944, although the evidence against him is completely circumstantial. Seaver maintains that Father Fischer had the profile to make him a likely suspect: he was a scholar and collector of old maps. He also believed in the Norse discovery of America long before Columbus and was convinced there must be some cartographic evidence of it. Father Fischer was also known to have consulted a Czech library which once held a copy of the *Tartar Relation* and the *Seculum Historiale*. Seaver believes that when the library was sold, Father Fischer bought the volume and later converted some of the parchment into the Vinland Map. However, forensic handwriting expert, Robert Baier, who compared the map with some of Father Fischer's letters, believed they were not written by the same person.

It seems that the jury is still out, and Yale apparently watches the ongoing debate with interest.

1 Choose, and research **one** of the following:
   - How was the famous hoax, known as Piltdown Man, perpetrated against the curators of the British Museum and the Geological Society of London?
   - Has the famous James Ossuary been proven without doubt to be a fake?
   - Is the Turin Shroud the original cloth that covered Jesus or the product of an accomplished medieval artist?

   In your research, you must try to provide both historical and scientific evidence for your answer.

   Write a report on your findings.

2 Draw a mind map of the categories of experts consulted in an attempt to authenticate the Vinland Map.

3 List the major features that seemed to point to the Vinland map as a fake.

4 Propose your own conclusion based on the evidence presented here.

1.5 Conservation, restoration and reconstruction

Ancient sites:

- grew and flourished
- were abandoned or destroyed by environmental change, seismic events or conflicts
- disappeared under millennia or centuries of earth, older settlements and rubbish dumps, were overgrown with jungle or slipped into the sea
- were rediscovered and excavated
- began immediately to 'die' a second time from exposure to air, weather, other natural and human causes, looting and accidental and deliberate destruction during modern wars
- were 'treated' in some form or another, often causing further damage
- were conserved in the modern understanding of the concept
- continue to deteriorate despite the care given.

FIGURE 1.53 The Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens covered in scaffolding in the 21st century

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

1 Discuss the following rather controversial questions:
- Is everything from the past supposed to survive?
- Is what we see conserved today really the past at all, or the present, which offers a highly distorted fragmentary version of the past?
- Why do conservators bother trying so hard at such expense to freeze the present?

2 Refer back to Figures 1.2 and 1.3 (on p. 6) and ask yourself if these conserved sites really represent the past or just the little that we are fortunate to see now? Propose how we could possibly 'see' the past from these remains.

3 Study Figure 1.53 and ask yourself, will this always be the way in the future? Explain your answer.

What is conservation, restoration and reconstruction?

There has been, and still is, among the general public considerable confusion about the definition of these terms and what they entail. In fact, even though international charters define them, they are still interpreted in various ways in official publications, by individual conservationists and in different parts of the world. For example, in Sources 1.22 and 1.23, Neville Agnew of the Getty Conservation Institute expresses his opinion on conservation and restoration, while Source 1.24 reveals the attitude towards conservation in some parts of Asia.

Conservation deals with the authentic creation that remains. The conservator's art and science apply … only to those methodologies that take the 'patient' as it is. No one can rejuvenate it, recreate it, restore it. Even to try is sheer artifice.

SOURCE 1.22 Neville Agnew, cited in John K. McDonald, *House of Eternity – The Tomb of Nefertari*, p. 114

Problems arise when archaeologists endeavour to reconstruct based on their notions of what the monument looked like, and that is often based on misinterpretation. You are really creating a fake and not an original object. You are looking at an object that has been restored and not conserved.

SOURCE 1.23 Neville Agnew, cited in. Alexander Stille, *The Future of The Past*, p. 34, when commenting on the restoration work being carried out on the Sphinx

The Chinese, Japanese and other Asian nations have a tradition of copying and rebuilding … The epitome of this seemingly Zen approach to conservation is the Ise Shrine of Japan, a Shinto Temple originally built in the 7th century CE that is ritually destroyed and rebuilt every 20 years. The Japanese think of it as being 1300 years old, yet no single piece of it is more than two decades old.

SOURCE 1.24 Alexander Stille, *The Future of The Past*, p. 41

1 Explain what you think Neville Agnew's view is of:
- conservation
- restoration.

2 Justify your opinion of the Japanese view of conservation expressed in Source 1.24 (on p. 57).

Below is a definition proposed in a publication (2001) called *English Heritage Policy Statement on Restoration, Reconstruction and Speculative Re-creation of Archaeological Sites Including Ruins*. This is based on a number of international charters. According to Source 1.25, it seems that conservation is an overarching term that means 'a process that is intended to hand on to future generations what we value',[16] but that under its umbrella are all the ways of treating sites, although some are considered preferable to others.

> The aim of conserving the historic environment is to hand on to future generations what we value. Conservation involves many activities – maintenance, repair, use, access and interpretation. In some instances, conservation can also involve restoration, reconstruction or replication of historic fabric, usually as part of a programme of public interpretation. Unfortunately, such work also has the potential to damage places. Therefore, international and national guidance is that restoration or reconstruction of historic buildings and ruins should be approached cautiously and never carried out on a speculative basis.

SOURCE 1.25 *English Heritage Policy Statement on Restoration, Reconstruction and Speculative Re-creation of Archaeological Sites Including Ruins*, p. 2

The policy statement also lists the following definitions:

1 **Restoration** means 'returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material'.[17]

2 **Reconstruction** means 'returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material into the fabric'.[18]

3 **Re-creation** means 'speculative creation of a presumed earlier state on the basis of surviving evidence from that place and other sites and on deductions drawn from that evidence, using new materials'.[19]

4 **Replication** means 'the construction of a copy of a structure or building, usually on another site or nearby'.[20]

A Getty Conservation Institute Project: The Tomb of Nefertari

Queen Nefertari was the chief wife of Ramesses II. When discovered by Italian explorer, Ernesto Schiaparelli in 1904, Nefertari's tomb in the Valley of the Queens was found to have been badly damaged, plundered and left open to the elements and mankind. And yet, despite their fragility, the wall paintings of Nefertari's journey to the afterlife are among the finest surviving masterpieces of ancient Egypt. Paintings were found on almost every available surface in the tomb.

The tomb was closed to the public in the 1950s after it had fallen into a dangerous state of dilapidation due to water damage, bacterial growth and salt formation. Scientific studies showed that the greatest threat to the long-term future of the tomb was the presence of tourists whose breath and sweat increased moisture and accelerated the process of salt crystallisation that corroded its painted surfaces.

In 1986, an operation that consisted firstly of the emergency stabilisation of detaching plaster was embarked upon by the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation and the Getty Conservation Institute.

Between 1988–90, the conservation work to preserve the delicate paintings began in earnest – cleaning over 3000 years' worth of dust, soot and salt from the fragile walls and ceilings to return them to their original brightness.

In 1992, the Getty Institute commissioned an Italian software company to create a virtual reality simulation of one of the chambers for use in travelling exhibitions to gain public understanding of the tomb's importance.

In 1995, against the Getty's advice, the Egyptian government reopened the tomb to a restricted number of tourists a day who paid $US34 for a 10-minute visit. At the same time, they had to close other tombs – once equally glorious – whose condition had deteriorated to a perilous state.

In 2006, the tomb was closed to the public with the exception for special private visits at a cost of 20 000 Egyptian pounds (approximately US$2000) for up to 10 people.

In November 2016, the Tomb of Nefertari was opened again to the public – a maximum of 100–150 people a day, at a cost of $US113 per person. This decision was taken in an attempt to attract more tourists to the valleys and Luxor after the decline of tourism that hit Egypt following the January 2011 revolution.

FIGURE 1.54 The 'restored' tomb of Nefertari

Throughout all this time the Getty Conservation Institute continually monitored the condition of the tomb. The GCI, in all its projects, aims at 'sustainability where the collaborative conservation achieved will be maintained by its partners in the host country'.[21]

Nowhere in this process has 'restoration' of the paintings been undertaken. Nor will it be. The G.C.I (Getty Conservation Institute) is philosophically committed never to engage in restoration, believing that to restore an ancient work by adding to it is to assault its authenticity. In the tomb of Nefertari, not a single drop of new paint was added to the images. Similarly, all cleaning processes and materials used in conservation were reversible. The paintings that remain are in every way authentic, entirely the work of the original artist and artisans. They have been carefully and respectfully conserved, stabilised where in danger of detachment, and cleaned of dirt and salt to regain their original lustre. Where the original paintings have been lost, patches of blank plaster (made from local, natural products) now cover the walls.

SOURCE 1.26 John K. McDonald, *House of Eternity – The Tomb of Nefertari*, p. 8

The risk of deterioration will always remain, and irreversible damage may still occur if site management plans, methodologies and political will are lacking. If a point of no return is reached, the only alternatives may be:

- to introduce new material into the site, which the GCI regards as a 'fake'.
- an exact replica of the tomb, a 'virtual experience' museum in close proximity to the actual tomb.

Virtual visitors can already experience a virtual experience at the Silicon Graphics Reality Centre, Britain. Wearing headsets to provide a stereoscopic three-dimensional view inside the tomb, they can manoeuvre their way around chambers and through passageways. Each chamber can be explored from any angle.

1 Using Source 1.26 (on p. 59), recall what the GCI claim to have done to the tomb.

2 What seems to be a significant motivating factor of the Egyptian authorities with regards to Nefertari's Tomb? Justify your opinion.

Various projects to reconstruct/restore the Egyptian Sphinx

The deterioration and conservation of antiquities in Egypt is an extremely sensitive issue and nowhere more so than at the Sphinx. Within hundreds of metres of the great monument, there are McDonalds, Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets, as well as the ever-growing 'village' of Nazlet as-Samman, with its forest of satellite dishes and seeping sewage. Then there is a city of over 17 million encroaching on the Giza Plateau; the traffic, the air pollution, the endless streams of tourists, jets overhead, nearby quarries using dynamite, and salt crystallisation in the monuments causing flaking. The list goes on and, of course, there is the looting – always a problem in Egypt – that has increased and become more blatant since 2011.

While remote sensing can now 'see' beneath the sands of Egypt to its prehistoric landscape, Egyptologists and their foreign colleagues are in many ways fighting a losing battle to save those monuments, like the Sphinx, that have stood for millennia. While people in white coats in laboratories around the world are helping to transform the way we study and preserve the historical past, the situation on the ground looks a lot different.

FIGURE 1.55 The Sphinx partially buried in sand at the time of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt

Over the last three decades, there has barely been a time when some part of the Sphinx has been without scaffolding. According to Mark Lehner, who has worked on the Giza Plateau for decades and probably knows more about the Sphinx than anyone, the Sphinx we see today is nothing like the Sphinx even 30 years ago. 'It is no longer the same monument … many of the details have changed. The surface modeling has suffered not only from erosion, but, in large areas, from the cement, mortar and limestone that have been added to support and protect the statue.'[22]

The Sphinx has undergone various 'restorations' throughout its history, in between stints buried up to its neck in sand. The first was in 1401 BCE at the hands of the future pharaoh Thutmose IV. There were others, possibly under Ramesess II and during the 26th dynasty, later under the Greeks and the Romans, and a major French one in 1926. Attempts to restore it have often caused more harm than good.

In the 1920s, French engineer Emile Baraize decided to recreate parts of the missing headdress with cement to support the head which altered the appearance of the Sphinx's head as seen in older photographs. He also replaced many of the smaller stones that had fallen off with replacements of his own from limestone. He also placed a new casing over the lion's rump and upper part of its body, once again changing the appearance of the monument.

In 1981, a patch of this 1926 'restoration' collapsed from the north paw, alerting authorities to the deteriorating condition of the Sphinx. Another disastrous restoration took place between 1981–87.

Eager to show that they were addressing the problems of the Sphinx, the Egyptians rapidly began building a coat of stone armour around the body without having tested the effect of what they were doing … Since cement has a high salt content, the restoration accelerated the process of crystallization. The Sphinx' body continued flaking and the new stone armour began to crack, crumble, and fall off. 'It's as if the Sphinx were shedding a layer of unwanted skin', Lehner said. … the 1980's restoration work was collapsing in on itself.

SOURCE 1.27 Alexander Stille, *The Future of the Past*, 2002, p. 33

FIGURE 1.56 The Sphinx partially covered in scaffolding

When a 700-pound chunk fell off its right shoulder in 1988, right in front of a German photographer, it was time to do something urgently. The restoration work was abandoned and a Sphinx Committee was formed from the Egyptian Antiquities Organisation, Egyptian universities and foreign experts.

Actions taken included:

1 removing all the casing stones, cement and gypsum mortar immediately
2 paying special attention to maintaining the modelling of the paws as seen in ancient restorations
3 dividing the new project into phases. During the first phase, they spent more time investigating and analysing problems, such as the water table under the sphinx and finding stone that had similar properties to those used in ancient repairs. They found such stone in the quarries at Helwan.
4 replacing the cladding with the new stones, finding a way to interlock the blocks and experimenting with a new type of protective mortar made of a mixture of quicklime and sand
5 installing a solar-powered monitoring station at the back of the Sphinx in 1990 to measure destructive environmental factors that impacted the Sphinx.

At the conclusion of the supposedly successful campaign in 1998, Zahi Hawass, the official in charge of the project, with his usual flourishing rhetoric, announced that the Sphinx would now last another thousand years.

In 2007, new reports that the Sphinx was still disintegrating hit the headlines. Sewage dumped in a nearby canal raised concerns that polluted local groundwater was rising under the statue. To stop the groundwater threat, the Egyptians had a series of test holes drilled into the bedrock around the Sphinx. To maintain a check on future signs of damage, they had state-of-the-art laser gear map the individual rocks on the back of the lion body producing a precise 3D model for future restorers to consult.

ACTIVITY 1.29

1 Recall the mistakes made during past attempts to preserve the Sphinx.
2 Describe what you consider to be the most significant problem facing the Sphinx's future.
3 Will most of Egypt's archaeology be in museums or virtual forms in the years to come? Justify your answer.

A COMMENT ON PAINTED MONUMENTS

Did you know that the Sphinx, the Greek Parthenon and the Terracotta Warriors were once painted in brilliant colours?

Can you imagine the horrified outcry around the world if it was suggested to paint the Sphinx in its original red, or colour the Parthenon marbles in reds, blues and gold, or paint all the Terracotta Warriors standing in their pits in the vivid purples, greens, reds, pinks and browns in which scientists have proved they were coloured?

Yet these ancient monuments *were* painted, but we have become so used to the pale buff and stone colour that we believe the monuments always looked like that.

The speculative re-creation of Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans

Influenced by the discoveries of Heinrich Schliemann at Troy – and later Mycenae – as well as believing that the legendary kingdom of King Minos was real, Arthur Evans began excavating at Knossos in Crete in 1900. He was a product of Victorian England, wealthy and eccentric with an intense passion for the myths of the ancient world. He was also an esteemed and successful figure in his field when he went to Crete. Over a period of five years, he unearthed what he called 'the Palace of Minos', a sprawling, labyrinthine complex, and evidence of a sophisticated culture he called Minoan. The site now attracts tens of thousands of visitors a year, predominantly due to a controversial reconstruction/re-creation of the 'palace' carried out by Evans.

Rather than leaving the ruins as they were when they were uncovered, Evans believed that he could somehow restore them to what he believed was their former splendour, a mistake made by many subsequent archaeologists. Sections of the palace were restored by using what remained of the original material, but other parts were entirely reconstructed and re-created according to his vision and based on his misinterpretation of the culture he thought he had discovered. He brought in a Dutch-English artist, Piet de Jong, a man who had no archaeological training, to spearhead a building program that would make contemporary archaeologists wince in disgust. Wooden beams and squat reinforced concrete pillars, coloured a severe tone of red and black (believed to have been influenced by the art deco colour so popular after World War I), were thrown up. Although these propped up crumbling walls, they often covered the original brick work and features in the process. The evidence he based all this on was fragmentary at best. He often just seemed to pluck his ideas from his imagination. The so-called throne room – named because Evans found a gypsum chair there which he called the 'oldest throne in Europe' – got special attention. A scaffold was originally built over the room to give it protection, but he later decided to replace the scaffold with wood and plaster columns for more artistic effect, creating a fabricated room. Inside he gave free reign to a father-and-son team of French artists to paint the walls. He would claim they had based their gaudy images on original designs, but in fact many of them were simply made up. Some of the celebrated remains of the ancient Knossos' frescoes were treated to fanciful reconstructions and placement by de Jong. Some paintings were based on the tiniest of fresco pieces as they all let their imaginations run wild. In the 1950s, some of the colours were toned down somewhat in accordance with changing tastes

Reactions to the reconstruction/re-creation in parts of the 'palace' are largely hostile, some calling it a case of archaeological delinquency. However, others argue that they were visionary. Remember, Arthur Evans was working at Knossos in the early years of the 20th century.

FIGURE 1.57 A brightly coloured recreation at Knossos on the island of Crete

FIGURE 1.58 An example of a fanciful painting at Knossos

Reconstruction has always been one of the most controversial issues for those with an interest in the material evidence of the past. The urge to make whole again … is a very strong one, similar in some ways to the urge to improve or correct someone else's text. Both involve a strong desire to see an object that is complete and integral to one's own satisfaction, rather than tolerate a creative work that has been diminished in its intelligibility. The idea that the object may have a greater value in its incomplete state than if it is reconstructed, runs counter to this strong compulsion.

SOURCE 1.28 Nichoas Stanley Price, *The Reconstruction of Ruins: Principles and Pratice* (2009)

The Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention addresses the questions that should be asked before considering whether to reconstruct or recreate an excavated building. Although Arthur Evans operated at Knossos long before such guidelines were implemented, it might be interesting to see if his work can be justified under some of the present guidelines.

Reconstruction should only be used where:

1 there is sufficient evidence to reproduce an earlier state and it should be identifiable

2 it can be seen to have been used to stabilise excavated ruins.

Some of the arguments against a reconstruction are that it:

1 is difficult to achieve authenticity

2 can present wrong information

3 should not be built directly on archaeological remains

4 can distort visual and spatial relationship on the site: for example, the monumental scale of reconstructions such as the Temple of Hatshepsut at Luxor, the Stoa of Attalus in the Athenian Agora and the Gymnasium of the Baths at Sardis.

However, there is an argument for retaining erroneous reconstructions carried out in the past as they can reveal a history of tastes and ideas.

ACTIVITY 1.30

1 Identify any of these modern guidelines that apply to Sir Arthur Evans' reconstruction at Knossos.

2 If you were a traveller to Crete, explain which you would prefer:
 • to wander around a reconstructed/re-created site that reflects someone's view of what it *might* have looked like
 • or a mass of unintelligible stone structures with a guidebook.

3 Research the site of Knossos, and in one page of writing assess Evans' work.

Issues of protection and conservation of the Terracotta Army at Xian

From the moment the first excavation was carried out at Xian after discovery of the Terracotta Army in 1974, the Chinese archaeological community was confronted with the problems of how best to protect and conserve the massive Terracotta Army of the first Chinese emperor, which was immediately exposed to the natural elements from which it had been protected for thousands of years.

1 From the beginning, any pigments left on the terracotta soldiers vanished not long after they were exposed to air and light and the figures turned to an oxidised grey. This was mainly due to the damage caused to the lacquer in the damp soils so that when they were excavated, the figures dried out and the original pigments flaked off. Conserving the painted surfaces has proved a continuing challenge, and work had to stop frequently until better ways of conserving the delicate artworks were found.

2 Already by 1976, due to exposure to high temperatures and humidity created by the breath of workers, the site was facing a significant mould problem, predominantly found on earthworks surrounding the terracotta figures.

3 Also, as at all great archaeological sites around the world, one of the biggest problems – as well as benefits – has been the upsurge in cultural tourism. From the moment it was listed as a world heritage site at the end of 1987, Xian, the capital of Shaanxi Province, has become one of China's major tourist attractions.

FIGURE 1.59 Restoration of the Terracotta Warriors

FIGURE 1.60 Painted replicas of the Terracotta Warriors

Some protective solutions put in place

1 In 1976, Pit 1 was enclosed in a large, steel-framed arched hall, resembling a plane hangar. It is fireproof, has good ventilation, lighting, temperature and humidity control. Originally tourists, particularly VIPs, were given access to the terracotta army, but now they can only view them from elevated walkways. Refer back to Figure 1.2 on p. 6.

2 New technology developed by a German institute has helped the Chinese in preserving the original pigments on the terracotta figures. This work began in earnest in 1990, when scientists examining the structure and patterns on pottery relics 'were able to devise the chemicals and applications needed to preserve the colour'. It was first used in Pit 2 and involves 'newly unearthed relics being treated at the scene with anti-wrinkle and reinforcing agents before they are wrapped in plastic film and relocated to a laboratory.'[23] Eight warriors have already been fully protected by using this technique.

3 Between 1994–98, experts at the Belgium-based Janssen Pharmaceutical Co., a world leader in mould control, developed effective fungicides against scores of mould species. Working in collaboration with the Emperor Qin's Museum of Terracotta Warriors and Horses, they equipped Pits 1, 2 and 3 with anti-mould instruments and monitoring devices. Air and earth are regularly sampled for research and monitoring.

> In 2009, the Museum of the Terra-Cotta Warriors and Horses was upgraded to the Qinshihuang Mausoleum Museum … In order to respond to the pressure of urban development and tourism, the Shaanxi provincial government approved the *Conservation Plan for Qinshihuang Mausoleum* in July 2010, which clarifies the borders of the protection area and the construction control zone around the mausoleum and prohibits the development of Lintong district from infringing on the mausoleum. The measure has effectively protected the mausoleum and its settings, and prevented destructive activities. …

SOURCE 1.29 UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Mausoleum of the First Emperor

The question of tourism

At the present time all around the world, increasing tourism is encroaching on archaeological sites and presenting problems for those trying to protect the authenticity and integrity of those sites. Tourism is a 'double-edged sword'.

Although tourist dollars are used in the study and conservation of the Terracotta Army, it still raises the question of whether the impact of tourism has a negative effect on sites such as the Qin emperor's mausoleum.

The number of foreign tourists coming to see the Terracotta Warriors, located in the northwestern city of Xi'an, is stable. It's the growing number of domestic tourists that is contributing to the visitor increase. Thanks to the booming economy, more people are now able to afford leisure trips. Although package tour groups still account for the majority of visitors, more private car owners are being seen driving here.

SOURCE 1.30 Cao Wei, China.org.cn. 2007

ACTIVITY 1.31

1 Draw up a table of two columns, and under the headings 'Problems' and 'Solutions' list all the difficulties faced by Chinese archaeologists in preserving the site and some of the ways they have been solved.
2 Explain why the question of growing tourism at the Emperor Qin Shi-Huang's mausoleum could be more of a problem than at archaeological sites in other countries.

1.6 Cultural heritage and the role of museums

Cultural property and looting

Cultural property is generally regarded as meaning physical items that are part of the cultural heritage of a group or society. They include such things as historic buildings, works of art, archaeological sites, libraries and museums.

However, the legal meaning of cultural property differs from country to country. The most universally accepted definitions under international law come from two sources:

1 The 1954 Hague Convention (Article 1) – Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of an Armed Conflict
2 The 1970 UNESCO Convention (Article I) – Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property

The term 'cultural property' shall cover, irrespective of origin or ownership:
(a) movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people, such as monuments of architecture, art or history, whether religious or secular; archaeological sites; groups of buildings which, as a whole, are of historical or artistic interest; works of art; manuscripts, books and other objects of artistic, historical or archaeological interest; as well as scientific collections and important collections of books or archives or of reproductions of the property defined above;
(b) buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property defined in sub-paragraph (a) such as museums, large libraries and depositories

> of archives, and refuges intended to shelter, in the event of armed conflict, the movable cultural property defined in subparagraph (a);
>
> (c) centres containing a large amount of cultural property as defined in subparagraphs (a) and (b), to be known as 'centres containing monuments'.

SOURCE 1.31 Article 1 – Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague Convention)

Cultural property and museums

Much of the cultural property in well-established Western museums has come from illicit sources.

> The Louvre has been involved in acquiring stolen cultural items practically from its inception as France's National Museum during the French Revolution, when it was the practice of those overseeing the Museum to take possession of art actively confiscated from French royalty and, later, during military expeditions … The revolutionary government perceived the Museum Français as a place where much of the world's great art could be protected, restored, and displayed in the best possible manner … the new French government ordered the confiscation of foreign art works while its army was engaged in military expeditions abroad. These military tours and the pieces of art looted, fed the Louvre's collection for the next decade.

SOURCE 1.32 Bette W. Oliver, *From Royal to National: The Louvre Museum and the Bibliotheque Nationale*, 2007, pp. 39, 41

Sanctioned removal of artefacts was not just limited to the French government. Most European governments were involved in it.

1 In the early 19th century, when Greece was still part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, Thomas Bruce, seventh Earl of Elgin, British ambassador to the Ottoman court in Constantinople, was given a permit to take away any pieces of stone with inscriptions or figures from the Parthenon in Athens for his own private collection. These sculptures and the Parthenon represent one of the greatest artistic and architectural achievements in human history. For five years, Lord Elgin's agents removed over one hundred pieces from the marble frieze on the temple, using marble saws to cut off the backs of the blocks, weakening the structure in the process. For ease of transportation,

FIGURE 1.61 The Parthenon Marbles displayed in the British Museum

some of the blocks were sliced into smaller sections. One shipload of marbles, on its way to England, was caught in a storm and sank near the island of Kythera in 1802. It took Greek sponge divers two years to retrieve the marbles and, even then, they did not find their way to England for another 10 years but remained in Malta during the Napoleonic Wars. The last shipment to England arrived about 1811–12; by which time Elgin was in financial difficulties and was forced to sell them to the British Museum, where they first went on display in 1816 as the 'Elgin Marbles'.

2 In 1812, Belzoni, a one-time Italian circus performer and explorer, was hired by the British consul-general in Egypt, Henry Salt, with authority from the Egyptian pasha, Muhammed Ali, to gather antiquities for Britain. One of his tasks was to retrieve the colossal 3-metre high, 7-tonne bust of Ramesses II from the Ramesseum in Upper Egypt, during which he deliberately broke the bases of two columns to remove his prize. It seems that Belzoni rescued the statue just in time. The French Consul to Cairo, who also collected artefacts, had eyed the Ramesses statue for himself and had considered drilling into it and inserting dynamite in order to make it smaller. The drill-hole can still be seen in the statue's right shoulder. Today, the bust resides in the British Museum.

A new form of cultural removal: partage

Sometime around the mid-1850s, wealthy private foreigners and organisations who paid for and/or led excavations at foreign sites were entitled to keep some of the materials they excavated after

partage a system put in place to divide up ownership of excavated artefacts

sharing their discoveries with the host county (**partage**). In the space of one year alone, Auguste Mariette supposedly increased the Louvre's Egyptian holdings by 5964 objects.

In 1912, a German archaeological team – led by Ludwig Borchardt – excavating at Amarna in central Egypt discovered a painted stucco-coated limestone bust of Nefertiti – *Great Royal Wife* of the pharaoh Akhenaten – in a sculptor's workshop. This is one of the best known works of art from all antiquity. In 1913, Borchardt supposedly met with an Egyptian official to discuss the division of the finds from Amarna, as was the usual practice, but, determined to keep the bust for Germany, he simply provided the Egyptian with a photo of the bust, taken in an unfavourable light. Some reports say that he partly covered the bust in mud to disguise its beauty. It was shipped back to Germany and presented to James

FIGURE 1.62 The bust of Nefertiti

Simon, a wholesale merchant who had sponsored the Amarna expedition and it was displayed at Simon's house until 1913, when it was loaned to the Berlin Museum. However, Borchardt insisted it remain secret until it was donated to the Museum in 1920. It finally went on public display in 1924. Between 1939–56 it was stored in a bank cellar, then a bunker; it was found by the American army; was moved to the Reichbank in Frankfurt; and, finally, back to West Berlin. In 2009, it was moved to the Neues Museum, where it still remains the centrepiece of its collection.

A COMMENT ON EGYPTIAN ARTEFACTS IN SELECTED MUSEUMS

It has been estimated that the Egyptian antiquities collection in the:

- British Museum numbers 90 000
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, numbers 60 000
- Louvre numbers 35 000.

Repatriation

The first **repatriation** of stolen artefacts occurred in 1815, when at the Congress of Vienna after the defeat of Napoleon, the representatives demanded that France return the 'military trophies' they had stolen. Within the space of three months, approximately half of what they had collected since 1793 was returned to the country of origin.

repatriation return of antiquities to their country of origin

The following table shows some of the objects in museums that were, or still are, under dispute.

TABLE 1.5 Summary of some successful artefact repatriations and some still pending

Item	Place of origin	Place of display	Present status
Reliefs from the tomb of an 18th Dynasty noble, Tetaki	Luxor, Egypt – chipped off walls in 1980s by looters	Louvre Museum, Paris	2009, first request by Egypt for repatriation but Louvre stalled. Egypt waited a year, then suspended a Louvre-sponsored excavation at Saqqara. France agreed to return five reliefs.
Bust of Nefertiti c. 1340 BCE	Egypt – removed in 1912 by German excavator, Ludwig Borchardt	Neues Museum, Berlin	Vehement requests for repatriation over many years, Germany constantly refuses
'Priam's Treasure'	Smuggled to Germany from Turkey by Heinrich Schliemann	Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow	Russians refuse Germany's requests for repatriation on the basis that it is war booty to compensate for their losses during WWII at the hands of Germany
The Parthenon Marbles 440s BCE	Greece – removed by Lord Elgin in 1801–12	British Museum	Refusal to return to Greece one of its most wanted artefacts. Museum cites its 1963 Charter
Rosetta Stone, 196 BCE	Egypt – found by French, ceded to Britain after French defeat in Egypt	British Museum	Refusal to return to Egypt one of its most wanted artefacts. Museum cites its 1963 Charter
Euphronius Krater – 515 BCE	Greek origin, looted from a tomb near Rome. Purchased by MMFA in 1972 for $1 million	Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, NY	Italy pressed for return in 2006, Met. agreed in return for long-term loans of artefacts from Italy
Khmer sandstone heads – 9th–12th centuries	Angkor Wat complex, Cambodia. Hacked off by looters, acquired by private collector, donated to Honolulu museum in early 1990s	Honolulu Academy of Arts	Returned to Phnom Penh in 2002

TABLE 1.5 (*Continued*)

Item	Place of origin	Place of display	Present status
Collection of royal Korean books from Joseon Dynasty – 1392 – 1910	Seized by French troops in 1866 from Oegyujanggak Royal Library, South Korea	Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, NY	1993 returned one volume to South Korea. 2010 discussions between Foreign Ministers to return the remainder
The Benin Bronzes – 16th century	Nigeria, taken from Kings Palace in Benin City by British Forces in 1857	British Museum	Nigerian government has pressed for return but plaques remain in British Museum
A collection of Inca artefacts – 16th century (5000 items)	Taken from Macchu Pichu, Peru, in 1912 by Hiram Bingham	Peabody Museum at Yale University, where 300 are displayed	Peru filed legal challenge through US court but dropped some charges of theft. Yale returned some items in the 1920s, but believes it has no further obligations to return the rest

Arguments often used by countries to refuse to comply with requests include:

- Antiquity cannot be owned; it belongs to all.
- There is no natural connection between antiquities and a modern nation–state.
- Modern societies do not share a cultural identity with the societies that once inhabited the same geographic area. For example, modern Arabic, Muslim Egypt is nothing like that of Pharaonic Egypt.

To assess the question of whether an object should be repatriated or not, John Henry Merryman, the world's greatest scholar of art and cultural property, suggested three criteria: preservation, truth and accessibility. For example:

1 How and where will the object in question and its context be best preserved?
2 How and where can the object and its context best serve the search for knowledge?
3 How and where can the object be made most accessible to scholars and the public?

James Cuno, in *Who Owns Antiquity? Museums and the Battle Over Our Ancient Heritage* (2008) suggests that 'perhaps the argument should not be about ownership but about stewardship'.[24]

ACTIVITY 1.32

Both Lord Elgin and Ludwig Borchardt have been accused of the illegal removal of artefacts.

1 Discuss: Is it fair to judge people of the past by the standards of our own day?

2 Research the arguments for and against returning the Parthenon Marbles to Greece. There are many websites devoted to this issue. Make sure you consider the legal position, the moral issue, the emotive arguments and any possible political agendas. Check the wording of the British Museum's Charter.

3 Present your own view in a written form under the heading: Why I believe the Parthenon Marbles should be … .

4 Discuss the extent to which you agree with James Cuno that the question of repatriation should be about stewardship rather than ownership.

Looting

Looting has been going on for centuries in so-called 'archaeological places' like Egypt, the Near East, and the Mediterranean basin, but today it is a pervasive, broad-based and frequent global issue. It has been made worse by:

- ongoing warfare in the Middle East, particularly with the rise of IS (Islamic State)
- economic and political instability in other parts of the world
- the involvement of criminal organisations, such as the Mafia, in the illicit antiquities business, with vast international networks that include looting, smuggling, restoration and laundering (often through corrupt dealers and compliant auction houses) then selling to private collectors and prominent museums. It was estimated that in the early 21st century the black market in antiquities was worth $2–6 billion, third only in profits to the illicit trade in drugs and arms.

In a 2013 investigation into global looting reported in the January 2013 issue of the *American Journal of Archaeology*, it was found that looting activities occurred in 87% of the 118 countries reported as primary locations of archaeological fieldwork. This has serious implications for the preservation of the world's cultural heritage and an understanding, or rediscovering, of human history.

In recent years Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia) has been severely impacted by looting and deliberate destruction of sites and museums and is frequently in the news as the world watches on in shock. At the present time, Syria, with its ancient cities of Aleppo and Palmyra (see Case Study on Palmyra, Chapter 6) are suffering equally devastating looting and destruction. Below is a timeline of looting in Iraq.

1884	Laws passed in Mesopotamia about removing and destroying antiquities
1919	British occupied Mesopotamia. British Museum was responsible for: • protection of archaeological sites where looting had become a 'problem' • prohibition of export of antiquities • the care of museums across Iraq. Gertrude Bell was responsible for creating the National Museum of Iraq.
mid 1920s	Black market in antiquities increased; and when Iraq became independent, the absolute ban on antiquities export was lifted.
from 1970	Iraq became more attractive to looters
1979–1980s	Saddam Hussein came to power – treasured his national heritage and: • defended sites and artefacts in museums • doubled the budget for archaeology and heritage • created museums across Iraq.
1990–91	First Gulf War. In its aftermath: • 4000 artefacts were looted from Iraqi sites • 9 of 13 museums were looted and burned • looting became so rampant that workers on sites were even looting their own workplace.

2003	Invasion of Iraq by US-led Coalition led to: • open looting of the National Museum of Iraq and hundreds of sites around the country • criticism of US for inadequate protection of Iraqi culture and antiquities • occupation of Iraq by US troops until 2007.
2007–11	US troops withdraw from Iraq, leaving a vacuum for insurgents, looting and destruction.
2014	Iraqi insurgency escalated into a civil war resulting in: • conquest of Mosul (ancient Nineveh) and Tikrit and major areas in northern Iraq by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) • murder, pillaging and destruction, the bombing of sacred shrines, including the famous Mosque of the Prophet Jonah.
2015–16	Iraqi government forces fight back
2016–17	The Battle of Mosul

ACTIVITY 1.33

1   Describe how Britain might have benefited from its mandate over Iraq in 1919.
2   Despite his reputation as a ruthless dictator, describe how Saddam Hussein showed respect for his country's heritage and what effect his downfall had on Iraqi antiquities.
3   Research the recent activities of IS in Iraq and look for photos of looting and destruction of significant sites. Write a brief report on your findings.

Looting – even if not on the scale of Iraq – has been, and still is, everywhere. Below are two examples from Nigeria and Peru

Nigeria

Stunning terracotta figurines, relics of the Nigerian Nok culture, have been found for sale in European and North American antique galleries, in auction houses and on the internet. There is a world-wide black market in Nok statues. At the Nigerian end, this involves official corruption such as the granting of export licences and mining permits, which provide cover for 'coming across' buried Nok treasures; looting of sites by organised teams of villagers; museum thefts; and smuggling in diplomatic pouches. Official apathy, greed and the poverty of many Nigerians has led to this systematic pillaging of some of Nigeria's earliest cultures. Some of the terracotta figures that escaped the looters have been destroyed as idols by Nigerian Muslims. Perhaps the material remains of the Nok culture are safer, at the moment, in the hands of various collections around the world.

FIGURE 1.63 A Nok figurine

> There is almost no record of what Nigeria has lost, almost two complete cultures have been looted and there are no photographic records of associated artefacts, no mapping of past settlement distribution and nothing of stylistic comparisons or archaeological provenance.

SOURCE 1.33 Patrick J. Darling, *The Rape of Nok and Kwatakwaski: The Crisis in Nigerian Antiquities*

Peru

On a February night in 1987, a group armed with shovels and torches stumbled upon what turned out to be the richest site of pre-Columbian treasures ever found in the 'New World'. These raiders penetrated a tomb in a **huaca** near the village of Sipan. An unemployed mechanic, named Ernil Bernal, pushed an iron rod through the floor of a chamber and was almost immediately buried in a shower of gold, silver and bones. The men carted off 11 rice sacks of treasures that night. The rest of the story involves a Mafia-backed Italian financier with suitcases stuffed with money; furtive meetings; smugglers; overseas art connoisseurs; an informant; a pre-dawn police raid on the home of Ernil Bernal, and his death in a shooting; angry Sipan villagers, and a Peruvian archaeologist, Dr Walter Alva. When shown the confiscated loot, Alva knew it was from an elite Moche burial. Despite the recovery of 83 pieces, the police had arrived too late to save the rest, and they soon began appearing on the international antiquities market, leading to a worldwide undercover investigation, prosecutions and the return of at least one significant piece in 1998.

huaca a sacred pyramid-shaped shrine in Peruvian Moche culture

FIGURE 1.64 A returned Moche/Sipan artefact

ACTIVITY 1.34

1 Do you agree that the material remains of the Nok culture are safe at the moment in the hands of various collections around the world? Justify your views.

2 Imagine you were one of the Peruvian looters on that night in 1987. Write an account of what happened during your looting raid and in the days that followed.

The effects of looting

Looting, no matter what the motivation:

- turns a culture's highest artistic creations into simple decorations and adornments on a shelf, divorced from historical context.
- provides limited contributions to our knowledge of the human past and little about the culture that produces the artefacts.

- damages and destroys archaeological sites, and obliterates, in many cases, the memory of everyday life of ancient societies by ignoring, destroying, or disposing of items judged to be of no sale value.
- denies future generations information about their ethnic and cultural heritage.

1.7 The treatment and display of human remains

The definition of human remains is used to mean the bodies, parts of bodies and cremated remains of once living people … This includes osteological material (whole or part skeletons, individual bones or fragments of bone or teeth), soft tissue including organs and skin, embryos and slide preparations of human tissue.

SOURCE 1.34 *Guidance for the Care of Human Remain in Museums* (2005)

Most museums and medical schools have a collection of human remains of some sort:
- disarticulated leg or arm bones, fingers, jaws or whole skulls, some that were buried and some cremated
- whole skeletons
- well-preserved and not-so-well-preserved bodies.

However, it is only fairly recently that the treatment and display of human remains has become an ethical issue. This arose predominantly through the concerns of indigenous peoples such as the Australian Aboriginal people, American Indians, and others for whom it is taboo to disturb the dead. It led to an impassioned debate, and requests for repatriation of their ancestors' bones held in museums and institutions around the world.

A collection of skeletal remains of known historical people in an Australian collection being used for scientific study (the Tasmanian Crowther Collection) were returned to the Aboriginal community and eventually underwent a traditional burial. The conditions under which the bones were originally collected were appalling and the Tasmanian government, on ethical grounds, could do nothing else.

Not all scientists are happy about the return of ancient bones as they regard them as an integral part of archaeological research and 'an important source of information about both biological and cultural aspects of prior human populations' and critical as well 'to the field of forensics'.[25]

Despite the one-time authority of science over the dead, scientists have to consider the sacred and spiritual beliefs of those cultures with which they come in contact. It is now generally agreed that if the bones are from pre-1000 CE, custody favours the scientists who must treat the bones in the same professional way as other artefacts.

It is imperative that all forms of human remains be treated with respect as outlined in the Code of Ethics for Museums in Source 1.35.

Human remains should be displayed in a manner consistent with professional standards and where known, taking into account the interests and beliefs of members of the community, ethnic or religious groups from whom the objects originated. They must be presented with great tact and respect for the feelings of human dignity held by all people.

SOURCE 1.35 International Council of Museums, ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2006, p. 9

Unfortunately, it was not always the way in the past to show respect for the dead, particularly with regard to the treatment of Egyptian mummies.
- Some of the greatest damage to mummies was carried out by exactly those who prepared their 'houses of eternity' and knew where the deceased nobles and royalty were buried. Often, in order to get to the gold and
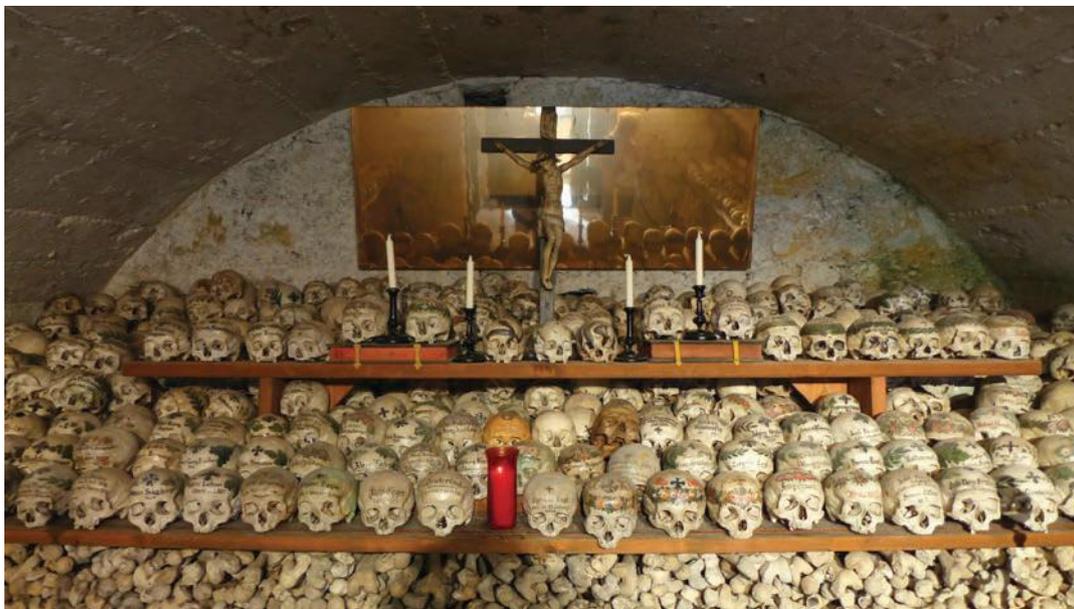
FIGURE 1.65 The Bone-house, a popular tourist destination in Hallstat, Austria

jewelled amulets hidden within the mummy wrapping, they tore the linen bandages and damaged the mummy in the process, even to the extent of carelessly throwing it to one side, despite knowing of the written curses denouncing anyone who violated the tomb or the body, and that the deceased would be denied an afterlife. And yet their greed was so great that they ignored such things.

- Geovanni Belzoni once mentioned that he had pulled at the hair of a mummy he found in the Valley of the Kings and it had detached from its head, and many European travellers believed it would never do to return home from Egypt without at least a mummy and an embalmed crocodile.

- In the Victorian era, when **Egyptmania** was all the rage, and when anything neo-Gothic was popular, unwrapping mummies for entertainment and limited scientific knowledge was regarded as stylish. People use to attend mummy parties where they witnessed an unwrapping. The promoter of these fascinating spectacles was Thomas Pettigrew, a respected surgeon, antiquarian, published author of the well-received *History of Egyptian Mummies* (1834), and a founding member of the British Archaeological Society. His macabre unwrappings were irresistible to the Victorians, including upper-class women.

Egyptmania the renewed interest of Europeans in ancient Egypt during the 19th century

- Even the illustrious discoverer of Tutankhamun, in a rush to look on the face of the young king, unwrapped the mummy to examine it in 1926, and was apparently not as careful as his notes indicated. He did not re-wrap it, so that it deteriorated substantially over the next 42 years. In 1968, an X-ray examination showed that both of the mummy's legs were removed from the pelvis to retrieve some of the jewellery, and the head was severed from the body in order to prise the death mask off.

FIGURE 1.66 *Examination of a Mummy* by Paul Dominique Philippoteux, c. 1891

CHAPTER 1 METHODS AND ISSUES IN INVESTIGATING THE PAST

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You have already been introduced to the treatment of human bodies in the section on forensics: the use of science in analysing human bodies, the amazing things revealed about them, and to some of the problems associated with the investigations, particularly of Egyptian mummies. Also, you have learned that a mummy is not just a carefully embalmed and wrapped ancient Egyptian. Not all mummies are artificially preserved. Some, like the Iron Age bog bodies, found in northern Europe and sites across Britain and Ireland, have been preserved in peat, while others like Otzi were found under ice and snow. A pre-dynastic Egyptian – who lived before the development of embalming – was almost perfectly preserved in the hot sands, right down to the presence of his ginger hair, hence his popular museum name of 'Ginger'.

What follows, refers to the questions surrounding the display of human remains.

The display of human bodies

It seems that most people are fascinated more by preserved human bodies than a 'bunch of bones'. This interest can be judged, not only from museum questionnaires and surveys, but also by the crowds who flock to the following museums across the world where mummies are displayed:

- Royal Mummy Halls in the Cairo Egyptological Museum
- Silkeborg Museum in Denmark, home of Tollund Man, probably the most famous of the bog bodies
- the British Museum, where Lindow Man, another bog person, is on permanent display, together with the naturally preserved prehistoric Egyptian man known as 'Ginger'.
- South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, Italy, where Otzi the Iceman is kept
- Hunan Provincial Museum in China, where lies the Lady of Dai, the best preserved ancient human ever found
- the museum in San Miguel de Azapa, Chile, that houses the remarkable anthropogenically-modified black mummies who date from around 5050 BCE
- the stunningly modern Museo Tumbas Reales de Sipan, Peru, that houses the mummy of the Lord of Sipan.

In a recent survey carried out in Great Britain, commissioned by English Heritage, over 90% of museum goers who were questioned agreed that museums should be allowed to display human remains.

FIGURE 1.67 'Ginger', the earliest naturally preserved prehistoric mummy, now in the British Museum

FIGURE 1.68 Lindow Man displayed in the British Museum

FIGURE 1.69 The Royal Egyptian Mummy Room in the Cairo Museum

Why this fascination?

Is it perhaps because – unlike skeletons or cremated remains, removed of all the things that make us human – preserved bodies provide a more direct and immediate link to the past. Bog bodies, particularly, still with their facial features, hair and skin, 'attract our imagination.'[26] We can still see their humanity, even 'read' something of their character in their faces, feel a connection and can build up personal stories about them from the details that scientists provide. We give them names as if we once knew them. Appearing as if they have just died, they can remind us of our own mortality and raise spiritual questions about the hereafter.

Much of this connection also has to do with the way museums, following specific guidelines, display them:

- They are usually displayed in specially designed glass cases or pods, with just the right temperature, humidity level and subdued lighting.
- They are clearly signposted and positioned in an area away from the main exhibition where children, and those who might find them confronting or objectionable, will not come upon them unawares.
- The number of viewers at any one time is limited.
- A great deal of careful attention is paid to the context of their discovery, creating the impression that they have just been discovered.
- The accompanying text is detailed enough to explain how they died, and other facts of their lives.

These successful ways of displaying the mummies contribute to further research, promote specialist education and the better understanding by the public of our humanity.

Fortunately, great care is now taken with, and respect shown to, human bodies from the moment they are removed from a site, to the initial analysis and the decisions made about the best way to preserve the body for the future. There have been many scholarly publications since the late 1980s on these aspects of treating human remains, but since the turn of the 21st century, most publications focus on the ethics of displaying them.

Of course, there are those who still believe that these types of displays are examples of morbid voyeurism, or disrespectful, and there is an increase in pressure from vocal minority groups, especially in Britain, to hide away all mummies, skeletons and bog bodies. Some British museums are becoming more sensitive and, despite the popularity of their displays of human bodies, are changing their policies and hiding them away.

> This is not driven by public demand, but professional insecurity. Unfortunately, it will penalise the millions of people who enjoy learning from the display of human remains. It will also impact detrimentally on the research environment, making it more difficult to study this important material.

SOURCE 1.36 Dr T. Jenkins, *Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections*

ACTIVITY 1.35

1 Are you for or against the display of human bodies in museums? Explain reasons for your view.
2 Do you think that the fascination with mummies in museums has contributed to the frequency of their representation in pop culture, or could it be that the pop culture representations have stimulated an interest in the real thing? Justify your answer.
3 Describe how mummies tend to be depicted in popular culture and how it can influence a person's perception of ancient Egyptian culture.

COMMENTS REGARDING A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

You may not have yet decided on a topic for your mandatory historical investigation.

However, up to this point you have been introduced to some of the elements/processes involved in a historical investigation, beginning with the syllabus requirements listed in the Introduction at the start of the book.

Some of these include:

- the types of sources available: written, artefactual and visual, and their limitations
- the questions to ask of the sources to gauge their reliability (degree of bias, or propaganda, for example)
- the need to be aware of the relevance of a source for your particular topic and its currency: that is, how up-to-date it is if it's a written source
- the importance of cross-referencing sources
- the need to formulate a focus question that requires more than just a descriptive response
- the need to evaluate different perspectives and controversial issues
- the ability to use historical terms and concepts appropriately.

Of course, there are other things you must know how to do, such as referencing and compiling a bibliography, be it a book, journal entry or website.

CHAPTER 1 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE CONTRIBUTION OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND SCIENCE IN RECONSTRUCTING THE PAST

- Historians ask questions, formulate hypotheses, evaluate the reliability of sources, seek out patterns and attempt to develop an informed explanation of the past.
- Archaeology is a crucial aspect of the study of ancient history. Archaeologists focus on physical objects, such as artefacts; locate archaeological sites; decide if it is appropriate to excavate or not; uncover hidden physical remains; then record, date and interpret what they find.
- With the rapid developments in technology, scientists and other specialists are filling out our picture of the past.

THE ROLE OF ANCIENT TEXTS AND ICONOGRAPHY IN UNDERSTANDING THE PAST

- Written materials used by historians to construct a picture of the past include literary sources such as histories, biographies, orations, letters, plays, poetry, legends and hymns, as well as official documents, medical treatises, lists, inscriptions and coins. To these are added the study of visual images and symbols known as iconography. However, it must be remembered that no matter what the category of source, they all suffer from their own particular weaknesses, be they fragmentary, unbalanced, or subjective.

REPRESENTATIONS OF TWO ANCIENT BATTLES AND INDIVIDUALS

- Representations of two significant battles (the Battle of Thermopylae and the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest), plus the men who played such a vital part in them as leaders (the Spartan King Leonidas and the Romanised German, Arminius) have become the stuff of legends and subjects of hero worship down through the ages. They have both been represented in the modern world in poems, statues, paintings, graphic novels, biographies and feature films.

HISTORICAL AUTHENTICATION AND RELIABILITY

- Because there have always been archaeological hoaxes and faked artefacts, as well as forged ancient documents, due to people's fascination with the past and the money paid for antiquities, the question of provenance is vital to authentication, as well as a range of scientific tests and dating methods.

THE METHODS AND ISSUES INVOLVED IN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE PAST: CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

- The terms 'conservation', 'restoration' and 'reconstruction' are contested and interpreted in various ways in official publications, by individual conservationists and in different parts of the world.
- 'Conservation' can mean 'a process that is intended to hand on to future generations what we value'; 'restoration' can mean 'returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state'; and 'reconstruction' can mean 'returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric'.

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE ROLE OF MUSEUMS

- 'Cultural property' refers to the physical items that are part of the cultural heritage of a group or society, including historic buildings, works of art, archaeological sites, libraries and museums.
- Much of the cultural property in well-established Western museums has come from illicit sources, though repatriation (return of antiquities to their country of origin) has been an ongoing process over the last 200 years.

THE TREATMENT AND DISPLAY OF HUMAN REMAINS

- Most museums and medical schools have a collection of human remains of some sort and it is imperative that all forms of human remains be treated with respect as outlined in the Code of Ethics for Museums.
- Museum-goers over the world have a fascination with preserved bodies. Examples like the Egyptian mummies and bog bodies provide a direct and immediate link to the past.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these skills may have been called for.

Key terms

- bias
- propaganda
- artefact
- ecofact
- stratigraphy
- context
- relevance
- currency
- provenance

- absolute dating
- historiography
- repatriation
- Egyptmania.

Historical concepts

Continuity and change

What changes have occurred in archaeology over time?

Causation

What have caused and continue to cause the destruction of the Sphinx at Giza?

Perspectives

- What were, and are, the different perspectives on Heinrich Schliemann's excavation at Troy held by many of his contemporaries and by some modern scholars?
- Describe the different modern perspectives held on the following issues:
    - Conservation/restoration of sites and artefacts
    - Reconstruction of ancient monuments
    - Repatriation of cultural property
    - Display of human remains.

Significance

- What do you consider are five of the most significant pieces of technology used today in building up a picture of the past?

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

- What is the most significant motivation behind the widespread cases of looting around the world today?
- What is the significance for the future of each of the following:
  - The Theban Mapping Project
  - The Million Image Database project.

Historical skills

Analysis and use of sources

- How do many ancient sources reveal their biases?
- How reliable do you think Herodotus is as a written source for the Battle of Thermopylae?
- What are the limitations in using the following types of sources in searching for answers to the ancient past:
  - coins
  - pottery
  - epitaphs
  - speeches in literary sources.

Historical interpretation

- Interpret the known facts about the following:
  - The Nazca Lines
  - The Plain of Jars

  - The Vinland Map
  - The death of the Otzi, the 'Ice Man'
  - The death of Tutankhamun.
- Is it fair to judge what people did in the past by the standards of our own day?
- What use can imagination play in understanding the past?
- Why are most people who visit museums fascinated with preserved human bodies?

Historical research and explanation

- Research the discovery (when? where? and how?) of the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- What use are they in understanding the ancient past?
- Present your findings in a short report.

Explanation and communication

- Explain why rescue archaeology has become so vital in today's world.
- Explain why historical events and individuals are usually presented in modern film in a different way to the written sources.
- Explain, in an extended answer, the uses of forensic science in building up a picture of the past.

PART 2

Investigating ancient history: case studies
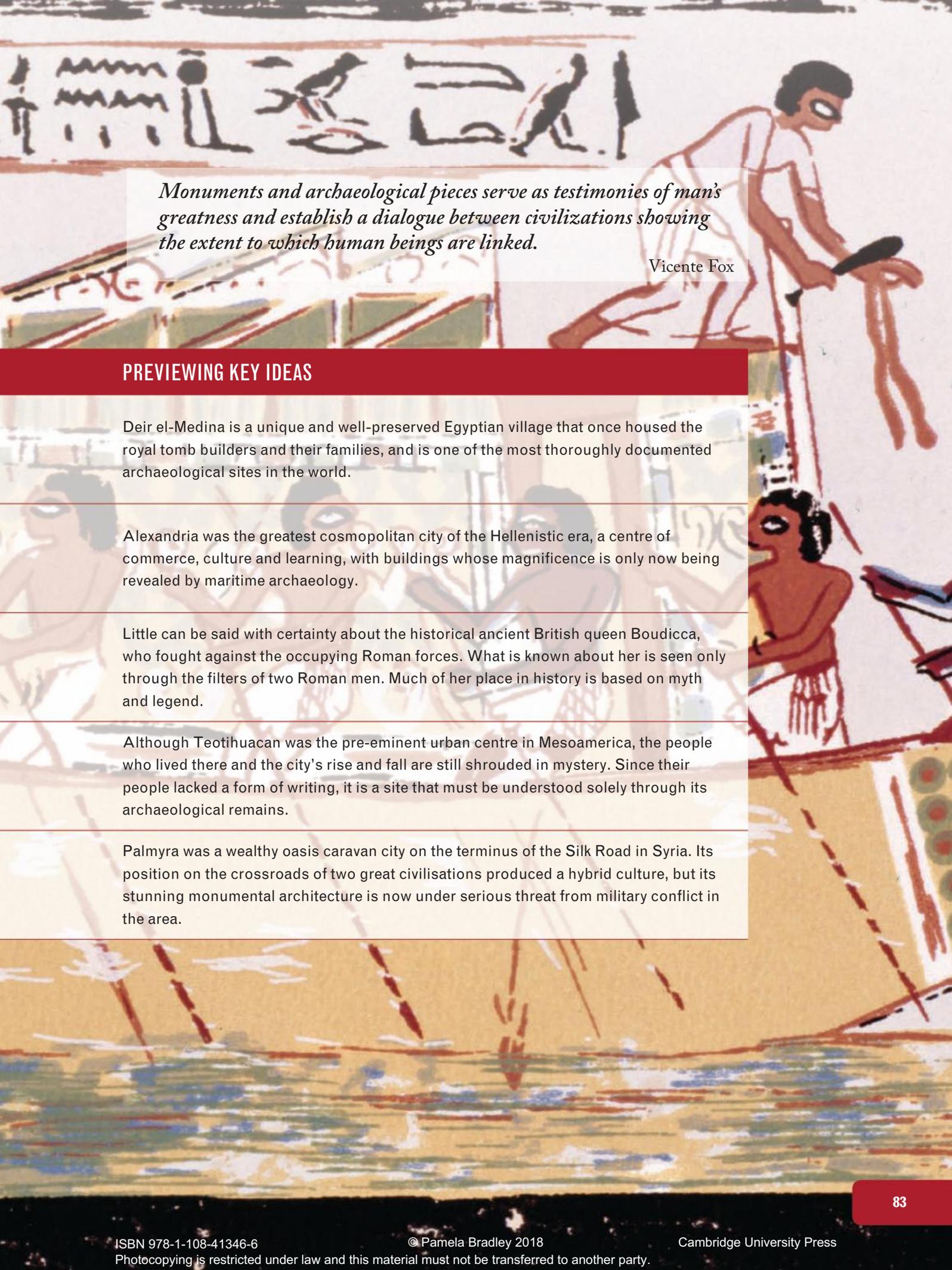
Monuments and archaeological pieces serve as testimonies of man's greatness and establish a dialogue between civilizations showing the extent to which human beings are linked.

Vicente Fox

PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

Deir el-Medina is a unique and well-preserved Egyptian village that once housed the royal tomb builders and their families, and is one of the most thoroughly documented archaeological sites in the world.

Alexandria was the greatest cosmopolitan city of the Hellenistic era, a centre of commerce, culture and learning, with buildings whose magnificence is only now being revealed by maritime archaeology.

Little can be said with certainty about the historical ancient British queen Boudicca, who fought against the occupying Roman forces. What is known about her is seen only through the filters of two Roman men. Much of her place in history is based on myth and legend.

Although Teotihuacan was the pre-eminent urban centre in Mesoamerica, the people who lived there and the city's rise and fall are still shrouded in mystery. Since their people lacked a form of writing, it is a site that must be understood solely through its archaeological remains.

Palmyra was a wealthy oasis caravan city on the terminus of the Silk Road in Syria. Its position on the crossroads of two great civilisations produced a hybrid culture, but its stunning monumental architecture is now under serious threat from military conflict in the area.

CHAPTER 2
Deir el-Medina

FIGURE 2.1 A view of the remains of the village of Deir el-Medina

FIGURE 2.2 Map of present-day Egypt

FIGURE 2.2 Map of present-day Egypt

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate the history of the village of Deir el-Medina and how its inhabitants helped shape ancient Egypt as we know it today.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the context for understanding life in the village • the nature of the available sources • the occupations and working conditions of the '*Servants in the Place of Truth*'. • the living conditions within the village

I supervised the excavation of the cliff–tomb of His Majesty alone, no one seeing, no one hearing … I was vigilant in seeking that which is excellent. I made fields of clay in order to plaster their tombs of the necropolis.

SOURCE 2.1 Royal architect Ineni, in James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 11.43

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FIGURE 2.3 A view from a balloon showing the edge of the cultivated area and the beginning of the desert
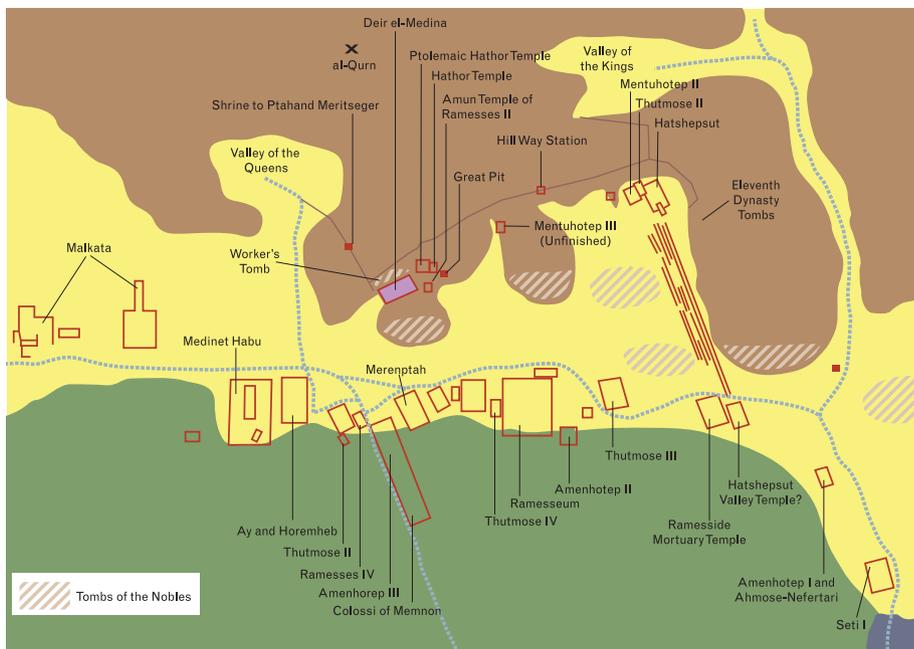
FIGURE 2.4 A map showing the locations of the necropolis on the west bank of Thebes and the village of Deir el-Medina

Study Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 carefully. Note what you can see in each one. Identify the features of the site of Deir el-Medina and think about the possible reasons behind its particular location.

CHAPTER 2 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS	
Deir el-Medina was a unique, secluded, state-sponsored village in the Theban necropolis that housed the royal tomb builders and their families. They worked in shifts in the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens and were strictly supervised.	Its rich documentation provides a unique insight into the life and thoughts of a community of average Egyptian men and women, whose needs and concerns appear little different to working people today.	• necropolis • ostraca • mortuary temple • stelae • vizier • papyrus • hieratic	• natron • *deben* • *ka* • *ba* • *ushabtis* • pyramidion

Painting the picture

Deir el-Medina is an unusually well-preserved and unique Egyptian village on the west bank of the Nile opposite modern Luxor (ancient Thebes) in Upper Egypt, 800 km from the Mediterranean. The village, known in ancient times as *Set Ma'at* (*the Place of Truth*) but now called by its Arabic name, was constructed specifically to house the specialist workmen (*Servants in the Place of Truth*) who built and decorated the royal tombs in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, where most of their activities were focused. This isolated, protected and state-sponsored community consisted of tomb workers, their families and a few support groups that catered to their needs. At the time of Ramesses II and III, this small, purpose-built village, covering an area of approximately 132 by 50 metres, included 70 houses, within a high enclosure wall; it had one main street and a number of side alleys, with a police station, a community well, chapels and tombs of the villagers outside the wall.

> **INQUIRY QUESTION**
>
> When did the village of Deir el-Medina flourish and what caused its decline by the time of Ramesses XI?

c. 1550–1070	New Kingdom – Dynasties 18–20	
18th Dynasty	**19th Dynasty**	**20th Dynasty**
Ahmose and Ahmose-Nefertari	Ramesses I	Sethnakhte
Amenhotep I	Seti I	Ramesses III
Thutmose I	Ramesses II and Nefertari	Ramesses IV
Thutmose II	Merneptah	Ramesses V
Hatshepsut (f)	Seti II	Ramesses VI
Thutmose III	Siptah (usurper)	Ramesses VII
Amenhotep II	Twosret (f)	Ramesses VIII
Amenhotep III		Ramesses IX
Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and Nefertiti		Ramesses X
Smenkhkare		Ramesses XI
Tutankhamun		
Ay		
Horemheb		

The village existed for almost 500 years between the 18th and 20th dynasties from approximately 1550–1070 BC, during what is referred to as the New Kingdom.

2.1 The geographical and historical context for understanding life in Deir el-Medina

The natural features of the village site

The village was laid out in a narrow valley in the southern part of the Theban **necropolis** (city of the dead), behind Gurnet Murai hill, about 800 metres beyond the edge of the cultivated land bordering the river and between the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens.

The environment of the walled village was not particularly pleasant. Not only was it hot – temperatures in summer could reach 40° plus – and arid, but the surrounding barren hills reflected the blazing

necropolis an ancient cemetery; in Greek a 'city of the dead'

FIGURE 2.5 A satellite view of the river and desert from the air, showing the location of Deir el-Medina (arrow)
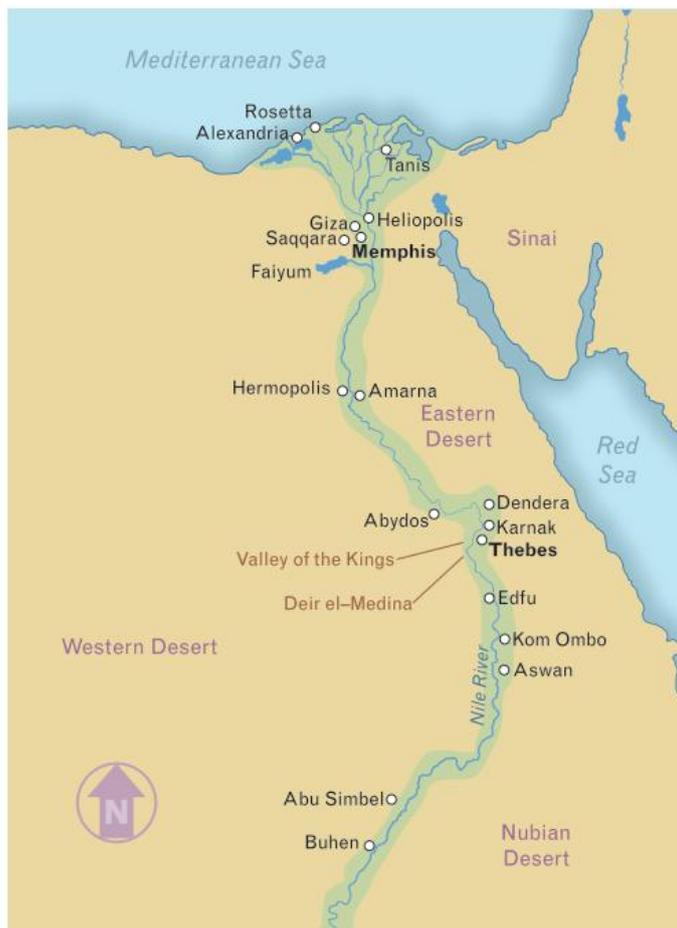
FIGURE 2.6 The Nile Valley

FIGURE 2.7 A view of the village today

© Pamela Bradley 2018   Cambridge University Press

Egyptian sun, and it was cut off – by the Gurnet Murai hill – from the breeze that came from the north and from the view of the fertile lands along the river.

One of the village's continuing problems was its lack of drinking water; the nearest source was the Nile River 2 km away. Because the workers were not able to drill down the 52 metres needed to access water, regular supplies had to be brought from the Nile by water carters and stored either in a well outside the northern gate or in large pottery jars outside village houses. The village was also dependent on food supplies to be delivered.

There was a major path leading north from the village, along the top of the cliffs that surround Deir el-Bahri (the site of Hatshepsut's mortuary temple), where the workmen made a small encampment of huts for themselves so they did not have to return to the village every night during their shift. The path then descended steeply into the Valley of the Kings known as *The Great and Majestic Necropolis of the Millions of Years of the Pharaoh, Life, Strength, Health in the West of Thebes*.

The Valley of the Kings was an arid, desolate and isolated gorge lost among rocky ravines at the base of a pyramid-shaped mountain referred to as 'The Peak', supposedly haunted by a cobra goddess called Meretseger. Eventually, the valley contained 63 royal tombs.

FIGURE 2.8 The Peak that separated the village from the Valley of the Kings

FIGURE 2.9 The Valley of the Queens

There was also a path leading south to the Valley of the Queens, known in ancient times as Ta-Set-Neferu, meaning *Place of Beauty*. Within the main wadi and a subsidiary ravine are 110 tombs of royal wives and children.

The village had two access routes to the plain, one leading to the southwest and ending close to the **mortuary temple** of Ramesses III, the other to the northeast leading to the plain south of the Ramesseum of Ramesses II. However, these were guarded by small fortifications of stone or brick in which policemen were stationed to guard the road. In the contemporary documents, these are referred to as 'redoubts' and of the workmen occasionally appearing to break some rule by 'passing the five redoubts'.

mortuary temple temple erected – separate from the royal tombs – for the celebration of the cult of the deceased king

FIGURE 2.10 The mortuary temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu

1   Describe Deir el-Medina.
2   Explain what you consider to be its most significant feature.
3   Recall what was it called in the 18th–19th Dynasties.
4   Discuss the greatest problem the villagers had to cope with.
5   Refer to Figure 2.5 (on p. 88) and explain why Egypt has been called 'the gift of the Nile'.
6   Refer back to Figure 2.4 (on p. 86) and identify the paths taken by the royal tomb workers to the Valley of the Kings and Valley of the Queens.
7   Explain what a mortuary temple is and why the pharaohs built theirs on the west side of the Nile.
8   Refer to Figures 2.7 to 2.10 (on pp. 88–9) and imagine what you think it must have been like crossing those peaks to the Valley of the Kings.

The importance of Deir el-Medina as a site of study

Most of our knowledge of ancient Egypt comes from the remains and writings of royalty and the nobility. Little is known of the everyday lives of ordinary people except what the upper classes chose to depict in their tombs, and in many cases these depictions were idealistic and symbolic.

Also, most ancient Egyptian mud-brick villages – located on the eastern bank of the Nile, and focused on agricultural and livestock activities – have not survived due to being built on the damp Nile flood plain.

FIGURE 2.11 An inscribed ostracon

The village of Deir el-Medina, on the other hand, did survive, since it was built among the tombs and royal mortuary temples on the edge of the western desert, and for much of the period after its abandonment was buried under the shifting sands.

The preservation of the village and its systematic excavation has 'yielded an immensely rich documentation on the life and thoughts of this New Kingdom community of average people who ranged from poor to moderately wealthy, from simple labourers to skilled artists.'[1] This rich documentation includes thousands of inscribed limestone fragments known as **ostraca**, many found in a well outside the village, which feature the 'casual writings, the memoranda and jottings of a literate community, written informally'.[2] Deir el-Medina is one of the most thoroughly documented communities in the ancient world.

ostraca small pieces of stone (or pottery) that have writing and images etched into them

The foundation and purpose of the village

Thebes had become the religious capital of Egypt at the beginning of the 18th Dynasty when its princes had expelled the occupying foreign Hyksos in the north, united the country once more, and took the first steps in expanding Egypt's territory. As the warrior kings of the 18th Dynasty built up an empire, wealth flowed into Egypt, Thebes flourished, and there was an ever-growing need for more construction in the form of tombs and mortuary temples on the west bank.

The decision to separate mortuary temples and the burial site (for the mummified body and grave goods) as a way of preventing tomb robbery was inaugurated by Amenhotep I. To further protect the pharaohs' tombs in the Valley of the Kings, the skilled craftsmen and workers, selected to cut, carve and paint them, had to be set apart from the rest of the population, and to have little contact with those workers employed on other constructions. So, they were segregated, with their families, in their own walled and guarded village, founded sometime in the early 18th Dynasty.

There is some question over which king founded the village. The chief candidates are Amenhotep I with his mother, Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, because they were worshipped for centuries by the villagers as their patron deities. Their images were found on religious **stelae** in the village and painted on the tomb walls of the village workers.
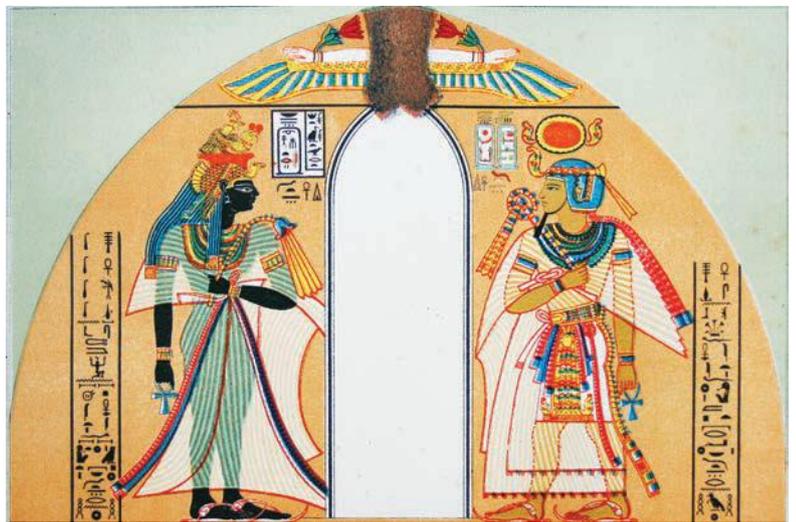
FIGURE 2.12 Taken from a stela depicting Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari, the patrons of the village

stelae upright stone slabs, often with rounded tops, bearing inscriptions, commonly serving religious purposes

Stages of settlement from the 18th–20th Dynasties

1   There is not much known about the earliest community in Deir el-Medina. The records name only those high officials selected by the pharaohs to supervise their tomb construction. For example, Thutmose I delegated the construction of his tomb to Ineni, who recorded: 'I supervised the excavation of the cliff-tomb of His Majesty alone, no one seeing, no one hearing … I was vigilant in seeking that which is excellent. I made fields of clay in order to plaster their tombs of the necropolis.'[3]

2   The first village is believed to have been destroyed by fire. It may have been rebuilt under the auspices of the great Thutmose III, when building expanded on the west bank.

3   During the reign of the pharaoh Akhenaten, a new capital city and royal burial ground was built in middle Egypt. It is possible that the activities of Deir el-Medina declined then and that some of the tomb workmen went to a new workers' village in Akhetaten (Amarna).

4   In the reign of Tutankhamun, the court returned to Thebes and the royal tombs were once again built in the Valley of the Kings, but it is possible that it was not totally secure as there was an attempted robbery of the tomb of Tutankhamun.

5   In the late 18th Dynasty, an extension was built along its western side.

6   Most of the detailed evidence for Deir el-Medina dates from the 19th and 20th Dynasties when work began in earnest in the Valley of the Queens, providing tombs for royal wives and children.

7   In the reign of Seti I (the 19th Dynasty), a further 'block' of houses (12–14) was added and the entire village enclosed by a rectangular wall.

8   During the reign of Ramesses II, the village reached its greatest extension and was under the control of a **vizier**. It was expanded to the south and west; nine further district quarters were added; more streets and access points were cut through the former blocks of buildings; old houses were restored; new ones were built, and a new village wall was constructed. There is also a wealth of information about life in the village, including the names of the viziers, and members of individual families.

vizier a high official, second in importance to the king

9 By the time of Ramesses XI, increasing raids from outside Egypt and civil war in Nubia made the Theban area rather unsafe and many workers abandoned the village. The following source describes that period.

> We are living here in Medinet Habu ... However, the boys of the Tomb have gone. They are living in Thebes, while I am living here alone with the scribe of the army, Pentahuanakhte. Please have the men of the Tomb who are there in Thebes assembled and send them to me to this side [of the river].

SOURCE 2.2 A letter from Dhutmose, who had once held office as a scribe in Deir el-Medina, cited in Morris Bierbrier, *The Tomb-Builders of the Pharaohs*, p. 119

ACTIVITY 2.2

1 Explain how the remains of Deir el-Medina survived into the modern period when most other ancient Egyptian villages disappeared.
2 Explain what is meant by stating that Deir el-Medina 'yielded an immensely rich documentation'.
3 Recall who is supposed to have founded the village.
4 Identify when it reached its greatest extent.
5 Use Source 2.2 to answer the following:
   - Identify the author of this ostraca letter.
   - Deduce when the author was writing it.
   - Recall what position he formerly held.
   - Recall where he is writing from and with whom he is residing.
   - Explain where most of the village workers were at this time.
   - Describe where many of the former workmen eventually ended up.

Deir el-Medina rediscovered

In the early 19th century, the Deir el-Medina site was plundered on a large scale, and many objects, including large numbers of inscribed and painted stelae were removed from their context, eventually ending up in European museums. Due to their beauty and small size, it is believed that perhaps as many as half of the unique 'medical' ostraca found at Deir el-Medina were removed illegally.

The following source provides some indication of the state of Deir el-Medina at this time.

> The site, previously inhabited by the Theban cemetery employees, between the 18th and 21st Pharaonic Dynasties, then overrun by the Copts of the Byzantine era, was at this time a chaos of ruins. An exploitation deprived of scientific methodology driven in turn by Drovetti, Salt, Mimaut, Sabatier, Wilkinson, had left the ground strewn with the remains of statuary, stelae, ceramics, fragments of all kinds of objects and shredded mummies among excavation pits and the open burial chamber shafts. For the most part these were either demolished or burnt.

SOURCE 2.3 Gaston Maspéro, translated by Bernard Bruyère

The work of 19th- and 20th-century Egyptologists

From the 1840s, many renowned archaeologists worked at bringing the village of Deir el-Medina back to life once more.

TABLE 2.1 19th- and 20th-century archaeologists in Deir el-Medina

Auguste Mariette	Auguste Mariette, a French archeologist, carried out the first excavation at Deir el-Medina in 1862. He had created the Egyptian Museum and was determined that any artefacts discovered should not be sold to private collectors but should be stored in a safe location.
Gaston Maspéro	Gaston Maspéro, also a French archaeologist, took over from Mariette as Director of the Museum and continued his predecessor's work at Deir el-Medina.
Ernesto Schiaparelli	Ernesto Schiaparelli was the Italian curator of the Egyptian Museum at Turin. He worked on the excavations at Deir el-Medina and in the Valleys of the Kings and Queens. In 1904, Schiaparelli discovered in the Valley of the Queens the tomb of Nefertari, chief wife of Ramesses II, which later revealed some of the finest tomb paintings in the whole of Egypt. Two years later, he made one of the greatest discoveries in the village of Deir el-Medina: the intact tomb of the couple Kha and Meryt, whose tomb provided much information on the life and funeral customs of a well-to-do Egyptian family.
Bernard Bruyère	Bernard Bruyère, another French archaeologist who was the Director of the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo, began the first systematic excavation of the village which he continued between 1922–51. From within the village, and in the great rubbish tip – where he found thousands of ostraca, papyrus and household items – he was able to build up a picture of: • social interactions between villagers • living conditions of the tomb workers • work 'gangs' and how they were organised, the number of working days, average pay, reasons for sick days, the nature of rations and tools • changing technology, crafts • funeral practices • type of food consumed by the population • treatment of the sick. However, his fascinating discoveries did not receive the attention they deserved since his findings coincided with the world-stopping work of Howard Carter in the tomb of Tutankhamun.

New investigations

Recently, work done by Jennifer Babcock, a Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has suggested a new interpretation of the figured ostraca from Deir el-Medina. Instead of the common interpretation of the images of animals acting as humans, as 'visual parodies of Egyptian social hierarchy' she has suggested that they might have been part of some 'assemblage' used to illustrate Egyptian stories passed down orally (folklore or even Egyptian literature) and that they 'should be a reminder to us to be aware that our perception of what constitutes artistic or aesthetic worth may be different from that of the ancient world, or any other foreign or historically distant culture'.

SOURCE 2.4 'Ancient Egyptian Ostraca: A Re-evaluation', *The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Met online*, 10 October 2012

Cambridge University Press
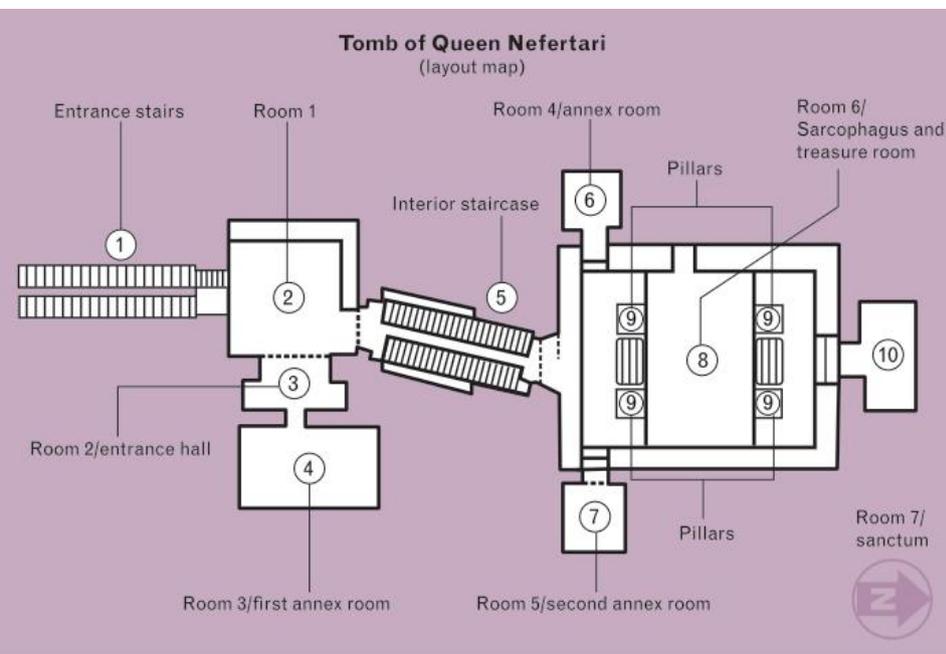
FIGURE 2.13 Plan of the tomb of Nefertari
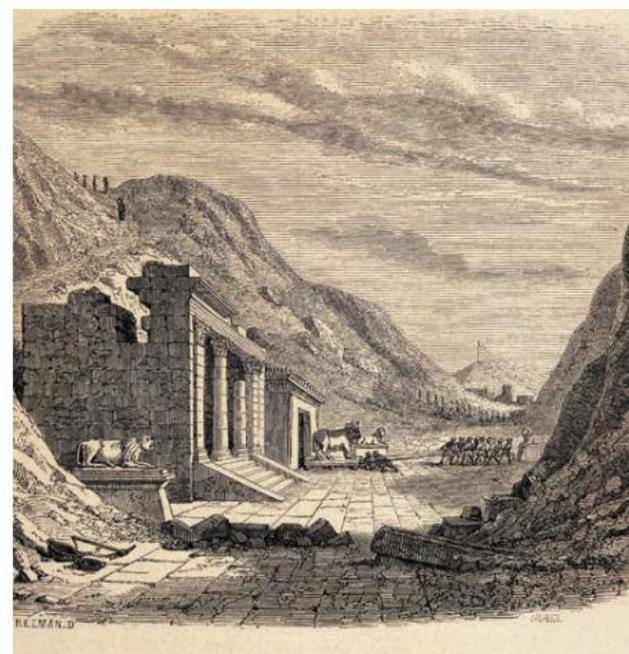
FIGURE 2.14 An engraving showing the discovery of the Serapeum at Saqqara by August Mariette

In 2014, Anne Austin, a Stanford University post-doctoral scholar 'found physical evidence of the earliest documented governmental "health care plan" – in which workers could take paid sick days'. She studied the bones of a number of mummies and discovered evidence that there seemed to be care taken for those who were disabled, and indications of occupational stress amongst tomb workers.

SOURCE 2.5 *Ancient Origins, Reconstructing the Story of Humanity's Past*, November 2014

FIGURE 2.15 An ostracon showing a cat serving his mouse mistress

FIGURE 2.16 A wooden prosthetic toe

1 According to Source 2.3 (on p. 92), what did the site look like when the French archaeologist Gaston Maspéro arrived at Deir el-Medina.

2 Identify who discovered the tombs of Nefertari and Kha and Meryt.

3 Discuss how important the work done by Bernard Bruyère was.

4 Explain what new interpretation Source 2.4 (on p. 93) gives for the various depictions of animals acting as humans found on many of the ostraca.

5 Analyse what Figure 2.16 reveals about Egyptian medical procedures.

6 Discuss the other evidence Source 2.5 provides for the medical care of the royal tomb workers.

7 Justify what you consider to be more significant:

- the discovery of a magnificent hoard of royal treasure such as that found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, which shows something of the Egyptian burial practices, but very little about his personal life, except that he died, or

- masses of written and material remains that reveal details of the social, religious, economic and legal aspects of the everyday life of ordinary people, such as those in the village of Deir el-Medina? Write a short explanation of your view.

8 Suggest a re-definition of the word 'treasure' in terms of historical significance.

9 Discuss whether it is possible for scholars of the 21st century to interpret what people from the far distant past recorded?

- Can we really know their thoughts and motivations for doing something?

- Should we be careful in interpreting information from our modern perspectives?

2.2 The nature of the available sources

Ostraca and papyri

The abundant written material from Deir el-Medina – in the form of ostraca and **papyrus** scraps and sheets – found in the village, and especially in a nearby pit, is a rich and varied source of information for the ordinary day-to-day-activities of the villagers.

The flat shards of limestone were a cheap and convenient writing surface for the villagers – unlike the cost of papyrus – and because of the resilience of the limestone and the dry and warm conditions of Upper Egypt, many have been preserved in good condition.

These limestone shards were used for sketching and doodling; recording folk tales, poems, hymns, magical spells and oracles; for writing down medical prescriptions, as well as notes and letters to family and friends; making laundry lists, recording transactions of sales such as receipts, complaining about rations, work conditions and those who didn't do their fair share of work. They were also used for semi-professional record-keeping.

Like the papyri, they were written in **hieratic**, a form of writing that was a simplified version of the hieroglyphic script in which strokes replaced images. It made writing quicker and easier and was used for everyday transactions and literature.

papyrus paper made from the tall papyrus plant that grows along the Nile

hieratic form of writing that replaced hieroglyphic images with strokes

Many papyri, especially those that were official documents such as a will – like that of the widow, Nau-nakht (see Source 2.19 on p. 113) – written and witnessed by a scribe, would have been originally in rolls. Some were as long as 2 metres. Many medical papyri, that give details of diseases, diagnoses, treatment, surgery, and magical spells – an integral part of Egyptian medicine along with amulets – were stolen and sold to various individuals after whom they are now called. Thousands of papyri and ostraca still await publication.

FIGURE 2.17 An example of a medical papyrus in the British Museum

FIGURE 2.18 Painted limestone stela of villagers worshipping the gods

Stelae

The homes and chapels of Deir el-Medina were filled with inscribed and painted stelae, principally rectangular, round-topped slabs of limestone. They were mostly of a votive or funerary nature, dedicated to deceased family ancestors or members of the village. Some are decorated with scenes of an individual bearing offerings to a particular god or gods, seeking some assistance from a god, or giving thanks for a blessing the god has bestowed. From these, historians can gauge which state gods and local deities the villagers worshipped and the degree of their piety. (See p. 121.)

FIGURE 2.19 A stela featuring the snake goddess, Meretseger, guardian of the Peak

FIGURE 2.20 A close-up of the remains of Deir el-Medina and the small size of most houses

Tombs

The construction, wall paintings and grave goods of the surviving tombs (see page 121) of the more well-to-do villagers, located in the hills to the west of Deir el-Medina – such as that of the foreman, Sennedjem – reveal:

- the status certain villagers attained and the wealth they accumulated
- the time they devoted to preparing their own *houses of eternity*
- their funerary beliefs and practices
- how their tombs differed from those on which they worked in the Valley of the Kings.

Houses

Although the remains of the houses are barely above ground level, considerable information has been revealed about their size, layout, construction material, and the identity of some of the owners. The remaining structures within the houses give some idea of where certain domestic activities were carried out, and artefacts, such as **amulets**, figurines of personal gods and wall frescoes throw light on the personal religion of the members of the households. (See p. 121.)

amulets protective charms

ACTIVITY 2.5

Draw up a detailed mind map showing the major sources available for a study of Deir el-Medina.

2.3 The occupations and working conditions of the *Servants in the Place of Truth*

For the most part – unlike the workmen of Deir el-Medina – the skilled craftsmen and artists in other parts of Egypt are virtually anonymous. Their working conditions must be gauged from depictions on the tomb walls of the nobles, which tell virtually nothing about how the craftsmen 'saw' their jobs, and a famous written source: *The Satire of the Trades* is overly negative about the various workmen because it was written by a scribe to show how good his life was in comparison to others.

On the other hand, the written evidence from Deir el-Medina not only provides a more realistic and detailed account of working conditions for men of this class, but it also reveals the names of many of the *Servants in the Place of Truth*. We 'feel' we 'know' them.

FIGURE 2.21 Bowls, vases and jugs from the tomb of Kha
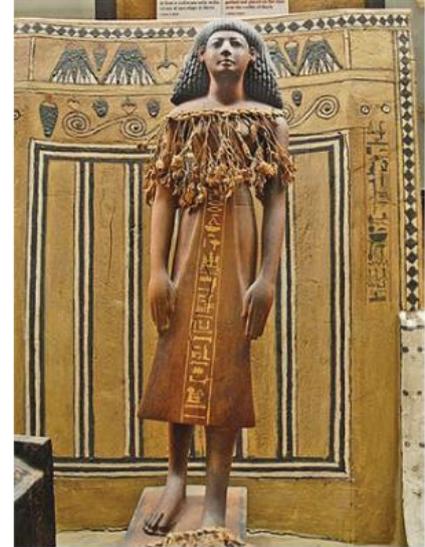
FIGURE 2.22 A funerary image of foreman and architect Kha, whose tomb was one of the most significant finds in the Deir el-Medina necropolis.

ACTIVITY 2.6

1 Refer to Figure 2.23 to find the answers to the following:
   - Recall who the captains of the village were and how many there were.
   - Describe to whom they were directly responsible.
   - Identify which captain was in charge of keeping records and registers.
   - Identify which captains kept overall control of the discipline of the 'gangs'.
   - Explain who looked after the royal storehouses where tomb construction materials were held.
   - Explain why there would have been two to three doorkeepers per gang of workmen.
   - Identify some of the specialist craftsmen in each gang of workmen.
   - Identify some other people who were counted as part of the gang.
   - Explain who the Medjay were and under whose command they worked.
   - Recall what outside services were provided by the government to help the workmen and their families.
2 Do some research on Kha and write a brief report on what you discover.

The organisation and personnel of the royal work force

Vizier

appointed

The captains of the village

– Kept overall control and discipline of workforce
– Liaised between the vizier and higher officials and the villagers
– Sat as magistrates on local court and made recommendations to vizier for candidates to fill vacancies in workforce.

Chiefs of the gangs in the Place of Truth – two foremen who looked after the technical side of the work

Scribe of the tomb – looked after the administrative side of the work

– Kept records of wages and other payments
– Kept registers of absentees and reasons
– Kept records of all tools and equipment issued
– Recorded all complaints and disputes in the village
– Sat on the local court and made recommendations for the vacancies in the workforce.

Two deputies, usually the eldest son or close relative of foremen

– Looked after official stores
– Handed out tools and other materials
– Watchmen of the tombs under constructions.

Guardians of the tomb

Outside Services
Medjay
Two chiefs of police for Deir el-Medina, prevented unauthorised entry to village and tomb area

Women slaves provided by the king, performed duties for the workmen such as grinding their corn and washing clothes

Labourers for the village – water carries, wood cutters, gardeners and fishermen

Guarded entrance to royal tombs

Doorkeepers of the tomb

Specialist craftsmen: stonemasons, draughtsman, plasterers, sculptors, painters, carpenters

Servants of the tomb – specialists, trainees, labourers and children of the tomb

FIGURE 2.23 Structure and hierarchy of Deir el-Medina

Working conditions

The workers were collectively known as 'the men of the gang' because they were organised into two gangs: one referred to as the 'left side', the other as the 'right side'. The full complement of workers varied considerably from time to time, depending on the economy and a particular pharaoh's reign. For example:

- Ramesses II, who reigned for 67 years, employed 48 workmen at the middle of his reign and 32 towards the end.
- Ramesses IV, who reigned for only eight years, employed a huge 120 workmen at the beginning of his reign, then cut back to 60 towards the end.

Working hours, attendance and absenteeism

The Egyptian week comprised 10 days. The men worked in 4-hour shifts for eight days straight in the Valley of the Kings. During this time, they 'camped' in huts on the col above the valley, after which they returned to the village and their families for two days. Since the Egyptian month was made up of 30 days, the men had six free days a month. This did not include special festival days and the frequent absences about which there is substantial evidence.

The *scribe of the tomb* kept a careful register of those men who did not turn up for work and the reasons given by them for their absences. The most frequent excuses were:

- scorpion bites and eye diseases
- family events and crises such as births and deaths
- brewing beer for a festival
- hangovers
- doing personal work for superiors
- building houses.

A worker had a valid excuse if either his wife or daughters were menstruating because 'coming in contact with a man whose female relations were bleeding could be considered undesirable'.[4]

- Pendua: 1st month of Inundation, Day 14 – (out) drinking with Khons
- Heremwia: 3rd of Inundation, days 21 and 22 – with his boss (foreman); 2nd of Winter, Day 8 – brewing beer; 3rd of Summer, Days 17, 18, 21 – ill
- Huynefer: 2nd of Winter, Days 7, 8 – ill; 3rd of Summer, Days 3, 5 – eye trouble; Days 7 and 8 – ill
- Amenemwia: 1st of Winter, day 15 – mummifying Harmose; 2nd of Winter, Day 7 – absent; Day 8 – brewing beer; Day 16 – strengthening the door …
- Seba: 4th of Inundation, Day 17 – a scorpion bit him
- Khons: 4th of Inundation, Day 7 – ill; 4th of Winter, Day 8 – attending his god; 1st of Inundation. Day 14 – his feast; day 15 – his feast
- QeAnuy: 1st of Winter, Day 24 – fetching stone for Qen-hir-khopshef; 2nd of Winter, Day 7 – ditto; Day 17 –absent; Day 24 – absent with scribe.

SOURCE 2.6 Entries in a scribal attendance document, trans, K. Kitchin, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, pp. 196–197

Provision of equipment and payment of rations

Although many of the workmen had their own tools, they did not use them when working for the king. Tools were issued from the government storehouse when required. The scribe kept a careful record of every piece of equipment distributed to the workers and every tool handed back to be sharpened or repaired.

FIGURE 2.24 A desert scorpion
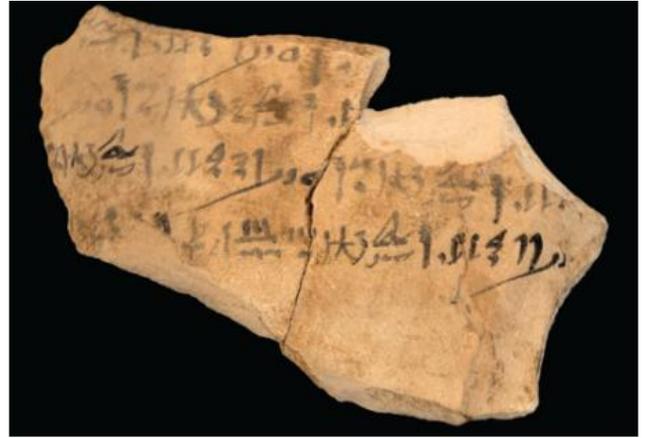
FIGURE 2.25 An ostracon with an excuse for absenteeism due to a scorpion bite

ACTIVITY 2.7

1 Identify the causes for absenteeism mentioned in Source 2.6.
2 Identify who had the most days off work.
3 Deduce why only blindness and scorpion bites are mentioned among the illnesses suffered by workmen. Suggest a reason why accidents don't appear to be recorded, even though many were bound to have happened and wounds to the head are recorded in detail in medical papyri.
4 Explain what you think is meant by 'his feast' and 'attending to his god'.
5 Assess what you consider would have been the least common source of absenteeism mentioned in this register.
6 Describe what causes of absenteeism may not have been strictly legal, although quite common, during an eight-day work shift.

- A list of workers absent from work. It lists absences due to illness, and shows that one specific man served the community as a doctor [British Museum 5634]
- A letter to a priest from a scorpion charmer, asking for the ingredients to mix a remedy [University College London 3]
- A letter from a father to his son, asking for help in treating his blindness [Berlin P 11247]
- A letter from a doctor to a patient who claimed to never have received needed treatment [Gard 177]
- A compilation of prescriptions for various ailments [DeM 1091]

SOURCE 2.7 Comments on four ostraca from Deir el-Medina, housed in overseas collections

Pharmaceutical treatments were also offered – aromatic oils and pleasant substances were believed to attract good gods and to repel evil … some medicines contained disagreeable substances such as dung or urine, in the hope that these would expel the evil from the patient complaints. The treatment of some complaints involved the use of *transfer* … one example was the migraine headache, when the head of the sufferer was rubbed with that of a fish, to transfer the pain.

SOURCE 2.8 A. R. David, *The Ancient Egyptians, Religious Beliefs and Practices*, p. 142

CHAPTER 2 DEIR EL-MEDINA

1 Recall what three categories of people (mentioned in Source 2.7 on p. 101) cared for the sick in the village.

2 Deduce what Source 2.8 (on p. 101) indicates about Egyptian medicine.

3 Examine what evidence there is (in Source 2.5 on p. 94) that a term like 'government sponsored health care system' is likely to be a modern distortion of what actually happened in the village.

FIGURE 2.26 A plasterer's float

FIGURE 2.27 A copper chisel

Since work was done deep within the tomb, the workers were provided with lamps. These consisted of wicks made from greased pieces of twisted linen placed in pottery bowls which 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 from the Source 2.9 that men went through an enormous number of them each day.

> Account of wicks issued from the storehouse in the 3rd month of Summer, [Day:]: 528 wicks.
> Account of consumption rendered this day: 118 wicks.

SOURCE 2.9 Translated by K. Kitchin, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, p. 192

Egypt did not have a form of currency; payments were made in goods of some kind, and because Deir el-Medina did not produce its own food like the people in most other Egyptian villages, it received government food rations and benefits as payment for working on the royal tombs. Wage slips have been found among the remains at Deir el-Medina and they show that the workmen were paid in the form of monthly rations of emmer wheat flour for making bread, and barley for making beer. These payments, due on the last working day of each month, came from the temple granaries and storehouses, were authorised by the vizier and paid through the royal treasury. In addition, the men received deliveries of vegetables, fish, water, wood and pottery from suppliers outside the village. A bonus of meat, salt, **natron** and oil was generally paid to the workers on festival days. Supplies were divided up among the community by the foremen and scribes.

natron a mineral salt found in dried lake beds

Rations for the 2nd month of summer for only one of the gangs

Gangs	Sacks of barley	Sacks of emmer
The chief workman	2	5.5
The scribe	2	5.5
17 men, each	1.5	4
2 young men, each	.5	1.5
The guardian	1.5	3.25
All slave women	1.5	1.25
The doorkeeper	.5	1
The doctor	.5	1

SOURCE 2.10 Ostracon Cairo 25608

The mayor of west Thebes Ramose informs the two chief workmen and their crews that he had received a message from the Vizier Paser, saying: Please let the wages be delivered to the crew of the necropolis, consisting of: vegetables, fish, firewood, beer in small vessels, small cattle and milk.

Let nothing of it be postponed so that I would be in arrears with their wages. Be at it and pay heed!

SOURCE 2.11 Ostracon Berlin 11238

Year 8 of Merenptah. On day 20 of the 2nd month of the inundation the crew were rewarded with:
- 9000 loaves of bread
- 20 vessels of oil
- 9000 fish
- 20 sacks of salt and 400 blocks of it
- Also beer and beans (3 sacks) and more that is lost
- Finally, they received 10 pieces of cattle which were slaughtered.

SOURCE 2.12 Ostracon Cairo 25504

FIGURE 2.28 Bread, the staple food for the workers and their families found in the tomb of Kha and Meryt

© Pamela Bradley 2018

1. Discuss why the scribe of the tomb was so scrupulous in keeping records of equipment.
2. Explain why salted oil was used for lamps in the tombs.
3. Identify the staples of the Egyptian diet.
4. Identify other items that were part of the workers' regular rations.
5. Although we have no other information, suggest why the doctor mentioned in Source 2.10 (on p. 103) might have received such a lowly ration.
6. Analyse what Source 2.11 suggests about the administration of the Vizier, Paser.
7. Discuss the reasons the pharaoh could have had (Source 2.12) for giving the workmen such an excessive gift of food on this occasion.
8. Explain how the workers and their families might have become vulnerable in a situation where they relied on rations.

Opportunities for promotion and supplementary income

The members of the work gangs were usually recruited from the sons of the workmen. Since families were large, not every son was fortunate enough to become a member of one of the gangs. Those who missed out had to find work elsewhere.

Although the foreman's position was not strictly hereditary, the chiefs often made their sons deputies to give them a greater chance of inheriting the position. All the same, competition for vacancies in the workforce was fierce. Positions were theoretically filled by the vizier, but it was usually the foremen and scribe who made the recommendations. This situation often led to bribery and it was not unusual for a man to give gifts to his superiors in order to ensure his son a position.

> I am the son of the foreman of the gang, Nebnefer. My father died … Neferhotep, my brother was appointed in his place. The enemy (unknown) killed Neferhotep. Paneb gave five servants of my father to Pareemheb who was vizier, though it was not an office that was his due.

SOURCE 2.13 Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 71

Fortunately, those workers who did not gain promotion had opportunities to supplement their income by other means. The villagers were enterprising in their attempts to increase their standard of living and often bartered their specialised skills to those both inside and outside the village, in order to gain possessions not normally owned by equivalent workers in other places. However, their greatest needs were to furnish their own tomb, provide a coffin and prepare funerary goods. Most would never have been able to achieve this except by bartering goods and services with others.

deben an ancient Egyptian weight unit

Every object had a value that was expressed in a unit known as a **deben**. A *deben* was based on the weights of certain commodities such as metal, usually copper or silver. In the New Kingdom, a *deben* was equal to about 91 grams of copper and that was further divided into 10 'pieces' (*kidet*).

An ostracon from Deir el-Medina in the 20th Dynasty revealed that a villager bartered a coffin worth 25.5 *deben* of copper with two goats (five *deben*), one pig (five *deben*), two logs of sycamore (2 *deben*) and scraps of copper.

1 In your own words, describe what the speaker in Source 2.13 is particularly angry and frustrated about.

2 In an economy where there were no coins, discuss how the value of an object was gauged.

3 Identify the most pressing need for a villager to make extra income.

The construction and decoration of royal and non-royal tombs

When a new king came to the throne, the royal tomb workers rejoiced because it meant the start of a new project. They would have no trouble getting rations and supplies, and if the king wanted his tomb completed quickly, more men would be recruited.

Once a royal commission, headed by the vizier, had chosen a suitable site in the Valley of the Kings and a plan was drawn up, the quarrying deep into the limestone cliffs began.

- The stonemasons used copper or bronze spikes which when pounded with a wooden mallet would split the rock.
- The limestone debris was removed from the site in baskets and deposited on the valley floor. The workmen and their superiors used these limestone chips for keeping records, making rough notes, sending messages, scribbling and drawing.

FIGURE 2.29 An ostracon of a workman with chisel and hammer

- As the quarrymen and stone masons excavated further into the cliff, the plasterers followed, smoothing down the walls with a layer of gypsum and whitewash.
- The draughtsmen outlined the layout of the text and pictures, mainly funerary in nature. Any mistakes or improvements were marked in black by the master draughtsman. The scenes to be inscribed or painted featured mainly funerary themes, such as the journey of the sun god, Re, through the Underworld.
- The sculptors and painters followed the draughtsmen and depending on the quality of the underlying rock, either painted directly onto the plaster surface or carved the reliefs using bronze chisels. The reliefs were then painted, using natural oxides (red, brown and yellow), derivatives of copper (blue and green), whitewash and soot. These were ground and then mixed with either water or gum.

When a king died, the workmen had to stop what work they were doing and concentrate on making the tomb as presentable as possible.

Royal tombs

Each pharaoh went to a great deal of trouble to make sure his *House of Eternity* was protected from robbers. Apart from the tomb's site in the arid ravines of the Valley of the Kings, other protective features included the following:

- Tomb entrances, built at odd angles in clefts high in the cliffs, were small and inconspicuous and covered with rock and rubble once sealed.
- Tombs were cut deep into the hillsides in a series of sloping corridors (often three). The entrance corridor could vary from 15 metres in length to as much as 105 metres long.

FIGURE 2.30 The tombs in the east Valley of the Kings

- A variety of devices to fool robbers if they broke through the entrance, such as blind chambers (also to serve as storage), false walls and passages under the floors of what appeared to be the last chamber. Also, a pit or well, some over 6 metres deep, was often constructed part-way along the main corridor. The room containing this well was called the 'room of hindering' which suggests it was meant to fool robbers, although it could have served the purpose of collecting rain water during flash floods. Some scholars maintain it was meant to represent the tomb of Osiris, God of the underworld.
- An antechamber at the end of the last corridor and, finally, a pillared burial chamber in the room farthest from the entrance.

'Decoration' of a royal tomb

In most royal tombs, the walls of the corridors and chambers were covered with texts and illustrations from the *Book of What is in the Underworld*, the *Book of Gates* and the *Book of Caverns*. These funerary books followed the theme of the nightly progress of the sun god's boat through the Underworld and its re-emergence at dawn. The corridors of the tomb represented the various stages of the journey through the Underworld and the obstacles to be overcome.
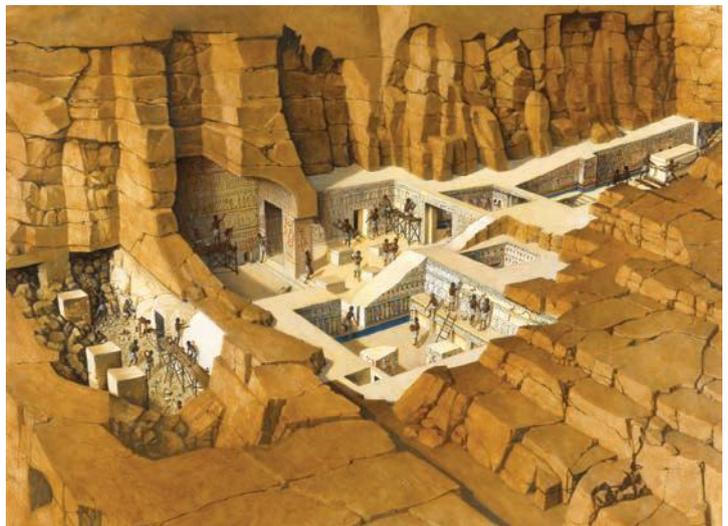
FIGURE 2.31 An artistic representation of digging Seti's tomb

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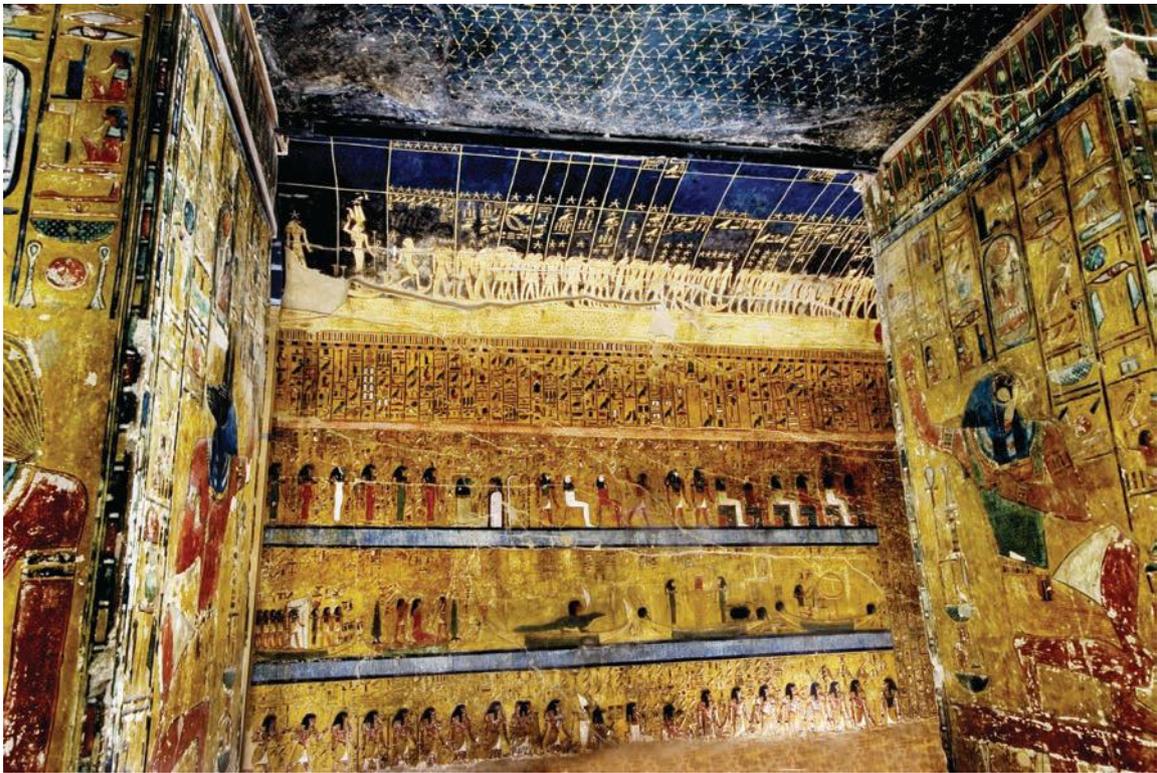
FIGURE 2.32 Wall painting and ceiling of the tomb of Seti I

FIGURE 2.33 Detail of the wall painting from the tomb of Seti I

Other scenes showed the deceased king or queen making offerings to a number of gods and standing before an enthroned Osiris.

Most ceilings, like the lids of coffins and sarcophagi, represented the sky. They were covered with gold stars on a dark blue background, and some included astrological maps, figures of Nut, the sky goddess, and the passage of the sun across the sky.

FIGURE 2.34 Detail of the wall painting in the tomb of Nefertari, one of the most beautiful ever found in Egypt

ACTIVITY 2.11

1 Try imagining:
   - the effort and time required of the quarrymen in digging so far into the cliff, and cutting all the side rooms, corridors, burial chamber and pit.
   - the difficulties of the sculptors and artists carving and painting the complex funerary scenes and precise hieroglyphic texts in the light of lamps whose wicks had to be constantly replaced.
2 Explain why is it not really accurate to use the term 'decoration' when speaking of the paintings and reliefs on the walls of the pharaohs' tombs.
3 Review the Theban Mapping Project described on p. 26 in Chapter 1 and check out its interactive map of the Valley of the Kings, noting just how many tombs were prepared by the Deir el-Medina workmen. Find the location of Pharaoh Seti's tomb.
4 Write an imaginative account by a tomb workman of the hardships he faced during his eight-day shift in the Valley of the Kings. Consider such things as the weather, environment, working conditions, illnesses, accidents, problems with possible lack of resources, constant supervision and time away from home.

Strikes by the workers

The first recorded strike in history occurred in year 29 of the reign of Ramesses III, a time of serious political and economic difficulties. It involved the workers of Deir el-Medina and rocked the end of Rameses III's reign. Although, the workers received various forms of government compensation, getting paid was another matter.

> Beginning Year 29, written by the scribe, Neferhotep to the vizier: We are in extreme destitution. We are left lacking in every staple that comes from the white house, that comes from the storeroom, that comes from the reserves. … Year 29, month 2 of the inundation season, Day 21, … Twenty days have gone by in the month without our rations having been given to us.

SOURCE 2.14 Cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 55 and 56

PROFILE OF AN ANCIENT STRIKE

The sequence of events occurred in the following ways:

1. To show their discontent, the workers left their village and the territory of the Institution of the Tomb – passing the police posts – and made their way to the funerary temple of Ramesses III. They were excluded from this significant spot and then gathered in the rear of the temple of Thutmose III.

2. Their immediate supervisors said the matter had to be submitted to pharaoh and they returned to the village.

3. The next day a similar scenario was played out and they went to the mortuary temple of Ramesses II to make their demand. This action terrified the administrators who distributed whatever they could find: total 50 cakes.

4. This paltry attempt to appease the workmen did not succeed in forcing the workmen to give up their demands, and the following day they arrived once more at the mortuary temple of Ramesses II, but instead of just making noisy demonstrations outside, they entered it, and presented their grievances to the staff.

> If we arrived there, it is because of hunger, because of thirst. There is no clothing, no unguent, no fish, no vegetables. Write to Pharaoh, l.p.h., our goodly Lord, and write to the vizier our superior, to procure us means of subsistence.[5]

5. Their actions appeared to have paid off for they were granted the rations, but this was not the end of it, for they were still owed rations for the current month. A new development occurred when the chief of the Medjay police, Montmose, suggested they desert the village, take their wives, children and tools and follow him to the funerary temple of Seti I, further south than they had ventured before. Why Montmose assumed command of the movement is not really known.

6. The workmen continued their strike for another four days, rejecting the continued half-hearted and devious tactics of the administrators, until the overseer of pharaoh's troops came to them to listen to their grievances, and who apparently wrote to pharaoh.

7. Finally, on day 17 of winter, year 29, the delivery of rations for the second month was made. However, one month later they were once again on strike. This time, the angry workmen gathered in the administrative centre of the village and launched a new weapon against the authorities: the threat of tomb violation.

8. The vizier finally had to admit that he was unable to deliver the rations because the state granaries were empty, and that he would give them what he could find, and they received only half-measures: two sacks of emmer wheat to (each of) the gang, as the ration of the month.

9. However, soon after the workers showed fresh discontent at their half-rations and once again gathered behind the mortuary temple of Merneptah, from where they shouted abuse at the governor of Thebes who happened to be passing. Several days later they registered a complaint with the chief priest of Amun, charging the governor of Thebes for misappropriation of the allocations they were entitled to from the loaves dedicated to the cult of Ramesses II.

10. The trouble persisted until the end of the reign of Ramesses III and into the reign of his successor, Ramesses IV.

1   Construct a list of the tactics used by the workmen to bring pressure to bear on the bureaucratic authorities.

2   Identify some of the reasons behind the authorities' failure to provide the worker's rations on time?

Tomb robbery

The rich grave goods buried away for the use of royalty and nobility in the afterlife attracted the greedy and impoverished throughout Egyptian history, but the tomb robberies that occurred during the 20th Dynasty were unique in several ways:

1   They were aimed specifically at the tombs in western Thebes.

2   They were extensively documented in detail in dossiers, known as *The Tomb Robbery Papyri*, prepared for judicial investigations carried out in years 16–17 of Ramesses IX and year 19 of Ramesses XI. These dossiers included not only the investigations into the robberies but also the social classes from which the robbers came.

3   They revealed the lack of security that had prevailed on the west bank since the days of the workers' strike and due to the bands of 'foreigners' (Libyans) wandering the area, who threw fear into the locals and gave the workmen in Deir el-Medina an excuse for not reporting to work in the Valley of the Kings.

4   They revealed the serious corruption among members of the Theban administration, the rivalry between individual officials and factions, and their part in the organisation of the robberies and the distribution of loot.

> In Year 13 [of Pharaoh …] we set off to commit robberies in the funerary monuments according to the manner of acting to which we quite regularly conformed … then some days later, the guardians of Thebes learned that we had committed robberies in the west. They seized us, and they confined me in the seat of the governor of Thebes. I took the twenty *deben* of gold that had fallen to me as my share. I gave them to the scribe of the District of Tameniu, Khaemope; he freed me. I rejoined my companions, and they repaid me a share. I returned to this practice of plundering in the tombs of the dignitaries … who lie in the west of Thebes down to this day.

SOURCE 2.15 Papyrus Amhurst-Leopold cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt,* pp. 6–7

A tomb robbing scandal in years 16 and 17 of Ramesses IX

This situation would have continued had it not been for the personal enmity between two high officials: Paser, the governor of Thebes – the city on the east bank with its great temples – and Pawero, the governor of the west bank and chief Medjay of the *Institution of the Tomb* who supervised the royal necropolis. Paser had the support of the inhabitants of the east bank and Pawero had the support of the people of the west bank, especially the workers of Deir el-Medina, and also the vizier.

•   The scandal began when two scribes from Deir el-Medina reported five cases of pillaging to Paser, who felt it his duty to advise the pharaoh, despite the fact that that he was not in charge of such matters. It is unlikely that Paser was really too concerned about the moral issue of tomb robbing, but more interested in implicating the tomb workers in order to embarrass Pawero, who was responsible for the security of the west bank.

•   Pawero was furious at the actions of his 'enemy'.

- He immediately reported their complaints to Pharaoh himself, as if he had discovered the thefts and instigated an enquiry. There is no doubt this was done in an effort to prevent a scandal in which he was accused of covering up pillaging, of which he most certainly had some knowledge. He carried out an investigation of the men, who were found to have conducted excavations in the funerary monuments of the west of Thebes. A commission was set up, led by Pawero and including representatives of the high offices and local officials, and it was found that of the 10 complexes inspected, nine were found intact, including the Valley of the Queens. This seemed to have been done in suspect haste because the following year it was reported that the Tomb of Queen Isis *had* been violated.

FIGURE 2.35 An artistic representation of a royal tomb robbery

- Pawero submitted a list of robbers who were jailed and interrogated, but according to Pawero, the workers of the royal tombs were innocent of any accusation of robbery; and yet it became clear that though they may not have been among the thieves, they were actually involved in these robberies as informers and receivers of stolen goods.
- The dignitaries encouraged the leaders and men of the Tomb, as well as Medjay, to cross to Thebes, supposedly to rejoice at their 'innocence' but in fact it was a triumphant rally targeted at Paser.
- Afterwards, when the vizier made a speech before the tribunal, it was obvious he was complicit in the defeat of Paser.

> It was a mistake for these two scribes of (the institution of) the Tomb to approach the governor of Thebes to make a report to him, given that none of their predecessors had ever made a report to him, and that it was the vizier, when he was in the southern region, to whom they made reports.

SOURCE 2.16 Cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 9

Who were the tomb robbers?

From the information available, and the lists of robbers drawn up, it is interesting to note that they were:

- mostly ordinary people recruited from the middle and lower classes, not those on the margins of society
- artisans, all possessing useful skills for robbery, such as quarrymen and carpenters
- people from both sides of the river, employed in subordinate positions in the significant departments and institutions of the Egyptian state, such as workers in the domain of the state god Amun (east side) and in the funerary temple of Ramesses III (west side).
- bands of men united by family or profession.

There is no doubt that the connection of the workers from Deir el-Medina with the robbers ranged from 'turning a blind eye', to compromising security by not turning up to work, to complete complicity by informing thieves of particular sites to rob, and sharing in the spoils.

The following sources are from the mouths of the robbers themselves.

> We opened the sarcophagi and their coffins, in which they were. We found the august mummy of this king provided with a scimitar, while a great number of amulets and gold jewels were on his neck, his mask on him, and that the venerable mummy of this king was entirely covered with gold, his coffins were accented with silver within and without and encrusted with every sort of precious stone. We collected the gold … as well as the amulets we found on his neck and the coffins in which he rested.

SOURCE 2.17 Papyrus Amherst-Leopold II, 1, 16-3, cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 40

> We opened the place. We removed a shroud of gold and one *deben* of silver. We tore it up; we placed it in a basket; we brought it down. We divided it up; we made six shares. We gave two shares to Amenkhau, son of the singer of the altar Hori, because he said, 'It is I who suggested the job.' That left us four shares for the four of us as well.

SOURCE 2.18 Papyrus BM 10052, Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 41

ACTIVITY 2.13

1 Uses Sources 2.15–2.18 (on pp. 110–112) and other information to answer the following:
   - Explain what made this series of tomb robberies different to those of previous ages.
   - Examine what Source 2.15 indicates about Theban officials and the attitude of the robbers.
   - Recall what the basis of the enmity between Paser and Pawero was.
   - Identify what was surprising about those involved in these robberies.
   - Recall what part the workmen of Deir el-Medina played in these crimes.
   - Identify the kind of 'treasures' the robbers in Source 2.16 focused on.
   - Explain how the robbers in Source 2.18 divided up their spoils.
2 Write an account of these robberies as if you were reporting to the vizier of Pharaoh.
3 Discuss the daily problems and ongoing vulnerability faced by the workers of Deir el-Medina and their families.

2.4 Life in Deir el-Medina

Women in Deir el-Medina and their roles

The picture of women (upper class) presented in New Kingdom literature, painting and sculpture reflects 'male ideals concerning women and their place in society'.[6] They are always depicted as young and beautiful and are shown in relationship to their fathers, husbands and sons playing a supportive but subordinate role.

The wall paintings in several Deir el-Medina tombs belonging to village foremen Sennedjem and Inherkhaur reflect this image; however, legal documents and correspondence reveal a different picture to tomb wall paintings. In theory at least, Egyptian women of all classes were the equals of men in the eyes of the law. A woman could:

- inherit, purchase, lease and sell property
- continue to administer her own property even when married
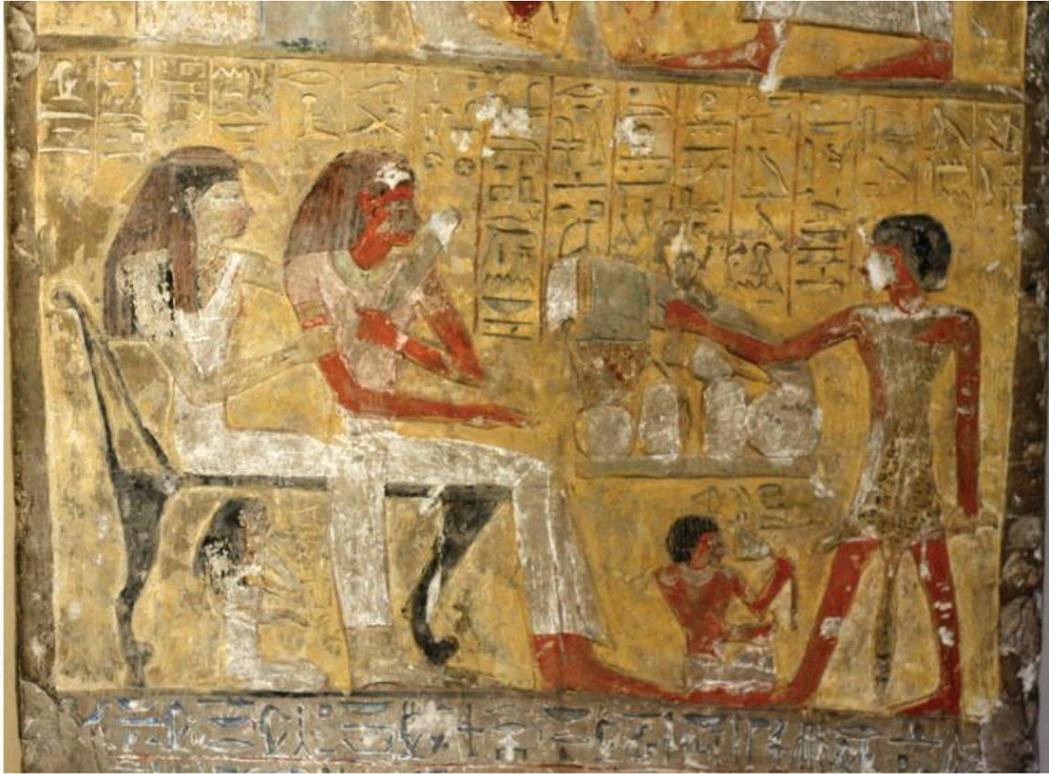
FIGURE 2.36 A Deir el-Medina family, from a stela

- hire or buy slaves
- make a legal contract (see Source 2.19), go to court as a plaintiff or defendant and give evidence
- live alone without the protection of a male guardian
- retain her property if divorced and claim a share of any joint property, except in the case of adultery.

The will of Nau-nakht

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 land 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. But see, I am grown old, and see, they are not looking after me in my turn. Whoever of them has aided me, to him I will give of my property, but he who has not given to me, to him will I not give of my property.' … list of the workmen and women to whom she gave, She said, 'I have given to him as special reward a washing-bowl of bronze over and above his fellows' As for the Citizenness Menat-nakht, she said 'She shall have her share of the division of all my property except for the *oipe* (about 20 litres) of emmer which my three male children and also the Citizenness Wast-nakht have given me'. List of her children of whom she said: 'They shall not participate in the division of my 1/3, but in 2/3 of their father they shall participate. As for these four children of mine, (named) they shall not participate in the division of any of my property. And as for any property of the scribe Qenherkhepseshef, my first husband, and also his landed property and this storeroom of my father and also this *oipe* of emmer which I collected in company with my husband, they shall not share them. As for these 8 children of mine they shall participate in the division of the property of their father in one single division …

SOURCE 2.19 Jaroslav Cerny, 'The Will of Nau-nakht and the Related Documents', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 31 (1945) 29–53

Explain in your own words what Nau-nakht is leaving, or not leaving, to particular members of her family in her will and why.

Marriage and motherhood

Like all women in ancient Egypt, married women in Deir el-Medina were more respected than unmarried ones. Women and men in the village appear to have had only one married partner, although it seems that some women married again after the death of their first. Married women derived their status from their husbands' position within society, but there is evidence that adultery within the community of Deir el-Medina was not uncommon.

A woman's status increased with motherhood. The more children she had, the greater her standing in the community. The birth of a boy further enhanced her status. The sources indicate that families in the worker's village were very large, some as large as 8–15 members. Of course, many children would have died during infancy.

After motherhood, a woman's chief duty was to look after the home. However, in Deir el-Medina the women had help with this task. Slaves provided by the government alleviated their housework somewhat by grinding corn and carrying out other menial tasks. There was also a regular laundry service. These launderers were assigned a certain number of households to service, but a woman did not always take up the option of using one.

FIGURE 2.37 An ostracon showing a feeding mother

Apart from their duties as mothers and looking after their households, they seem to have spent time supplementing their own and others' meagre government issue of clothing by spinning, weaving and dressmaking, bartering their skills and services for extra goods they needed, and dispatching food and other supplies to the workers' encampment in the mountains. A workman called Nebneteru sent the following message to his mother: 'Have brought to me some bread, also whatever else you have by you, urgently, urgently!'[7] Another asked for beans to go with his bread. In one case, a scribe in the valley requested that his wife send papyri, pens, a writing board and text.

According to the number of 'notes' about female matters (dressmaking advice, laundry lists) and letters addressed to mothers and wives by husbands and sons working in the Valley of the Kings, it seems that that the women in Deir el-Medina may have had a higher level of literacy than in other communities. This is not surprising, since the village was filled with a high number of skilled and educated personnel.

Everyday life

Because Deir el-Medina was an atypical village, with the men away for eight days at a time working in the Valley of the Kings and the Valley of the Queens, it was the women who kept the village going. Of course, there were always some men around: 'retired workers, invalids, men on special duty in the village, men excused from work and servants bringing up goods from the river'.[8]

FIGURE 2.38 An enlarged plan of the village

Village houses

The houses of Deir el-Medina have been preserved only to ground level and yet, archaeologists have been able to 'reconstruct' what they would have once looked like. The following table summarises what they have surmised about them.

TABLE 2.2 The houses and furniture of Deir el-Medina

Houses and furniture
• Most houses were relatively small and cramped considering the large size of village families, although houses belonging to leading men in the village (foremen, deputies and scribes) were considerably larger.
• The average house had four small rooms, sparsely furnished: with chairs, stools, chests, beds and statues of gods. The one-storey mud-brick and stone houses were white-washed, with hard-packed dirt floors. Where floors were plastered, they were painted red or white. Thick flat roofs were made from palm trunks and fronds then plastered over. Doors were thought to be painted red with inscriptions in red identifying home owners.
• Each house opened onto a street and shared several walls with neighbours. An entrance hall, several steps below the street level, had wall niches for offering tables, stelae and busts of ancestors, plus a large brick structure, reaching almost to the ceiling, that may have been an altar or a bed for giving birth. This may have been decorated with frescoes; the most common found were of Bes, the deity associated with childbirth. A second room, with a higher ceiling that allowed light to filter in through small windows, featured brick platforms or divans around the room that served as beds at night and as seating during the day. Side rooms were probably used for sleeping, storage, or work.
• Sometimes, home owners turned part of the front room into a business: a shop or bar. In some houses, the remains of cellars have been found beneath room two, perhaps for storing grain or beer.
• There is no indication of sanitation facilities. Water was collected from a community well outside the northern gate, and garbage dumped in a pit outside the town.

FIGURE 2.39 Examples of household items found in the tomb of Khat and Meryt
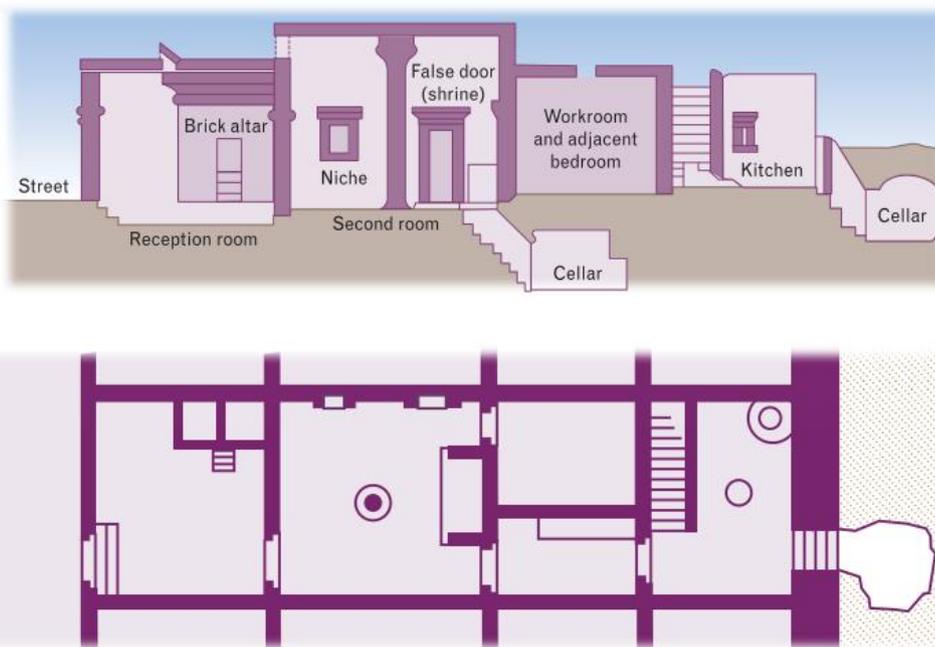
FIGURE 2.40 An artist's reconstruction of a house belonging to a leading member of the community village

Recreation

Life in the village was not always just hard work. Religious festivals and family celebrations such as births, weddings and anniversaries gave people a chance to relax and have fun. They seemed to need little excuse for a party or to indulge in beer and wine.

Cambridge University Press

FIGURE 2.41 An ostracon depicting a dancer or acrobat during the celebration of the Opet Festival

A feast to the village patron, the deified Amenhotep I.

The gang made merry before him for four full days, drinking with their wives and children –sixty people from inside (the village) and sixty people from outside.

SOURCE 2.20 K. A. Kitchen, *Pharaoh Triumphant*, p. 199

Scenes from villagers' tombs show members of the family amusing themselves at a game of draughts, and numerous ostraca reveal that many villagers sketched in their spare time, and read popular stories such as the *Tale of Sinhue*. They also kept pets.

Neighbourhood squabbles and work-related disputes

In a community as small as Deir el-Medina, disputes often broke out. Many were often trivial, such as the failure to pay for a pot of fat or the sale of a lame donkey, while among the workman, minor grievances included neglect of tools and laziness, as in the case of someone called Ib who 'spent the whole day fetching the water pot, and no other job laid on him the whole day long'.[9] Some were complaints against bosses, such as that made by a draughtsman-painter named Prehotep to his boss, the scribe Qen-he-khopshef: 'What's the meaning of this rotten way you've treated me? I am just to you like a donkey.'[10]

Perhaps taking some of these matters to the local court (*kenbet*) – composed of the foremen, deputies, scribes and highly regarded senior villagers – alleviated the boredom of the daily routine.

But there were more serious disputes, such as those that were committed by a tomb worker (later a foreman) named Paneb.

Memorandum concerning the fact that he constantly attacked the men during a nighttime gathering and that he took to … throwing stones at the men.

SOURCE 2.21 Papyrus Salt 124, cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 74

A memorandum concerning the fact that he said to the foreman of the gang Hay, 'I'll attack you on the mountain, and I'll kill you'.

SOURCE 2.22 Papyrus Salt 124, cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*, p. 75

> Memorandum concerning the fact that he seized the large pick for breaking stone, and that when it was said, 'It is not there', a whole month was spent looking for it, and that he took it and threw it behind a large stone … that he went in search of the large chisel of the construction site and that he broke it in his tomb.

SOURCE 2.23 Papyrus Salt 124, cited in Pascal Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt,* p. 75

Eventually Paneb became even more notorious by robbing private tombs and making sexual assaults on several married women. He was eventually dismissed from office by the vizier.

ACTIVITY 2.15

1 From Sources 2.21–2.23 (on pp. 117–8), list the category of crimes Paneb would have been accused of today.

2 Describe village life in Deir el-Medina from the perspective of a wife of one of the royal tomb workers.

Religious beliefs and practices in Deir el-Medina

The painted scenes in the workmen's tombs, the number of village and household shrines, stelae, amulets, statues of local gods, and the remains of 16–18 chapels in the community indicate that the villagers of Deir el-Medina had a strong personal devotion to the gods, whom they believed played a real and direct role in their everyday lives.

In Deir el-Medina, however, there was one unique feature of this personal piety: the cult worship of their divinised patrons, Amenhotep I (*Amenhotep of the Town*) and his mother Queen Ahmose-Nefertari (*Mistress of the Sky* and *Lady of the West*) which continued throughout the centuries of the village's existence. Every year, each villager took part in the *Festival of Amenhotep I* when the local gods of the village were honoured.

The evidence for state and funerary gods being worshipped alongside local gods can be seen in:

FIGURE 2.42 Worshipping the gods, from a stela

- their tombs cut into the cliffs above the village, which feature Osiris, god of the Underworld and resurrection, and his wife, Isis, as well as the deified Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari.

- village shrines where many were dedicated to Amon-Re, the chief state god during the New Kingdom; Ptah, the god of craftsmen; Hathor, the goddess of, love, beauty motherhood and joy; and Thoth, the ibis-headed god of writing and patron of scribes; alongside the snake goddess Meretseger, goddess of the Peak, *Lady of the Western Mountain.* In the village, Meretseger, who was in charge of protection in the whole of the necropolis, was almost as important as Osiris.
- the two popular deities, particularly with women, Taweret, the hippopotamus goddess of childbirth, and Bes, the bearded dwarf, god of fertility, dance and music. This latter god was depicted on amulets and in frescoes found in houses.
- stelae placed in the home or in special chapels, which were also dedicated to the deceased members of the village and family ancestors recorded as 'excellent spirits of Re' and shown holding a lotus blossom, symbol of transformation. These were part of the ancestor cult.
- other stelae, used to record remorse, to ask for forgiveness or to express thanks for the mercy of a god.
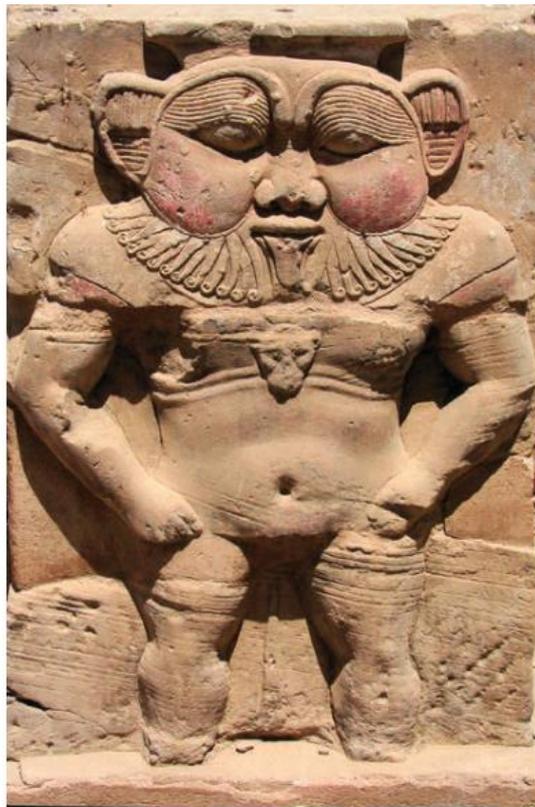
FIGURE 2.43 Bes

FIGURE 2.44 Taweret

A stela set up by the sick workman, Neferabu
I was an ignorant and foolish man
Who did not know good from evil.
I sinned against the Peak
And she taught me a lesson.
I was in her power night and day
I called to my Lady
She came to me as a sweet breeze.
She was merciful to me.

SOURCE 2.24 Morris Bierbrier, *The Tomb-Builders of the Pharaohs*, p. 98

With so many gods, shrines and temples, one would have expected there to have been a body of priests in the community, but the workers 'acted as their own priests and performed all the sacred rituals for their gods'.[11]

Magic was also an integral part of Egyptian religion and numbers of amulets or protective charms, written with spells, have been found both within the settlement and in the tombs of the villagers. Egyptians

believed in sympathetic magic, or the belief that 'an image of an object could act for or against the item it represented, depending on the spells associated with its use'.[12]

Like all Egyptians, the people of Deir el-Medina believed in the cycle of life, death and rebirth all around them (sun, flood, growth).

1 They believed that each person had a:
   - physical body that must be preserved after death
   - double or life force called the **ka**. The *ka* left the body after death but remained in the tomb, residing in a *ka* statue, and had to be provided with offerings. In the case of the workmen of Deir el-Medina, these offerings were carried out by the family, unlike royalty for whom special priests carried out the cult of the dead in mortuary temples.
   - soul or **ba** which enjoyed eternal existence but which – in the form of a human-headed bird – could revisit the tomb whenever it wanted.

ka spiritual part of an individual human being or god, which survived after death and could reside in a statue of the person

ba the soul of a person or god in the form of a human-headed bird, which survived after death

ushabtis funerary figurines that were buried with a person in order to act as a worker in the afterworld in place of the deceased

pyramidion the uppermost piece or capstone of an Egyptian pyramid or obelisk

2 From the evidence of their tombs, workmen of Deir el-Medina expected an Osirian afterlife in the *Fields of Reeds or Yaru*, based on the fertile and watery landscape of the Egyptian delta, where the deceased lived a life of ease and prosperity sailing among the lakes, visiting cities and reunited with their families; where harvests never failed, crops grew tall and labourers in the form of **ushabtis** (model workers known as *answerers* with hoes, picks, seed bags and water pots) did all the hard work.

While most workers in Deir el-Medina hoped to build a tomb for themselves, the number of burial pits around the village indicate that some people did not achieve this goal.

The tombs of Deir el-Medina are in a category of their own and although they each had a basic plan, their exact construction depended on whether the site had plenty of flat land or if it had to be cut into the rocky cliff, and on the status of the deceased. General features included:

- A small open forecourt marked by a pylon (gateway), or a portico supported by pillars in which was a large stela commemorating the deceased and depicting his funeral.
- A one- or two-roomed vaulted chapel with statue niches, surmounted by a small brick pyramid topped with a limestone **pyramidion**.
- A shaft leading either from the outside court or from within the chapel to a subterranean vaulted burial chamber, the walls and ceilings of which were usually brightly painted with scenes less stereotyped than those of 19th-Dynasty nobles. Although the usual funerary themes were still predominant, the deceased's family played a prominent role in many scenes. Another variation was the inclusion of the villages' patrons, Amenhotep I and his mother Ahmose-Nefertari.
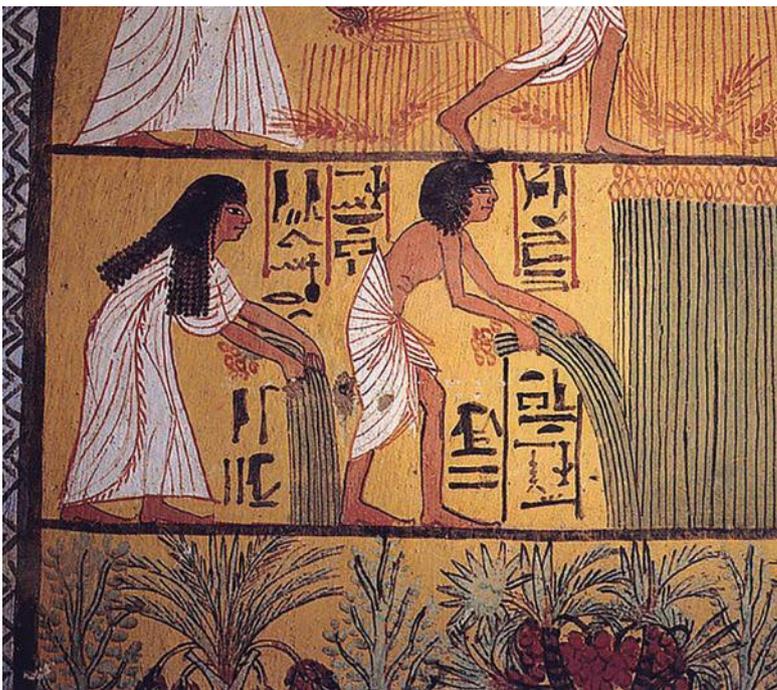
FIGURE 2.45 The 'Fields of Reeds' depicted in the Tomb of Sennedjem

The tomb of Sennedjem

One of the outstanding tombs in the Deir el-Medina necropolis belonged to Sennedjem, one of the captains of the village. He and his sons were fortunate to have lived at a time of great prosperity in the village, and the talents of the tomb workers were put to use in his own tomb. This was a family crypt used for the mummies of Sennedjem and his wife, Iineferti; his son Khonsu and his wife, Tameket; Khonsu's younger brother Ramesses; and four other named members of the family, as well as 11 unidentified mummies. It was one of the most beautiful and best preserved in the Theban necropolis.

FIGURE 2.46 A pyramid-tomb in Deir el-Medina

ACTIVITY 2.16

1 Discuss the evidence for a strong sense of personal piety in Deir el-Medina.
2 Explain the ways in which the Deir el-Medina tombs were in a category of their own.
3 Explain why the tomb of Sennedjem, the captain of the village, is so highly regarded.
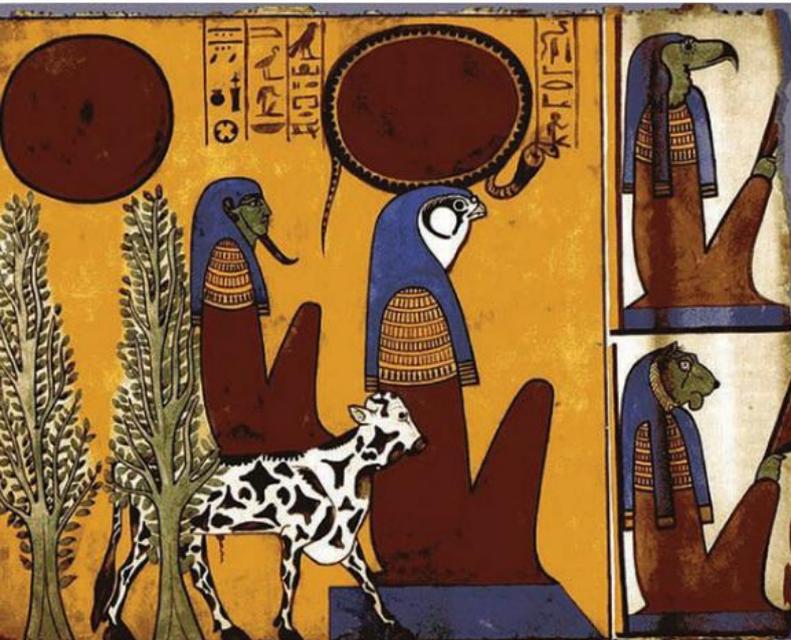
FIGURE 2.47 A scene from the Tomb of Sennedjem

FIGURE 2.48 Decoration in the tomb of a notable workman from Deir el-Medina

The urgent need to protect and conserve Deir el-Medina

There is a recognition that all the monuments and remains – including the unique village of the tomb workers – on the west bank in Luxor, that have survived for so long, are in serious danger of irreparable damage due to changes in environmental and demographic conditions over the last few decades. These changed conditions include wetter weather, growing population, more settlements, increasing numbers

of tourists, and the proximity of agriculture to the monuments. These have caused the mudbrick palace complexes, enclosure walls and tomb chapels to have suffered more decay than in the previous millennia.

Several recent initiatives have been implemented by foreign and Egyptian organisations. These have:

- lowered groundwater level in the vicinity of the West Bank temples
- laid 3 km of drains in the cultivated areas from Medinet Habu in the south to the Temple of Seti I in the north, with a pumping station midway in front of the Ramesseum
- directed excess irrigation water that now flows toward the antiquities sites in the desert into a drainage canal leading to the Nile
- addressed the real source of the problem – the over-irrigation of crops such as sugarcane that require far too much water by attempting to replace the sugarcane fields with lucrative crops that require less irrigation – such as fruits, flowers and vegetables
- introduced new site management techniques to protect the fragile environment from the increasing numbers of visitors.

FIGURE 2.49 A coffin of one of the workmen from Deir el-Medina
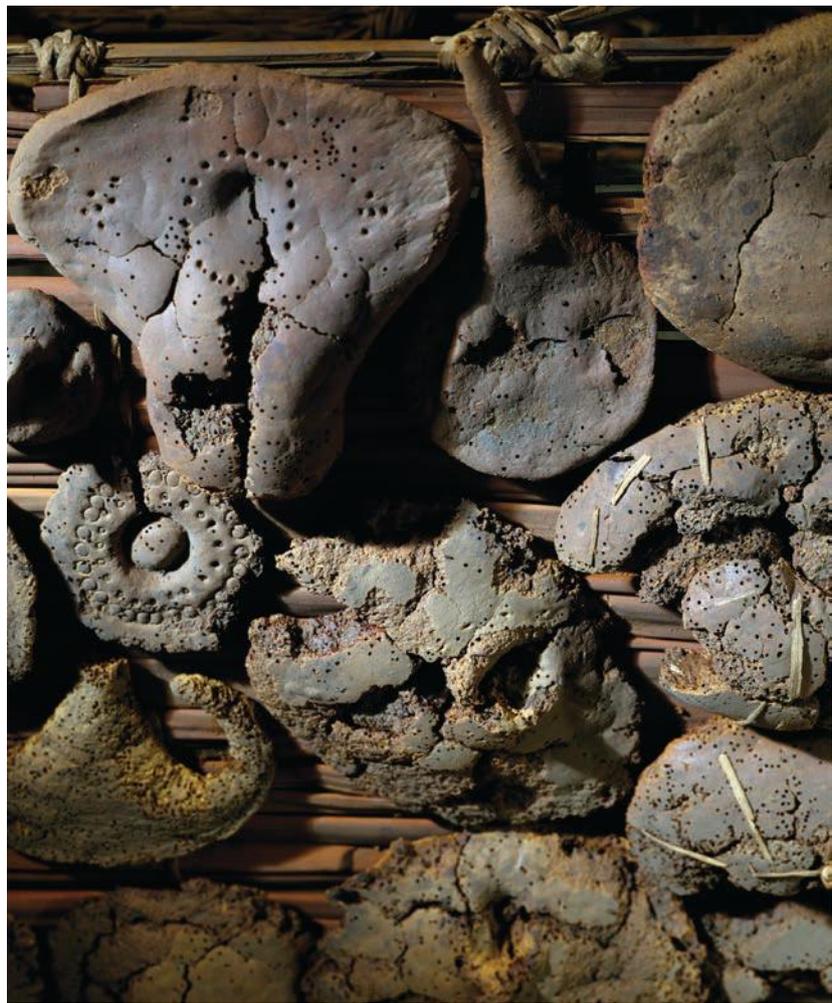
FIGURE 2.50 Loaves of bread found in the tomb of Khat and Meryt

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING LIFE IN THE VILLAGE

- Deir el-Medina was a purpose-built village in the necropolis of western Thebes. It housed those craftsmen and labourers who constructed the tombs of the Egyptian kings and queens of the New Kingdom. Due to the looting of pyramids and associated mortuary temples of the past, the early kings of the 18th Dynasty decided to separate their tombs and temples to prevent robbers looting their tombs. These were to be hidden away in the remote and rocky Valleys of the Kings and Queens. The villagers of Deir el-Medina, though privileged in many ways, both lived and worked in inhospitable environments.

THE NATURE OF THE AVAILABLE SOURCES

- The documentation for life in Deir el-Medina is vast. This includes endless inscribed ostraca (stories, laundry lists, complaints, drawings and doodles); papyrus rolls and scraps with medical and legal information; and the material remains: houses, temples, shrines, and tombs, plus associated artefacts.

THE OCCUPATIONS AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF THE *SERVANTS IN THE PLACE OF TRUTH*

- Unlike skilled craftsmen elsewhere in Egypt who tend to be anonymous, the workmen of Deir el-Medina are known to us, many by name and actions. The ostraca provide a realistic and detailed account of their working conditions (shifts, teams, bosses), pay (rations), absenteeism and excuses, grievances and quarrels and medical problems.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN DEIR EL-MEDINA

- Village life revolved around the usual concerns of working people: looking after their families, motherhood, religious and personal celebrations, festivals and indulging in drink, music, bartering for extras, village squabbles and preparing for death (tombs and coffins).

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources

- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication

    As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- necropolis
- ostraca
- mortuary temples

- stelae
- hieratic
- pyramidion.

Historical concepts

Change and continuity

Discuss the changes that occurred in the village during its period of occupation (from the time of Amenhotep I to Ramesses). What things remained the same?

Causation and perspective

Compare the different ancient perspectives on the cause of the first recorded strike in history and the behaviour of the tomb workers.

Significance

Assess the importance of the work done in Deir el-Medina by Bernard Bruyère.

Historical skills

Source analysis and historical interpretation

- On the basis of figured ostraca and the bones of mummies, identify the new interpretations that have been posed about the culture and health of the inhabitants of Deir el-Medina.
- Analyse how the sources help in understanding the way the workers reacted to their on-going vulnerability in terms of being a government-supported village.

Explanation and communication: extended essay

Explain the importance of Deir el-Medina during the 18th and 19th Dynasties and discuss why is it important to historians today.

CHAPTER 3
Ancient Alexandria

FIGURE 3.1 The Nile in flood as depicted in the Nilotic mosaic, Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia, Italy
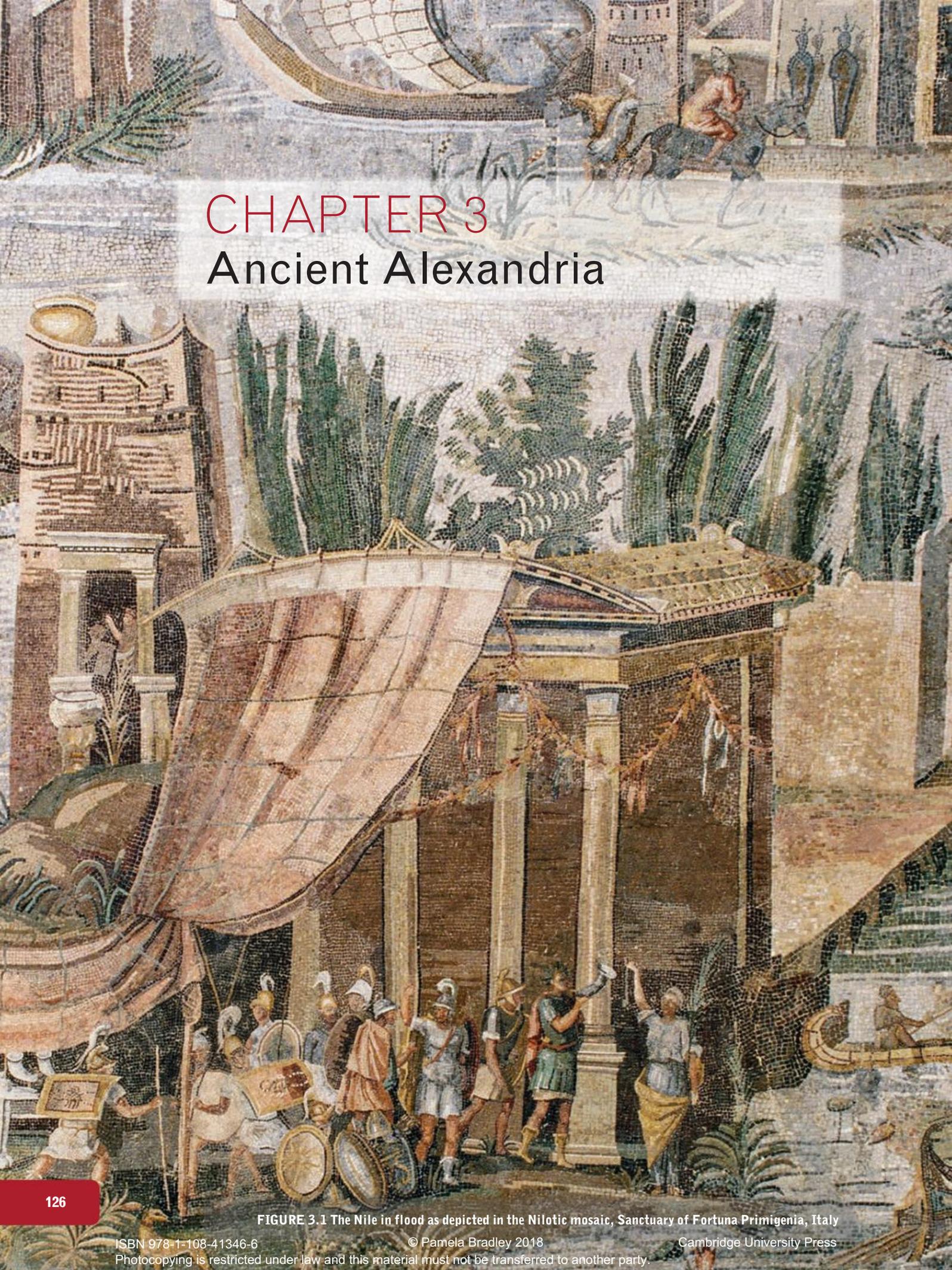
FIGURE 3.2 Map of the Egyptian delta and the location of Alexandria

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate the history and development of the city of Alexandria and how this city shaped the ancient world.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the historical and geographical context of Alexandria • representations of Alexandria • sources of evidence for ancient Alexandria • life in Alexandria as revealed through the sources.

The advantages of the city's site are various; the first, the place is washed by two seas, on the north by the Aegyptian Sea, as it is called, and on the south by Lake Mareia, also called Mareotis. This is filled with many canals from the Nile … and through these far more goods are imported than from the sea, with the result that the harbour on the lake was much wealthier than that on the sea …

SOURCE 3.1 Strabo, *Geography*, 17.7

CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 3.3 Alexander wearing the horns of Zeus-Amun whose oracle declared him his 'son' at Siwah Oasis prior to the founding of the city

FIGURE 3.4 A 17th-century painting by Sébastien Bourdon of the Roman emperor Augustus paying homage before the tomb of Alexander the Great

Study Figures 3.3 and 3.4 carefully. Note what you see in each one and consider how the response of the oracle at Siwah might have influenced Alexander's claim to power and later legendary status.

CHAPTER 3 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS

KEY IDEA

Alexandria was one of the greatest cosmopolitan, multi-religious, trading and cultural cities in the Hellenic world. It preserved and spread Hellenic culture all around the Mediterranean and beyond, and was known for its patronage of scholars.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

The scholars who studied in Alexandria are still known today for their work and outstanding achievements, particularly in the sciences. Also, at the present time Alexandria is giving up its secrets both on land and sea, although it is maritime archaeology that is revealing much that bears witness to the city's illustrious past.

KEY TERMS

- agora
- stadia
- Hellenistic
- Emporium
- *Gymnasium*
- Mausolea
- Mouseion
- Serapeum
- contemporary
- extant
- *ethnarch*
- heresies
- sectarian

Painting the picture

Alexandria has long occupied a special place in the popular imagination due to its almost legendary founder, Alexander the Great, and to its last Ptolemaic ruler, the charismatic Queen Cleopatra VII and her various dalliances with significant Roman generals. However, the ancient port city – founded by Alexander in 332 BCE to become the greatest of all his subsequent 'Alexandrias' – was more important than any one individual. It was second only to Rome in size and wealth due to its commerce and far-flung trade links, and its attraction for other ethnic and religious groups; it became the largest urban Jewish community in the world and a crucible of clerical Christian politics. It was a renowned centre of learning, a city of magnificent buildings and great wonders such as the Pharos Lighthouse.

Alexandria prospered and survived both under Ptolemaic and Roman rule, until a series of undersea earthquakes and a massive tsunami hit it about 365 CE. The historical record indicates that the area continued to suffer from tremors, quakes and tsunamis and the city appears to have begun a slow decline until it finally 'slipped into obscurity'.[1]

> **INQUIRY QUESTION**
>
> How did the site chosen by Alexander the Great contribute to its continuing importance in the ancient world?

3.1 The geographical and historical context

The site of ancient Alexandria

In 334 BCE, Alexander, King of Macedon, began his conquests of the Persian Empire, and by 332 had entered Egypt which was at that time under the control of the unpopular Persians. He was welcomed by the Egyptian people, crowned pharaoh at Memphis, declared the son of the Egyptian god Amun by an oracle at Siwah Oasis in the western desert, and founded what was to become the city of Alexandria-Rhacotis.

Some of our knowledge of the site chosen by Alexander to build his greatest city, and of his plan for it, can be deduced from the works of writers such as Strabo (a geographer in the 1st century BCE), Plutarch (a biographer of the 1st century CE) and Arrian of Nicomedia (a historian of the 2nd century CE).

However, it must be remembered that these accounts were written long after the city's foundation, although these sources may have been based on some now-lost contemporary records, such as those by Ptolemy and Aristobulus, both of whom accompanied Alexander.

Ongoing rescue archaeology on land, and maritime archaeology in the harbour of Alexandria, which began in 1994, is now revealing details of the site both before the arrival of Alexander, and the city during Ptolemaic times.

There were already important trading port/cities in the Egyptian Delta to the east of where Alexander eventually built his city:

- the Greek emporium/colony of Naucratis at the western edge of what is now Aboukir Bay
- Canopus or Canobus, a coastal town located at the mouth of the Canopic (westernmost) branch of the Nile which was widely used for shipping at the time
- Herakleion, also located close to the Canopic mouth of the Nile.

Also, it is generally believed that there was a settlement called Rhacotis, somewhere on the site chosen by Alexander, probably established before the 4th century BCE and alluded to by various historians as either a fishing village or a small fortified settlement.

> When he 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 harbor at the end of it ... he ordered the plan of the city to be designed so that it would conform to this site.

SOURCE 3.2 Plutarch, *The Age of Alexander: Alexander*, 26
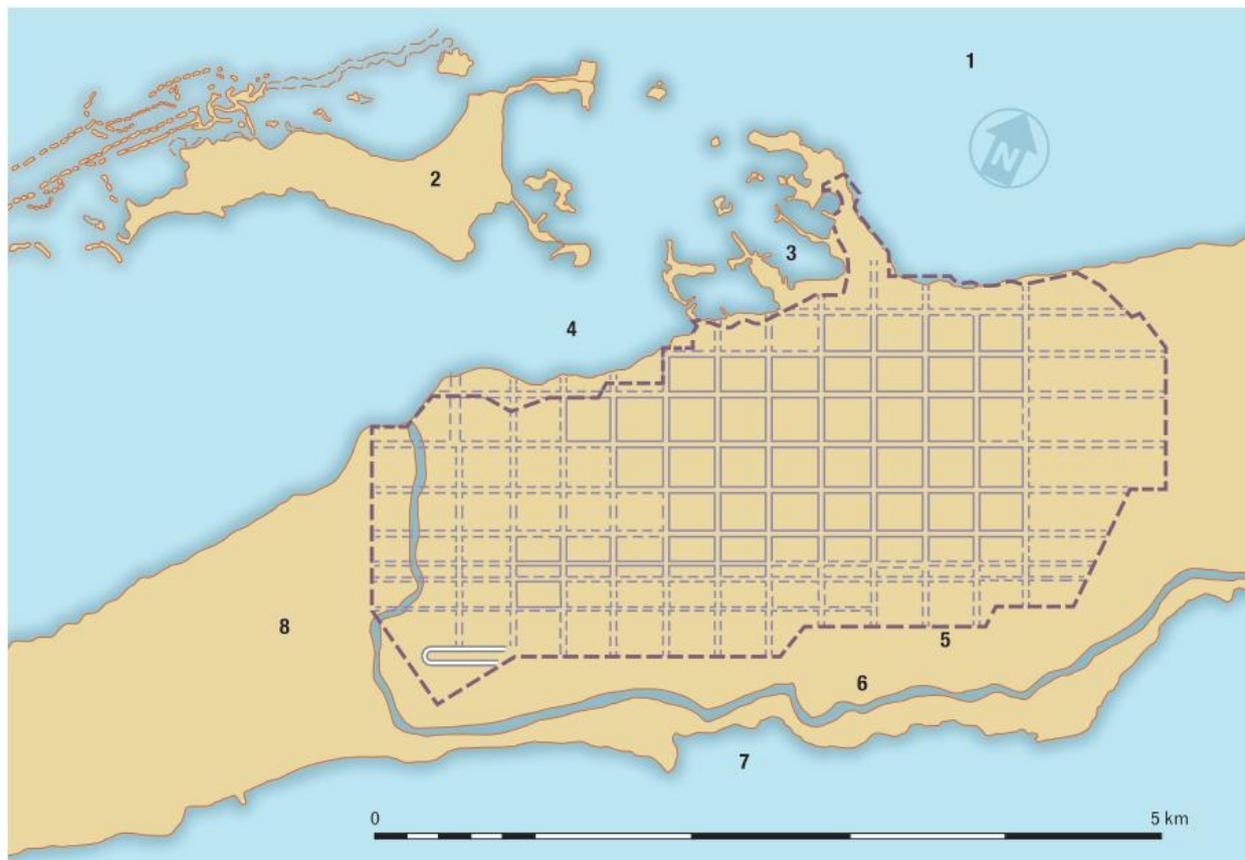
FIGURE 3.5 The natural features of ancient Alexandria and the extent of the original boundary wall established by Alexander

> From Memphis, he sailed down the river again with his guards and archers to Canobus (Canopus), when he proceeded around Lake Mareotis and finally came ashore at the spot where Alexandria, the city which bears his name, now stands. He was at once struck by the excellence of the site, and convinced, that if a city were built upon it, it would prosper.

SOURCE 3.3 Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander III*, pp. 149–50

Alexander's vision

According to Arrian, Alexander expected the city – as he did with all his subsequent cities (20 named after him) throughout the East – to:

- have a large Macedonian and Greek population – veterans, prisoners, Greeks from different parts – as well as incorporating a mix of other ethnic groups and native Egyptians
- be easily defensible. Pharos Island would act as a screen, and situated as the city was between Lake Mareotis and the Mediterranean Sea, approachable by only two narrow roads, it would be very difficult to attack especially when encircled by a high enclosure wall. Also, it was protected from the east by the Nile delta and from the west by the vast Libyan desert.
- be well-placed for commercial activity. The site, removed from the silt thrown up from the westernmost mouth of the Nile, was accessible to large ships, and to grain and other products transported down the Nile.
- become large and prosper.

Needless to say, the fact that the city looked outward towards Greece would have appealed to Alexander.

> The city … was intended, among other things, to be the connecting link between Alexander's kingdom in Macedonia and Greece which lay under his enforced hegemony, on the one hand, and the eastern empire which he was in the process of acquiring at the time on the other.

SOURCE 3.4 Dr Lutfi Abdul-Wahhab Yehya, 'Alexandria and the Mediterranean in Classical Times', *The Hellenic Community in Alexandria (EKA)*

ACTIVITY 3.1

1. Use Sources 3.1–3.3 (on pp. 127–131) to identify the natural features numbered in Figure 3.5.
2. Use Sources 3.1–3.4 (on pp. 127–131), Figures 3.2 (on p. 127) and 3.5 (on p. 130) and other information to make a list of all the advantages the site of Alexandria offered for its future development.

The early plan of the city

Legend has it – reported by Plutarch – that the Greek poet, Homer, appeared to Alexander in a dream, inspiring the 25-year-old conqueror to found a city on the mainland opposite the island of Pharos that would carry his name.

Arrian refers to Alexander's enthusiasm to begin the layout of the city himself.

Although he would have had substantial input into the design, such as setting out the precise limits of its defences, deciding where the **agora** might be located, and which Greek and Egyptian gods were to be worshipped in the temples, he left the surveying and planning to his personal architect, Deinocrates of Rhodes, and the city's future waterworks to Crates of Olynthus, a mining and hydraulic engineer, both of whom travelled with Alexander.

agora a public open space used for assemblies and markets

Deinocrates designed the city according to the typical Greek rectangular-grid system of parallel roads, devised originally by Hippodamus, a 5th century BCE urban planner who believed that cities should be characterised by order and regularity. There were to be two main intersecting avenues in the new city:

1 the Canopic Way that crossed Alexandria from east to west

2 Soma from north to south.

They were up to 30 metres wide; others were as wide as 15 metres. The width was probably to allow for the passage of chariots and the flow of cool breezes during the summer. Later, during the time of the Ptolemies, these avenues were probably lined with colonnades and the rich façades of houses and temples.

stadia plural of stadion, an ancient Greek measure of approximately 180 metres

The enclosure, that would eventually be walled, was laid out so that its long sides, according to Plutarch, ran along the sea and the lake for approximately 30 **stadia** (one stadion equalled approximately 180 metres), while the shorter sides ran across the Isthmus for about 7–8 stadia. Eventually the enclosure wall had four gates: at the eastern end of the Canopic Way was the Gate of the Sun, and to the west was the Gate of the Moon.

Due to the increasingly multi-ethnic population, especially at the time of the Ptolemies, Alexandria was divided into three main residential districts (see Figure 3.10 on p. 136):

1 The Brucheum was the most magnificent area of the city, where the elite Greeks lived – aristocrats, administrators and intellectuals. This was close to the eventual palace and temple area and was later referred to as the Royal Quarter.

2 The so-called Jewish area. This was not restricted just to Jews who immigrated from Israel, but included many other foreign minorities who decided to make Alexandria home.

3 Rhacotis, the part of the new city that incorporated the original settlement, was occupied by native Egyptians.

Water was to be brought from the Nile by a series of canals and each street was supposed to have had an underground system of cisterns for storing water. Throughout Egyptian history, archaic travellers have commented on the wonder of these ancient subterranean cisterns of Alexandria, many of which are now coming to light under the densely populated modern city.

Alexander remained in Egypt no more than a few months, and before even the first stone was laid in his new city, he was heading east with his army to defeat the Persian king. He appointed Cleomenes, a Greek from Naucratis, to look after affairs in Egypt and to make sure that the development of Alexandria continued apace.

FIGURE 3.6 An 18th-century painting by Italian Placido Costanzi of Alexander supervising the founding of his first 'Alexandria'

Alexander never lived to see his city. He died in Babylon in 323 BCE, after which his former generals were involved in years of conflict over parts of his vast empire. The map in Figure 3.8 shows its subsequent division into three main **Hellenistic** kingdoms, with Egypt under the control of General Ptolemy.

Hellenistic relating to Greek/Macedonian history and culture in the Mediterranean and Near East from the death of Alexander to the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE

ACTIVITY 3.2

1 Identify the person responsible for the planning of Alexandria.

2 Write a short piece describing the city as it gradually developed in the immediate years after Alexander left to continue his conquests.

3 Analyse the 18th-century painting in Figure 3.6. These paintings were not intended to be a realistic representation of an event, however there are elements in it that appear to represent real or legendary incidents.

   • Define the symbolism of the supernatural being.

   • Explain who the figure with the plan represents.

   • Identify the major 'historical error' in the painting.

4 Discuss what was meant by the word 'Hellenistic'.

FIGURE 3.7 A bust of Ptolemy I, Soter

FIGURE 3.8 Map of Hellenistic kingdoms and neighbouring empires and kingdoms

The history of Alexandria under the Ptolemies

ALEXANDRIA FROM ITS FOUNDATION TO THE END OF THE PTOLEMAIC DYNASTY 331–30 BCE	
331	City founded by Alexander, ('The Great'), King of Macedon and populated by Greeks, Jews and local Egyptians
323–304	Death of Alexander in Babylon and wars between his generals to decide the future of his empire. Ptolemy secures Egypt as his area of rule with Alexandria as Egypt's capital and founds the Graeco-Egyptian Dynasty known as the Ptolemies
304–285	Ptolemy I (Soter, 'the Saviour'), introduces the new cult of Serapis, which becomes the major god of Alexandria, and builds the temple of Serapis (Serapeum); fortifies the city; constructs the Heptastadion, the causeway linking the island of Pharos with the mainland; begins construction on the Great Lighthouse of Alexandria (297); plans the Great Library and *Mouseion*, and supposedly builds the Mausoleum of Alexander (Soma)
285–246	Ptolemy II (Philodelphus, 'Brotherly love') adds to the beauty, material and literary splendour of the Alexandrian court; continues his father's building program; finishes the Great Lighthouse and the Library and *Mouseion*, adds theatres, zoological gardens and builds the *Gymnasium.* Adopts Egyptian religious concepts
246–221	Ptolemy III (Eurgetes, 'the Benefactor') continues with his predecessors' policies: rebuilds the Serapeum in the Egyptian quarter and adds another library; promotes various Egyptian cults (Apis and Mnevis Bulls); and sets a precedent by publishing his decrees as bilingual inscriptions on large stone blocks
221–205	The dynasty begins to decline under Ptolemy IV Philopater, a weak ruler: devoted to orgiastic religion and controlled by his mistress
205–80	Under subsequent Ptolemies, the dynasty declines further: child kings, regency in-fighting, puppet rulers, royal murders, revolts and threats from outside. Two significant events occur during this period: – a decree by Ptolemy V in 196 carved in three scripts, which became known as the Rosetta Stone and allowed the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphs – the first translation of the Hebrew Bible from Aramaic into Greek (the *Septuagint*) under Ptolemy VIII in 130
80–51	Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos ('Auletes the flute player') father of Cleopatra, comes to the throne, is driven into exile by Alexandrians, and restored by the Romans. Cleopatra VII comes to the throne on his death in 51
51–30	The real influence of Rome over Egypt begins with the arrival of Julius Caesar in 48 to quell a looming civil war. Caesar supposedly responsible for part-destruction of Alexandria's library by fire. Mark Antony's long liaison with Cleopatra results in their defeat by Octavian (Augustus) at the Battle of Actium in 31, their deaths by suicide in 30 and the annexation of Egypt as a Roman province, bringing the Ptolemaic dynasty to an end.

1 Discuss the extent to which the first three Ptolemies were responsible for the later reputation of Alexandria as a cultural centre of the Mediterranean.
2 Examine the significance of the two events that occurred in 196 and 130 BCE. Explain how they could affect our understanding of the past.
3 Outline some of the reasons for the slow decline of the Ptolemaic dynasty after the first 100 years.
4 Recall how this long dynasty ended.
5 Research the events and circumstances that led up to the death of Cleopatra and Marc Antony.
6 Research the Soma ('body') that was an enclosure in the Royal Quarter of Alexandria containing the body of Alexander the Great, and the focus of a cult. After 199 CE, his body disappeared and its location has remained a mystery ever since, despite 140 official searches for it.

FIGURE 3.9 A painting of the death of Cleopatra by Reginald Arthur, 1892

3.2 Alexandria under the Ptolemies and Romans

Alexandria in the 1st century BCE

Although most of the great buildings we associate with ancient Alexandria were built under the auspices of the first three Ptolemy rulers, most of our information of early Alexandria comes from later written sources. The most useful of these is Strabo, the geographer who lived around the end of the Ptolemaic period and who personally visited Alexandria with a Roman prefect around 25 BCE. He recorded his impressions of the city and enumerated the city buildings as they were seen from a ship entering the harbour at the time.

Obviously the first things he would have seen on the approach to Alexandria would have been the Great Lighthouse on the island of Pharos, the Heptastadion causeway joining the island to the mainland and the harbours on either side.

The following are the city buildings Strabo listed:

- the palaces in the north-east angle of the town, occupying the promontory of Lochias
- the Great Theatre, used by Julius Caesar as a fortress where he withstood a siege by a city mob
- the Temple of Poseidon, close to the theatre
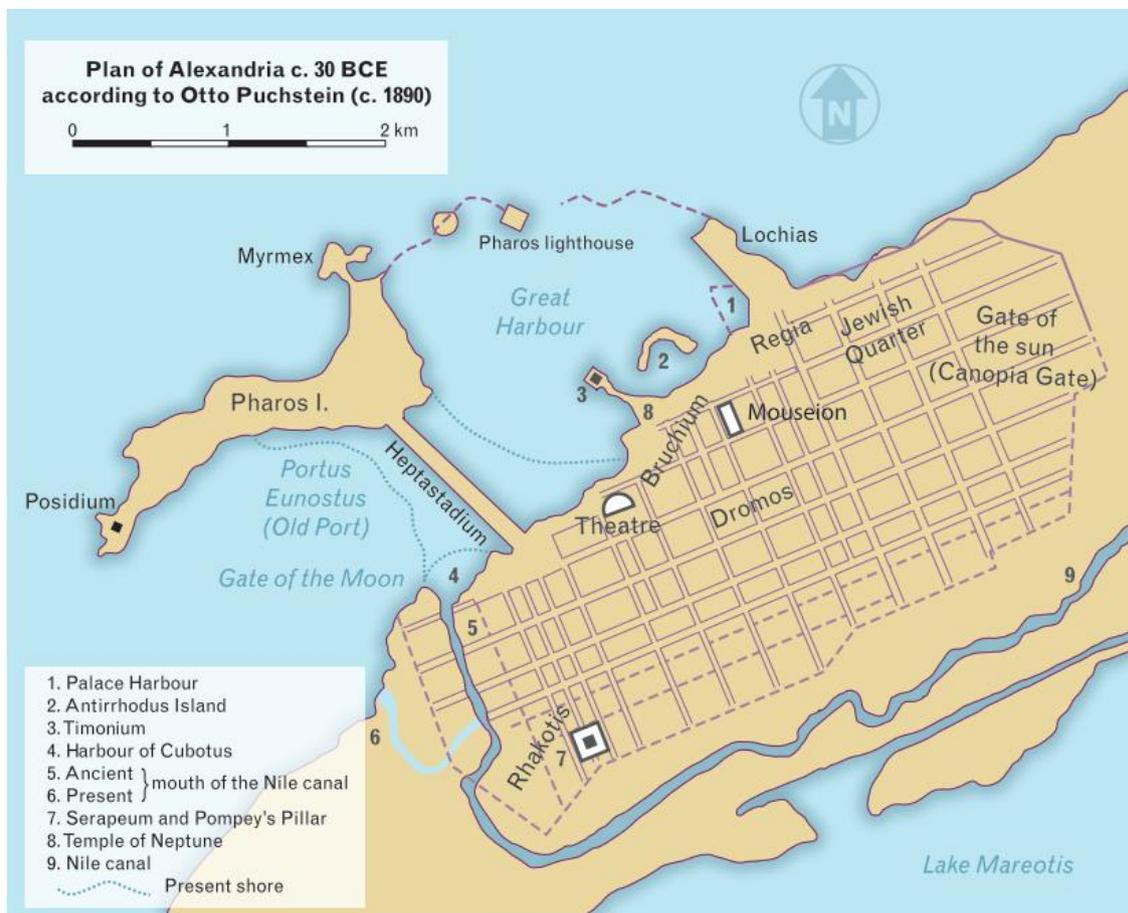
FIGURE 3.10 A plan of Alexandria in the 1st century BCE

Emporium a large centre of commerce

Gymnasium an area for both physical and intellectual exercise

Mausolea buildings housing a tomb or group of tombs

Mouseion a place where scholars studied, wrote and carried out their experiments

Serapeum a large temple dedicated to the god Serapis

- the Timonium built by Marc Antony
- the **Emporium**
- the Apostases (a storage facility)
- the Navalia (docks), lying west of the Timonium, along the seafront as far as the causeway
- the Caesareum, behind the Emporium, by which stood two great obelisks (now known as 'Cleopatra's Needles'), originally built to honour Julius Caesar
- the **Gymnasium**; nothing remains of it, but Strabo stated that it was the most beautiful of the public buildings in the city with 'its porticoes over a *stade* in length' and its shady groves. Because it was in the middle of the city, its running tracks were arranged along the streets.
- the Temple of Saturn
- the **Mausolea** of Alexander and the Ptolemies near the point of intersection of the two main streets
- the **Mouseion**, which included the Great Library
- the **Serapeum**, to the west of the city.

The city has magnificent public precincts and royal palaces which cover a fourth or even a third of the entire area. For just as each of the kings would, from a love of splendour, add some ornament to the public monuments, so he would provide himself at his own expense with a residence in addition to those already standing.

… All the buildings are connected with one another and with the harbor, and those also which are beyond it.

SOURCE 3.5 Strabo, *Geography XVII*, transl. by H. C. Hamilton

FIGURE 3.11 *A View of the Roman Forum with Temple of Saturn* by Ippolito Caffi, (1809–1866)

Most of the 30 or so plans of ancient Ptolemaic and Roman Alexandria – drawn since the conquest of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 – and based on the ancient texts, have proven to be inaccurate in light of recent maritime archaeological searches.

Two significant Ptolemaic buildings

1   The Pharos Lighthouse
2   The Heptastadion.

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF ALEXANDRIA

Built on the island of Pharos during the reign of Ptolemy I and completed during the reign of his son, Ptolemy II, the Lighthouse – an incredible feat of engineering – was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and the tallest structure, besides the Great Pyramid at Giza. The Lighthouse or Pharos was supposedly designed by Sostratus of Cnidus, originally as a daytime landmark; it only became a functioning Lighthouse towards the Roman period.

The Lighthouse which took about 12 years to construct:

- was built of large light-coloured stone blocks held together by molten lead to strengthen it against the pounding of the sea
- was constructed in three parts:
    1   a large box-like base in which stood two giant statues of gods
    2   an octagonal (eight-sided) central tower
    3   a cylinder-like structure topped by a cupola from where a fire provided the light during the night.
- had a statue at the top of the tower. Some sources say it was a statue of Poseidon, God of the Sea (and of earthquakes); others that it represented Alexander or Ptolemy I in the form of the Sun God, Helios
- is believed to have been approximately 115–135 metres in height
- had a ramp leading up the entrance that allowed mules to haul the timber for the fire, and a spiral staircase inside leading up to the top

- had (speculation only) a large curved mirror made of polished metal that was able to reflect the sun's rays far out into the Mediterranean
- believed to have had its own protective goddess: Isis-Pharia, believed to protect ships and sailors.

The Lighthouse stood for almost 1500 years until it was badly damaged in a series of natural disasters, such as the 22 earthquakes that struck between 302 CE and 1303, when it finally crumbled or toppled into the sea.

After its destruction, the Muslim Sultan of Egypt, Qait Bey, built a medieval fortress on the same site incorporating some of the fallen stones from the Lighthouse into its walls. The fort still stands in Alexandria today.

Although nothing remained of the Lighthouse, historians knew what it looked like because it appeared on ancient coins, mosaics and other artefacts made in its image, and there are eyewitness accounts of travellers throughout the centuries, such as the Arab traveller, Abu Hamid Al-Andalusi in 1117, who commented on a mosque built on the top of the damaged Lighthouse.

There is also a 1/10th-scale quasi-replica: a 17-metres-tall Ptolemaic funerary monument known as the Tower of Abusir still standing in a cemetery in the ancient port city of Taposiris Magna, west of Alexandria (see Figure 3.13).

Between 1994–98, the submerged remains of the ancient Lighthouse were discovered and inspected by Jean-Yves Empereur (see p. 143). In 2015, it was reported that the Egyptian government had approved plans to rebuild the towering Lighthouse, just a few metres south-west of where it once stood.

FIGURE 3.12 A three-dimensional reconstruction based on a comprehensive 2006 study

FIGURE 3.13 Tower of Abusir, still standing in a cemetery in the ancient port city of Taposiris Magna, resembles the shape of the Lighthouse

Cambridge University Press

The Heptastadion and Alexandrian harbours

The Heptastadion was a giant causeway, approximately 1200 metres long and 200 metres wide, that linked the island of Pharos and the mainland. The causeway created two harbours:

1 *Portus Magnus* (the Great Harbour) to the east, designed for military vessels
2 *Portus Eunostus*, on the western side, became the commercial harbour.

The harbour which has its entrance on the side of the tower of Pharos which I have mentioned is the Great Harbour, while the (other harbours) lie continuously with it in their recess, being separated from it by the embankment called the Heptastadion. ... This embankment forms a bridge stretching from the mainland to the western part of the island. ... As for the Great Harbour, in addition to being excellently closed by the embankment and by its natural shape, it is so deep near the shore that the largest ship can be moored at the stairs, and it is split up into several harbours. ... In the Great Harbour at the entrance on the right there is the island and the tower Pharos, and on the other side are the rocks and the promontory Lochias with the royal palace. As one sails into the harbour there are on the left the inner royal palaces, which are joined to those on Lochias and have groves and many colourful lodges. Below these lies the artificially dug harbour which is not visible and is the private property of the kings, and Antirrhodos, a small island in front of the dug harbour which has both a royal palace and a small harbour.

Next after the Heptastadion comes the harbour of Eunostus, and above this the artificial harbour which is called Cibotus . . . it too has shipyards. Further beyond this there is a canal fit for ships which stretches as far as Lake Mareotis.

SOURCE 3.6 Strabo, *Geography XVII*, transl. by H. C. Hamilton

ACTIVITY 3.4

1 Identify the designer of the Pharos Lighthouse.
2 Outline how long is it supposed to have taken to build.
3 Who was Isis Pharia?
4 Explain what happened to the Lighthouse, and when.
5 What eventually replaced the Lighthouse?
6 Describe what the Heptastadion was and how it got its name. Look up your glossary for the meaning of the word 'stadia'.
7 Outline how many harbours Strabo mentions in Source 3.6.
8 Explain the particular advantages of the Great Harbour described by Strabo.
9 Imagine you are the captain of a ship approaching Alexandria for the first time around 30 BCE. Record your impressions as if in a ship's log.
10 Watch the digital re-creation of ancient Alexandria on YouTube: 'The Lighthouse of Alexandria and the ancient port', Ancientvine, April 2013.
    What did you learn from this about the harbour?

A brief summary of Alexandria under the Romans

From the fall of the Ptolemies in 30 BCE until the end of the Roman Empire in the 5th century CE, Alexandria was under the control of Rome.

Augustus annexed Egypt as a Roman province, which was governed by a high-ranking Roman prefect responsible directly to the emperor because of Egypt's importance as the granary of Rome.

The prosperity of Alexandria and its reputation as an intellectual centre continued under the Romans, although the next three centuries were marked by sporadic but violent religious conflicts involving the Jewish and Christian populations of Alexandria, who refused to pay homage to Rome's pagan gods and objected to the Imperial Cult of the Caesars. See pp. 155–6 for religious troubles in Alexandria.

In 365 CE, a devastating tsunami, which resulted from an earthquake off the coast of Crete, struck the Nile Delta and Alexandria, destroying – even obliterating – many communities along the Mediterranean coast. Eyewitness accounts reported what happened at Alexandria, and the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus wrote a detailed account of the day that came to be known in the future as 'the day of horror', during which it was estimated that approximately 5000 died in Alexandria and 50 000 homes were destroyed. Farmland around the Delta area was contaminated by salt water and was useless for many years to come. Later, Alexandria suffered even more earthquakes and tidal waves.

At the beginning of the 4th century, Emperor Theodosius suppressed all pagan cults and Christians destroyed the famed Serapeum and converted many of Alexandria's ancient monuments into churches. It was during this time that the famous Alexandrian female scholar, Hypatia, was murdered by a Christian mob in public (see pp. 160–61).

A little before sunrise there was a terrible earthquake, preceded by incessant and furious lightning. The sea was driven backwards, so as to recede from the land, and the very depths were uncovered, so that many marine animals were left sticking in the mud. … Many ships were stranded on the dry shore, while people straggling about the shoal water picked up fishes and things of that kind in their hands. In another quarter the waves, as if raging against the violence with which they had been driven back, rose, and swelling over the boiling shallows, beat upon the islands and the extended coasts of the mainland, levelling cities and houses wherever they encountered them. All the elements were in furious discord, and the whole face of the world seemed turned upside down, revealing the most extraordinary sights. … the vast waves returned when least expected, and thus drowned many thousand men. Even ships were swallowed up in the furious currents of the returning tide, and were seen to sink when the fury of the sea was exhausted; … Other vessels of great size were driven on shore by the violence of the wind, and cast upon the house-tops, as happened at Alexandria; and some were even driven two miles inland.

SOURCE 3.7 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, Book XXVI, Ch. 10, 15619, trans. by C. D. Yonge

ACTIVITY 3.5

1 Explain why Alexandria was so important to the Romans.
2 Describe what plagued the Roman rulers in Alexandria for the first three centuries CE.
3 Describe how the Christians in Alexandria eventually reacted to those who had practised their pagan religions for centuries.
4 Imagine you are a survivor of the 'day of horror' and write an eyewitness account of your experiences, using Source 3.7 and Figure 3.14. Comment on your fears for the future of Alexandria.

FIGURE 3.14 A sketch map showing the ancient and present shorelines

3.3 Sources of evidence for ancient Alexandria

What is left today of that once magnificent ancient city?

Modern Alexandria, a city of almost 5 million, and a leading port, transportation, commercial and industrial centre, is built directly on top of its ancient self, which is why there is a lack of exposed archaeological remains.

FIGURE 3.15 Alexandria with obelisk pre-1923

FIGURE 3.16 The harbour front of modern Alexandria

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The modern city is faced with all the problems associated with crowded urban areas, especially in a developing country. This provides a dilemma about how to balance the everyday needs of the population while still saving as much of the past as possible.

Certain types of building are no longer considered viable given the pressure on space, and, little by little, old cinemas, billiard halls, warehouses and garages in the centre of town are being destroyed to make way for office and apartment blocks. This situation provides an opportunity for the archaeologist to slip between the phases of destruction and reconstruction to check on the nature of those ruins that might be found under the town. On every occasion, there are a good ten metres and two millennia of history to be discovered and the information gleaned from one site is complementary to that from another. These interventions are at the request of the Egyptian authorities and it happens that a shortage of funds can lead to the unwilling inability to tackle certain plots. In such cases it is, unfortunately, the bulldozer that too often replaces the archaeologist and the deep foundations of a modern high-rise can destroy any ancient vestiges.

SOURCE 3.8 Hellenic Electronic Center and Le Centre d'Etudes Alexandrines, 1998

ACTIVITY 3.6

1 Explain what is meant by the following statements in Source 3.8:
   - 'slip between the phases of destruction and reconstruction'
   - 'there are a good 10 metres and two millennia of history to be discovered'
   - 'unfortunately, it is often the bulldozer that replaces the archaeologist'.
2 Define the kind of archaeology that is being described here.

According to UNESCO, there 'are many remains on the land and under the sea to bear witness to the city's past'.[2] These remains have been classified into three categories:

1 monumental remains such as the misnamed 'Pompey's Pillar', a 30-metre-high structure carved out of Aswan granite and erected or re-used by Diocletian in 297 CE. It is the only monument of such dimensions to have survived.

2 ancient necropolises (burial grounds) and their associated funerary objects.

3 underwater remains like the immense archaeological site near Pharos.

FIGURE 3.17 The misnamed 'Pompey's Pillar'

Excavations on land

The only systematic excavation and preservation site on land in Alexandria that has avoided the construction and demolition frenzy marking the development of modern Alexandria has been that carried out at Kom el-Dikka by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Studies. Since the mid 1960s to the present, their team of archaeologists – now led by Grzegorz Majcherek – has unearthed what they believe was a new development carried out by the Alexandrian authorities in the 4th century CE. These remains comprise a complex of late Roman buildings:

- a small Roman theatre, the only one found in Egypt
- a complex of 'lecture halls' with rows of benches for students, a dais for a teacher or notable individual, and a podium for student recitations. It has been referred to as 'the Oxford of Antiquity'
- a bathhouse with its water installations such as subterranean cisterns
- lime pits used for construction
- a residential quarter that included houses, workshops and villas.

This site has been conserved and made accessible for future tourists.

Rescue operations on land and sea by Dr Jean-Yves Empereur

Dr Empereur, who has a doctorate in classical literature and archaeology,

FIGURE 3.18 The excavated Roman theatre at Kom el-Dikka

FIGURE 3.19 One of a complex of 'lecture halls' (20 in all) at Kom el-Dikka

established the Centre for Alexandrian Studies in 1990. In 1992, the Egyptian Antiquities Service requested that he undertake a number of rescue excavations both within the centre of the city and in the waters of the bay.

From the land excavations carried out by the Centre, the following archeological finds have been made and site studies carried out.

- well-preserved remains of 2nd century BCE domestic architecture complete with an elaborate system of underground water supply
- some 100 square metres of Roman-era floor mosaics of quite remarkable quality
- a geophysical survey of the peninsula that lies between Alexandria's two harbours to search for traces of the Heptastadion, using electrostatic resistance, seismic and electro-magnetic conduction in the subsoil of the streets that cross the peninsula.
- a long-term study to provide an overview of ancient Alexandria's water system. Of the 400 fresh-water cisterns recorded by Napoleon's engineers, only 10 were known of in the 1990s, although a team of

architect-archaeologists has provisionally located a further 30 and their aim is to plot them on a map.

- a salvage dig within the district of Gabbari, to the west of Alexandria, where diggers employed on the construction of an elevated highway pierced a large Hellenistic tomb complex that was part of an ancient Alexandrian necropolis, spoken of by Strabo. The excavation has so far cleared 15 Hellenistic chambers with rock-cut sarcophagi and funerary items. The lower levels are still inaccessible due to groundwater. Excavators are hoping these might reveal undisturbed burials.

Empereur says 'that the houses, streets and mosaics that have been uncovered represent just 1% of what could be rescued' and yet even that small percentage is rewriting the city's history'.[3]

FIGURE 3.20 The medieval fortress of Qaitbey

Underwater excavation

Despite the potential for land excavation in Alexandria, underwater sites were largely ignored, even though divers and fisherman were aware of the collection of artefacts found in the waters off Alexandria.

Although most people are aware, via the many media articles, of the discoveries and research carried out in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s by several French maritime archaeologists, few know of the work of an Egyptian diver and spear fisherman, Kamal Abou el-Saadat. In 1961–62 he chanced upon a number of sites: at the foot of Qaitbey Fort, in the Eastern Harbour, off Silsileh not far from the beach, and also in Aboukir Bay, where large collections of artefacts were to be found.

FIGURE 3.21 The head and body of the raised statue of Isis-Pharia

> In June 1962, he managed, with the help of the Egyptian navy to lift from the water a life-size male statue in Aswan granite … Five months later, the same team lifted the so-called statue of Isis-Pharia from the waters of Qaitbey Fort. This statue, also in Aswan granite, stands seven feet tall.

SOURCE 3.9 Ahmed Abd El Fattah, Mona Serry and Ibrahim Darwesh, *Underwater Archaeology in Egypt*, in Zahi Hawass, *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, p. 100

Abou el-Saadat continued his work during the 1970s and 1980s, but no government-backed underwater excavation occurred until the Egyptian Antiquities Service requested that Dr Empereur begin work around Qaitbey Fort. This was after Empereur and a cinematographer, Asma el-Bakri, diving illegally near Qaitbey to make a documentary, saw hundreds of building stones and shapes that resembled columns and statues. When they saw a crane lowering 20-tonne blocks of concrete into the water to reinforce the breakwater close to where they had been filming, el-Bakri pestered the government to halt the work, and Empereur began conducting a survey of the area.

1 Research the Qaitbey Fort and find out when it was built, by whom and why.

2 Explain the significance of the find of what is believed to be the Isis-Pharia statue.

3 Clarify what sparked the Egyptian authorities into eventually giving permission for extensive underwater surveys and salvage operations around Qaitbey Fort.

TABLE 3.1 Jean-Yves Empereur and the underwater Pharos excavations

Aim   To make a preliminary underwater examination of the sea just outside Alexandria's eastern harbour and evaluate the site lying underneath 6–8 metres of water that was being threatened by the construction of a modern concrete breakwater intended to protect the fort of Qaitbey
Phase 1 – 1994   Located a dense scattering of 30 architectural fragments over 2.25 hectares but with no clue as to their provenance nor how they came to be deposited in the sea. Needed a better-equipped campaign to chart and illustrate the finds
Phase 2 – 1995   • Gained funding from a French multimedia company and employed divers, topographers, Egyptologists and photographers, who set about the detailed marking, charting, illustration and analysis of approximately 1000 archaeological fragments lying on the sea bed. These included massive blocks weighing between 50 and 75 tonnes, hundreds of columns – both Pharaonic papyriform and Hellenistic – and capitals, sphinxes, sections of obelisks, parts of colossal statuary and inscribed blocks. But their exact provenance would have to wait while painstaking computer-aided topographic work was carried out.   • Later in 1995, after the site had been plotted, it was discovered that the remains were in two concentrations: one on the immediate north-eastern tip of Qaitbey Fort, and one further to the east. The former zone held huge worked architectural blocks, some cracked in two or three parts, anything from 5–75 tonnes in weight, while the second held a smaller collection of blocks and columns.
Phase 3 – 1995–96   • Documention: photographic, sketching, video and topographic   • Preparation for and lifting of some 30 pieces: sphinxes, columns, capitals, colossi, fragments of inscribed obelisks and two massive segments of the Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World   • Desalination and restoration   • Exhibition in an open-air museum by the Roman amphitheatre at Kom el-Dikka in central Alexandria.
Phase 4 – 1996–97   • Dives to plot and register a further 2250 blocks   • Preliminary architectural definition of blocks   • The development of a descriptive terminology based on form, dimension, volume and decoration   • Identifying groups to allow for interpretation.
Future needs   • Producing hand-drawn and computer-generated reconstitutions of architectural ensembles that still lie on the bed of the Mediterranean Sea   • Dealing with the issue of the modern breakwater of concrete blocks which runs through the site   • Dismantling and repositioning the concrete blocks to locate those pieces of colossal statuary still underneath.

TABLE 3.1 (*Continued*)

Conclusions so far

- Granite pieces, many pillaged – in usual Ptolemaic fashion – from pre-existing buildings in the Delta and from the cult centre of Heliopolis, re-used in their own Alexandrian buildings.
- The massive cracked blocks are almost certainly from the Great Pharos Lighthouse that toppled into the sea and these may help provide some insight into the method of construction of the Lighthouse.
- The heterogeneous collection of smaller architectural pieces might have been taken from crumbling Alexandrian buildings by the Mameluke rulers for use as rubble to block the harbour when the city was sacked over two days in 1364 by the Cypriot King Pierre de Lusignan.
- The architectural elements reveal the application of Graeco-Macedonian technology to produce Egyptian forms.

What of the future?

- In 2015, the Permanent Committee of the Egyptian Antiquities had agreed on reconstructing the Alexandria Lighthouse on an area of land located a few metres to the southwest of the landmark's original location.
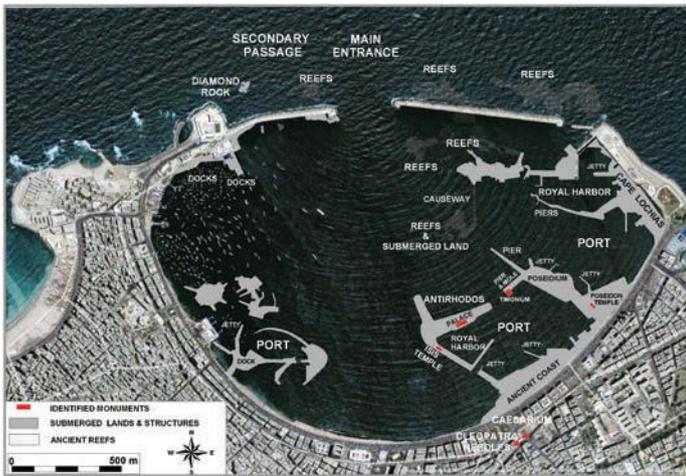
FIGURE 3.22 A changed shoreline

FIGURE 3.23 Alexandria Harbour from the air

Franck Goddio and the European Institute of Underwater Archaeology (IEASM)

Franck Goddio is a French pioneer of modern maritime archaeology and founder of the IEASM. Since the 1980s he has devoted himself to underwater excavations all over the world especially in areas where there are technical difficulties.

His work in the early 1990s on the other side of the eastern harbour from Empereur, and in partnership with the Egyptian Supreme Council of Antiquities, has produced some startling results. He and his team have:

- Discovered columns, statues, sphinxes and ceramics associated with the Royal Quarters of the Ptolemies, possibly – but still in dispute – the palace of Cleopatra.
- Located 'a monumental structure 328 feet long and 230 feet wide, as well as a finger from a bronze statue that Goddio estimates would have been 13 feet tall'.[4]

FIGURE 3.24 Underwater finds

           Cambridge University Press

- Mapped the underwater topography of the area using sonar equipment and global positioning equipment, which shows the original outline of the coastline and foundations of wharves, temples and storehouses.
- Carried out radiocarbon dating of excavated material which reveals activity from the 4th century BCE to the 4th century CE.
- Located, mapped and excavated parts of the ancient city of Herakleion, which lies 6.5 km off the coastline and 150 feet underwater.
- Examined hundreds of core samples from Alexandria's harbour that provides 'evidence of the centuries-long battle that ancient engineers waged against both gradual and sudden subsidences'.[5]

ACTIVITY 3.8

1 Draw up a mind map illustrating the types of artefacts found by Jean-Yves Empereur and Franck Goddio in the 1990s.
2 Assess Jean-Yves Empereur's work as a maritime archaeologist. Present your answer in either an essay form or as an oral presentation.

A COMMENT ON A FUTURE UNDERWATER MUSEUM BY UNESCO

This feasibility study started in 2009. It will discuss the practicability of a museum placed partly underwater, exhibiting the heritage of the Bay of Alexandria in situ, in compliance with the ethical and scientific principles of the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. UNESCO has established an International Scientific Advisory Committee, gathering eminent international experts, which will accompany the feasibility study.

Written sources

You have been introduced to some of the written sources earlier in this case study which provide information on ancient Alexandria.

Many **contemporary** (primary) written sources for the various phases of ancient Alexandria's existence have totally disappeared while most of those that have survived are fragmentary. Occasionally, historians are fortunate enough to have access to an eyewitness, but just how accurate is such an account?

contemporary refers, in history, to any source of information created at the time of a particular period of study

A COMMENT ON THE ANCIENT WRITTEN SOURCES

The following writers were from Greek-speaking backgrounds but lived under the Roman Empire.

Strabo (c. 63 BCE – c. 24 CE) – Greek geographer/historian

- Born in Amasia, Pontus (modern Turkey)
- Came from an affluent family
- Travelled extensively
- Studied under various notable scholars in different specialties
- Sailed up the Nile and visited Alexandria about 25 BCE

- The only **extant** (surviving) work covering the whole range of people known to the Greeks and Romans
- Gives a remarkable account of geographical science as well as the history of the countries he writes about.

Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE) – a biographer

- Born in Chaeronea in central Greece
- Came from a wealthy, prominent family
- Travelled widely
- Studied mathematics and philosophy at the Academy in Athens, became a Roman citizen and spent time teaching and lecturing in Rome
- Wrote about the careers of many great men in a 'parallel-lives-format', such as those of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and provided an understanding of the life and customs of the times in which they lived
- More concerned with character and moral issues than with historical analysis.

Arrian (c. 86–160 CE) – historian, philosopher, military commander, public servant

- Born in Nicodemia (modern Izmit in Turkey)
- Came from provincial aristocracy
- Had a life-long attachment to learning
- Became a friend of the Emperor Hadrian, a Roman senator and governor
- Wrote a history of the military campaigns of Alexander the Great (*Anabasis*). Book 3 begins with an account of Alexander in Egypt and a brief mention of his trip to consult the oracle at Siwah
- Used the lost histories of Cleitarchus (negative view of Alexander), Ptolemy (that included some propaganda) and Aristobulus (a favourable view of Alexander).

Ammianus Marcellinus (c. 325 – c. 391+ CE) – Roman soldier and historian

- Born in either Syria or Phoenicia, possibly Antioch
- Believed to be from a high class family judging by the top positions he held in the imperial army
- Chronicled the history of Rome from 96–378 CE, although only the sections covering the period 353–378 survive
- Described by scholars as a pagan who was tolerant of Christianity
- His work is valued as a comprehensive and generally impartial account of events by a contemporary
- Lived at the time of the great earthquake and tsunami that destroyed much of the coastal area of Egypt, and during a period of lengthy outbreaks of religious strife.

ACTIVITY 3.9

1 Which of the first three written sources do you consider would be the most reliable for a study of Ptolemaic Alexandria? Explain your answer.
2 What do you consider the limitations of the other two?
3 Explain what makes Ammianus Marcellinus a reasonably reliable source for the tsunami that hit Alexandria in 365 CE.

3.4 Life in Alexandria as revealed through the sources

Social groups, their position and rights

There were three major groups in Alexandria from its foundation:

1 Greek/Macedonians

2 Jews

3 Egyptians.

However, as Alexandria grew and developed – reaching a population of 300 000 – it became an open city that welcomed foreigners such as Greeks from other areas, Libyans, Ethiopians, Syrians, Thracians, Sicilians, Persians, even Indians. But not everyone had the same rights.

1 Alexandrian Greeks, whose parents (both) were born in Alexandria could become citizens when they reached adolescence. They were admitted to a tribe, permitted an education in the city's *gymnasia* and were eligible for military service. They became the city's elite, were wealthy – some engaged in trade and business – held high administrative positions, often priesthoods, and enjoyed special privileges such as paying less tax, and exemptions from certain civic duties and corporal punishment.

2 Resident aliens included Jews, Greeks from elsewhere and foreigners. The Jews were originally brought to Alexandria as captives, it was claimed, when Ptolemy I Soter took Judea. They were eventually freed by Ptolemy II Philodelphus, and waves of others followed, attracted by the fertile soil of Egypt and the tolerance of the Ptolemies who assigned two of the five districts of the city to them to keep their laws pure of outside influences. They also enjoyed more political rights than Jews elsewhere and, via an official known as an **ethnarch** and a Council of Elders, they had the right to handle their own affairs. They became Hellenised and spoke Greek; however, under the Romans, they began to suffer persecution.

> **ethnarch** the ruler or leader of a particular ethnic group of people

3 The Egyptians also lived in their own area in the city, were protected and had their own law courts, and were often used in the lower echelons of the administration, in construction and in the priesthoods. Some, like Manetho, who was an Egyptian priest, rose to hold important positions at court.

At the bottom of this hierarchy were the slaves, many whom came as prisoners of war from Syria. The Ptolemies kept strict control over the slave trade, which was heavily taxed.

In a city of so many social and ethnic groups it is not surprising that there were occasional outbreaks of street violence in which the Alexandrian mob resorted to assaults in public places and even to murder. Polybius recorded that 'terrible is the cruelty of the Egyptians when their anger is aroused'.[6]

During the Ptolemaic period, especially during the reigns of later kings, there were occasions when relations between the rulers and the inhabitants broke down. The Alexandrian mob made things worse by often taking sides in dynastic situations and instigating violent acts in public places.

1 One such occasion occurred after Ptolemy IV Philopater died in 205 BCE. He had been a weak king devoted to orgiastic religion and controlled by his favourites: Agathocles, one of his ministers, and his sister Agathoclea, who became Ptolemy's mistress. Agathocles kept the king's death secret, hoping to plunder the treasury, and then formed a conspiracy to kill Ptolemy's wife Arsinoe and take the throne as guardian of the young heir. The Egyptian and Greek mob, outraged at Agathocles' behavior, surrounded the palace and forced their way in at night. Agathocles was stabbed by his friends 'to save him from suffering the fate he deserved'. Agathoclea with her sisters and all her relatives were dragged out in a state of nakedness and 'delivered into the hands of the mob' who 'now began to bite them … some to stab them, and others to dig out their eyes'. Whenever one of them fell, the mob 'tore the body from limb to limb until they had thus mutilated them all'.[7]

2 Another violent occasion occurred in 80 BCE when Ptolemy XI murdered his step-mother and half-sister Cleopatra Berenice, who had been forced to marry him 19 days before. She was a crowd favourite, and the mob dragged the king from the palace to the *gymnasium* and assassinated him.

The administration under the Ptolemies, according to Strabo 'had been lax and ruined by licentiousness',[8] but under Roman rule there was an attempt to prevent further disturbances by stationing one legion of troops in the city, suspending the Town Council (*Boule*) and establishing orderly government, by appointing officials such as vice-governors. But even these efforts were unable to prevent increasing violence between different religious communities over the next few centuries.

ACTIVITY 3.10

1 Explain the ways in which Alexandria was a cosmopolitan city.
2 Describe who the political elite were and what gave them their status.
3 Draw up a three-columned chart summarising the rights and benefits each group enjoyed: Greek/Macedonians, Jews, Egyptians.

A Mediterranean emporium

The Emperor Hadrian described Alexandria as a city prosperous, rich and productive, in which no one was idle. It was regarded as a place of elegance and luxuries where anything imaginable could be obtained. According to Strabo, it was 'the greatest emporium in the world',[9] which was true, but its economic life was still based on agriculture.
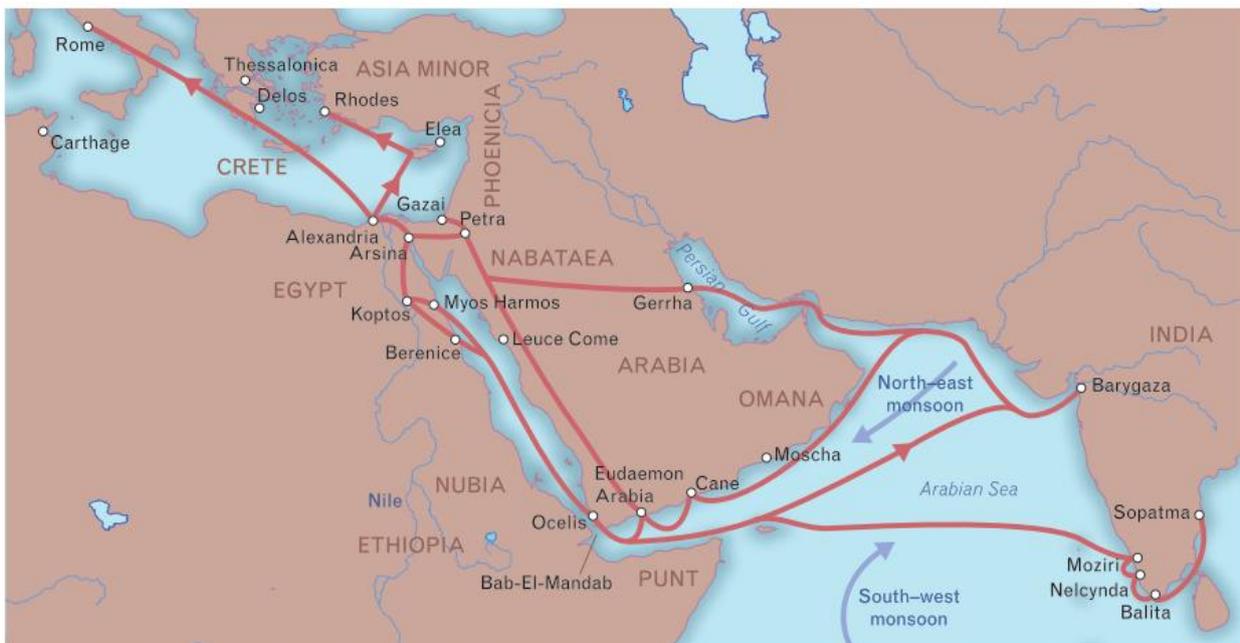
FIGURE 3.25 A map of main trade routes to and from Alexandria

Under the Ptolemies, like the previous Egyptian pharaohs, the king was the exclusive owner of all lands, but in practice he leased arable lands to tenants. During Roman rule, Egyptian land was transferred to the Roman people, but the authorities encouraged private individuals to purchase agricultural lands as they were then subjected to taxes.

Grain (emmer wheat and barley) was the most important crop grown in Egypt, supplying the Roman Empire with at least one-third of its grain, but the Ptolemies also encouraged farmers to grow grapes in large amounts, and taxed foreign imported wine to promote the consumption of local wine. They also imported a variety of vine stock from elsewhere to produce wine of different quality and price. Alexandria's Mareotic wine was famous even in Rome.

Alexandria's two harbours facilitated trade from as far away as India, and canals allowed transportation of goods inland across the Nile Delta. Exotic goods, such as spices, ivory, perfumes, silks, precious stones and bronze lamps, were imported; grain, papyrus, wine, olives, glassware and textiles were exported. Customs dues (import and export taxes) were paid on all goods passing through Alexandria, increasing its prosperity.

Many Alexandrians became wealthy merchants, some even forming trading companies with men from other nations to import goods.

There was a thriving shipbuilding industry; the papyrus industry boomed, as paper was in great demand throughout the Mediterranean and Egypt was the foremost producer. Alexandrian mosaics, including medallions made from miniature cubes of terracotta, glass or stone, as well as glassware and linen, were in great demand.

During the Ptolemaic period, the state-controlled banking and banks were referred to as 'royal banks', but under Roman rule, they became public, although there were many that were private.

The Ptolemies produced coins in their own mint and their coins continued to be the main form of currency during Roman rule alongside Roman coins until 296 CE. Most coins were of bronze but Alexandria was also noted for its extensive series of large coins in gold, silver and bronze, most notably the gold *pentadrachm* and silver *tetradrachm*.

FIGURE 3.26 A detailed mosaic of life along the Nile

The Romans had a strict and rather complex taxation system in their provinces. There were many different kinds, such as a poll tax on every adult male from 16–60 years of age, tax on land and property, and on certain products such as oil and salt. One-quarter of all tax revenue in Egypt went to Rome, another quarter to pay the Roman legions in Egypt, the rest spent on the upkeep of farm lands, dykes and canals and on the salaries of the government officials.

FIGURE 3.27 Papyrus plants from which paper, so much in demand around the Mediterranean and beyond, was made
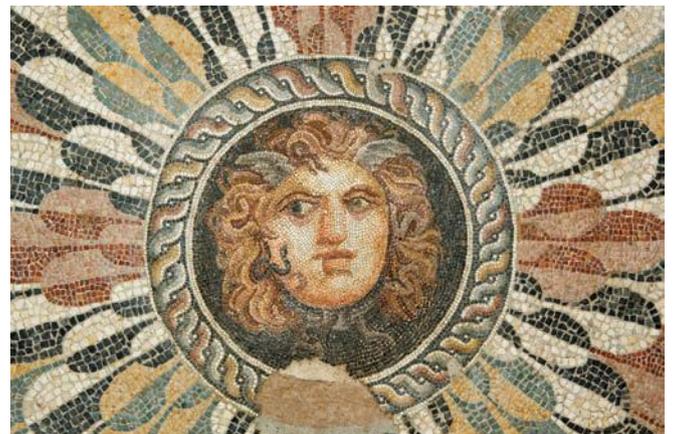
FIGURE 3.28 An Alexandrian mosaic of Medusa

1 Explain what an emporium is.
2 Describe what products Alexandrian merchants imported from the east.
3 How did the Ptolemies promote the local wine industry?
4 On what did the Romans spend the taxes raised in Egypt?
5 List the chief categories into which the features of Alexandria's economy could be grouped.

FIGURE 3.29 A coin minted by Ptolemy III

A crucible of religions and cults

The cult of Serapis

When Ptolemy I Soter made himself king of Egypt, his aim was to legitimise the new dynasty by creating a composite Graeco-Egyptian god called Serapis, which became the patron deity of the Ptolemies. Serapis combined the qualities of:

- the Egyptian funerary god, Osiris, and Apis, the sacred bull of Memphis with its patron god Ptah
- Greek gods: Zeus, Hades, Dionysius, Poseidon and Asklepios
- the Hellenistic sun god, Helios.

    The iconography of Serapis included a man:

- wearing a Greek-style robe, hairstyle and full beard
- with a basket (*modius*) on his head representing a dry corn measure
- often holding a trident (like Poseidon)
- sometimes accompanied by a three-headed dog (Cerberus, in Greek mythology, referred to as the 'Hounds of Hades' who guarded the gates to the Underworld).

    As in Pharaonic religion, the new dynasty also had a Divine Triad composed of Serapis, his wife Isis (originally sister and wife of Osiris), goddess of love, fertility, kingship and protector of ships and sailors, and their son, Harpocrates (identified with Egyptian Horus). Also, as in Egyptian religion, the Ptolemaic queens were often depicted wearing the traditional indicators of royalty. Arnisoe II, the wife of Ptolemy II, was often depicted in the form of the Greek Aphrodite, as well as shown wearing a headdress of ram's horns and ostrich feathers in the Egyptian fashion.

FIGURE 3.30 A head of Serapis with a *modius* on his head

FIGURE 3.31 A mosaic of Serapis and Isis

The huge cult statue of Serapis sitting on a throne in the Serapeum was supposedly made of wood, metal and precious stones. Its body was dark blue, and its clothes and sandals decorated with gold and silver.

Associated with the cult of Serapis was the cult of Isis. She was so popular that it became customary for queens of Egypt, such as Cleopatra, to wear the goddess's headdress of sun disk between two horns. The cult of Isis spread rapidly throughout the Roman empire.

The Serapeum – the Temple of Serapis

According to Strabo, the Serapeum was located in the west of the city with other sacred places, but he maintained that they were abandoned. However, we know that Ptolemy III's temple was still in existence in 116 CE, because it suffered major destruction during the Jewish revolts that year.

Nothing was known of the early versions of the Temple of Serapis until excavations, carried out in 1944, unearthed the foundation deposits of Ptolemy III's temple: two sets of 10 commemorative plaques in gold, silver, bronze, Egyptian faience, and opaque glass. The gold plaque is inscribed in both Greek and hieroglyphics and records that Ptolemy III Euergetes built the Serapeum, and that Parmeniskos was its architect.

Judging from later writers, whose descriptions are based on the 3rd version of the Serapeum, rebuilt by Hadrian somewhere between a 117–138 CE, it was the largest and most magnificent of all temples in the Greek quarter of Alexandria.

> The Serapeum, splendid to a point that words would only diminish its beauty, has such spacious rooms flanked by columns, filled with such life-like statues and a multitude of other works of such art, that nothing, except the Capitolium, which attests to Rome's venerable eternity, can be considered as ambitious in the whole world.

SOURCE 3.10 Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire* XXII, 16.12

FIGURE 3.32 A drawing of the Serapeum

The site consisted of:
- a large platform on top of the only hill in Alexandria
- a wall that surrounded the platform, which was a colonnade on the inside
- the temple – a classical structure – that stood inside the colonnade in which resided the wooden statue of Serapis. Worshippers would often sleep in the Serapeum hoping their dreams would bring them help and healing.
- a hundred steps leading up to the main entrance of the temple from the East
- a pool of some kind inside the entrance
- subterranean passages, which still exist.

The Serapeum was destroyed either by a Christian mob or Roman soldiers sometime around 391 CE when the Emperor Theodosius suppressed all pagan cults.

1   Explain why Ptolemy created a composite god
    called Serapis.
2   Investigate how many versions of the Serapeum
    there are believed to have been.
3   What is the opinion, expressed in Source 3.10
    (on p. 153), of the Serapeum?

The Cult of Dionysus

Dionysus was worshipped in Greece and Macedon as the god of wine, religious ecstasy and rebirth, and for these reasons, many festivals were held in his honour. His cult seems to have been more prominent in Macedon than in other parts of Greece, and the god was important to Alexander the Great who claimed divine descent from him. Alexander's mother, Olympias, was high in the god's cult, so it is not surprising that the Ptolemies also claimed divine descent from Dionysus and associated him with Serapis.

Ptolemy II established a festival in 285 BCE known as the Ptolemaia to mark the deification of his father Ptolemy I, which was thereafter held every four years and for which he sent out invitations all over the Mediterranean. At this time Alexandria was filled to overflowing with foreign dignitaries and sacred envoys. From an account of this magnificent festival, recorded by Callixeinus of Rhodes, it appears that the cult of Dionysus was an integral part of it.

FIGURE 3.33 A marble statue of Dionysus and his goat-like satyr companion

Next there followed another cart 30 feet long, 24 feet wide, drawn by 300 men; in this was set up a wine-press … full of grapes. And 60 Satyrs trod them while they sang a vintage song to the accompaniment of pipes, and a Silenus superintended them. The new wine streamed through the whole line of march. Next came a four-wheeled cart …drawn by 600 men; in it was a wine skin holding 30 000 gallons, stitched together from leopard pelts; this also trickled over a whole line of march as the wine was slowly let out. Following the skin came 120 Satyrs and Sileni some carrying wine-pitchers, others shallow cups – everything of gold. Immediately next to them passed a silver mixing-bowl holding 6000 gallons, in a cart drawn by 600 men.

SOURCE 3.11 Callixeinus of Rhodes, cited in Athenaeus' *Deipnosphistae,* Bk 5

ACTIVITY 3.13

1   Who was Dionysus?
2   Explain why was his cult was so important in Alexandria.
3   Analyse what evidence there is in Source 3.11 that shows the cult of Dionysus played an integral part in the four-yearly festival of the Ptolemaia.

The Imperial Cult

After the annexation of Egypt by Rome, there was a growth of Caesar worship which took the form of 'Rome and Augustus' and 'Rome and the Deified Julius'. Augustus had seen the need for a common practice that would unite all the provinces (including Egypt) in loyalty to Rome. However, when later emperors such as Caligula and Nero had themselves depicted as gods in the provinces and demanded that others treat them as such, it was to cause problems, particularly among the large population of Hellenised Jews of Alexandria.

Judaism

Due to the religious tolerance of the Ptolemies, many Jews were attracted to the city where they were permitted to follow their own religion. An inscription, recording a Jewish dedication of a synagogue to Ptolemy and Berenice, discovered in the 19th century near Alexandria, provides evidence of a certain tolerance towards Jews. However, during Roman rule, the Jews became targets of persecution from many in Alexandria, beginning in the reign of the Emperor Caligula. A previous law granting them exemption from emperor worship that applied elsewhere in the empire was rescinded. Caligula issued an edict demanding that they place statues of himself as a god in the synagogue. A delegation, by the great Jewish philosopher, Philo, travelled to Rome to protest and seek justice for the Jews. This caused hostility in Alexandria, leading to attacks on Jews and looting of Jewish property. The Roman governor, Flaccus, made no attempt to stop the assaults. Caligula's timely assassination and Claudius' accession to the position of emperor upheld the Jews' exemption from Caesar worship.

Further attacks on Jews occurred in Alexandria in 66 CE as a result of rising tension over the Jewish–Roman War taking place in nearby Judea. A gathering of Alexandrians meeting to discuss sending a delegation to the Emperor Nero, was interrupted by a large number of Jews, many of whom were either killed or captured and burnt alive. Jewish threats to retaliate were delayed by the Roman Governor who sent for the leading Jews and convinced them to be quiet and not provoke the Roman army, but many Jews would not be pacified. The Governor sent two Roman legions and 5000 other soldiers to punish the Jews by killing and setting fire to their houses. The Romans showed no mercy and, by the end, it is believed that over 50 000 Jews were dead in the streets. The Governor eventually called off the attacks.

Much greater violence occurred in 117 CE, during the reign of the Emperor Trajan, when the Jews of Alexandria set fire to the city and destroyed the Egyptian temples.

The Roman response was predictably quick and massive. The Emperor Trajan sent one of his best military men to Egypt to deal with the situation. The Alexandrian Jews were no match for the professional and battle-hardened Roman legionaries and were promptly slaughtered. Alexandria suffered so much damage that Trajan's successor, Hadrian, had to embark on a rebuilding program.

ACTIVITY 3.14

1. Summarise when the Jews first become real targets for persecution in Alexandria.
2. To what did they initially object?
3. Explain the opinion expressed about the role of the Jews in the conflict at the time of the Emperor Trajan.
4. Recount the outcomes for the Jews, and for Alexandria as a city, of that 2nd-century conflict with the Romans.

Christianity

Modern Egyptian Christians (Copts) believe that it was the apostle Mark the Evangelist who brought Christianity to Alexandria, where he is supposed to have performed a number of miracles and where he was murdered for preaching Christianity to the 'pagan' inhabitants of the city. His Christian followers

FIGURE 3.34 St Mark bringing the gospel to Alexandria

supposedly buried his body in a church in Alexandria but his relics were removed in 828 CE and taken to Venice.

Early Christianity spread quickly in Alexandria, and the construction of churches changed the city's appearance. By 300 CE, Alexandria was one of the great Christian centres and many of the Ptolemaic buildings that survived were converted to churches.

However, like the Jews, the Christians did not escape persecutions which were carried out by the Alexandrian mob and by Roman officials. Some of these persecutions included:

- forbidding the population of Alexandria to convert to Christianity under Septimus Severis (202 CE)
- compelling Christians to sacrifice to Roman gods or face imprisonment and execution under the reigns of Decius and Valerian (250 CE)
- demolishing all Christian churches, burning sacred books and enslaving Christians under Diocletian (303 CE).

Even when the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and declared freedom of worship in 313 CE, Christians still suffered some spasmodic persecutions.

FIGURE 3.35 An oil painting by Gentile and Giovanni Bellini dated to 1504–07 of St Mark preaching in Alexandria

1 By what name have Egyptian Christians been known since the 1st century CE?

2 Identify who is believed to have introduced Christianity into Egypt.

3 Describe the obvious historical inaccuracies you can see in the painting in Figure 3.35.

A city of scholarly culture

The early Ptolemies were highly educated and encouraged and supported learning. Many people from all over the Mediterranean basin and adjacent areas came to Alexandria to study and carry out research in the Mouseion, the Great Library and the temple libraries such as that attached to the Serapeum.

The Mouseion and the Royal Library

In 304 BCE, Ptolemy I Soter invited the Greek poet and philosopher Demetrius of Phalerum to come to Alexandria, to advise him on setting up a great library in the Royal Quarter. It is believed that he set himself the objective of acquiring 500 000 scrolls.

There were two parts to this great complex of knowledge and learning:

1 The Mouseion, a Temple to the Greek Muses – the nine goddesses of the Arts – with its own king-appointed priest. It was like a modern research institute, for it was supposed to have had special rooms for the study of astronomy and anatomy, plus a zoo of exotic animals. Although the word 'museum' comes from 'Mouseion', the ancient Ptolemaic institution was not a collection of objects, but rather an assemblage of scholars who studied, wrote and carried out their experiments under the protection of the muses.

2 The Royal Library, the largest collection of texts in the world, a repository of all the most important works of the day: of playwrights, poets, mathematicians, scientists and philosophers. Initially, Ptolemy I invited rulers in other parts of the Mediterranean world to send books; then he issued an edict that all visitors to Alexandria had to surrender any books or scrolls they had in their possession, and all ships entering the harbour had to be searched for books. These were 'borrowed' and copied, but the library kept the originals and returned the copies.

Callimarchus, a Greek from Cyrene in Libya, catalogued the library's collection of scrolls. He wrote 120 books, listing the works in chronological order. The total number in the collection is not known but has been variously estimated as close to half a million at the library's peak.

The exact layout of the Mouseion/library complex is not known but the ancient sources speak of some of the following features, which resemble a modern university campus:

- meeting rooms
- private study rooms
- lecture halls and theatres
- reading rooms
- a communal dining room
- residential quarters
- columned and roofed walks and gardens.

Staff and scholars were patronised by the royal family of the Ptolemies. They received a salary, paid no taxes and were provided with free room and board, as well as free servants.

The library had legendary status in ancient times, which has led to various controversial theories about its destruction. Although many of the ancient sources, like the 1st century CE account by Plutarch in his *Life of Caesar*, and the 4th century pagan writer Ammianus and the Christian writer Orosius, claim

FIGURE 3.36 An artistic representation of the Great Library

it was destroyed by fire during the time Julius Caesar was besieged in Alexandria in 48 BCE, others disagree. It is likely that there was some destruction then but there was a secondary library attached to the Serapeum. It seems that the library, in one form or another, survived until it was largely lost when the Emperor Aurelian took the city in 270–272 CE. Although the last known references to Mouseion membership were from the 260s, there are scattered sources that seem to indicate that it may have been re-established in some form in the 4th century on a different site.

Recent excavations (at Kom el-Dikka) have revealed that higher education continued well into the 6th century CE, even after the former Ptolemaic centres for learning had disappeared. This complex of higher learning may have kept the intellectual Alexandrian tradition alive.

ACTIVITY 3.16

1   Investigate who the nine Greek Muses were.
2   In what ways did the ancient Alexandrian Mouseion differ from our modern museums?
3   Describe the methods Ptolemy I used to start his library collection of all the known works of the day, and how many 'books' the Great Library is believed to have once held.
4   Evaluate the accuracy of the ancient view that Julius Caesar was responsible for its destruction.
5   Describe how recent excavations at Kom el-Dikka (refer back to p. 143) provided evidence that Alexandria may have continued as a centre of learning well into the 6th century CE.

A modern Alexandrian library

In 2002–03, the ancient Alexandrian Great Library was reborn in the form of a modern Bibliotheca Alexandrina which, in the 21st century, will function like its ancient counterpart, as an international centre of exchange and communication of human knowledge and, like the ancient library, its aim is to attract scientists and scholars from all over the world.
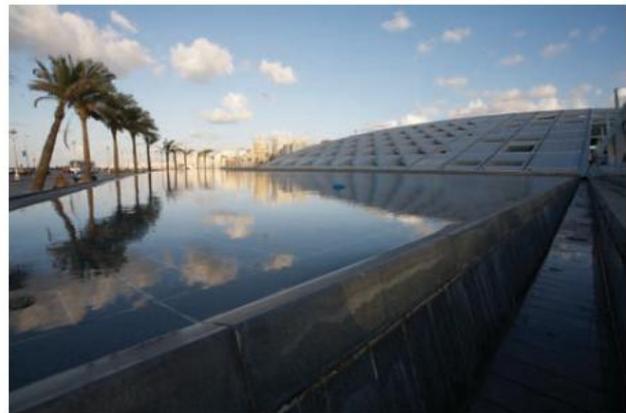
FIGURE 3.37 The modern Bibliotheca Alexandrina

Distinguished scholars who studied in Alexandria

The Ptolemies encouraged those who specialised in all forms of science as well as historians, philosophers and poets to come to Alexandria.

The following table provides a summary of some of the intellectual achievements that occurred in Alexandria.

TABLE 3.2 Distinguished scholars who studied in Alexandria

Sciences
1 Aristarchus – Greek astronomer and mathematician, presented the first heliocentric model of the solar system, placing the sun, not the earth, at its centre.
2 Erastitratus – founded a school of anatomy in Alexandria and first to distinguish between veins and arteries.
3 Eratosthenes – mathematician and astronomer, who invented the system of longitude and latitude, the first person to calculate the circumference of the Earth with amazing accuracy, and to prove the earth was round.
4 Euclid – mathematician, often referred to as 'the father of geometry' for his 'Elements', one of the most influential books on mathematics in the world.
5 Herophylus – physician, one of first scientists to perform scientific dissection of human bodies, identified the brain, not the heart, as the controlling organ of the body and the seat of intelligence.
6 Hipparchus – astronomer and mathematician, considered the founder of trigonometry, compiled the first star catalogue and calculated the length of the solar year to within 6.5 minutes.
7 Archimedes – mathematician, physicist, engineer, inventor, astronomer, one of the greatest scholars and inventors in antiquity, unrivalled in his genius until the era of Leonardo da Vinci.
8 Heron – mathematician and engineer, great experimenter and the first person to harness the wind on land by means of a windmill, and also invented a water clock.
9 Sosigenes – astronomer consulted by Julius Caesar on the design of a new calendar (the Julian Calendar) and is credited with work on the orbit of Mercury.
10 Claudius Ptolemy – astronomer, mathematician and geographer, established a geocentric model of the world which, though inaccurate, was accepted for 1500 years.
11 Galen – a physician, surgeon and philosopher and the most accomplished medical researcher in antiquity, wrote books on healing and anatomy which dominated the area until the Renaissance.
12 Hypatia – female scholar: mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, the author of books on geometry, algebra and astronomy.

Poetry, history and philosophy
1 Callimarchus – official court poet. He wrote a poem called *The Lock of Berenice*, about the wife of Ptolemy III who was Ptolemy's sister; and, later, another famous poem to mourn the queen's death.
2 Theocritus – poet, who besides composing flattering poems about royalty, also wrote poetry about ordinary people and everyday life known as pastoral poetry, e.g. *The Idylls*
3 Manetho – native Egyptian priest and historian, held an important position at the court. He wrote a history of Egypt, and a list of its kings and the dates of their reigns. He divided the kings into 30 dynasties and this system is still used today.
4 Philo – an Alexandrian Jew, philosopher, educated in Greek Platonic philosophy and was the first person to combine religious ideas with philosophy.

FIGURE 3.38 Euclid

FIGURE 3.39 Archimedes

Hypatia – a pagan Alexandrian scholar

Historians know that there was once a female pagan scholar known as Hypatia, the daughter of another scholar, Theon. She taught students in mathematics, philosophy and astronomy, and wrote books. However, there is little in the way of primary sources about her; there are no extant diaries or letters that tell us in her own words what she thought or did. We have to rely on the witness of others, and being an outstanding woman, she inspired admiration in some and envy and fear in others, many of whom had an axe to grind.

The following are the most often quoted of those sources.

1 Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais, who studied with Hypatia in the early 390s. He was devoted to her and corresponded regularly when he left Alexandria. He described her as 'the most holy philosopher', 'mother and sister teacher and withal benefactress', and on his deathbed, he bemoaned that he had not received a letter from her.

heresies any beliefs or theories that are strongly at variance with established beliefs or customs

sectarian denoting or concerning a sect or sects

2 Socrates Scholacticus was taught by pagan grammarians in Alexandria, but fled to Constantinople in 391 after the destruction of the Serapeum. He referred to himself as a member of the mainstream Christian church and is believed to have provided a balanced and thorough view on the religious problems and **heresies** he wrote about. He attributed Hypatia's death to her involvement in the **sectarian** conflicts of Alexandria and criticised the role played by the Church in her murder.

3 John, Bishop of Nikiu, was appointed as Coptic bishop and general administrator of the monasteries of Upper Egypt in 696; he was removed from his offices after a monk he disciplined, for some moral offence, died 10 days later; he disparaged Hypatia and approved of the Patriarch Cyril of Alexandria's supposed role in her murder.

Cyril was Coptic patriarch between 412–444 CE, and is known for his expulsion of Jews from Alexandria and for inflaming tensions that led to the murder of Hypatia, although historians disagree over the extent of his responsibility in this. It seems that with his arrival in Alexandria, Hypatia's dream of an open scholarly city began to take on the form of a nightmare.

Eventually, she was waylaid on her way home by a bigoted, frenzied Christian mob who dragged her from her carriage, took her to the Caesarion, which had been converted into a church, completely stripped her and murdered her with tiles. The mob tore her body to pieces, took her remains to the edge of the city and burned her as a 'witch'.

If I could only have had letters from you and learnt how you were all faring – I am sure you are happy and enjoying good fortune – I should have been relieved, in that case, of half of my own trouble, in rejoicing at your happiness. But now your silence has been added to the sum of my sorrows. I have lost my children, my friends, and the goodwill of everyone. The greatest loss of all, however, is the absence of your divine spirit.

SOURCE 3.12 The *Letters* of Synesius

… Hypatia, daughter of the philosopher Theon, who made such attainments in literature and science, as to far surpass all the philosophers of her own time … For all men on account of her extraordinary dignity and virtue admired her the more. Yet even she fell a victim to the political jealousy which at that time prevailed.

SOURCE 3.13 *Ecclesiastical History* Vols. 66 and 67

And in those days, there appeared in Alexandria a female philosopher, a pagan named Hypatia, and she was devoted at all times to magic, astrolabes and instruments of music, and she beguiled many people through (her) Satanic wiles. And the governor of the city honoured her exceedingly; for she had beguiled him through her magic. And he ceased attending church as had been his custom …

SOURCE 3.14 The *Chronicle* of John, Bishop of Nikiu

ACTIVITY 3.18

1 Explain how Sources 3.12–3.13, though both positive towards Hypatia, are different.

2 Of what things does Source 3.14 accuse Hypatia? What kind of a person does the writer appear to be?

3 Try to watch the 2009 film, *Agora*, to get a 'feel' for Hypatia and the city during her life. Note though that the movie has been criticised by some for historical inaccuracies.

4 Check out the excellent documentary by Bettany Hughes on YouTube, part of the Ancient World Series 2–7 called 'Alexandria the Greatest City', for extra information about Hypatia and the city.

5 Write a short report on what extra information you have discovered about this exceptional woman.

FIGURE 3.40 A scene from the movie *Agora*

CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The site of Alexandria was chosen by Alexander the Great in 332–331 BCE for its various natural advantages for future growth and prosperity. Some of our knowledge of the ancient site comes from historians of the 3rd–2nd centuries BCE, some of whom accompanied Alexander.
- The city was ruled for 300 years by the Ptolemies, a dynasty of kings descended from Ptolemy, one of Alexander's generals. After the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE, it was ruled for centuries by the Romans as part of the province of Egypt until the downfall of the Roman Empire.

SOURCES OF EVIDENCE FOR ANCIENT ALEXANDRIA

- According to UNESCO, there 'are many remains on the land and under the sea to bear witness to the city's past'. These remains have been classified into three categories: monumental remains such as 'Pompey's Pillar', a 30-metre-high structure carved out of Aswan granite erected in 297 CE; ancient necropolises (burial grounds) and their associated funerary objects; and underwater remains like the immense archaeological site near Pharos.
- Many contemporary (primary) written sources for the various phases of ancient Alexandria's existence have totally disappeared, while most of those that have survived are fragmentary.

LIFE IN ALEXANDRIA AS REVEALED THROUGH THE SOURCES

- There were three major groups in Alexandria from its foundation: Greek/Macedonians, Jews and Egyptians. However, as Alexandria grew and developed – reaching a population of 300 000 – it became an open city that welcomed foreigners such as Greeks from other areas, Libyans, Ethiopians, Syrians, Thracians, Sicilians, Persians, even Indians; but not everyone had the same rights.
- Alexandria was a prosperous, rich and productive emporium city, a crucible of religions and cults and a city where scholarly research was encouraged.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation

- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- *agora*
- Hellenistic
- emporium
- Mouseion
- Serapeum
- heresies

Historical concepts

Changes and continuity over time
Review the changes that occurred in the city of Alexandria over time.

Significance
Explain the significance of the arrival in Alexandria of Julius Caesar to the future of the city.

Causation
What was the cause of the various Jewish persecutions in Alexandria in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE?

Historical skills

Historical interpretation
- Describe how useful the work of the geographer Strabo is in understanding Ptolemaic Alexandria.
- Describe how useful popular culture is in understanding the life and achievements of the pagan female scholar, Hypatia.
- Outline how successful Alexandria's multi-religious policy was.

Historical investigation and research
Research the Rosetta Stone:
- Outline when and why was it inscribed by Ptolemy V, in 196 BCE.
- Recall how it was rediscovered in 1799.
- Explain what part its discovery played in understanding Egyptian civilisation.

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)
- To what extent was the Ptolemaic dynasty responsible for the reputation of Alexandria as one of the greatest cosmopolitan centres in the ancient world?
- Assess the role of archaeologists in the rediscovery of ancient Alexandria.

CHAPTER 4
Boudicca (Boudica)

FIGURE 4.1 An artistic representation of Boudicca

FIGURE 4.2 Map of Britain showing location
of ancient Iceni

FIGURE 4.2 Map of Britain showing location of ancient Iceni

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will need to explore the significance of the historical figure Boudicca, and her revolt against Rome.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • representations of Boudicca over time • the historical and geographical context of Boudicca's conflict with the Romans • the nature of the written and archaeological sources for Boudicca • Boudicca and the British revolt against the Romans.

Their [ancient Britons'] physical characteristics are various, and from these conclusions may be drawn. The red hair and large limbs of the inhabitants of Caledonia point clearly to a German origin. The dark complexion of the Silures, their usually curly hair, and the fact that Spain is the opposite shore to them, are an evidence that the Iberians of a former date crossed over and occupied these parts. Those who are nearest to the Gauls are also like them.

SOURCE 4.1 Tacitus, *Agricola*, Bk 1.11

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CRITICALLY SEE, THINK, WONDER

FIGURE 4.3 A visual compilation of Boudicca: (left) An artistic depiction of Boudicca; (right) John Opie's painting *Boadicea Haranguing the Britons* (over 200 years old)

Based on the images provided in Figures 4.1 and 4.3, as a class consider the following question for discussion:

• How do these images depict Boudicca as a woman and leader and how accurate do you think they might be?

    Study Figures 4.1 and 4.3 carefully. Note how each one depicts Boudicca. Consider what they reveal about her as a woman and leader. Which one do you think might be the closest to the 'truth'? Keep this question in mind as you read on.

CHAPTER 4 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
That there was a revolt against Roman occupation in Britain in the mid–1st century CE is not in doubt, but little is known about the historical Iceni queen, Boudicca, and the real nature of the part she played in that revolt. Only two Roman sources, Tacitus and Dio Cassius, reported the revolt and Boudicca through the viewpoint of their own biases with regard to 'barbarians' and 'powerful women' and in the form of speeches that, in the way of ancient historiography, were only what a writer thought a person would have or should have said.	Women like Boudicca reveal our desire to lift prominent individuals out of the dust of history and breathe new life into them, often providing them with identities that are most often fictionalised. However, this episode in history raises issues that are still applicable today: oppression and persecution by conquering nations and the way individuals and groups react to them.	• torques • polytheistic • Druids • acolyte • auxiliaries • legions • *pila* • *gladius* • *pugio* • *scorpio* • Romanisation • client-kingships • *coloniae* • *carnyx*

Painting the picture

When the Romans invaded and occupied Britain in the 1st century CE, the Iceni tribe to which Boudicca belonged became a client-kingdom of the Romans, and many ancient Britons, some willingly, others reluctantly, succumbed to the process known as Romanisation. The Romans set up their headquarters at the ancient tribal town of Camulodunum, modern Colchester, and built a temple to the Emperor Claudius, which became to the British a symbol of the arrogance of the Romans and an insult to their gods. At the time, the Druids (ancient priests) were inciting the British tribes to revolt.

When King Prasutagus of the Iceni died, Boudicca became the tribe's leader, but according to Tacitus, the Romans carried out various atrocities against her and her teenage daughters and others within the Iceni tribe. It was supposedly these actions that led Boudicca to plan a rebellion against the Romans. There were – other than personal revenge – other causes that led thousands of Britons to attack and annihilate the Roman-controlled towns of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium.

Unfortunately, the undisciplined force supposedly under the leadership of Boudicca, with little organisation, poor weapons and few wearing armour, were no match, despite their much larger numbers, for the well-trained, equipped and disciplined Roman legion led by Suetonius Paulinus in the final confrontation.

The tribal force was overwhelmed, Boudicca is supposed to have taken poison and Paulinus went on a campaign to destroy what remained of the Iceni. Boudicca's revolt marked the end of British resistance to Roman occupation.

> ### INQUIRY QUESTION
> What are the problems faced by historians in 'finding' the historical Boudicca and her part in the revolt against Rome in 60–61 CE?

4.1 Representations of Boudicca over time

There are many Boudiccas, depending on whether we are looking for the historical Boudicca, who lived in the 1st century CE and for whom 'nothing exists to authenticate her existence other than the brief words of two Roman men', or the fictional Boudicca depicted in novels, movies and popular images that are 'based on myth, legend and wishful thinking'.[1]

The historical Boudicca

The historical Boudicca, according to Tacitus and Dio Cassius, was:

1. a warrior queen in Roman Britain who took up arms in 60–61 CE, led a rebellion against the Roman Empire, razed three cities and killed 70 000 men, women and children before the final battle
2. the widowed queen of Prasutagus, the Roman-appointed client-king of the Iceni tribe, who stepped outside the normal role of wife and mother to gain vengeance against the Romans for failing to honour her husband's will and the outrages they committed against her and her two daughters.
3. a brutal rebel who killed indiscriminately and sacrificed her victims to her gods.

All of these may have some truth to them, and it is certainly true that although she lost her fight against the Romans and failed to end the Roman occupation of Britain, she remained in the minds of both the Britons and the Romans for at least the next 50 years.

However, almost nothing is known of the 'real' woman. In fact, we really do not know if Boudicca or Boudica was her real name. Perhaps it was a title, since 'Boudica' comes from the Celtic word 'bouda' or 'victory', a call that warriors supposedly chanted before going into battle.

In this case study, her name is spelt 'Boudicca', although you will find her frequently referred as 'Boudica' or 'Boadicea'.

A woman for everyone

Boudicca had been dead for 1500 years and little known about her when, during the reign of Elizabeth I in the 16th century, there was a rebirth of the image of the warrior queen, and an 'emerging corpus of literature that featured that first British warrior queen herself 'Queen Boudica of the Iceni'.[2]

The many gaps in the works of the Roman writers Tacitus and Dio Cassius – our *only* written sources for Boudicca – have allowed her to live in people's imaginations – particularly for the last 300 years – and to become anything anyone wants her to be: queen, mother, wife, warrior, victim, hero, patriot, activist and the ultimate role model for modern women in the 21st century.

- In the reign of Queen Victoria, the ancient warrior queen, inaccurately known then as 'Boadicea', was 'presented as an idol of nationalism, of British warrior tradition and, somewhat incongruently, as a figurehead of imperialism, even though this was the thing she had fought against'.[3]
- A sculpture made by Thomas Thorneycroft, commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1850 and finally erected in 1902 at Westminster Bridge, depicts 'Boadicea', accompanied by her two crouching, bare-breasted daughters in a chariot drawn by rearing horses. The warrior queen is depicted in a flowing gown and bears some resemblance to a young Victoria. The chariot is not based on an ancient British or Iceni chariot, but a scythed Roman one. 'Boadicea' stands upright, a spear in one hand, the other raised like an avenging angel.
- In 1906, Boudicca was adopted as the symbol of the Suffragettes in their protest marches, but one decade later, in 1916, a Welshman, James Harvard Thomas, unveiled his sculpture in Cardiff City Hall of a maternal Boudicca – no weapons in sight – with her arms around her daughters' shoulders.
- A 1938 painting by C. Gill, hanging in the Council Chambers in Essex, features Boudicca as 'defeminised, with mannish hair, stern gaze, high neckline, and the classic pose of Britannia complete with spear'.[4]

- Today, many see her as an icon for the 'new' feminism and a strong model or metaphor for modern women.
- Boudicca has been the subject of many films, documentaries and YouTube clips. She is often depicted in a clichéd way: as a fiery-haired, lusty Irish woman or a sexual 'Xena warrior princess' type.

FIGURE 4.4 Victorian sculpture
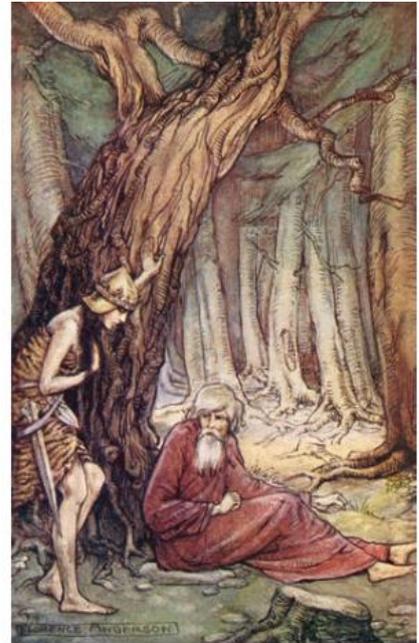
FIGURE 4.5 An illustration by Florence Anderson, inspired by the poem *Boadicea* by William Cowper, 1914

ACTIVITY 4.1

1 Explain the symbolism displayed in Figure 4.4.
2 Based on the limited information you have so far, explain why some people might think that this sculpture of 'Boadicea' is inappropriate and should possibly be moved somewhere other than close to Britain's Parliament Square.
3 Discuss the statement below:
   - Rebel women like Boudicca 'provide stark evidence of our desire to tell stories about long-dead characters, to lift them out of the dust of history and breathe new life in them – even if that life is gained at the expense of the truth'.[5]
4 Search the internet for more images of Boudicca and note the various ways she is depicted in art, film and cartoon.
5 Referring to the following videos on YouTube:
   – 'In Search of Queen Boadicea', Michael Wood, 2013
   – 'Boudicca' (full documentary) April 2017
   - write a short opinion piece, or
   - give an oral presentation, or
   - engage in a class discussion.

4.2 The geographical and historical context of Boudicca's conflict with the Romans

1 Caledones
2 Taexali
3 Carvetii
4 Venicones
5 Epidii
6 Damnonii
7 Novantae
8 Selgovae
9 Votadini
10 Brigantes
11 Parisi
12 Cornovii
13 Deceangli
14 Ordovices
15 Corieltauvi
16 Iceni
17 Demetae
18 Catuvellauni
19 Silures
20 Dubunni
21 Dumnonii
22 Durotriges
23 Belgae
24 Atrebates
25 Regni
26 Cantiaci
27 Trinovantes
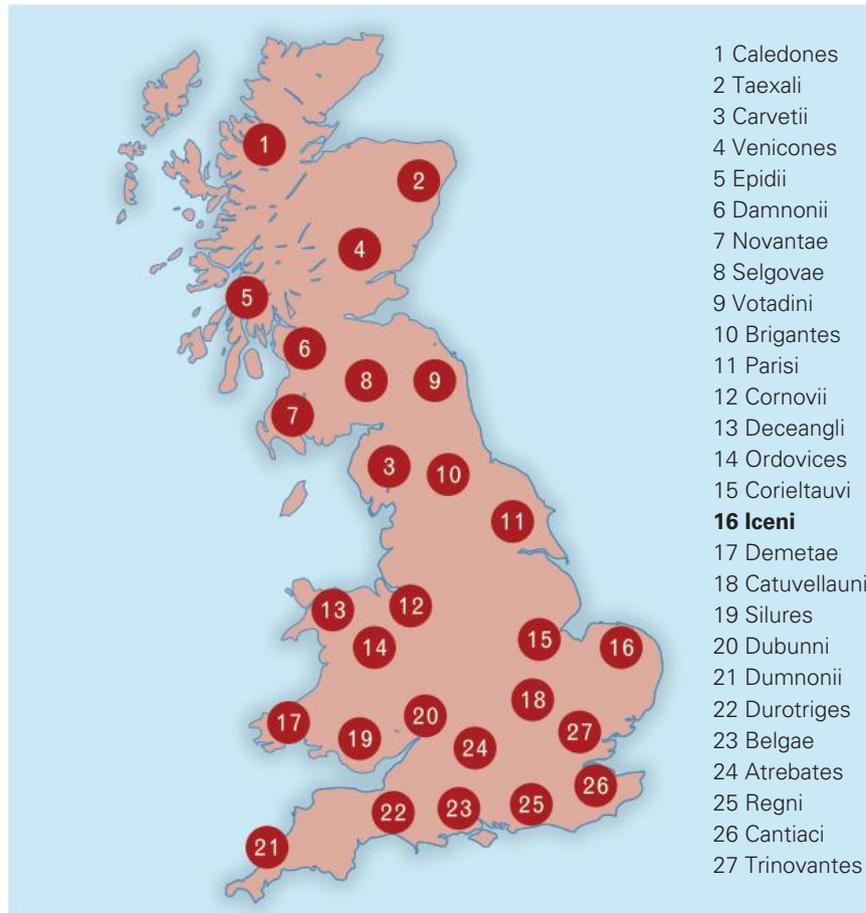
FIGURE 4.6 Map of the approximate location of the tribes of Britain in the 1st century BCE

A COMMENT ON THE CELTIC LABEL

Boudicca is described in most works as a Celtic queen. However, the inhabitants of Iron Age Britain never referred to themselves as Celts to define their identity, and no classical writer ever described them as such. Although they may have spoken some forms of a core Celtic language, there was no such thing as a 'Celtic Britain'; this was an 18th-century label that hides the reality. When an 18th-century Welsh Oxford scholar, Edward Lhuyd, published his work on the Celtic language, he inadvertently set off a movement that has been called 'Celtomania', and for the next 300 years there was a wave of Celtic passion for the idea of a special British Celtic identity where there had never been any historical or cultural precedents. In some cases, people simply made up Celtic traditions as they seized on some connection to a Celtic past.

The timeline on the next page summarises early Roman contacts with the Britons from the time of Julius Caesar, the annexation of Britain as a Roman province (Britannia) by the Emperor Claudius, and the revolt of Boudicca.

58–50 BCE	• Julius Caesar campaigns in Gaul in 58–56 BCE
	• Crosses to Britain in 55 – 1st invasion, believing the Britons were helping the Gallic resistance to Rome. Captures no more than a beach
	To the Romans fresh from the glory of their victories in Gaul, the people of this savage land were even stronger than the stories that abounded of this cold, dangerous place that lay beyond the edge of the world.[6]
	• In 54, he carries out the 2nd invasion of Britain with a fleet of 800 ships. Pushes inland, faces ferocious guerrilla attacks, eventually accepts terms of submission of Trinovantes and five neighbouring tribes including the Iceni:
	Caesar found that fighting such a foe was difficult. Even greater problems were posed by the natives' use of chariots, of which Cassivellaunus had 4000 under his control. Evidently this kind of warfare was new to Caesar.[7]
	• Returns to Gaul where he faces a Gallic rebellion under Vercingetorix, a powerful Gallic chieftain. Spends 52–50 BCE defeating Vercingetorix at Alesia and mopping up remnants of the revolt
	In 30 pitched battles in Gaul, Caesar claimed to have captured a million men, killed 1 192 000 and captured 800 towns. He followed this up with a conciliatory policy, realising that he might need supportive Gauls in the future.[8]
49	Beginning of Roman civil war when Caesar crosses the Rubicon and enters Italy with his army
44	Julius Caesar murdered by fellow Romans
27 BCE– 41 CE	• Octavian becomes 1st Roman Emperor, Augustus, followed by Tiberius and Caligula
	• Caligula assembles 200 000 men at the Channel but abandons attempt to invade Britain
	• Emperor Claudius takes the imperial throne
43 CE	• Emperor Claudius invades Britain on the excuse to restore an exiled tribal British king, but also to gain the support of the Roman Senate and people:
	Another factor that made Britain desirable for a renewed invasion was the rich trade that Rome was currently enjoying with the island, especially in products like Roman wine and pottery in exchange for British tin, lead, iron and other metals.[9]
	• Becomes a Roman Province: Britannia
	• Caratacus, a king of the Catuvellauni tribe, leads Britons' resistance, and although other tribes submitted to the Romans, Caratacus continued the fight for the independence of his people
47	• First revolt by the Iceni tribe, soon quashed by Romans
	• Publius Ostorius Scapula leads military action against the tribes of Britons
48	Romans assist Cartimandua to retain power as Brigantian Queen
c. 50	London (Londinium) established as Roman trading port
51	Caratacus finally defeated in battle, handed over to Romans by Queen Cartimandua, and sent to Rome a hero
52–58	Wales conquered by Romans
54	Emperor Claudius dies, Nero becomes Emperor
58–61	Gaius Suetonius Paulinus becomes governor of Britain

60	• Iceni client king Prasutagus dies, leaving his lands jointly to his two daughters and the Emperor Nero, leading to persecution of Boudicca's family and tribesmen
	• Queen Boudicca rules the Iceni
	• Suetonius invades Anglesey to destroy Druid resistance to Rome
	• Boudicca rises up in revolt against the Romans and sacks Colchester (Camulodunum), London (Londinium) and St Albans (Verulamium) before being defeated and dying
	• Widespread retribution by Romans against the rebellious tribes of Britons

Tribal Iron Age Britain before the Roman conquest in 43 CE

The people of Britain in pre-Roman days did not think of themselves as a single group. Although they probably shared a fairly similar language, they gained their identities from their tribal groups and the territory in which they lived. Many of these tribes were highly organised, some were extremely wealthy, while others were split into small tribal factions or chiefdoms led by their own king or queen.

> Our greatest advantage in coping with tribes so powerful is that they do not act in concert. Seldom is it that two or three states meet together to ward off a common danger. Thus, while they fight singly, all are conquered.

SOURCE 4.2 Tacitus, *Agricola*, Bk 1.12

- Each tribe had its own chief or king, although decision-making was in the hands of the free men of the tribe, while a group of warrior nobles chose each king/queen or chieftain.
- Tribal lords were famous for their generosity, which was important in maintaining their status. Part of this was the social gatherings of nobles at feasts at which there was plenty of drinking and entertainment.
- Warrior nobles had a reputation for being warlike and aggressive. They carried splendid weapons, meant to impress their enemies. They were highly skilled charioteers, and it appears that this kind of warfare was a passion. According to Caesar, they pursued it with daring, ferocity, courage and much noise. Caesar also seemed to have been impressed by their agility.
- They fought among themselves and rarely united against a common foe.

ACTIVITY 4.2

1. Explain what Tacitus is saying about the origins of the ancient Britons in Source 4.1 (on p. 165).
2. Evaluate what Tacitus said in Source 4.2 was the reason why the British tribes were beatable.

The image of ancient Britons

It must be remembered that Celtic-speaking people ranged over large parts of Europe, possibly from as early as 1000 BCE until they were wiped out by the Roman conquests, so it is to be expected that they changed over time depending on when they lived and with whom they came in contact.

FIGURE 4.7 An early British chariot

FIGURE 4.8 A dying Celt referred to as the 'Dying Gaul' – Roman marble copy of one originally in bronze, probably commissioned c. 220 BCE

According to Greek and Roman writers, the European Celtic warriors:

- were impressive – taller than the Romans
- seemed to take pride in their appearance – shaved their faces clean but left long-flowing moustaches
- loved adornment to show off their wealth and status although they often fought bare-breasted
- wore colourful clothes, ornamental brooches, **torques** and jewellery. The fact that some tribesmen wore trousers and tunics might have made the Romans regard them as barbaric
- stiffened their hair with lime which made it lighter and stand up from their heads in a terrifying manner.

torques neck ornaments consisting of a band of metal, often twisted gold

Despite the popular image of ancient Britons as ferocious warriors, the majority of tribal members lived on the land as subsistence farmers, growing crops, managing woodlands and raising livestock and horses. Among the Iceni, horses played an important spiritual role and was a source of power and wealth.

Most members of the tribe tended to live in small settlements of round, waterproofed houses, although there were hill forts built of banks, ditches and gateways that could be used in time of war to house people and stock. Some of these gathering places were

FIGURE 4.9 A golden torque

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FIGURE 4.10 A reconstructed British village (Buster Farm)

used as religious centres and showed off the tribe's power. However, there appear to have been few Iron Age hill forts in the flat lands of the Iceni, perhaps because it was a watery, marshy landscape that provided its own form of defence.

There were also tribal craftsmen who made weapons, chariots, pottery and the jewellery that the ancient Britons liked so much.

Women

It seems that British tribes were comfortable with powerful women.

- Women of the elite could choose their own husbands and were not the property of their spouses.
- They held their own wealth independently and appear to have been able to make legal transactions in their own right.
- Either partner could inherit everything on the death of the other.
- They seem to have had some education in the use of weaponry and strategy and were fiercely proud, and like their husbands and fathers would demand vengeance if their personal honour was insulted.
- Some women achieved positions of respect and influence within the community and others took part in

FIGURE 4.11 A print of Cartimandua handing over Caratacus (a British king of the Catuvellauni tribe) to the Roman governor of Britain

politics and wielded power. Apart from Boudicca, the sources speak briefly of Queen Cartimandua or Cartismandua, of the Brigantes tribe in northern Britannia, as a powerful warrior queen whom men were prepared to follow as a war leader.

A COMMENT ON A POWERFUL ANCIENT BRITON WOMAN AS FAR BACK AS 300–100 BCE

A chariot burial was discovered in Wetwang in North Yorkshire that contained the body of a young women in her mid to late 20s, along with a disassembled two-horse chariot that had been richly decorated with enamel and Mediterranean coral. Also in the grave were pig bones, perhaps food for her journey into the next life, and an unusual iron mirror. She came from the Parisi tribe and, according to Dr Jeremy Hill, Curator of the Iron Age Collection at the British Museum, she was some form of female leader, almost certainly a queen. There is also the possibility that she might have been a priestess.

Burials, especially chariot burials, were rare in Iron Age Britain, as most people were cremated, but the presence of their personal possessions indicates that the ancient Britons believed in some form of afterlife.

A COMMENT ABOUT ROMAN ATTITUDES TO WOMEN

It is hard to generalise about the position of women in Rome. Although their lives were in stark contrast to their British contemporaries, they had a degree more independence in the 1st century CE than they had in previous eras. Roman men did not give much weight to women in their society, apart from in the bedroom, because they were unable to take part in politics or military conflicts, the two things that most concerned men. Women were used for political alliances and there were frequent marriages and divorces as males' political 'friendships' changed. Most upper-class women remained under the control/influence of their fathers, although married, and they were expected to raise children, run a household, work in wool, be pious, chaste and thrifty. The male writers tended to see women as stereotypes and the Roman orator Cicero said that their ancestors, in their wisdom, put women under guardians because of their innate weakness.

ACTIVITY 4.3

1 Describe the ways in which ancient British women were different from Roman women.
2 Explain why it is not surprising that a British woman would rise up against unacceptable Roman treatment.
3 Discuss what the position of Roman women in society suggests about the reliability of the Roman sources reporting on Boudicca's revolt.

Allegiances and trade

There was a certain fluidity amongst the Iron Age Britons: there were temporary allegiances and alliances between tribes, while some crossed the channel to fight as mercenaries in Gaul. Also, they had been communicating with and exchanging goods and 'gift-giving' (trade) with others for centuries:

- internally along rivers and coasts
- beyond their borders along trade routes that extended far to the east.

> Here is a man who was clearly revered as some kind of great warrior or chief, who died and was buried in a lavish grave to mark his status in the community. … Here is a guy who clearly had his finger on the pulse of the latest European fashions: he had a shield boss and spear that were Gaulish, but the sword was wrapped up in linen which is something we've only ever seen in two sites in Guernsey. The scabbard was made in Britain, or at least in the British style – and then there was an imported Roman bronze bowl … It all seemed a confusing melee of cultural influences.

SOURCE 4.3 A 1st century burial of a warrior discovered in the tribal territory of the Trinovantian tribe. Description from Dr Paul Sealey, archaeologist from Colchester Museum, cited in Vanessa Collingridge, *Boudica*, 2005, p. 93

Religion

The ancient Britons worshipped many gods and goddesses (they were **polytheistic**), who had to be placated by special rituals and sacrifices. Certain times of the year – such as November 1, called Samhain, which marked the end of summer – were particularly significant, as the people believed it was possible then to pass across the line between the living and the gods. Special places such as rivers, lakes and springs were associated with certain important gods.

polytheistic the belief in many different gods

ACTIVITY 4.4

Research the British goddesses Epona and Andraste and write a brief summary of what you find.

Druids

Druids were:

- priests
- wise men
- diviners
- judges
- a link between men and the gods
- ranked second only to the kings and chiefs, and were in a class of their own.

Because they could supposedly interpret the moods of the gods and intercede with them on the people's behalf, they were the only people who could move easily among *all* tribes, and be given a warm welcome by both kings and commoners alike.

This group was so feared and hated by the Romans that they tried wiping them off the face of the earth, first in Gaul under Caesar, and then on the shores of the Welsh island of Mona (Anglesey) under the general of the Roman army in Britain, Suetonius Paulinus.

There were often priestesses working alongside Druids who passed down their ancient wisdom from one generation to another in verse and song. A specially chosen boy, usually from a noble family, became an

FIGURE 4.12 The horse goddess Epona

acolyte (a person who assisted the Druid in his various activities), training for about 20 years before becoming a full Druid.

The following extracts about the Druids are from Julius Caesar's *The Gallic War*.

> The Druids are engaged in things sacred, conduct the public and the private sacrifices, and interpret all matters of religion. To these a large number of the young men resort for the purpose of instruction, and they [the Druids] are in great honour among them. For they determine respecting almost all controversies, public and private; and if any crime has been perpetrated, if murder has been committed, if there be any dispute about an inheritance, if any about boundaries, these same persons decide it; they decree rewards and punishments; if any one, either in a private or public capacity, has not submitted to their decision, they interdict him from the sacrifices. This among them is the most heavy punishment.
>
> The Druids do not go to war, nor pay tribute together with the rest; they have an exemption from military service and a dispensation in all matters. Induced by such great advantages, many embrace this profession of their own accord, and [many] are sent to it by their parents and relations. They are said there to learn by heart a great number of verses; accordingly, some remain in the course of training twenty years. Nor do they regard it lawful to commit these to writing …
>
> They wish to inculcate this as one of their leading dogmas, that souls do not become extinct, but pass after death from one body to another, and they think that men by this tenet are in a great degree excited to valor, the fear of death being disregarded.
>
> They also discuss and impart to the young many things concerning the heavenly bodies and their movements, the size of the world and of our earth, natural science, and of the influence and power of the immortal gods. … to a great degree devoted to superstitious rites; and on this account, those who are afflicted with severe diseases, or who are engaged in battles and dangers, either sacrifice human beings for victims, … these employ the Druids as ministers for such sacrifices, because they think that, unless the life of man be repaid for the life of man, the will of the immortal gods cannot be appeased.

SOURCE 4.4 Julius Caesar: *The Gallic War,* 6.13, 6.14, 6.15

ACTIVITY 4.5

1 List the chief functions of a Druid according to Julius Caesar.
2 What advantages did Julius Caesar believe induced young men to join the Druidic profession?
3 Find the quote that shows that the Celts passed their knowledge on orally.
4 What religious lessons did the Druids teach?
5 What 'sciences' do they appear to have had knowledge of?
6 What was Caesar's opinion of the Druids?
7 Use the information in this section on the Druids to construct a mind map of their role in the tribal communities of Briton.
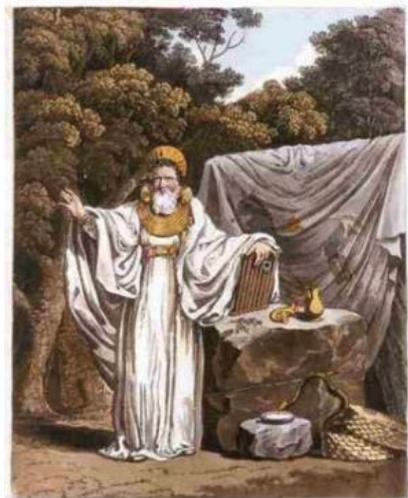
FIGURE 4.13 A 19th-century imaginative drawing of an Archdruid in full judicial costume

CHAPTER 4 BOUDICCA (BOUDICA)

The Iceni prior to the Roman invasion

According to the archaeological evidence (including their coins), the Iceni lived in the fertile marshy flatlands of East Anglia, their territory covering the modern county of Norfolk and parts of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. Much of the land, cleared for crops and animals, was covered with a system of dykes and ditches.

> The tribe's origins were typical of many Iron Age groups in Britain at that time – an apparent amalgam of native Britons who had lived in the area since at least the Bronze Age together with some immigrants from the Belgic tribes of the Low Countries and the later more aristocratic immigrants from the Marne valley in north-eastern France who brought with them their warrior skills, superior iron swords and also their speedy war chariots. … There is one intriguing piece of evidence from Iceni coins that sets them apart from every other tribe in Britain at the time: they minted the only coins that appear to bear the tribal, as well as their rulers' names.

SOURCE 4.5 Vanessa Collingridge, *Boudica*, 2005, pp. 171–2

The evidence for the Iceni is very much incomplete, although tribal nobles appear to have been a relatively wealthy and powerful group judging from the hoards of coins found, the gold treasure known as the Strettisham torques, and other finds of elaborately decorated bronze chariot fittings.

FIGURE 4.14 An Iceni coin featuring a horse

FIGURE 4.15 The remains of a chariot

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FIGURE 4.16 Some of the Strettisham Treasure in the British Museum, weighing 30 kg, excavated from 1950–91. The treasure remains a mystery as there is no evidence of a contemporary settlement where it was found.

The arrival of the Romans

Return to the timeline on pages 171–172, and review the part played by Julius Caesar and Claudius in the invasion and annexation of Britain and the negative reaction of Caratacus. You might like to do your own research on this warrior king and his fate at the hands of the Romans.

A COMMENT ON THE ROMAN ARMY

- By the time of the 1st century CE, the Roman army was professional, well organised and highly disciplined.
- The army was a career and soldiers were dependent on the state for their regular pay, welfare (weapons, clothing and food) and pensions of land or cash on retirement.
- They served for a fixed term: 20 years for legionaries and 25 years for **auxiliaries** ('supports').

- The army was divided into **legions** of approximately 5500 men, and were further divided into tactical units: cohorts of 480 men and centuries of 80 men. Legionaries were recruited from Roman citizens.
- Auxiliaries were drawn from the Empire's vast pool of non-citizen subjects. There were equal numbers of auxiliaries and legionaries. The auxilia

auxiliaries regiments of non-citizen soldiers, usually allies, who fought alongside and supported the citizen legions

legions the largest units in the Roman army, each comprised of approximately 5500 heavily armed citizen soldiers

FIGURE 4.17 Roman legionaries

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provided virtually all the army's cavalry, light infantry, archers and other specialists, in addition to heavy infantry equipped in a similar manner to legionaries.

- Method and planning were important to the Romans.
- They were heavily armed, had javelins (***pila***), a sword (***gladius***), often a dagger (***pugio***), and the **scorpio**: mechanised field artillery that could throw bolts (chunky arrows) long distances at a rate of 3–4 a minute.
- They used a wedge formation for 'crushing' their opponents.

Britain was initially an imperial province under the direct control of the Roman emperor, because it required permanent garrisons of soldiers

Governors were carefully selected, usually held a consulship in Rome, had a strong military and administrative record

Main duties of the governor: primarily military, but also maintained diplomatic relations with client-kings, supervised the building of roads, maintained a courier system, acted as a judge and supervised the various settlements

To assist him the governor had the following:

A *legatus juridicus* (Legal advisor)	A *procurator* Financial administrator	Commanders of the Legions

A large administrative body of tax collectors, intelligence gathering, organising military supplies and dealing with captives

A staff of seconded soldiers who provided clerical services

FIGURE 4.18 Diagram of Roman military government in mid-1st century CE

Cultural Romanisation

Romanisation is a term used to describe the adoption of Roman culture by those people conquered by the Romans, beginning with the upper classes to increase their prestige, and proceeding downward to the general population. This was achieved by:

- taking hostages from elite families and sending them to Rome to be educated.
- setting up **client-kingships**. The Romans found it easier to control the people if they got the leaders on their side, hoping that the local nobility would develop a taste for the Roman lifestyle. In Britain, the local tribes who chose to be allies with Rome did so for their own preservation from attacks by Roman soldiers and also as protection from other unfriendly tribes. The Iceni was one such tribe.

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The client-kingdoms kept the borders of Roman occupation relatively safe (acting as buffer zones) allowing the Romans to focus on those who resisted them, such as Caratacus, a king of the Catuvellauni tribe, and the Druids. Some of these client-kings were provided with money granted or lent by the Roman Emperor.

- establishing colonies (*coloniae*) of veteran Roman soldiers in conquered territory. These soldiers would have brought with them their language (Latin), their technology, such as road building, their style of housing, their gods and their forms of administration.

FIGURE 4.19 An artistic representation of early London

Despite tribes like the Iceni gaining the good will of the Romans, it did not stop the Romans from demanding that they – like those who resisted – also hand over all their weapons. 'To a proud warrior culture, this was the height of emasculation, especially when it was probably rudely enforced by detailed searches of farms and fields.'[10]

Three towns: three different relationships with the Romans

1 Camulodunum (modern Colchester) – a Roman colony
2 Londinium (modern London) – a Roman trading boom town
3 Verulamium (modern St Albans) – a Roman-British town with the status of a *municipium*.

Camulodunum

Cunobelin, the father of Caratacus, and the greatest of all the pre-Roman British Kings, had conquered the adjacent Trinovantes tribe and transferred his seat of power to Camulodunum. During his 48-year reign, this settlement was importing Roman goods and minting its own money in the style of Roman imperial coins. What had started out as a typical Iron Age settlement became the largest settlement in south-east Britain at about 10 square miles in area with a series of protective dykes for defence.

FIGURE 4.20 A Romanised Gaul: Vercingetorix

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However, Cunobelin died just before the Roman invasion of 43 CE, and the Emperor Claudius himself chose Camulodunum as the base of Roman military and administrative rule. This was to be the key to Romanising the new province of Britannia.

Cunobelin's son, Caratacus, would not accept this and became one of the great heroes of British resistance to the Roman invasion of 43.

The Romans appropriated large tracts of farmland around the settlement from the Britons as homesteads for the veteran soldiers and their families, and immediately began turning it into a Roman-style town based on a grid system of seven by four blocks in extent. It became known by the Romans as Colonia Victricensis (City of Victory) of Camulodunum. The town was transformed. The thatched circular homes and workshops of Cunobelin's time disappeared to be replaced with all the features of a Roman urban settlement:

- houses, shops and a market place
- Roman baths
- a 3000-seat theatre
- a temple dedicated to the Emperor Claudius.

However, it had no defences, probably thought unnecessary as it was a colony of soldiers.

Perhaps more than anything that summed up Roman rule and 'represented the arrogant excesses of a Roman culture which had stolen their lands, taken their wealth and insulted their own gods' was the huge Temple to Claudius that dominated the town.[11] The temple was the centre for the Imperial Cult in the province. Today, it forms the base of the Norman Colchester Castle.
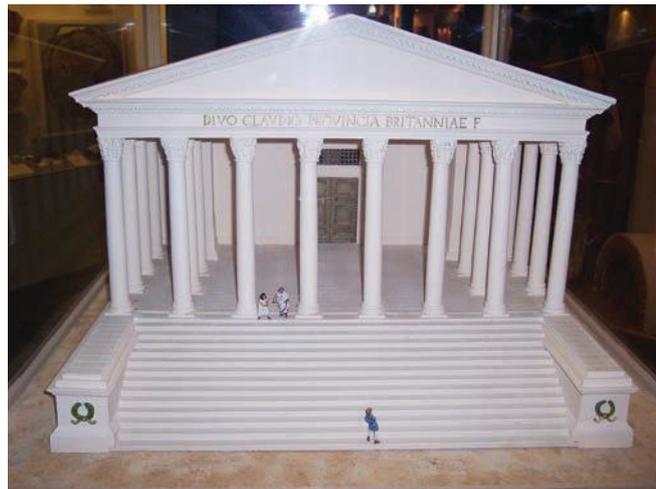
FIGURE 4.21 A model of the Temple to Claudius in Camulodunum

TABLE 4.1 Along with Camulodunum, these were the towns that Boudicca's Iceni, the Trinovantes and other Britons vented their fury against in the rebellion of 60–61 CE.

Londinium	Verulamium
- A Roman creation founded in c. 50 CE - No colony of Roman soldiers and no major fort - Prime location on the north bank of the Thames - Offered facilities for seafaring ships sailing up the Thames estuary - Roman-built roads radiating from its centre and a bridge over the river - A population of approx. 30 000: traders, merchants, financiers, artisans, craftsmen and the headquarters of the governor's procurator - Small shops and workshops and a forum or marketplace - Through it filtered all the products and profits of the new province.	- An Iron Age British settlement with a population of high-status Britons with strong connections to trading centres in Europe – relatively wealthy - Rapidly took on Roman styles and ideas after Claudius' invasion - Changed its name to the Roman form of Verulamium - The local British population built on their own strengths and developed their Iron Age settlement the way they wanted with no interference by Romans - Romans were so impressed that they gave them the privilege of being called a *municipium*, which meant inhabitants could become Roman citizens.

4.3 The nature of the written and archaeological sources for Boudicca

The written sources

Unfortunately, there are no ancient British sources for Boudicca, her life and revolt against the Romans. Historians have to rely on the writings of two Roman men.

Tacitus

Tacitus (58–117 CE) was a Roman statesman and historian, who wrote *The Annals of Imperial Rome* and *Agricola* towards the end of the 1st century CE. *The Annals* traces the history of the Julio-Claudian emperors to the death of Nero, while his *Agricola* is a semi-biographical account of his father-in-law, who was a military tribune under the British governor during Boudicca's revolt, and later Governor of Roman Britain in 77–78 CE.

He lived under the tyrannical reign of the Emperor Domitian, and although he survived, many of his friends did not. Both of his books have an anti-despotic theme: *The Annals* about the evils of one-man-rule; *Agricola* about an incorruptible officer and commander who had the superior morality of an earlier time.

Because of the high positions he held and his personal contact with emperors, he had vast inside information on the machinery of government.

Dio Cassius

Dio Cassius (155–235 CE) was a Roman statesman and historian, who wrote *The History of Rome* in 80 volumes, covering 1400 years of history. It was written over a 20-year period. Much of it is incomplete. For anything prior to his own day, he had to rely on past literary sources.

Their biases

Both historians:
- had 'their own unique filters'[12] through which they selected their material
- regarded the ancient Britons as 'barbarians'
- viewed themselves as culturally superior
- saw the place of women in society quite differently to the Britons (and modern people) and therefore displayed what today we call gender bias.

> Whoever were the first inhabitants of Britain, whether natives or immigrants, has never been answered: don't forget we are dealing with barbarians.

SOURCE 4.6 Tacitus, *Agricola*, xi

> A Briton woman possessed of greater intelligence than often belongs to women.

SOURCE 4.7 Dio Cassius, Bk 62.2, on Boudicca

Most of the Roman writers, like Tacitus and Dio Cassius, saw women as stereotypes, rather than individuals. Any ambitious women, such as Agrippina the Younger, wife of the Emperor Claudius and

FIGURE 4.22 Modern Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town and the first Roman capital in England, Camulodunum

mother of the Emperor Nero, who wanted to step outside the conservative Roman role of women in society and to participate in the political process, was treated in an excessively hostile way.

To add to the difficulties of 'finding' the historical Boudicca are the facts that:

- Tacitus and Dio Cassius do not mention – or agree on – the same things. Their depictions of Boudicca are entirely different and they give diverse causes for her revolt against the Romans, and also for her death.
- their accounts of Boudicca and her revolt are presented often in the form of speeches, which in ancient Greek and Roman historiography were not what a person actually said, but what writers thought a particular person would, or should have, said. This feature of ancient history writing meant that it 'was important to write in a highly descriptive, dramatic, emotional and persuasive way and to tell a good story that would also present a moral lesson'.[13] If these speeches are removed from Tacitus' and more particularly from Dio Cassius' accounts, there is very little detailed information about Boudicca.

The most common form of speech is the pre-battle address that includes certain stock elements and common themes. Of course, leaders would not have been able to address all of their troops in one gathering.

> ... the audiences for such speeches were entirely unrealistically portrayed in ancient historiography: one seldom learns of noises from the crowd, applause, jeers, and other forms of response. In addition, Boudica would not have addressed her troops in either Latin or Greek; as a result, it is highly unlikely that Tacitus and Dio acquired adequate information on her speeches' contents.

SOURCE 4.8 *Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio*, Project Muse, Scholarly Journals Online

ACTIVITY 4.6

1 Describe the forms of bias revealed by Sources 4.6 and 4.7 (on p. 183).
2 Recall the two reasons Source 4.8 gives for doubting the reliability of the speeches of Boudicca mentioned in the written sources.

The material remains

Despite the question of the reliability of the written sources, if it had not been for Tacitus, we would have known nothing of Boudicca.

But what of archaeology?

Over recent years there have been a series of discoveries that provide a greater insight into the lives of the ancient Britons and mean that modern historians are no longer entirely dependent on Tacitus' and Dio Cassius' version of the story of Boudicca. Particularly important are the excavations carried out at Colchester and London, which have revealed a destruction layer of burned red earth at a uniform level (the 'Boudican destruction horizon') that confirms that Tacitus and Dio Cassius were broadly telling the truth about a possible rebel army attack on the cities of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium (see Figure 4.29 on p. 193).

> Flecked with shards of blackened pottery and charcoal it could have been the debris of any settlement anywhere ... but this was in Britain and deep underground in the basement of a hotel in Colchester. ... this was the destruction layer of Boudica.

SOURCE 4.9 Vanessa Collingridge, *Boudica*, p. 1

A COMMENT ON METAL DETECTORISTS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF BOUDICCA'S BRITAIN

There have always been amateur sleuths, or 'treasure hunters', with their metal detectors, roaming over the British landscape, and professional archaeologists complaining about them. Despite their occasional – and sometimes important – finds there was often a negative relationship between these amateurs and professionals, until the Norfolk Museums Service – in the very area where Boudicca had lived – began a reciprocal program whereby the museum staff shared their knowledge with the detectorists in return for them 'showing' what they had discovered to the curators. This idea spread with the formation of *The Government's Portable Antiquities Scheme*, and the appointment of a network of *Finds Liaison Officers*, by which everyday people are now working responsibly with museums.

While the material remains provide more of an understanding of life in Roman Britain than they do of Boudicca as a person, they have helped to put together some of the pieces of the large puzzle about Boudicca left by the written sources.

ACTIVITY 4.7

1 Discuss why professional archaeologists might have complained about early detectorists.

2 Use the internet to research the Hockwold Treasure.
   Arrange your findings under the following headings:

   • What was found?

   • When was it found?

   • Where was it found?

   • How was it found?

FIGURE 4.23 The Hockwold Treasure

   • What are the approximate dates of the sites or artefacts?

   • What is its importance in understanding the life of Iron Age Britons around the time of Boudicca?

4.4 Boudicca and the British revolt against the Romans

Background

In 47 CE, probably due to the actions of the Roman Governor, Ostorius Scapula, to deprive the Iceni of their weapons, some of the tribe rebelled at being treated like enemies. Not only had the Iceni been deprived of their weapons, but they had to pay taxes towards the cost of being invaded and their young men had been taken to serve in the Roman army. This 'they bitterly resent; for they are broken in to obedience'.[14]

Unfortunately for the Iceni rebels, they were no match for the Romans and were easily subdued. The agitators were presumably killed, after which Scapula headed north-west to deal with Caratacus' band of rebels.

The Romans installed Prasutagus as a client-king of the Iceni, who paid homage to the Roman emperor for the next 17 years, and in return was presumably given a certain amount of independence by the Romans, as he continued to mint Iceni coins. Out of the three sources only the *Annals* mentions Boudicca's husband.

According to Tacitus, during his long reign, he become very wealthy – one of the wealthiest kings in Britain – presumably due to the financial support he was given by the Romans, and as his wife Boudicca would have enjoyed many of the luxuries of a Roman lifestyle.

In 60 CE, Prasutagus was still under the indirect control of the Romans, but then he died and this was the start of future problems for both the Romans and Britons.

How do the sources depict Queen Boudicca?

The following extract is the *only* description we have of Boudicca's appearance.

> In stature she was very tall, in appearance most terrifying, in the glance of her eye most fierce, and her voice harsh; a great mass of the tawniest hair fell to her hips; around her neck was a large golden necklace; and she wore a tunic of diverse colours over which a thick mantle was fastened with a brooch. This was her invariable attire.

SOURCE 4.10 Dio Cassius, *Roman History,* Book 62, 2.2–4

> Dio stresses Boudica's monstrous, barbarian features and offers a physical portrait that highlights her almost Amazonian countenance.

SOURCE 4.11 *Boudica's Speeches in Tacitus and Dio*, Project Muse, Scholarly Journals Online

It is believed that Dio Cassius was not describing the real Boudicca, but simply relating the commonly held ideas of what Celtic women looked like, and using the stereotypes and myths of the classical world – like that of the race of women warriors known as Amazons – to identity her as a 'barbarian' and emphasise her strangeness.

The Romans' belief in 'the exotic savagery of the redhead'[15] is revealed in Suetonius' comment about the Emperor Caligula.

> Then turning his attention to his triumph, in addition to a few captives and deserters from the barbarians, he chose all the tallest of the Gauls ... These he reserved for his parade, compelling them not only to dye their hair red and to let it grow long, but also to learn the language of the Germans and assume barbarian names.

SOURCE 4.12 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Caligula* 47

Despite Dio's apparent prejudice, the type of clothes and adornment he ascribes to Boudicca can be substantiated from the classical texts and archaeological finds as being Celtic.

- The gold necklace around her neck he refers to is probably one of the great golden torques worn by tribal leaders and found in hoards around Britain. A woman would not normally wear one, but as a warrior queen it is highly likely that Boudicca would have.
- The coloured tunic, woven in a way similar to ancient tartan, can be substantiated in both the classical texts and archaeological remains of Europe.
- Woollen cloaks – high status value – were well-known among Gauls visiting Rome.
- Brooches were the most common form of jewellery used for decoration and pinning garments in place and have been found in large numbers all over Britain.

FIGURE 4.24 An artistic representation of Boudicca

FIGURE 4.25 An artistic representation of Boudicca

ACTIVITY 4.8

1 List those features in Source 4.10 that Dio Cassius uses to suggest Boudicca is a 'barbarian' and different to most women.

2 Assess which of the images in Figures 4.24 and 4.25 most represents the description in Source 4.10.

3 Discuss whether Boudicca – the wife and queen of a man who had been a client-king of Rome for 17 years – would have actually dressed the way Dio Cassius relates.

The cause of the rebellion

In his will, the Icenian client-king, Prasutagus, 'celebrated for his long prosperity', named the emperor, Nero, his heir together with his two daughters, as 'an act of deference which he thought would place his kingdom and household beyond the risk of injury'.[16]

To the Britons, it was perfectly normal for women to inherit, and he had, for whatever reason, decided that he wanted to make his two daughters his heirs. We can only speculate on why he didn't leave his property to his wife Boudicca.

The Romans, however, saw this as unacceptable, because his estate was not his to give away. Prasutagus, as a client-king, was in a treaty with Rome and once he died a new treaty had to be made or else the kingdom would be annexed by Rome and absorbed into the empire. Also, it was seen as an insult to Nero – no emperor would share an inheritance.

Perhaps Prasutagus was hoping that the emperor would make a new treaty with his daughters and so maintain the peace of his kingdom and the safety of his family.

Tacitus' *Annals* and Dio Cassius' *Roman History* offer dramatically different views on what happened next.

1 Tacitus focuses on a personal attack.

2 Dio Cassius records a situation that would have affected many Britons, even though he claims that the person chiefly responsible for the rebellion was Boudicca, without telling the reader why.

His dominions were ravaged by the centurions; the 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 4.13 Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk XIV. 31

COMMENTS ON THE SUPPOSED ROMAN TREATMENT OF BOUDICCA AND HER FAMILY

The virginity of young women was highly prized in most ancient cultures, and especially in Iron Age societies where it represented purity and latent sexual energy. To have it forcibly taken was a source of incredible shame. The rape of young virgin princesses, probably no older than 12 or 13, was an outrage that could not go unpunished.

According to Dio Cassius, Boudicca is believed to have held a dual position both as queen and as the earthly representative or priestess of the Druidic goddess, Andraste, a warrior goddess, goddess of victory, of ravens and battles, who used hares as a form of divination. It is told that Andraste's presence was evoked on the eve of battle to gain favour and, as a goddess of divination, she was probably called upon to divine the outcome of battles and war. If Boudicca was indeed the embodiment of Andraste, by abusing her the Romans had desecrated the gods and their actions could not be tolerated.

As the wife of a client-king, Boudicca may also have been a Roman citizen, and no free Roman woman would ever have been flogged as punishment.

An excuse for the war was found in the confiscation of the sums of money that Claudius had given to the foremost Britons; for these sums, as Decianus Catus, the procurator of the island, maintained, were to be paid back. This was one reason for the uprising; another was found in the fact that Seneca [a Roman], in the hope of receiving a good rate of interest, had lent to the islanders 40 000 000 sesterces that they did not want and had afterwards called in this loan all at once and had resorted to severe measures in exacting it.

SOURCE 4.14 Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, Bk LXII. 2

ACTIVITY 4.9

1 Make a list of what Tacitus records about the Roman treatment of:
   • Boudicca
   • her young daughters
   • other illustrious Iceni
   • the relations of King Prasutagus.

The timing of the revolt

All this was happening while the Governor, Gaius Suetonius Paulinus, was far away in Wales opposite the Isle of Mona – the Druidic base – trying to put an end to the threat of the Druids, whom they believed controlled the minds of the Britons, inciting them to hatred of the Romans and fuelling them with ideas of resistance. Paulinus was a tough general and knew that the Druids' insidious power over the Britons had to be extinguished by whatever force was needed. Tacitus' father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, was probably present on this campaign.

On the opposite shore stood the Britons, close embodied, and prepared for action. Women were seen running through the ranks in wild disorder; their apparel funeral; their hair loose to the wind, in their hands flaming torches, and their whole appearance resembling the frantic rage of the Furies. The Druids were ranged in order, with hands uplifted, invoking the gods, and pouring forth horrible imprecations. The novelty of the fight struck the Romans with awe and terror. … They felt the disgrace of yielding to a troop of women, and a band of fanatic priests; they advanced their standards, and rushed on to the attack with impetuous fury.

The Britons perished in the flames, which they themselves had kindled. The island fell, and a garrison was established to retain it in subjection. The religious groves, dedicated to superstition and barbarous rites, were levelled to the ground. … While Suetonius was employed in making his arrangements to secure the island, he received intelligence that Britain had revolted, and that the whole province was up in arms.

SOURCE 4.15 Tacitus, *The Annals*, Bk XIV. 30

FIGURE 4.26 A drawing of Druids inciting the Roman soldiers

The causes of the revolt of the Iceni led by Boudicca tend to be viewed in isolation from the events that occurred in Anglesey (Mona) even though the Roman forces were recalled from there to deal with the revolt. The Romans' attack on the religious heart of 'Celtic' Britain would surely have been viewed very gravely by all of the 'Celtic' tribes. The Iceni's attack on the Roman capital of Colchester may not have been the best military target but it was their religious centre in Britain … the attack on Anglesey was undoubtedly a crippling blow to Druidism and whilst elements of it did survive in remote parts of Britain and in Ireland they would never wield such power again. More importantly perhaps the collective memory of the illiterate British tribes was also dealt an almost fatal blow for the Druids were the retainers of that knowledge.

SOURCE 4.16 Nigel Cross, *The Roman attack on Ynys Môn (Anglesey) & the British Druids*

The rebel force and leadership

Once the Iceni heard of the scourging of Boudicca and the raping of her daughters, they are believed to have gathered at her royal residence where they were joined by the Trinovantes and other tribes who flocked to her cause. According to Tacitus in his *Agricola*, the Britons 'dwelt much among themselves on the miseries of subjugation, compared their wrongs, and exaggerated them in the discussion and by such means roused themselves and all rose to arms.'[17]

Dio Cassius relates that Boudicca had been 'chiefly instrumental in rousing the natives to fight the Romans', and because she was worthy to lead, she 'directed the conduct of the war.'[18] However, it is more likely that:

- Boudicca was rather a figurehead than a heroic war leader
- she wouldn't have been acting on her own because the revolt was too widespread to be managed by one person
- she would have been part of a big group of leaders whose names haven't survived because the Romans focused on her gender to add to the disgrace of her rebellion
- the other Britons in the rebel force would have had their own leaders but acted as a collection of loose tribal units under a party of war leaders.

FIGURE 4.27 Boudicca speaking to her troops

On the other hand, is it possible that if she were a priestess of the war goddess, Andraste, those from other tribes – unusual as it was – were willing to unite completely under her leadership in battle? Her religious status might also explain why, according to Dio Cassius, after 'addressing' her rebel army, she carried out a form of divination by allowing a hare to escape from her garment, and when it ran to the auspicious side, she raised her hand to heaven and gave thanks to Andraste, calling upon her as woman to woman, to give her victory, protection and liberty against the insolence, injustice and impiety of men.

Perhaps her status as a priestess of Andraste also explains the fanaticism of her followers.

The words put into her mouth by Dio Cassius as she speaks to her large army, before beginning the 64 km journey to attack Camulodunum, include not what she actually said but what Dio thought would be her sentiments on the occasion.

> You have learned by actual experience how different freedom is from slavery. Hence, although some among you may previously, through ignorance of which was better, have been deceived by the alluring promises of the Romans, yet now that you have tried both, you have learned how great a mistake you made in preferring an imported despotism to your ancestral mode of life … For what treatment of the most shameful or grievous sort that we have not suffered ever since these men made their appearance in Britain.

SOURCE 4.17 Dio Cassius, *Roman History,* LXII. 3

Attack on Camulodunum

The nature of the tribal force

The tribal force – later to become a rabble – attracted more recruits as it made its way to the headquarters of the Romans in Britain, vengeance on their mind. The armed warriors in their chariots would have led the way, followed by painted tribesmen carrying anything they could use as weapons, even the weapons of the field: hunting spears, scythes, stones and knives. Accompanying the force would have been animals, as well as carts carrying the warriors' families. On their approach to Camulodunum, they would have begun to create a huge din of war-cries, battle songs, taunts and the dreadful sound of the *carnyx*, working themselves up into a frenzy of hatred ready to rush into the attack and engage in serious blood-letting. They were determined to destroy Camulodunum totally, the blatant symbol of Roman rule in Britain.

carnyx a Celtic bronze wind instrument

Supposed portents of disaster

The population had no idea what was to befall them, although, according to both Tacitus and Dio Cassius a number of portents supposedly pointed to something catastrophic about to happen. Tacitus in his *Annals* (Bk XIV. 32) described the following that included instances of 'barbarian' behaviour:

1   The statue of victory, erected at Camulodunum, fell from its base and lay extended on the ground with its face averted, as if the goddess yielded to the enemies of Rome.
2   Women in restless ecstasy rushed among the people, and with frantic screams denounced impending ruin.
3   Hideous clamours were heard in a foreign accent in the council-chamber.
4   Savage howlings filled the theatre.
5   The sea was purpled with blood and, at the tide of ebb, the figures of human bodies were traced in the sand.

Nothing is really known about what happened that day except for the few scant references in Tacitus and Dio, and the 'evidence burned into the ground'.[19]

Roman reaction

1   The veterans sent a call out to the procurator, Decianus Catus, in Londinium, but he had only 200 soldiers to send, after which he escaped to Gaul.
2   Cerealis, the commander of the 9th legion, had headed south from his headquarters when he heard that Boudicca had raised an army, but he was routed by the rebels, losing at least 1500 of his best troops. He felt he had no choice but to head back to his fort.
3   The Governor, Suetonius Paulinus, was still in Wales over 480 km away.

All that Tacitus tells us of that day is that the unguarded city was taken by surprise, and overpowered in one general assault. The town was laid waste with fire and sword. It appears that the men, women and children who were not cut to pieces sought refuge behind the stone walls and bronze doors of the unfinished Temple of Claudius, where they waited for two days while the tens of thousands of Britons rampaged through the town,

FIGURE 4.28 A reconstruction of the Temple of Claudius

baying for blood, butchering whoever they came across and setting light to the buildings until the town was nothing but ashes. Those in the temple were finally butchered by Britons climbing onto the temple roof and smashing the tiles, and the temple was put to the torch.

Camulodunum, the capital of Roman Britain and home of the legionary veterans had been annihilated.

It was not until the 20th century that excavations in the town of Colchester revealed the extent of the destruction in 61 CE. The depth and extent of the layer of burned red earth shows just how determined the Britons must have been to fire the whole town, because its buildings were made of materials that weren't easily combustible.

Despite being able to get some idea of what the town was like from the artefacts found in these

FIGURE 4.29 The remains of the Temple of Claudius, Camulodunum, Colchester, England

modern excavations, there is virtually nothing that proves a link with Boudicca and her Iceni tribe.

Archaeological excavations indicate that many of the houses were relatively empty of possessions, but there is evidence of looted material over 96 km away, including the discovery of the head of a statue of Claudius. In 2014, during excavations in the High Street of Colchester, a collection of gold and silver jewellery was discovered buried in the floor of a Roman building. Known as the Fenwick Treasure it was probably buried by an inhabitant just before the destruction of the city. In the over eight decades of meticulous excavation, only two discoveries of fragmentary human remains have been found and dated to the period of the revolt, despite the thousands supposedly slaughtered.

ACTIVITY 4.12

1   Describe what the lack of valuable objects, empty houses and lack of bodies suggests about the fate of the population of Camulodunum and of the figures of dead given by Tacitus. Suggest a possible scenario of what might have happened there.
2   Imagine you are a surviving Roman veteran from Camulodunum. Write an account of the impending attack on your city by the rebel British army, the effect of the negative portents on the people, the city's failure to get Roman help and its subsequent fate.

Attacks on Londinium and Verulamium

After celebrating their victory with feasting, drinking and giving thanks to the gods, the rebel army with their cartloads of loot made for the port of London, their next target.

Suetonius Paulinus, on hearing of the total annihilation of Camulodunum – an affront to the Roman emperor – had to get back from Wales as quickly as possible, not only to redeem his reputation, but to meet the rebels in battle. He left the bulk of his forces in Wales and took a small detachment of men and headed to Londinium to assess the crisis, reaching it before the slow-moving rebel army. It seems that many of its people had taken their possessions and left already. Paulinus, according to Tacitus, suffered some uncertainty about whether he could defend the city with his small number of men. Probably after some discussion with the city's leaders, he decided that due to its lack of defences, all those inhabitants who were willing, plus his soldiers, should evacuate before the bloodthirsty Britons descended on the town. He believed it was better to sacrifice the city to save the province.

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According to Tacitus, only those 'tied to the place by the weakness of their sex, or the infirmity of age, or the attractions of the area'[20] remained to face the vengeful horde, after Paulinus and a group of refugees left the town.

There are few details of the rebel army's attack on Londinium but, as in Camulodunum, the destruction layer about 25–60 cm thick indicates an intense fire, and also most of the houses were empty.

Dio Cassius felt the need, however, to give a graphic account of what he regarded as indescribable slaughter of prisoners after the city was taken.

> Those who were taken captive by the Britons were subjected to every known form of outrage. The worst and most bestial atrocity committed by their captors was the following. They hung up naked, the noblest and most distinguished women and then cut off their breasts and sewed them into their mouths … afterwards they impaled them on sharp skewers run lengthwise through the entire body. All this they did to the accompaniment of sacrifices, banquets, and wanton behavior, not only in all their other sacred places, but particularly in the grove of Andate (Andaste). This was the name of Victory and they regarded her with the most exceptional reverence.

SOURCE 4.18 Dio Cassius, *The History of Rome*, LXII. 7

propitiate win or regain the favour of a god by doing something that pleases them

It is hard to find material remains to verify Dio Cassius' account. Perhaps he wrote it to shock his Roman audience, but could there have been some truth in the sacrifice of high-status women to **propitiate** a war goddess? Was it a ritual demanded by the Druids? Recently, a number of severed heads have been located in the area.

Despite having destroyed two of Britain's largest towns, Boudicca's army was still not satisfied. Their next target was what they regarded as a town of British collaborators who had adopted a Roman lifestyle.

While Suetonius Paulinus was attempting to rejoin the bulk of his legions and scouting for a suitable place to meet the rebel army in a final battle, the inhabitants of Verulamium were slowly leaving their city with their possessions.

The rebel force seemed to have no real strategy, and had little idea of what they would face when they confronted a professional Roman army. They probably rushed into the town hoping for a killing and looting spree as in the other owns, but except for a few people to slaughter and slim pickings to loot, they were left with firing the town. Despite the fire's intensity – judged from yet another destruction layer – due to a change in wind direction, parts of the town were saved, and unlike the other towns there was not even a single hoard of coins to be found.

As the rebels continued to raid, loot and destroy far out into the countryside, Paulinus and his legions were preparing to put an end to British resistance to Roman rule once and for all. Unfortunately for the Governor, the commander of his 2nd legion refused to join him in battle, and later committed suicide with shame in denying his troops the glory when Paulinus defeated the British rebels with just one legion and part of another.

ACTIVITY 4.13

1 Explain how the bulk of the population of Londinium and Verulamium escaped the fate of Camulodunum described in Tacitus.
2 Evaluate why Dio Cassius described the treatment of Roman prisoners so graphically. How much truth might there be in this description? Justify your answer.

The final battle in 61 CE

Suetonius Paulinus, a capable commander, knew that with only about 10 000 men of the 14th legion he would be vastly outnumbered by Boudicca's forces which, according to the sources, had swelled to about 230 000. Although this is almost certainly an exaggeration, even at half or a third that number they still vastly outnumbered the Romans. However, compared to the Romans, they were a rather ramshackle force with little organisation, poor weapons and with few wearing armour. They did have their chariots, however, but Paulinus chose his battlefield carefully to put the Britons at a disadvantage.

FIGURE 4.30 Map showing the main settlements of Britain in 61 CE. The Watling Street (Road), supposed site of Paulinus' battlefield, is shown in orange.

Despite Tacitus' description of the site, no one can say with certainty where the battle took place, although most historians think it was somewhere along the Watling Road in the Midlands, the main Roman road to the north-west. However, Philip Crummy, of the Colchester Archaeological Trust, says 'It could really be anywhere. It all keeps the interest in Boudicca's revolt alive as a matter of debate amongst historians and archaeologists.'[21]

> He [Suetonius Paulinus] chose a position approached by a narrow defile, closed in at the rear by a forest, having first ascertained that there was not a soldier of the enemy except in his front, where an open plain extended without any danger from ambuscades. His legions were in close array; round them, the light-armed troops, and the cavalry in dense array on the wings.

SOURCE 4.19 Tacitus, *The Annals*, Bk XIV. 34

The members of the rebel army, so confident in its size, had brought their families with them in wagons, placing them on the edge of the plain, to witness their success. This was to be a big mistake.

As usual, Tacitus and Dio Cassius put into the mouths of the various commanders a motivating speech, prior to battle. Tacitus recorded that Boudicca, with her two daughters in front of her in the chariot, rode

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up and down the lines from one tribal band to another; but if she had anything to say to her army on that occasion, we don't know what it was. All we know of is Tacitus' clever oratory and emotive language that focused on themes that he knew would appeal to his Roman readers. Dio Cassius' monologue placed in the mouth of Boudicca was even more over the top.

Suetonius Paulinus' speech to his legionaries and auxiliaries was much more business-like, and even though it is still a speech written by Tacitus, it rings truer than that put into the mouth of Boudicca, perhaps because he used the recollections of his father-in-law in composing it. After all, Agricola was present at the battle.

> Ignore the racket made by these savages. There are more women than men in their ranks. They are not soldiers – they're not even properly equipped. We've beaten them before and when they see our weapons and feel our spirit, they'll crack. Stick together. Throw the javelins, then push forward: knock them down with your shields and finish them off with your swords. Forget about booty. Just win and you'll have the lot.

SOURCE 4.20 Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV. 36

The accounts indicate a fairly straightforward battle that went according to Paulinus' plan.

1 The Romans kept their positions, clinging to the narrow defile as a defence.

2 Boudicca supposedly led her army forward across the plain and into the narrowing defile in a massive frontal attack.

3 As the Britons advanced, they were channelled into a tight mass.

4 At approximately 36 metres, their advance was staggered by a volley of Roman *pila* (javelins).

5 The Roman army then advanced in their wedge formation, their superior discipline, tactics and equipment giving them a decisive edge in the close quarters fighting against the tightly packed British.

FIGURE 4.31 An etching of Boudicca leading her troops against the British

6 The British losses quickly rose, and the tribal bands began to give way.

7 As they tried to retreat, their encircling wagons provided an almost impassable barrier.

8 The Roman army cut down an estimated 80 000 Britons including women and children spectators (probably an exaggeration, more likely half of that). The Romans suffered a small loss of 400 legionaries, but an unknown number of auxiliaries.

9 The great Iceni-led revolt ended as a disaster of epic proportions for the Britons, and yet Dio Cassius, says only the defeated Britons, 'scattered to their homes. So much for affairs in Britain'.[22]

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> The troops gave no quarter even to the women: the baggage animals themselves had been speared and added to the pile of bodies. The glory won in the course of the day was remarkable, and equal to that of our older victories: for, by some accounts, little less than eighty thousand Britons fell, at a cost of some four hundred Romans killed and a not much greater number of wounded.

SOURCE 4.21 Tacitus, *Annals*. Bk. XIV.37

ACTIVITY 4.14

1 Interpret how Tacitus sums up this bloody and final battle.

2 Watch the three-part: *Boudicca – The Final Battle* (2011) by Gustavo Archer on YouTube. This is one of the better accounts available on film.
Make a note of the:
- tactics employed by Suetonius Paulinus
- arms and weaponry of the Roman soldiers compared with the Britons
- discipline of the Romans versus the chaotic rabble of the Britons
- success of the Roman's wedge formation
- total devastation of the tribal force and the fate of the Iceni.

The fate of Boudicca

Did she survive?

Once again, the sources disagree on what happened to her. Tacitus says that fearing capture, she poisoned herself, while Dio Cassius says she suffered an illness and died. However, maybe like the Romans, she chose to die by her sword. The fate of her daughters, about whom we are told nothing, and who remained anonymous throughout the Roman accounts, disappeared from the record.

Did the surviving Britons carry their warrior queen somewhere far away and give her a burial or cremation?

Just another unanswered question about the Iceni warrior queen whose revolt marked the end of British resistance to Roman occupation, which lasted until 410 CE.

The aftermath

Suetonius Paulinus reinforced his army with legionaries and auxiliaries from Germania, and for weeks and months after he conducted retributive operations against what he considered remaining pockets of British resistance. People everywhere were killed, even those who hadn't take part in the revolt, but it was the Iceni and Trinovantes who suffered most.

1 What was left of the Iceni client-kingdom was stripped away and put under direct Roman control by means of forts constructed all over East Anglia.

2 These forts stood as a symbol of permanent foreign authority.

3 The members of the Iceni tribe who had survived the rebellion were killed, or forced into slavery.

Paulinus was removed from office by Nero due to complaints that his harsh measures were likely to cause more hostilities. However, he was not disgraced and it is possible that he held the consulship in Rome again in 66 CE.

CHAPTER 4 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

REPRESENTATIONS OF BOUDICCA OVER TIME

- The only written sources for Boudicca are the accounts of Roman writers Tacitus and Dio Cassius. Both contain many gaps, which have allowed Boudicca to live in people's imaginations to become anything anyone wants her to be: queen, mother, wife, warrior, victim, hero, patriot and activist.
- Today, many see her as an icon for the 'new' feminism and a strong model or metaphor for modern women.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF BOUDICCA'S CONFLICT WITH THE ROMANS

- Boudicca was a tribal Briton, similar in many ways to the Iron Age people now referred to as Celts, who ranged over large parts of Europe possibly from as early as 1000 BCE until they were wiped out by the Roman conquests.
- Despite the popular image of ancient Britons as ferocious warriors, the majority of tribal members lived on the land as farmers growing crops, raising livestock and managing woodlands, and there were also craftsmen within the tribal community. Most members of the tribe tended to live in small settlements of round thatched houses. Importantly, it also seems that British tribes were comfortable with powerful women.

THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES FOR BOUDICCA AND HER REVOLT AGAINST THE ROMANS

- Unfortunately, there are no ancient British sources for Boudicca, her life and revolt against the Romans. Historians have to rely on the Roman sources of Tacitus and Dio Cassius. Most of the Roman writers saw Britons as barbarians and women as stereotypes, rather than individuals, and so described them according to the standardised preconception.
- Over recent years there have been a series of archaeological discoveries that provide a greater insight into the lives of the ancient Britons and mean that modern historians are no longer entirely dependent on Tacitus' and Dio Cassius' version of the story of Boudicca. It has been confirmed that Tacitus and Dio Cassius were correct about the rebel army attack on the cities of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium, but there is little material evidence for Boudicca.

BOUDICCA AND THE BRITISH REVOLT AGAINST THE ROMANS

- The Iceni (clients of Rome) had already been treated like enemies by the Romans before the death of their king, Prasutagus, and the leadership of Boudicca, leading to considerable resentment. The inciting incident for a general revolt, however, seems to have been when their queen was flogged and her daughters raped.
- A large rebel army was raised and, according to the sources, led by Boudicca. Their chief objective was the Roman headquarters and veterans' town of Camulodunum, which they burnt to the ground and went on a killing rampage. Their confidence high, and loaded down with booty, the rebels sacked and burnt Londinium and Verulamium in turn before they finally had to face the Romans led by Suetonius Paulinus. In this final devastating battle, they were no match for the well-organised and well-armed Romans.
- The fate of Boudicca is really not known but 'her' revolt was the last attempt to overcome Roman occupation of Britain.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

    As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- torques
- polytheistic
- Druids
- Romanisation
- client-kingships
- legions.

Historical concepts

Perspective

Summarise how Tacitus and Dio Cassius 'see' Boudicca.

Significance

Explain the significance of the defeat of Boudicca and her rebel force by the Romans.

Historical skills

Historical interpretation

- Did Boudicca initiate a rebellion against the Romans for personal vengeance, or was it religiously motivated?
- Explain the value of the images of Boudicca from popular culture for understanding her as a woman and a rebel leader.

Research

Discuss the impact the Roman annexation had on ancient Britons in the 1st century CE.

Explanation and communication: extended essay

To what extent is it true to say that there is nothing that can be said about Boudicca with certainty other than she was an Iceni queen who lived in the mid-1st century CE?

Address some of the following:

- The written sources:
  - male Roman writers and their aims
  - attitude to the Britons and Celts
  - bias against powerful women
  - contradictory accounts
  - speeches whose words were never spoken by Boudicca.
- The archaeological sources:
  - no evidence specifically for Boudicca.
- The causes of the rebellion against the Romans:
  - any definitive evidence that Boudicca was directly responsible
  - the evidence of her supposed treatment by the Romans – a possible inciting incident?
  - other possible causes – Romanisation, treatment of Britons by Romans, the example of Caratacus' resistance, the role played by Druids and treatment of them by the Romans.
- Leadership of the rebellion:
  - any evidence about Boudicca as the sole warrior leader or figurehead
  - any evidence that that Boudicca decided on tactics
  - any evidence directly linking her to the utter destruction of Camulodunum, Londinium and Verulamium, and the supposed killing of 70 000 people mentioned by Tacitus
  - any evidence of a significant role in the final battle against Suetonius Paulinus, except a fictional speech.
- Her death:
  - contradictory and scanty reports of her death in written sources
  - no archaeological evidence of burial.

CHAPTER 5
Teotihuacan

FIGURE 5.1 A view across to the Pyramid of the Moon and the sacred mountain of Cerro Gordo

FIGURE 5.2 Present-day map of location of Mexico City and Teotihuacan within Mexico

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate the history and development of the city of Teotihuacan.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the historical and geographical context of Teotihuacan • different representations of Teotihuacan • the nature and range of the sources for an understanding of Teotihuacan • evidence for the organisation of the state and the living conditions of the people of Teotihuacan • when and why Teotihuacan collapsed.

Teotihuacan was the largest, most influential, and certainly most revered city in the history of the New World … its architecture, art, and religion would influence all subsequent Mesoamerican cultures …

SOURCE 5.1 M. Cartwright, *Teotihuacan*, Ancient History Encyclopedia

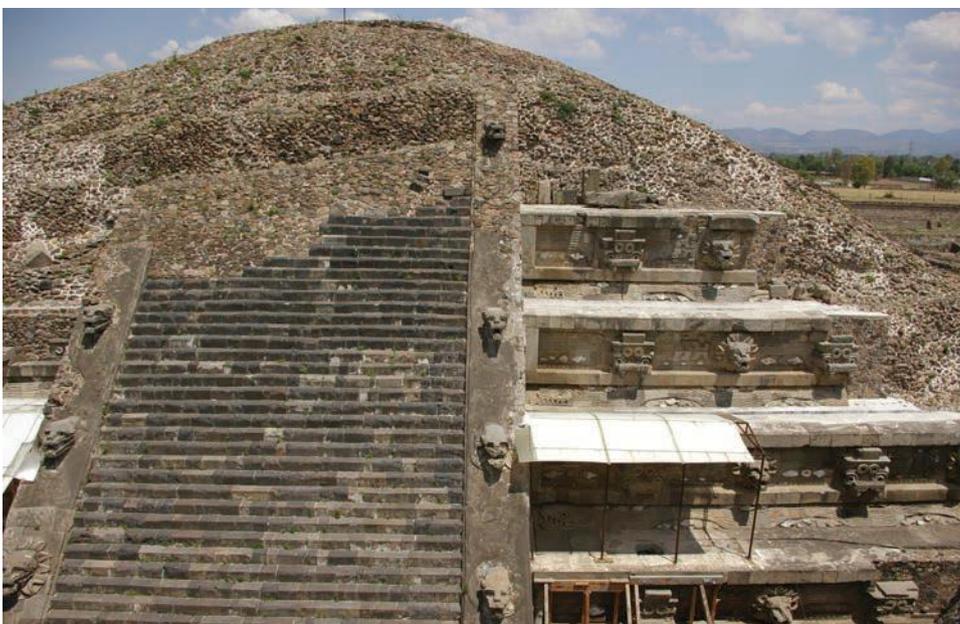**FIGURE 5.3** A photo of a 1932 excavation at Teotihuacan

FIGURE 5.4 Part of the restored façade of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent

Study Figures 5.1, 5.3 and 5.4 carefully. Note what you see in each one and think about what appears to have been happening at the site for the last 85 years. What do you wonder about its present appearance and its future?

Cambridge University Press

CHAPTER 5 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
Teotihuacan became the most extraordinary urban centre in Mesoamerica and yet its creation and collapse are still shrouded in mystery.	It is a World Heritage site, and is continuing to surprise scholars with results from its ongoing excavations; plus its densely urbanised, multicultural and stratified society may help us understand the problems we face in our modern, city-living societies.	• murals • glyphs • sound scrolls • oligarchy • ethnohistory

Painting the picture

Teotihuacan, an immense Mesoamerican city that flourished in the basin of Mexico between about 100 BCE and 650 CE, has been something of a mystery from the time the Aztecs first moved into the area and stood in awe at its 'mythical' ruins up to the present day. Little about it can be said with certainty, even in the 21st century, from its real name, to the reasons for its rise and astounding growth, and to its sudden collapse. Since any form of writing that may have been used in Teotihuacan is still not understood, it is often difficult to interpret much of the archaeological remains and so there is an abundance of theories and much guesswork about almost everything. Perhaps it is this sense of mystery that attracts more tourists to Teotihuacan than any other pre-Columbian site in Mexico.

INQUIRY QUESTION

What was the significance of Teotihuacan in the past history of Mesoamerica and how important is it as a site today?

ACTIVITY 5.1

Go to YouTube to watch the excellent video called 'The Pyramid at Teotihuacan, Mexico' in HD, Amazing Places on our Planet.

1 How did you feel watching that video with its accompanying atmospheric music and no voice-over?

2 What questions occurred to you as you watched it?

5.1 The geographical and historical context of Teotihuacan

The location and site of Teotihuacan

Teotihuacan is located in the Mexico Valley, about 50 km north-east of Mexico City.

- The Mexico Valley is a relatively flat, partially enclosed, semi-arid highland plateau 2250 metres above sea level, surrounded by mountains and volcanoes that reach a height of 5000 metres. The plateau is covered with lava and lava mounds which weathered into fertile soils.

- Originally, there were five lakes covering 1500 square km into which the precipitation and snowmelt from the surrounding mountains once flowed, although the largest lake, Texcoco, was salty. Lake levels were already dropping by the time the Spanish arrived and they no longer exist.
- Today, Mexico City and its environs are home to over 21 million people and approximately 6 million cars, making it one of the most polluted areas in the world.

The unknown founders of Teotihuacan may have chosen the present site for their city because:

FIGURE 5.5 A map showing the centre of Teotihuacan power in the Mexico Valley and the extent of its influence throughout Mesoamerica

1 of the presence of a natural lava tube cave that had been the scene of ancient religious rituals and pilgrimages. 'Caves are a key part of symbolic imagery associated with creation myths and the underworld throughout Mesoamerican history' – 'the womb from which the first humans came into the world'.[1] This cave was discovered under Teotihuacan's Pyramid of the Sun in 1971.

2 the San Juan River flowing through the area provided a source of water for agriculture. Most of the population of Teotihuacan were farmers and the arid climate could result in as many as eight dry months a year.

3 there was a significant trade route that ran from the Valley of Mexico to the Gulf of Mexico

FIGURE 5.6 A painting of the Mexico Valley by José María Velasco

FIGURE 5.7 The volcano Popocatépetl, SE of Mexico City

© Pamela Bradley 2018

FIGURE 5.8 A view of Mexico City today in the Valley of Mexico

4 the site was close to a rich source of the highly prized black volcanic glass (obsidian), which fractures with very shape edges and was used in ritual implements and weapons.

It is possible that the site drew the earliest inhabitants of Teotihuacan – whoever they were – 'into an intense, spiritually-charged relationship with the natural world'[2] where they would have seen the gods in everything: the fertile soil, the crops, the mountains and volcanoes, the rainclouds, the winds and the waterways.

Within this natural landscape, they built a magnificent sacred and urban complex, its great stone monuments echoing the surrounding mountains, including the 'sacred mountain' of Cerro Gordo that overlooked the site.

By the time the Aztecs settled in the Mexico Valley, the great city of Teotihuacan had already been in ruins for more than 500 years, and yet the remains caused the Aztecs to regard it as the setting for significant mythological events: the place where the sun and moon were created at the beginning of the current age. In the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs, 'Teotihuacan', meant the 'city of the gods' and so it has been called ever since. There is no record of what the original inhabitants called themselves and their city, although it appears in Mayan texts as *Puh* or *Place of Reeds*, a metaphor for a place of creation.

Because of Teotihuacan's symbolic importance to the Aztecs, they made frequent pilgrimages to the site to:

- make sacrifices and offerings
- consult oracles
- put criminals to a bloody death.

ACTIVITY 5.2

1 Explain what is meant by 'Mesoamerica'.
2 Describe the features of the location and site of Teotihuacan that inspired 'an intense spiritual relationship' of the people with the natural landscape and helped in its development into one of the most revered and influential centres in the ancient world.
3 Suggest some of the problems the site of Teotihuacan might face in the future.

CHAPTER 5 TEOTIHUACAN

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Chronological context

The timeline presents a summary of the Mesoamerican context of Teotihuacan.

PRE-CLASSIC OR FORMATIVE: 1800 BCE – 200 CE		
Large-scale ceremonial architecture, writing, ceramics and development of cities and states All the distinctive features of Mesoamerican cultures appeared during this period: dominance of corn, pyramid building, human sacrifice, complex calendar and jaguar worship	**1500 – 1100 BCE**	• The Olmec Culture developed in the Gulf of Mexico area and built the cities of San Lorenzo and La Venta
	900	• The Olmec site of San Lorenzo destroyed
	600 – 400	• Maya built a living and ceremonial centre at Nakbe, and Zapotecs built Monte Alban
	c. 400	• Cuicuilco, in the Valley of Mexico, became a political and commercial centre
	c. 300	• Maya built centres in Guatemala
	c. 100 BCE – 1 CE	• The Teotihuacan culture arose in the Valley of Mexico, initially competing with Cuicilco for political control of the area. Not much known about this formative period • A large part of the population of Cuicilco resettled in Teotihuacan possibly after a volcanic eruption caused it to decline • During the next two centuries, Teotihuacan consolidated its power and became the major city of Mesoamerica and the main, political, economic and cultural centre in Central Mexico
	150 CE	• Pyramid of the Sun built at Teotihuacan
	200 CE	• Zapotecs at the height of their power
CLASSIC: 250–950 CE		
This period was dominated by many independent city-states in the Maya region and the beginning of political unity in central Mexico. Regional differences between areas became more obvious. Highly sophisticated arts such as stuccowork, architecture, sculptured reliefs, mural painting, pottery and lapidary developed and spread throughout Mesoamerica	**c. 300 – 650**	• Peak of Maya building
	c. 350 +	• Teotihuacan became the pre-eminent Mesoamerican city based on its monopoly of trade, and the hub of a Mesoamerican trade network. Its population had risen to somewhere well over 100 000
	c. 400	• Maya city of Copan expands
	c.550	• Teotihuacan began to decline
	c. 750	• The mysterious destruction of Teotihuacan
	700 – 950	• Decline in Maya lowlands and Maya centres in Mexico and Guatemala abandoned

FIGURE 5.9 Plan of Teotihuacan

Moon Pyramid

Sun Pyramid

Ria San Juan

Ciudadela

Avenue of the Dead

Feathered Serpent Pyramid
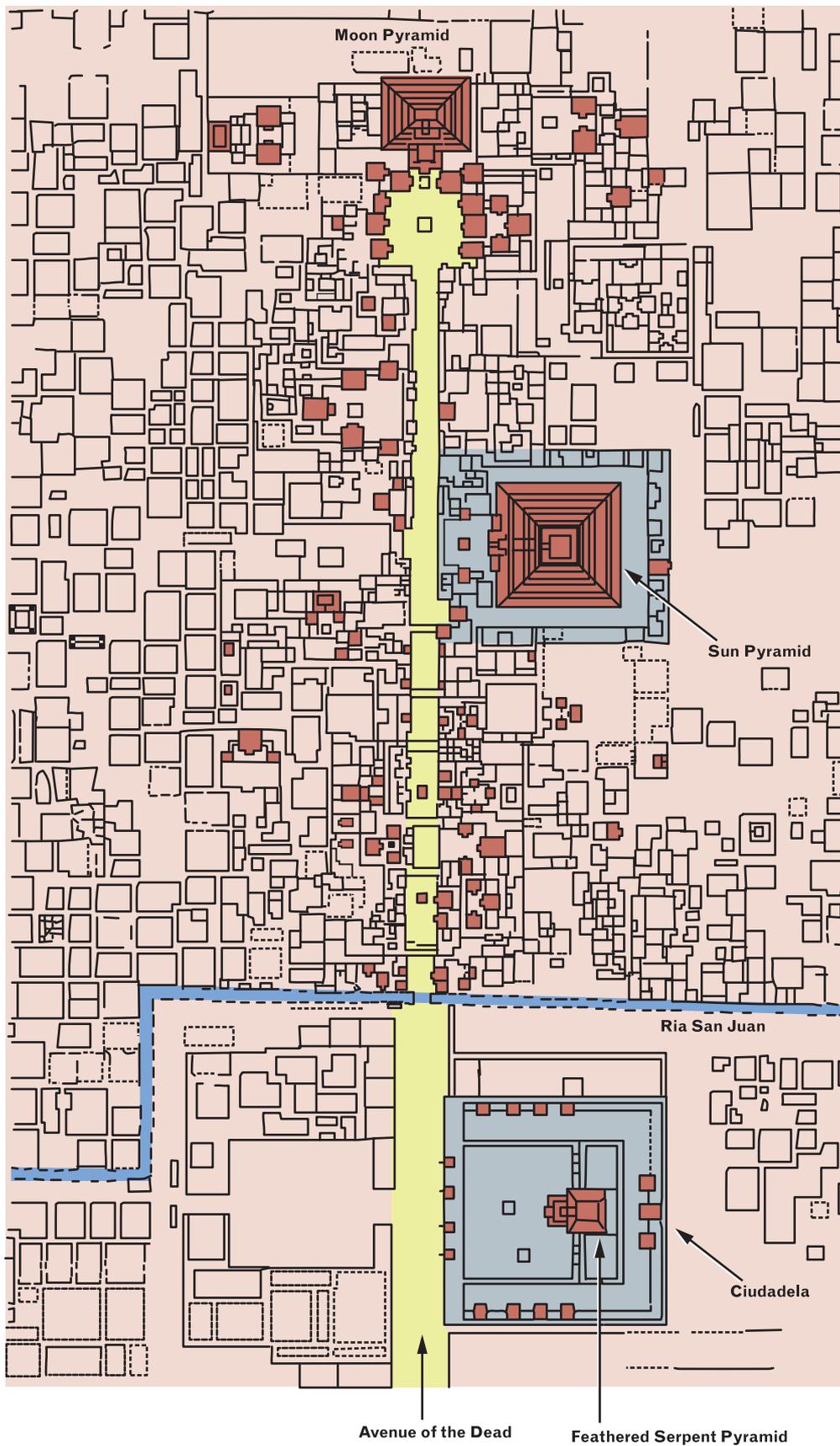
Temple platform

0   500 m

Plans and streetscape

Teotihuacan was a planned city although its major monuments appear to have been continuously under construction and to have been built in successive stages. There is also evidence that some of the major ceremonial buildings were built over earlier structures.

FIGURE 5.10 A museum model of Teotihuacan

FIGURE 5.11 The Avenue of the Dead

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5.2 The nature and range of the sources for an understanding of Teotihuacan

Despite the fact that for more than a century Teotihuacan has been the focus of surveys, excavations and studies using many different approaches, keep in mind, as you study this site, a statement made by Matthew Rob, of the De Young Museum in San Fransisco: 'Teotihuacan is a city that wasn't designed to answer our questions'.[3]

Lack of a textual writing system

One of the major difficulties in understanding Teotihuacan is that there is:

1 no knowledge of the Teotihuacanos' spoken language

2 no written histories or textual writing system that are obvious at the moment.

One scholar who has spent much of his career studying the writing system of ancient Teotihuacan is Karl Taube and he believes that the people had a complex system of hieroglyphic writing and this can be found in the city's elaborate murals. It is from these that scholars search for significant information on Teotihuacan's culture.

Murals are a pictographic form of communication, using single and compound signs (**glyphs**), in which the colour red dominates the colour scheme, although blues, yellows and greens also appear.

murals large pictures that have been painted on the wall of a room or building

glyphs signs or symbols

FIGURE 5.12 A mural from the patio of the Palacio de Atetelco showing coyote warriors

FIGURE 5.13 A mural from the Temple of Agriculture

The murals found in Teotihuacan include some of the following elements:

- naturalistic signs: jaguars, shells, birds such as owls, serpents, trees, flowers and seeds, which may or may not have particular meanings
- geometric elements that could mean something or be simply decorative
- insignia, such as headdresses, shields, rattles and standards, that may denote some form of rank or function of an individual
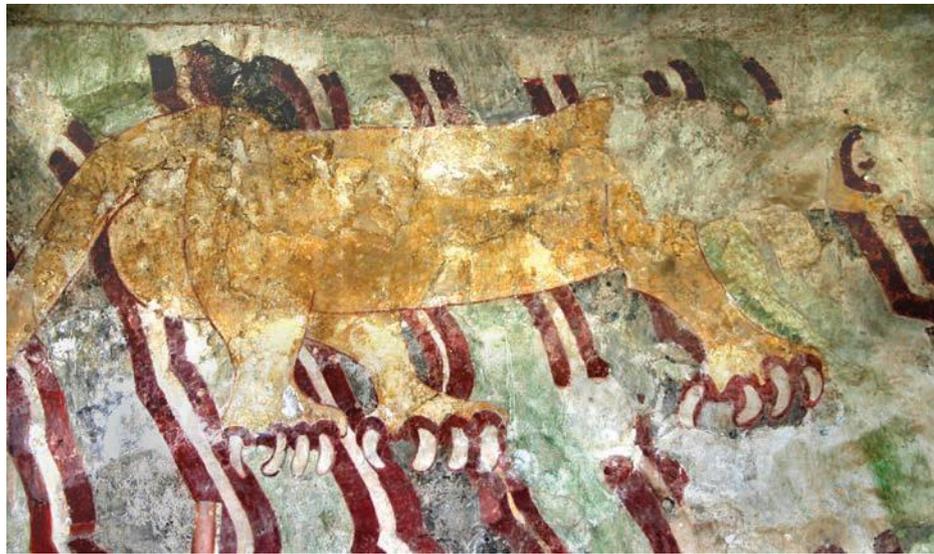- **sound scrolls**, which are found throughout Mesoamerica. These are devices denoting speech, song, or,

sound scrolls devices depicted in murals indicating speech, song and other types of sounds

FIGURE 5.14 A mural of a jaguar

in rarer cases, other types of sound. The murals of Teotihuacan are filled with sound scrolls curving from the mouths of humans and animals. One mural in the Tepantitla compound has no fewer than 20 speech scrolls.

- particular signs that reappear in a variety of contexts and combinations
- richly dressed individuals with a compound glyph preceding them which might serve to identify an individual's rank, while a variable sign might represent a name or role
- glyphs inside plants with entwined roots. Taube believes the twisted roots may be a metaphor for a fixed location and the glyph gives a specific place name
- a wide range of images centred around two major deities, believed to be a female known as the Great Goddess, and a male known as the Storm God identified by a distinctive face mask and the lightning bolt carried in his left hand.

One of the most interesting sites in the city in terms of 'writing' is the Plaza de los Gilfos at La Ventilla which contains 42 individual red-painted hieroglyphs on a central patio floor, which can be compared with Teotihuacan wall art, and signs appearing in other distant regions. But as Taube says, he is nowhere near identifying the hieroglyphic signs, although he has 'no doubt that Teotihuacanos had a notational system adequate for the information-handling needs of their society'.[4]

As the messages in the murals are obscure, there has been a wide variety of interpretations of the murals over the years. For example: a glyph with dots has been interpreted as a heart with blood, as drops of water and as a calendar sign.

Difficulties in deciphering the murals include the facts that:

- there is no real understanding of when the mural was painted, or if the way things were depicted changed over time
- similar signs are often shown differently
- we can't be sure what an artist meant to express.

As with written sources, the interpretations of murals can be based on the assumptions of the individual scholar. Many seem to stress religious themes in the murals and according to Jorge Acosta, 'it is very easy to give a seemingly normal and believable explanation for the mural art, even if that interpretation has no scientific fact'.[5]

So, for the moment, the detailed art of Teotihuacan and its glyphs remain a mystery, and without the key to unlock or decode them, the site must be reconstructed almost entirely on the basis of its archaeology.
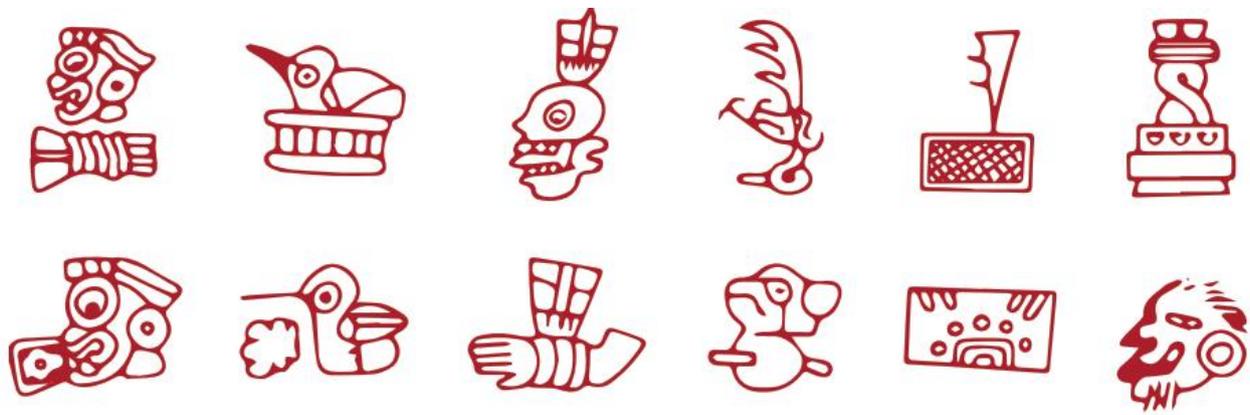
FIGURE 5.15 Examples of glyphs found at Teotihuacan

ACTIVITY 5.5

1 Outline the greatest problem facing historians in understanding life in Teotihuacan.
2 Define the following terms:
   • murals
   • glyphs
   • sound scrolls.
3 Explain why it is difficult to decipher the murals and come up with your own interpretation of either Figure 5.12, Figure 5.13 or Figure 5.14 on pp. 209–210.

Analysis of a mural

As we've seen already, nothing can be said with certainty about the meaning of the murals of Teotihuacan. What follows are some observations on two portions of a mural from the Tepantitla compound.

FIGURE 5.16 Upper part of a mural from the Tepantitla compound

FIGURE 5.17 Lower part of a mural from the Tepantila compound

Figure 5.16 depicts:

- a frontal view of a goddess. Frontal views were reserved for deities
- a face that looks like an owl or spider. The Great Goddess was often called Teotihuacan Spider Woman
- a green feathered headdress out of which grows a twisted plant, perhaps the morning glory vine which was used for its hallucinogenic properties
- the plant is decorated with circles (possibly representing mirrors), spiders and butterflies, and flowers appear from its tips
- birds fly around with sound scrolls (perhaps indicating bird songs)
- water falls from the deity's outstretched hands
- the deity's torso splits into curling rolls filled with plants and flowers
- at the bottom, a series of waves carrying stars and underwater creatures and seeds fall towards the border
- two figures in side view are presenting offerings with one hand. Water, seeds and circles cascade from their other hand.

Figure 5.17 depicts:

- a pyramid/mountain from which bands of water emerge
- human figures in red, blue and yellow swim or float among butterflies while plants sprout along a snake-like band of water
- the figures with speech scrolls seem to interact (sing, speak, etc.).

Archaeological sources

One of the most complex, audacious and significant projects carried out at Teotihuacan during the 20th century, and one that has formed the basis for all subsequent investigations at the site, was the Teotihuacan Mapping Project.

This was initiated in the early 1960s by René Millon and, proceeding through the 1970s and 1980s, involved the precise mapping of a 20-sq-km area of the partially buried city of Teotihuacan using comprehensive aerial photography, surface surveys and the collection of about one million artefacts from some 5000 sites within the mapped area. It resulted in the discovery of several thousand ceremonial and residential structures (apartment compounds) that made up the ancient city. Millon had realised that before understanding of Teotihuacan society could achieved, a detailed map of the entire city was needed to determine the:

- 'extent of the urban zone'
- 'density of the construction'
- 'way the buildings were disposed within it and related to each other'.[6]

In 1973, Millon published a map of the entire city at a scale of 1:10 000, and the ceremonial centre at 1:5000.

ethnohistory a branch of anthropology concerned with the history of peoples and cultures, particularly non-Western

The Teotihuacan map is an accomplishment of singular importance in the history of archaeology. No other city has been mapped in such detail. Scholars from diverse disciplines – archaeology, anthropology, **ethnohistory**, urban studies and city planning – continue to use the map, not simply to study issues pertinent to Mesoamerican archaeology, but to investigate the history of urbanism and the inner workings of cities in general.

SOURCE 5.2 René Millon and Jeffrey H. Altschul, 'The Making of the Map: The origin and lessons of the TMO', in *Ancient Mesoamerica* 26 (2015) p. 135
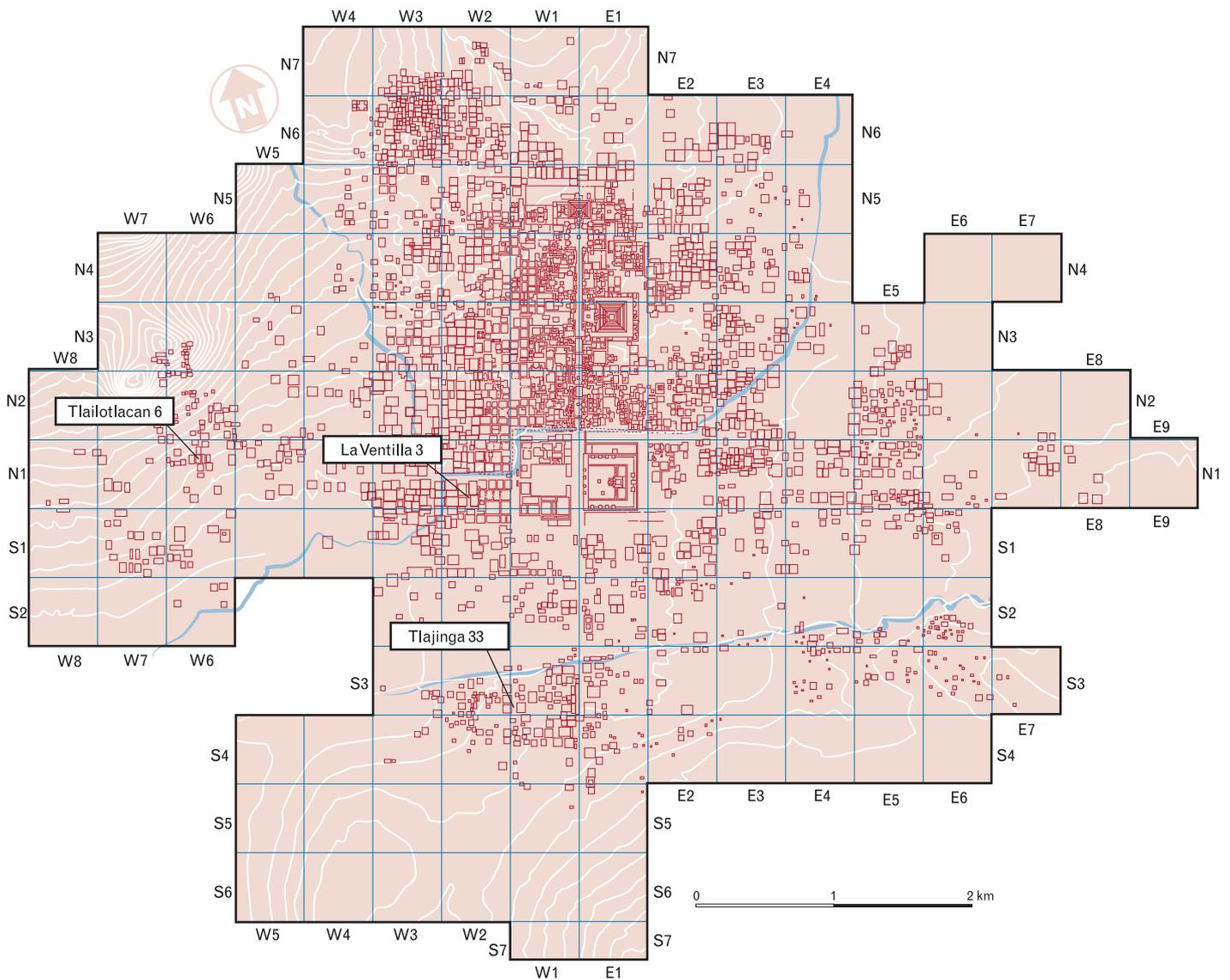
FIGURE 5.18 A reproduction of Millon's original map.

The monumental remains of the city

It is these that most tourists go to see when they visit Teotihuacan and they are truly spectacular, although they have undergone extensive restoration and reconstruction over the years and it is difficult now to 'see' what they would have once looked like.

These monuments are arranged for 2 km along a central north–south axis, called the 'Avenue of the Dead' by the later Aztecs who mistakenly believed that many of the buildings along the road were tombs. The Aztecs also gave the names to the following 'pyramids'. We have no knowledge of what the inhabitants of Teotihuacan called them.

These major monumental buildings are surrounded by over 2000 substantially built multi-apartment residential compounds.

The Pyramid of the Sun

This is the oldest, tallest and most massive of the buildings, under which is the previously mentioned four-chambered lava tube cave. 'The location and orientation of this cave may have been the impetus for the Pyramid of the Sun's alignment and construction.'[7]

The Pyramid has an estimated weight of 3 million tonnes, is over 70 metres tall, with each side measuring 224 metres, and has 248 steps. Although its original appearance is unknown – due to time, as well as private and institutional looting – it is believed to have been covered with a layer of plaster, painted red and with a temple on its top.

Like the main façade of the pyramid, the mouth of this tunnel faces west. The existence of the cave may have been known when the Pyramid of the Sun was built inasmuch as the 103-metre-long tunnel coincides with the middle of the pyramid's central stairway and the tunnel itself ends in a series of chambers directly under the centre of the pyramid.

SOURCE 5.3 Doris Heyden, 'An Interpretation of the Cave Underneath the Pyramid of the Sun in Teotihuacan', *American Antiquity*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (1975), p. 131

FIGURE 5.19 Pyramid of the Sun

FIGURE 5.20 A view from halfway up the Pyramid of the Sun, with tourists making their way to the top.

The Pyramid of the Moon

Built after the Pyramid of the Sun, it is thought to have been a ceremonial structure to honour the Great Goddess of water, fertility, earth and creation. It was enlarged and renovated six times during its existence. It would have had a platform on its top, and it is believed that a 22-tonne statue of the Great Goddess, the largest ever found in Teotihuacan – now in the National Anthropological Museum in Mexico City – once stood at its apex.

The Temple or Pyramid of the Feathered or Plumed Serpent

This is the third in size of the Teotihuacan 'pyramids' and was originally built in six tiers. Its name comes from the sculptured representations of the Mesoamerican 'feathered serpent' deity which covered its sides. Among the later Aztecs this deity was known as Quetzacoatl and among the Maya as Kukulkan; however, the people of Teotihuacan probably adopted it from the Olmecs. Also see below for recent, and ongoing, significant excavations under the temple which throws more light on its use.

The Ciudadela

This complex is at the southern end of the site and adjacent to the Temple of the Feathered Serpent. It was a sunken plaza, a huge open space that would have been able to hold most of the city's inhabitants.

FIGURE 5.21 Twenty-two tonne figure of the Great Goddess once positioned on top of the Pyramid of the Moon

The Palace of Quetzalpapalotl (quetzal bird and butterfly)

Located a short distance to the south-west of the Pyramid of the Moon, this is the most palatial building in the city, and conveys wealth and power with its porticoed vestibules set around a square courtyard featuring painted lintels and ornately carved pillars inlaid with obsidian and mica. Despite its name, recent work has identified that what was once thought were images of the Quetzalpapalotl are in fact the Teotihuanaco owl, an image found all over the city, the iconography associated with warriors, priests and its ruling elite.
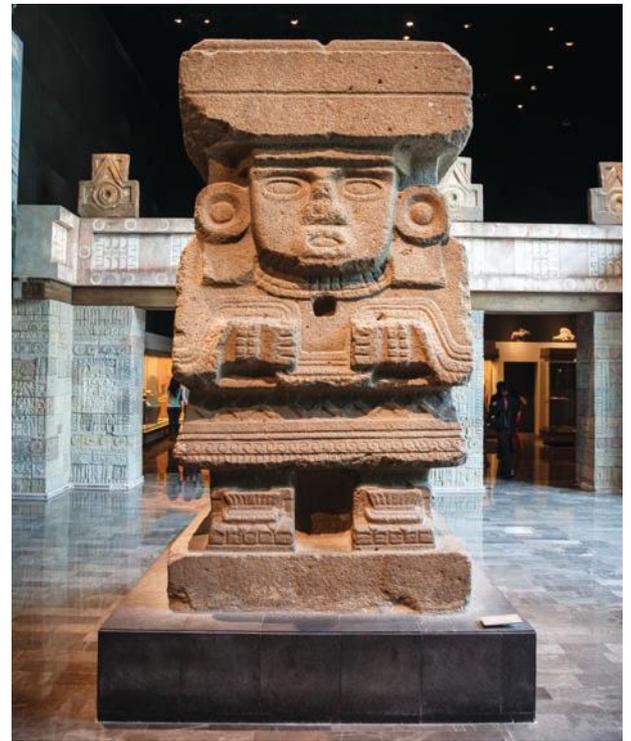

FIGURE 5.22 A reconstructed and preserved part of the façade of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent, now in Mexico's National Museum of Anthropology

FIGURE 5.23 The courtyard of the Palace of Quetzalpapalotl

The Palace of the Jaguars

This building, like the palace of Quetzalpapalotl, is found to the west of the Pyramid of the Moon. Its name comes from the many murals of jaguars, the most prominent of which is of a jaguar blowing a feathered conch shell that drips with blood.

The Palace of the Jaguars' proximity to the Pyramid of the Moon suggests that it was of supreme importance, but, as often is the case, the Teotihuacano artwork found painted on the walls is so cryptic it presents more questions than answers. With themes of transcendence, astrology and conquests, and with the Palace of Quetzalpapapotl immediately next-door, it seems likely that this was a place where elite warrior-priests convened and planned rituals that were carried out in the Plaza of the Moon and conquests far beyond.

SOURCE 5.4 R. Howarth, *Teotihuacan: The Palace of the Jaguars* (Oct. 2014), www.uncoveredhistory.com

ACTIVITY 5.6

1   Who might have resided in the Palace of Quetzalpapapotl? Explain you answer.
2   Explain what Source 5.4 suggests about the purpose of the Palace of the Jaguars.
3   Research more about the Palace of the Jaguars and the significance of the jaguar and conch shell iconography.

The range of artefacts found in Teotihuacan

Apart from the monumental and mural remains already discussed, excavations have unearthed a wide variety of artefacts. These include:

- remains of residential compounds and shrines
- human, animal and plant remains (mostly sacrificial offerings)
- high-quality jewellery (ear spools, pendants, beads)
- figurines and masks (many in greenstone)
- stone and clay statues
- pottery, stone bowls and elaborate ceramics

FIGURE 5.24 Figurines

FIGURE 5.25 A mask

- obsidian knives and blades
- collections of engraved sea shells
- amber, crystal spheres and pyrite mirrors.

A profile of an excavation in a mysterious tunnel under the Temple of the Feathered Serpent

On a morning in 2003, torrential rains created a sinkhole at the foot of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent. Archaeologist Sergio Gómez, with a rope tied around his waist, descended into the darkness of the sinkhole and came upon a previously unknown tunnel. It extended in both directions and despite being blocked, Gómez hoped that some of the questions that have plagued archaeologists for decades might at last be answered.

FIGURE 5.26 A view of the sinkhole that revealed the tunnel beneath the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent

Steps taken in the excavation of a tunnel sealed off for 1800 years

1 Gómez had to come up with a hypothesis and a plan in order to get permission to proceed.

2 The Mexican National Institute of Anthropology and History provided a large, high-resolution, ground-penetrating device, and at the beginning of 2004, Gómez and his team of 20 archaeologists scanned the earth under the Ciudadela and the Feathered Serpent Pyramid, and each evening uploaded the results to computers.

3 By 2005, they had a complete digital map, showing a hundred-metre tunnel, 12 metres underground, running from its original mouth a few metres from the sinkhole, to a spot directly below the centre of the Pyramid.

4 By 2009, after being granted government permission to dig, Gómez broke through into the tunnel, installed a staircase, ladders and lights, and began excavating by hand with shovels, moving forward only a few inches at a time. As each section was cleared, a 3D scanner was brought into the tunnel to document the team's progress. Ever so slowly, 10 000 tonnes of soil were removed.

5 The University of Mexico City donated a pair of robots to inspect much deeper into the tunnel, which descended another 3 metres, via a ramp. 'The robots chewed through the soil, their lights aglow, and returned with hard drives full of spectacular footage.'[8] At one point, the archaeologists had to wear protective gear against the toxic effects of the liquid mercury found.

6 This work culminated in 2013 with the discovery of a series of two chambers on either side of the tunnel piled high with jewellery and two statues. After that, the tunnel dropped below the water table which made work very difficult.

7 Late in 2014, Gómez announced that there were three more chambers beyond the initial two.

8 The excavation of the 103-metre-long tunnel and the series of chambers at its end – although still incomplete after almost a decade of digging – has produced some 75 000 artefacts, but has yet to reveal the longed-for opulent burial that Gómez believes might lie under the last chambers.

Many scholars are hoping that this famous dig might at last put an end to the academic debate that has raged over who ruled Teotihuacan: an all-powerful king, or a council of elite? Perhaps, as Gómez says, if there *is* a tomb, it may simply be a symbolic burial of the city's founders or gods. Although he has found no human remains so far, he remains optimistic.

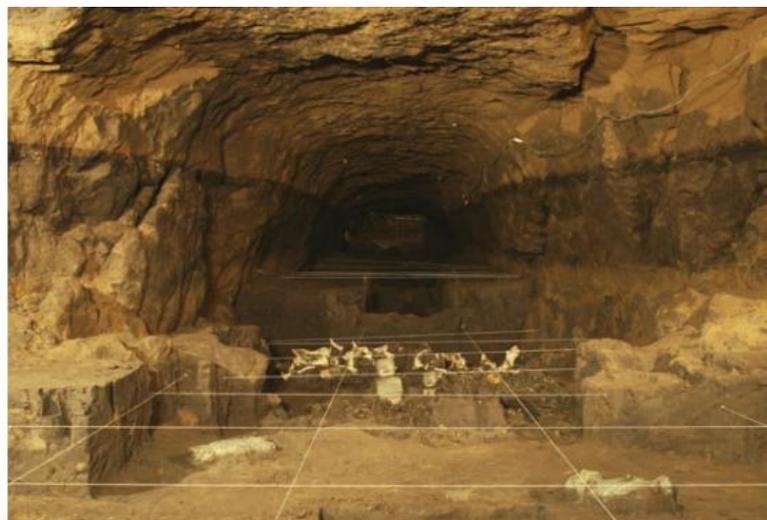**FIGURE 5.27** An archaeological excavation still underway beneath the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent

FIGURE 5.28 Work being carried out in the tunnel

Puzzling and mysterious artefacts

It appears that the tens of thousands of artefacts found in the tunnel and chambers were deliberately and precisely placed and most are remarkably well-preserved. These included:

- a wooden box of engraved sea shells, balls of rubber and amber, strange crystal spheres and pyrite mirrors
- the remains of corn in the bottom of a jar, jaguar bones, fragments of human or animal skin
- elaborate necklaces –some with strings still attached – and rings, pottery, greenstone masks and figurines, a coiled jaguar poised to strike, and two finely carved black stone statues
- a collection of flawless obsidian knives
- liquid mercury and mineral pyrite embedded in the rock by hand.

In 2015, Gomez said that so far only 10% of the artefacts had been catalogued and analysed, and where necessary restored.

Interpretations so far

Various scholars have posed theories that see the whole of Teotihuacan as a large-scale metaphor for a 'creation myth': of the sun, the world and humankind emerging from the darkness of a vast watery void. There is a creation story during which the sun shoots an arrow into the house of mirrors, releasing the serpent who then fertilises the earth. Could the tunnel, its chambers and artefacts be symbolic of the universe and its creation?

> Fifty feet in we stopped at a small inlet carved in the wall. Not long before, Gomez and his colleagues had discovered traces of mercury in the tunnel which Gomez believed served as symbolic representations of water, as well as the mineral pyrite … In the semi-darkness, Gomez explained, the shards of pyrite emit a throbbing, metallic glow. To demonstrate, he unscrewed the nearest light bulb. The pyrite came to life, like a distant galaxy.

SOURCE 5.5 Matthew Shaer, *Smithsonian Magazine*, June 2016, p. 5

Until Sergio Gómez manages to excavate the three recently-found chambers, and discovers if there *is* a tomb that contains the remains of a body, and until most of the artefacts and their context have been analysed, nothing can really be said with certainty about this underground site.

Could water be the key to understanding some of Teotihuacan's mysteries?

A recent excavation – carried out in the Square of the Pyramid of the Moon by Dr Verónica Ortega, of Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History – unearthed four canals, cavities that looked like pools, and sculptors of water gods. Dr Ortega has suggested that the whole city was consecrated to water in its various forms of lakes, rivers, heavy rains, or flooding. The Pyramid of the Moon, she says, was dedicated to the Great Goddess of rivers and lakes, but this is not the only evidence she cites. There are other places throughout the site that depict aquatic elements. Think back to the finds of shells and the vivid Tepantitla murals. Not everyone agrees with her, however.

5.3 Evidence for the organisation of the state and the living conditions of the people of Teotihuacan

> I venture to say that this type of archaeology [the TMP] changed the study of these societies, from a study just of the elites, to include all the people of a city. … There is no scholarly work on Teotihuacán that talks about its urban development without referring to his [Millon's] work.

SOURCE 5.6 Renato Perucchio, a professor of mechanical engineering and director of Rochester University's Archeology, Technology, and Historical Structures program

Teotihuacan was the centre of a large state that appears to have covered an area of at least 25 000 square km. Beyond the city, it probably held key settlements and routes, but it is unclear the extent of its political control, although its prestige certainly went much further than its political influence. Refer back to the start of the chapter and note the cultures and groups influenced by, if not politically controlled by, Teotihuacan.

The nature of Teotihuacan rulership

This has been a debatable topic for decades.

René Millon suggested that supreme political power may not have always been strongly concentrated in a single person or lineage. He thinks that Teotihuacan might have been ruled by an **oligarchy**. Others suggest that a more 'collective' type of government arising from the cosmopolitan nature of the city might have been the case.

oligarchy a government or a small group of powerful people

It is possible that at different times in the 'life' of Teotihuacan, both models of rulership might have applied.

Although there is no evidence of self-glorifying rulers as is found in other cultures, there must have been a strong, central authority – one, or a few very powerful, able and imaginative rulers – during the monumental building phase.

It is possible that from the middle of the 3rd century CE when the monumental buildings were modified and state-sponsored apartment compounds were built for the population – no matter what their socio-economic status – the government might have followed a more collective model.

Population

It is extremely hard to estimate the population of Teotihuacan from the archaeological evidence, but René Millon – basing it on the average size of the various compounds in the city that he believed held about 60–100 people – suggested the population would have been somewhere between 100 000 to 200 000 at the height of its power. He suggests we should take a reasonable middle figure of 125 000, one-third of whom were involved in craft speciality, and two-thirds of whom were farmers. The population seems to have been fairly stable for several centuries.
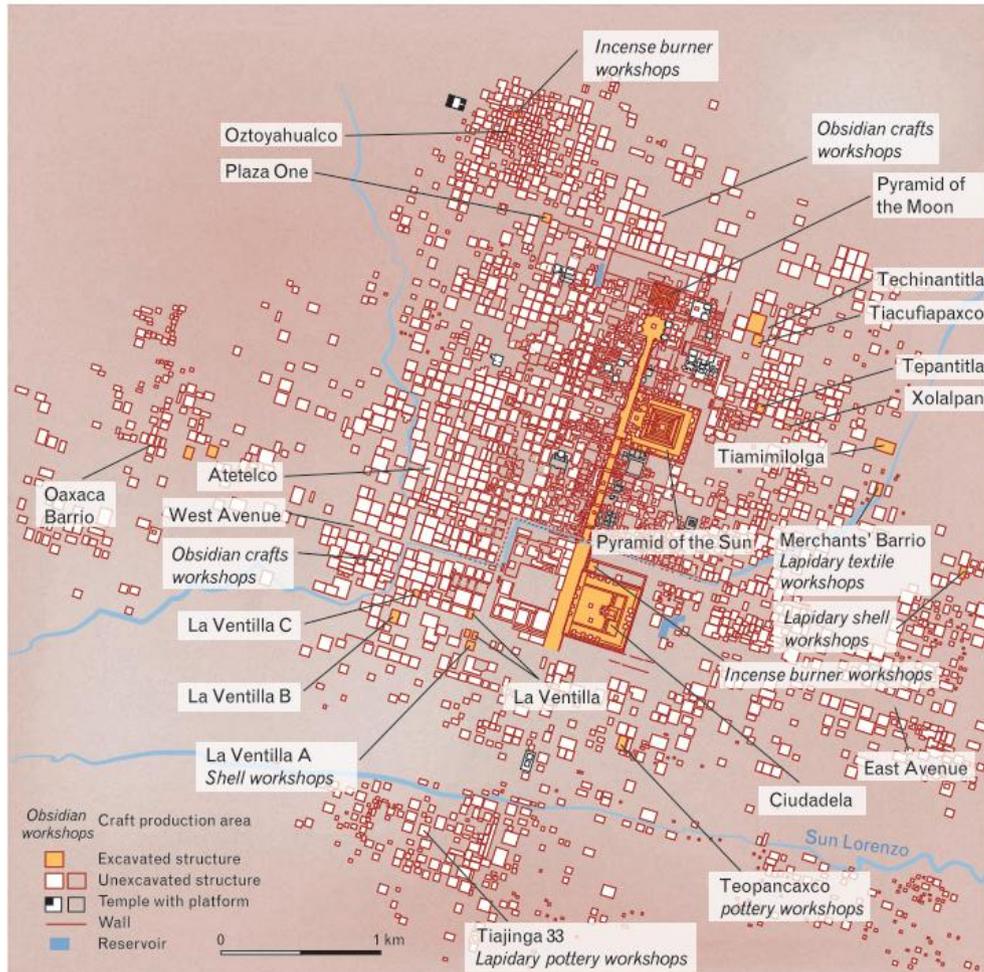

FIGURE 5.29 A map of Teotihuacan, based on Millon's map, showing the different compounds and structures in the city.

Socio-economic groups within the city

Teotihuacan was a stratified society. Millon identified six socio-economic status levels based on differences in residential construction and on occupation specialisation, although much of this, like everything else, cannot be said with certainty.

- The ruler and other powerful individuals lived in palaces around the Ciudadela complex and along the Avenue of the Dead. They had control and management of certain raw materials such as obsidian and agricultural resources and labour when needed.
- An elite level, possibly composed of a religious and administrative hierarchy, also lived in the city centre.

- Three intermediate levels lived in selected residential areas, some in houses quite modest, while others were spacious with rich mural decoration. One example of this was called the Zacuala 'Palace' and was probably the residence of a wealthy merchant or a high Teotihuacano official, about the third level in the social scale.
- The sixth socio-economic level was marked by residential areas of small apartments mixed with insubstantial structures.

The non-elite households, apartment compounds and workshops

Between the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, the population of Teotihuacan lived in distinctive types of residential structures which René Millon referred to as 'apartment' compounds. He estimated that about 2000 were built to house nearly the whole city, irrespective of their socio-economic status.

A compound was a large, rectangular walled structure that housed approximately 60–100 people and was composed of:

1 large self-contained suites of rooms ('apartments') large enough to house several families, and each with a small patio, separated by passageways from other 'apartments'
2 at least one temple and a prominent courtyard for ritual activities
3 a core of individual residents claiming descent from a common ancestor, judging by a number of well-stocked graves, which may have been those of the founders.

These compounds were a good way to organise the population at a local level. However, each compound was a part of a larger neighbourhood where craft workshops of various kinds were found, either singly or in clusters. It appears that each of these larger entities had its own particular identity, perhaps based on ethnicity or specialist business and craft activities.

Particular areas have been identified, such as: cotton manufacture; others with the processing of obsidian; some with lapidary; others such as the Tlajinga neighbourhood with the San Martin Orange pottery; some with the manufacture of ritual objects; and others with masonry.

It seems that some craftsmen worked in the local neighbourhood and some in state-controlled workshops. Unfortunately, the scale of craft production is still poorly understood.

A multi-ethnic society

It appears that Teotihuacan was a multi-ethnic society comprising of:

1 Teotihuacanos and those from the local basin of Mexico
2 people from nearby sites along the corridor to the Gulf Coast
3 people from further afield, including the coastal plains.

The majority of the groups from different regions tended to settle primarily on the edge of the city in foreign enclaves. The archaeological evidence for their presence includes:

- foreign funerary practices
- imported wares from foreign regions
- symbolic items from their homelands
- skeletons of individuals determined by isotopic analyses.

Around the core of the city, there were also multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. One of these was Teopancazio, where local businessmen settled foreigners they sponsored from different areas for their particular and varied skills. DNA extracted from bone and tooth samples from burials in the area reveal a large number of familial elements associated with the coastal area of the Gulf of Mexico. Other evidence confirms that these foreigners were from the Gulf Coast. This includes the manufacture of cotton cloth, and cotton garments decorated with shells, as well as their burial practices and their pottery.

It is not clear whether Teotihuacan was as ethnically diverse as is often suggested. The early influx from within the Basin would have brought in people with different local affinities, but they may not have differed much in language or culture. Later, foreigners seemed to have been handled by spatial segregation, to judge from some of the enclaves. Even without ethnic frictions, factions would have posed socio-political management problems.

SOURCE 5.7 George L. Cowgill, *State and Society at Teotihuacan*, p. 139

ACTIVITY 5.8

1 Define the meaning of 'oligarchy'.

2 Explain what René Millon means by a 'collective' kind of government.

3 On what did Millon base his estimate of the population of Teotihuacan?

4 Define what 'stratified society' means.

5 How did Millon identify each strata of society?

6 Describe where many of the elite class live. What is the evidence?

7 Describe why the government maintained control of obsidian supplies and agricultural resources.

8 Outline the features that Millon used to identify a 'compound'.

9 Explain why compounds were grouped into 'neighbourhoods'.

10 Identify the evidence that supports a multicultural society in Teotihuacan.

11 Refer back to Figure 5.29 (on p. 220) and identify the area of Teopancaxco. Describe the evidence, from the text, of the origins of the people who lived there.

12 Discuss the problems that might have arisen in a multi-ethnic and socially stratified society like Teotihuacan.

Household and state religion

Patio platforms within each neighbourhood served as a local temple for rituals and ceremonies. Elaborately moulded Tlaloc jars, representing the storm god, appear to have been associated with patio altars, and there seems to have been a household cult of the hearth and a ritual commemorating the dead, judging by the following artefacts found in all socio-economic residential compounds.

- Stone bowls supported on the back of a thin, bent old man.
- Mass-produced ceramic or stone incense burners, often in the shape of flower-pot-type bowls on a high pedestal with an inverted bowl as a lid. Others appeared to have been used as a miniature household shrine. Two figurines described as the Fat God and the Flayed God are assumed to be related to household rituals.

The presence of so many masks in Teotihuacan might indicate some association with a funerary cult, but this is just conjecture.

FIGURE 5.30 A Tlaloc vessel used in household cults

FIGURE 5.31 Image of Tlaloc on the Temple of the Feathered Serpent

On a state level, apart from the worship of a possible triad of astral deities – Sun, Moon and Venus, widespread in Mesoamerica – the chief deities were:

- the Great Goddess
- the Feathered Serpent – a dual-natured deity, the feathers symbolic of its divine nature, the serpent of its human nature
- the Storm/Rain God, Tlaloc, associated with mountains' life-giving rain and lightning, who is one of the oldest gods in Mexico. Tlaloc is an Aztec name.

Human and animal sacrifice

Like most Mesoamericans, Teotihuacanos practiced human sacrifice, often when a building was being constructed or dedicated, possibly during time of crisis, and to help their city prosper. The human sacrifices found in Teotihuacan were killed in a variety of ways, including being buried alive, decapitated and having their hearts removed. They were probably captured enemy warriors.

Sacred animals and those associated with military groups were also sacrificed.

FIGURE 5.32 Remains of human sacrifices

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The Pyramid of the Moon

Excavations were conducted by Saburo Sugiyama and Leonardo López Luja:

- Seven superimposed building structures were discovered, but it appears that sacrificial burials of humans and animals – integrated into the pyramid at the time of construction – only began with the fourth building phase, when the pyramid was enlarged nine times the size of its predecessor. This seems to have been associated with the substantial growth of the political authority of the state.
- The burials seem to have reflected different religious meanings and changing socio-political conditions over time.
- The 37 individuals discovered at the Moon Pyramid can be categorised loosely as: two individuals with exceptionally rich jadeite ornaments, and one including symbols of political office and kingship; one with highly elaborate ornamentation of shell and greenstone; three with small amounts of greenstone ornaments and three with shell ornaments; one with no ornaments and 27 decapitated individuals without ornamentation.
- The majority of these individuals were adult males, bound, perhaps gagged, and clearly treated with extreme violence during the consecration ceremonies. Bone analyses indicate that all had foreign origins. Although they may have been immigrants, merchants, envoys, rulers, warriors, or war captives, it seems most likely that they were war captives brought from different regions of Mesoamerica based on the evidence of the growth of the Teotihuacan state.
- Warfare was consistently displayed in the burials through weapons, warrior paraphernalia, conquest trophies (necklace in imitation of human lower jaw), artefacts associated with post-battle rituals and caged animals emblematic of military institutions.

Burial 2

- Adult male, about 40–50
- Seated position, facing west, hands crossed behind his back as if bound
- High-quality ornamentation: greenstone earspools, pendant and beads
- Sacrificial animals: wolf, jaguar, rattlesnake and birds
- 400 relics including large figurines in greenstone and obsidian; sacrificial obsidian knives and spear heads; shell necklace in imitation of human jaw; five Tlaloc (storm god) vessels.

Burial 3

- Three adult males adorned, one youth not
- Three in extended position, one in flexed position, all with hands crossed behind their backs
- Remains of ropes and gags found near bodies
- 18 heads of decapitated animals (wolves and pumas)
- A greenstone figurine, other small figurines, numerous obsidian knives and blades.

Burial 4

- 17 severed heads (male), fresh when interred
- Cuts indicate ritual decapitation
- Different ages, different ethnic groups.

Burial 5

- Different to other burials
- Three individuals, all seated facing west but with legs crossed in the position associated with gods or people of high political status
- Males aged 40–70, perhaps Maya elite who visited Teotihuacan.

Burial 6

- 12 individuals, 10 decapitated and one complete body
- Remains of complete and incomplete animals
- Offerings of exceptional quality.

TABLE 5.1 (*Continued*)

The Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent	
'… analyses indicate that many of the victims spent most of their lives in a variety of places outside Teotihuacaìn … This could mean that the victims were captives resulting from battles fought some distance from Teotihuacaìn, but, because of the uniformity and relative richness of their attire and associated offerings, I think it more likely that they represent foreigners in the service of a Teotihuacaìn ruler, especially as elite guards, a practice for which there is ample evidence in other early states.'	In the late 1980s, 200 sacrificial burials were found as part of the dedication of the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent. Just as in the Pyramid of the Moon, the male victims were accompanied by weapons and necklaces of human teeth.

Source: George L. Cowgill, *Ritual Sacrifice and the Feathered Serpent Pyramid at Teotihuacaìn, México*, FAMSI, 2002

ACTIVITY 5.9

1 Explain how the material remains have helped historians and archaeologists come to some conclusions about the personal religion of people in Teotihuacan. Think how difficult is it to learn anything about people's beliefs without written evidence.

2 Assess what is suggested in Table 5.1 about the reasons there were so many burials within the Pyramid of the Moon and the Feathered Serpent.

3 Describe the origin of most of the sacrificed victims.

4 Make a list of the evidence in the burials that most victims suffered considerable violence before and during their sacrifice.

5 Identify what evidence there is that many of them were of high status and what positions they might have held.

6 Discuss the link that can be made between sacrificial victims and the information in the map in Figure 5.5 (on p. 204).

7 Analyse why many animals were also sacrificed.

Military and warfare

Although there is some argument between scholars about the reality of warfare and its symbolic representation at Teotihuacan, it seems highly unlikely that this large city would have gained, and maintained, its pre-eminence within Mesoamerica without being able to overcome external armed opposition.

The sacrificial burial of foreigners and the accompanying grave goods seem to indicate that these might have been more than just symbolic. Also, there are abundant clay figurines with contorted bodies suggestive of hurling a spear with one hand and holding a shield with the other. René Millon identified a distinctive tasselled headdress as a symbol of high war-related office, and it is believed that fierce animals such as rattlesnakes, jaguars, coyotes and eagles may have been the standards of military orders.

5.4 When and why did Teotihuacan collapse?

In 450 CE, Teotihuacan was the most powerful city in all of Mesoamerica, and its influence spread even as far as the Mayan states to the south-east, but around 550 CE there is evidence that the major ritual and administrative buildings, and palatial structures along the Avenue of the Dead were set on fire (there are 147 buildings with clear traces of incineration and another 31 seem to have been burned). Apart from the

burning, sculptured façades were pulled down and cult images were shattered. The beginning of the end for Teotihuacan appears to have been rather violent.

Why Teotihuacan suffered this fiery attack has been a subject of debate among scholars for many years. It seems to have been premeditated and targeted, but what precipitated it?

Although there doesn't, as yet, seem to be any evidence of special problems leading up to 550, it is apparent that economic and social conditions were probably brewing for some time. There are any number of crises that could have occurred prior to the attack on the symbols of the Teotihuacan state. For example:

- too much bureaucratic interference in the lives of the people
- failure of the ruling elite to adapt to changes occurring elsewhere
- factional jealousies
- environmental problems: the more Teotihuacan grew, the more it depleted the forests to burn limestone and sea shells for mortar and stucco. Deforestation led to soil erosion, which resulted in long-term crop failure and resultant loss of control by the power elite
- drastic weather changes: scientists have discovered there was a long-term drying trend after 500 CE. Perhaps Teotihuacan suffered from a severe water crisis, crop failure, civil unrest and upheaval.

René Millon believes that the selective nature of the burning, intended to destroy the artefacts and facilities of the Teotihuacan state, could only have been done by insiders. George Cowgill, however, thinks that surrounding societies may have gained power and numbers to the point where they, or some combination including dissident insiders, could have defeated a weakened and no-longer well-led city.

Linda Manzanilla, an anthropologist at the National Autonomous University of Mexico, has proposed a new explanation for the collapse of Teotihuacan, based on her examination of the ruins, and an analysis of human remains and artefacts found in the area. She believes it was an internal economic and political crisis which was caused by some of the following factors:

- The intermediate elites (e.g. highly competitive businessmen) who lived in the inner core of the city fostered skilled foreign craftsmen to come to the city to produce lavish and costly goods for them.
- The jobs given to the various skilled craftsmen by the businessmen brought a certain status and economic power and kudos to their neighbourhood.
- This led to fierce competition between neighbourhoods to produce goods that distinguished them from their neighbours, and over time this led to rivalries, and an exclusionary organisation within each ethnic group.
- The government insisted on keeping control of the raw materials that came from afar such as cotton, an important item used in clothing of the elite, while the intermediate elite had control of other costly items such as pigments, greenstone, slate and cosmetics.
- Eventually, the rivalries and tension between the competitive wealthy businessmen, the neighbourhood leaders and those who were part of the government, boiled over, setting the stage for violent conflict and eventually Teotihuacan's collapse.

According to Cowgill, a considerable number – perhaps 40 000 – people survived, or resettled in the city since many of the apartments were still occupied for some time. However, the centre of the city around the Pyramids and Ciudadela was never re-occupied and Teotihuacan was never again the capital of a regional state.

ACTIVITY 5.10

1 Explain your view of Linda Manzanilla's explanation for Teotihuacan's collapse.
2 Are you more likely to believe the drought and water crisis theory? Why?
3 Have you got another theory?
4 In the light of what is going on in every major city around the world today, can a study of Teotihuacan help us to understand some of the problems we face in our modern city-living conditions?

CHAPTER 5 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF TEOTIHUACAN

- Teotihuacan, an immense Mesoamerican city that flourished in the basin of Mexico between about 100 BCE and 650 CE, has been something of a mystery from the time the Aztecs first moved into the area and stood in awe at its 'mythical' ruins up to the present day.
- Teotihuacan is located in the Mexico Valley, about 50 km north-east of Mexico City. This site is believed to have been chosen to reflect the sacredness of the natural environment. It was a planned city, although its major monuments appear to have been continuously under construction and to have been built in successive stages. There is also evidence that some of the major ceremonial buildings were built over earlier structures.

THE NATURE AND RANGE OF THE SOURCES FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF TEOTIHUACAN

- One of the major difficulties in understanding Teotihuacan is that there is no knowledge of the spoken language of the inhabitants and no written histories or textual writing systems that are obvious at the moment. However, scholar Karl Taube believes that the people had a complex system of hieroglyphic writing, and this can be found in the city's elaborate murals, which offer historians significant information on Teotihuacan's culture.
- Between the 1960s and 1980s, archaeologists discovered several thousand ceremonial and residential structures that made up the ancient city. In 1973, René Millon produced a detailed map of the city which indicated the 'extent of the urban zone,' 'density of the construction' and the 'way the buildings were disposed within it and related to each other'. Excavations have also unearthed a wide variety of artefacts, including human remains, pottery, stone images and jewellery.

EVIDENCE FOR THE ORGANISATION OF THE STATE AND THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF TEOTIHUACAN

- Teotihuacan was the centre of a large state that appears to have covered an area of at least 25 000 square km. Beyond the city, it probably held key settlements and routes, but the extent of its political control is unclear, although its prestige certainly went much further than its political influence.
- The nature of Teotihuacan rulership has been debated for decades: some historians argue that though there is no evidence of self-glorifying rulers as found in other cultures, there must have been a strong, central authority at least during the monumental building phase. Others believe that Teotihuacan might have been ruled by an oligarchy (rule by the few), while another view posits that a more 'collective' type of government arising from the cosmopolitan nature of the city might have been the case.
- Teotihuacan was a multi-ethnic society and with a mix of socio-economic status levels, all of whom lived in distinctive types of residential structures, compounds and neighbourhoods.
- Each neighbourhood had its own temple for rituals and ceremonies.

THE COLLAPSE OF TEOTIHUACAN

- In 450 CE, Teotihuacan was the most powerful city in all of Mesoamerica, and its influence spread even as far as the Mayan states to the southeast, but around 550 CE there is evidence that the major ritual and administrative buildings, and palatial structures along the Avenue of the Dead, were set on fire (there are 147 buildings with clear traces of incineration and another 31 seem to have been burned).
- Apart from the burning, sculptured façades were pulled down and cult images were shattered. The beginning of the end for Teotihuacan appears to have been rather violent, though why Teotihuacan suffered this fiery attack has been a subject of debate among scholars for many years.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

    As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- murals
- glyphs
- sound scrolls
- oligarchy.

Historical concepts

Significance

Describe the significance of the on-going excavation under the Pyramid of the Feathered Serpent.

Causation

Summarise the theories that have been proposed for the cause of Teotihuacan's decline and destruction.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

Critically evaluate what the secondary sources reveal about:

- the lack of textual writing in Teotihuacan
- the purpose of the Palace of the Jaguars.

Historical interpretation

- How was René Millon's map used to interpret the urban lifestyle of the inhabitants of Teotihuacan?
- Would you agree that the whole of Teotihuacan is a large-scale metaphor of a creation myth?

Historical investigation

- How is modern technology contributing to our understanding of Teotihuacan?

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)

Assess all the problems associated with studying the ancient site of Teotihuacan and the culture of its inhabitants, when there is a lack of written evidence.

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CHAPTER 6
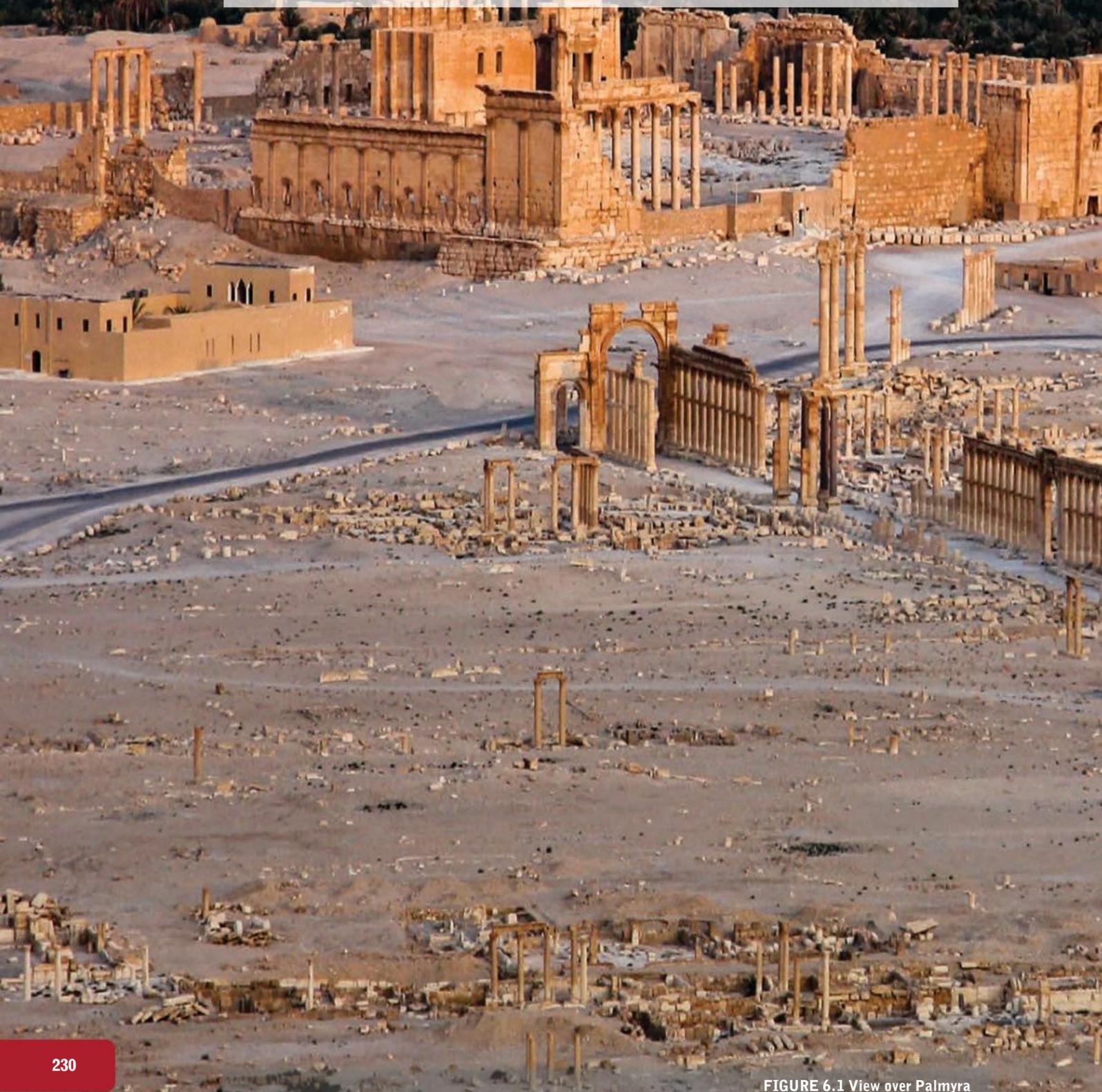## Palmyra and the Silk Road

FIGURE 6.1 View over Palmyra

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Cambridge University Press

FIGURE 6.2 Present-day map of the location of Palmyra

FIGURE 6.2 Present-day map of the location of Palmyra

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?	
FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate the significance of the Silk Road and Palmyra and how this shaped the ancient world.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the historical and geographical context of Palmyra • the range of sources for Palmyra • the nature of Palmyra as a caravan city revealed through the sources.

When after a wearisome day of marching across the Syrian desert, the long caravans descry, in the pale clarity of the stars, the uniform horizons becomes a serrated line of uneven colonnades, of broken walls, of half collapsed palace facades.

SOURCE 6.1 A 17th-century description of Palmyra by a French traveller, Lucien Double, *Les Césars de Palmyre*, 1877

FIGURE 6.3 The old village of Tadmor among the ruins of Palmyra in the early 20th century

FIGURE 6.4 The remains of the Temple of Bel in the early 21st century

FIGURE 6.5 The destruction of the temple by ISIS

FIGURE 6.6 Digital reconstruction of the Temple of Bel (New Palmyra project)

Study Figures 6.1–6.6 carefully. Note what you see in each one. Think about the vulnerability of Palmyra and its possible future.

CHAPTER 6 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
The location of the Syrian oasis city of Palmyra gave it many economic and political advantages, allowing it to develop into a magnificent and wealthy multicultural, multilingual caravan city, with a culture derived from both West and East.	Palmyra was a unique ancient city and its vulnerable remaining monuments are all that are left to speak of its past and the cultural heritage of the Syrian people.	• wadi • necropolis • *castra* • *lingua franca* • hypogea • decenarius • loculi • symposiarch • caravan • synodiarch • syncretistic • entrepôt • pantheon

Painting the picture

The Syrian city of Palmyra was described by the Roman natural historian Pliny the Elder as a noble city in a well-watered oasis set in a vast expanse of sand. Renowned as a stopping point for trading caravans on the Silk Road, it developed into one of the most magnificent ancient cities in the Mediterranean world during the 1st to 3rd century CE under Roman domination. Its imposing monumental architecture – a hybrid of influences from the Graeco-Roman West and the Parthian and Persian world of the East – rose in dramatic splendour from the surrounding desert. Standing at the crossroads of several civilisations, it was also one of the most important cultural centres of the ancient world until Queen Zenobia of Palmyra dared to challenge Rome, and brought down its wrath on the city.

> ### INQUIRY QUESTION
> What was the significance of the location and site of ancient Palmyra and how did it help to shape the ancient world?

Today, despite Palmyra's UNESCO World Heritage status, it is suffering once again under the onslaught of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in the Syrian conflict.

6.1 The geographical and historical context of Palmyra

The significance of the location and site of Palmyra

The location of the Syrian oasis city of Palmyra gave it many economic and political advantages.

It was situated midway between the fertile zones surrounding the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean coast and separated from the great coastal Syrian cities by a vast expanse of desert. This meant that it was able to keep a certain amount of political independence.

Despite being under Roman control from the 1st century CE, it sat between the two great empires of Rome and Parthia (later the Sasanids), and was directly affected politically, culturally and economically by both.

It held a strategic position on the two most important trade routes in the ancient world, connecting the Chinese, Indian, Persian and Roman empires:

- an overland route – the 'Silk Road' – that stretched almost 15 000 km from China across the deserts and mountain ranges of the Eurasian continent to the Mediterranean. In fact, there were several overland routes. See pages 238–239.

- a sea route (often referred to the 'Spice Route') that extended from the islands of the East Indies and India to the port of Spasinu Charax at the head of the Persian Gulf. From there, the route went overland to Babylon and the mid-Euphrates or to Seleucia on the Tigris and then west across the desert to Palmyra. The desert Palmyrenes even built ships to access the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean via the Euphrates.
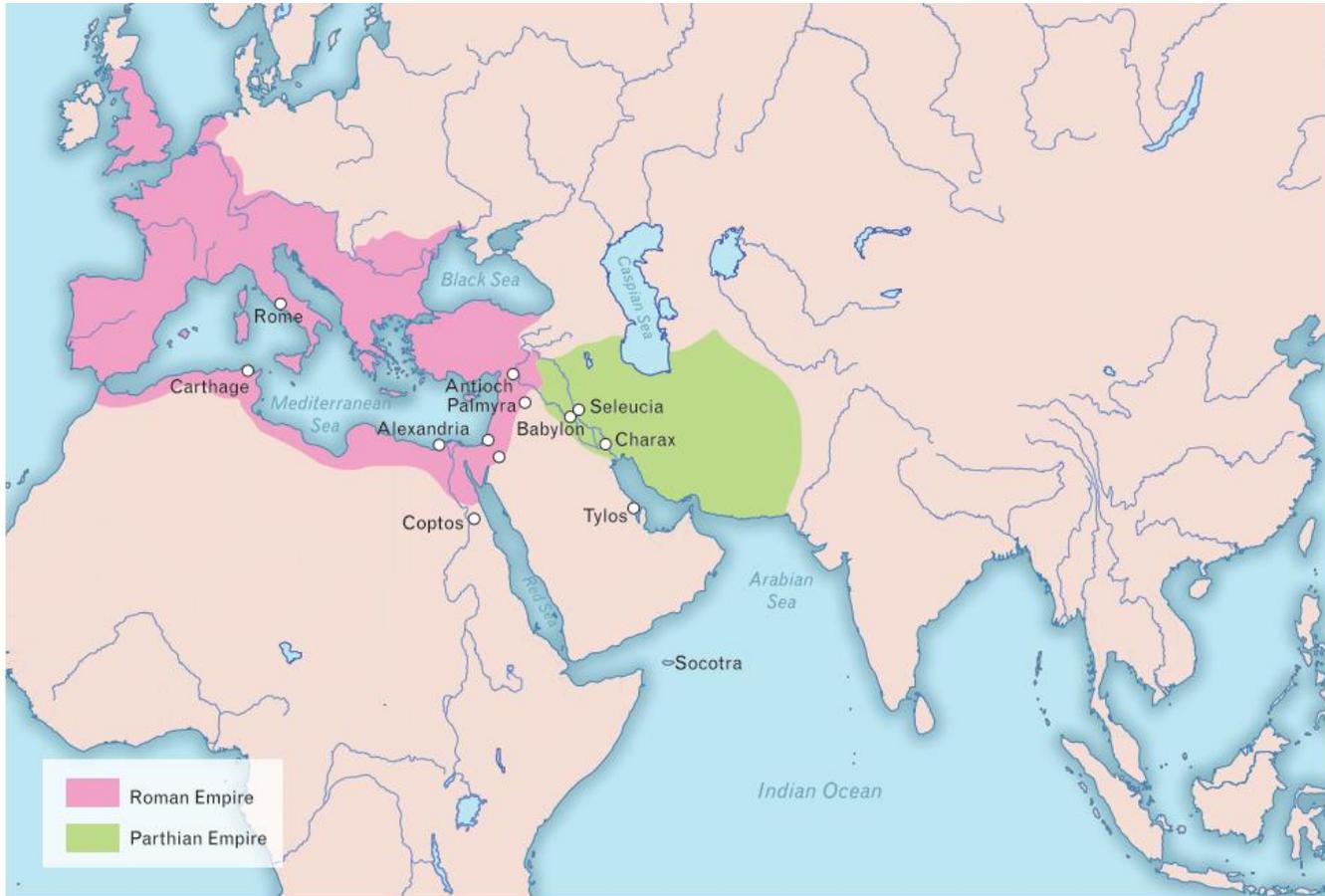

FIGURE 6.7 A map showing the Roman and Parthian empires

A COMMENT ON PARTHIA

As the power of the Seleucid Empire (one of the successor kingdoms of Alexander the Great) began to decline over the eastern Iranian plateau, the Parthians filled the vacuum and became the controlling force between the Graeco-Roman world of the West and the great cultural systems of India, Central Asia and China of the East.

It became the conduit for trade, religion, culture and information across the near East, but also had to deal with the movements of people throughout Central Asia. An embassy from China concluded a treaty with the Parthians as early as 115 BCE to facilitate the movements of goods.

The Parthians were a major issue for the Romans from the 1st century BCE and the Euphrates River became the de facto boundary between the two empires as the Parthians set the limits of Roman power.

Because the Parthians ruled a diverse but loosely-organised empire, they adopted and transmitted a wide range of cultural traditions.

Site features

Palmyra is a city famous for its location, for its rich soil and for its ample springs. Its fields are surrounded on every side by a vast circuit of sand, so that nature has isolated this place from the rest of the world.

SOURCE 6.2 Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

Palmyra was an oasis city, overlooked by two mountain ranges to the north and southwest, but exposed to the Syrian desert to the east and south. A small **wadi**, called Wadi al-Qubur, crossed the area, flowing from the western hills past the city before disappearing in the eastern gardens of the oasis. South of the wadi was the Efqa Spring, around which the earliest settlement of Tadmor (later renamed Palmyra) began.

wadi a dried river valley common in desert areas, but which can fill quickly after rains

As it developed, its territory extended 75 km to the northwest, 65 km to the south and its eastern and northeastern boundary ran along the Euphrates.

Water resources and farming

It was often wondered how a desert city the size of Palmyra could support and feed its population. That was until Norwegian and Syrian researchers, using satellite photos to catalogue ancient remains north of the city, discovered that what they were studying was not in fact a desert, but an arid steppe where underground grass roots kept any rain that fell from sinking into the soil.

The team also gathered evidence that residents of ancient Palmyra and the nearby villages collected the rainwater using dams and cisterns. This gave the surrounding villages water for crops and enabled them to provide the city with food; the collection system ensured a stable supply of agricultural products and averted catastrophe during droughts.

Local farmers also cooperated with Bedouin tribes, who drove their flocks of sheep and goats into the area to graze during the hot season, fertilizing the farmers' fields in the process.

SOURCE 6.3 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire: Zenobia's Revolt against Rome* (1994), p. 51

FIGURE 6.8 Gardens of Palmyra's oasis

FIGURE 6.9 The Palmyrene mountains

FIGURE 6.10 Efqa Spring, which dried up in 1994

ACTIVITY 6.1

1 Explain why ancient Palmyra was strategically and economically important.

2 Justify what you think the Roman natural historian, Pliny the Elder, meant when he said, 'Palmyra has its own fate between the mighty Roman and Parthian Empires …'[1]

3 Outline why the ancient town of Palmyra was able to survive in the middle of a desert, as well as support and feed a population of hundreds of thousands of people at its peak.

The growth and development of Palmyra over time

Judging from tools found near the Efqa Spring, there appears to have been a small neolithic settlement in the area as early as 7500 BCE. There is also reference to a settlement of Tadmor at the spring as early as the 18th century BCE. Tadmor's presence was mentioned in tablets from other Syrian trading centres, including Mari on the western bank of the Euphrates River, and in the records of the Assyrian kings during the 2nd millennium BCE. The area was under the control of various rulers over the centuries including the Assyrians and Persians. In the 4th century BCE, Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, and on his death his general, Seleucus, established the Seleucid Empire, under which Palmyra began its growth to prosperity and influence in the near East.

The Hellenistic Seleucid period 312–64 BCE	Events associated with Palmyra
• The large, wealthy Seleucid Empire was a centre of Hellenistic culture (a fusion of Greek and Eastern cultures). The urban centres of the Seleucid Empire were dominated by Greek customs and a Greek political elite • In the mid-2nd century BCE, the eastern part of the Seleucid Empire was conquered by Mithridates I of Parthia, leaving the Seleucid kings to rule a rump state from Syria until its ultimate overthrow by the Romans under their general, Pompey the Great	• During the time of the Seleucids, a road through Palmyra became one of the main routes of the east–west trade • Palmyra became a prosperous caravan settlement owing allegiance to the Seleucid kings • In the middle of the Hellenistic era, the settlement of Palmyra – formerly south of the al-Qubur wadi – began to expand beyond its northern bank • By the late 2nd century BCE, the tower tombs in the Palmyrene Valley of Tombs and the city temples began to be built

The Roman period 63 BCE –3rd century CE	Events associated with Palmyra
Pompey organised a series of Roman provinces – including Syria – along the eastern coastline of the Mediterranean in 63 BCE, and formed a buffer zone of client kingdoms between the Roman and Parthian empires	• Despite Palmyra's position in central Syria, it remained a minor caravan town between Rome and Parthia, while not really part of either • Palmyra's prosperity increased as its inhabitants offered water to caravans and protection to those merchants who occasionally took the desert route on which Palmyra was located
• Emperor Tiberius (14–37 CE) annexed Palmyra as part of the province of Syria • Roman authority in Palmyra was minimal during the 1st century CE, but imperial Rome brought it great prosperity	• Palmyra now had to pay tribute to Rome, and the Romans defined the city's boundaries. The territory of Palmyra extended as far east as the Euphrates Valley • Although there were Roman tax collectors in the city, Palmyra retained much of its internal independence • Palmyra saw intensive construction during the 1st century CE, including the city's first walled fortifications, and the Temple of Bel • Palmyrene merchants established colonies in surrounding trade centres
During the 2nd century CE, Palmyra was granted imperial benefits that enabled it to become an economic powerhouse and one of the most magnificent cities in the East	• In 106, the Romans shifted control of the southern trade routes of Arabia from Petra to Palmyra • In 117, the Palmyrenes built a trade route to the Euphrates protected by garrisons • In 129, Palmyra was visited by the Emperor Hadrian, who named it 'Hadriane Palmyra' and made it a 'free city'; and later, it was granted the title of *colonia* with exemption from taxes • Palmyra's expansion led to new era of building, including the theatre and the Great Colonnade
• In the 3rd century CE, Rome faced a series of crises • Another Persian dynasty, the Sasanians, defeated the Parthians, created an empire and, from 227 CE, began disrupting Roman trade along the Silk Road • Also, the Romans were faced with other problems: civil war, plague and a division of the empire	• While the Romans were preoccupied, Lucius Septimus Odaenthus, the governor of Syria, pushed the Sasanians back beyond the Euphrates and was rewarded by Rome with complete control of the eastern part of the Roman empire • Palmyra was at the apex of its power around 260 CE • When Odaenthus was assassinated in 267, his second wife Zenobia ruled as regent for her son; and, in 269 CE, seeing that Rome was too busy with its own problems to notice her, began building up Palmyrene power and extending its influence at the expense of Rome, forming a short-lived Palmyrene Empire • Palmyra was captured by the Emperor Aurelian in 271–2 and, after another rebellion the following year, the city was sacked • The prosperous, semi-independent trading city, with a population of 200 000, was reduced to a key military outpost, and was eventually nothing more than a provincial market town for the nearby nomads • 'The caravan routes moved to the north, through Asia Minor and on to Constantinople. Syria itself was no longer part of the Silk Road.'[2]

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On the nodal point of the silk route arose a city that could boast itself a new Athens, a city of rhetors and bankers, of merchants and warriors, of fine gentlemen and ladies in flowered embroidered gowns, of cameleers, and small traders and farmers. For a little over a hundred and fifty years, the city had exploded into a profusion of architectural splendour. Then it was emptied, like a shell of all its life. Only the colonnades and temples remained, like an uncertain vision in the dun expanse of the desert.

SOURCE 6.4 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire: Zenobia's Revolt against Rome* (1994), p. 51

ACTIVITY 6.2

1 What was the original name of Palmyra? It is the same name as the modern town adjacent to the ancient ruins.
2 Use the timeline to draw a diagram showing the significant steps in Palmyra's rise to economic prominence during the Roman period from the 1st century BCE to its height in 260 CE.
3 Who was Zenobia and what is her claim to fame?
4 Explain what brought Palmyra's prosperity and influence to an end.

The significance of the Silk Road to Palmyra

A COMMENT ON THE NAME 'SILK ROAD'

The Silk Road (Roads) is a 19th-century term – Die Seidenstrasse – coined by a German geologist, Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen, for the Asian trade and communication network. For most of their history, these ancient roads had no particular name.

Most of what is known about the ancient Silk Road(s) comes from medieval sources and reports of travellers in subsequent centuries.

The name is still in use today, as it stirs up the imagination of modern travellers who seek what remains of the many historical buildings, monuments and sites along its length, particularly in Central Asia.

What is traditionally regarded as *the* Silk Road is shown in the relief map of Figure 6.11. However, it was really composed of a branching network of major and minor routes leading to different destinations and along which caravan towns developed. One important branch led through north-western India to the mouth of the Indus River.

ACTIVITY 6.3

There are numerous video clips and documentaries on YouTube that feature the Silk Roads.
1 Research some, such as:
  • 'The Silk Road: a virtual tour from Rome to China' (Professor Clayton Brown, 18 November 2014)
  • 'An Animated Map of the Silk Route' (26 June 2014)
  • 'The Early Silk Road' – World History' (Khan Academy, 18 March 2017)
  • 'The History of the Silk Road' (16 May 2015).

2 Record what they show about:
- the location of the traditional Silk Road/s
- the chief trading sites along its length
- the landscapes through which travellers/ traders passed
- the various cultures along its length
- aspects of ancient trade.

FIGURE 6.11 The Silk Roads and Spice Route

ACTIVITY 6.4

1 Research the location of the following significant places on the Silk Roads:
- Chang'an (the ancient capital of Xian)
- Dunhuang (a Chinese frontier garrison on the Silk Road)
- Merv (one of the largest oasis cities on the Silk Road and an outpost of the Palmyrenes, in modern Turkmenistan)
- Charax Spanisu (a large port town at the head of the Persian Gulf in which Palmyrene merchants operated)
- Ctesiphon (on the east bank of the Tigris River and capital of the Parthian empire)
- Seleucia (a major city on the Tigris River opposite Ctesiphon)
- Dura-Europus (a border fortress city built high above the Euphrates River)
- Palmyra
- Antioch (Graeco-Roman town on the Orontes River and important in the silk and spice trades).

2 Use the various video clips to describe the types of landforms the Silk Roads crossed.

FIGURE 6.12 European on a Bactrian camel

The particular route taken by traders often shifted depending on conditions in the regions along the way. Also, the name Silk Road is misleading as many goods other than silk, such as textiles, spices, grain, animal hides, woodwork, metalwork, religious objects, art work and precious stones were carried in both directions.

There are scattered written records of trade along the Silk Road that mention Chinese and Persian caravans heading for the west, composed of dromedaries, yaks, horses and mules travelling as far as the Stone Tower, a major landmark where they broke their long and difficult journeys to rest, take on provisions, and trade goods before continuing on their next stage. The Stone Tower was mentioned in Claudius Ptolemy's *Geographia* (c. 90–168 CE) but, based on the information he left behind, it has been difficult to locate. However, work done by Reiz Dean in 2015 suggests that there is a strong case for the 'sacred' mountain of Sulaiman-Too, overlooking the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan, as the famous landmark on the Silk Road.[3]

No matter what route was taken by the traders and their fellow travellers along the Silk Roads, they faced many hazards and problems, which included:

- the terrain through which they travelled: high mountain ranges, deserts and rivers
- robber barons of the high Zagros mountains
- unscrupulous rulers who exacted heavy tribute on the route up the Euphrates
- desert bandits
- delays due to weather, hunger and exhaustion.

Sometimes the routes had to be changed due to political circumstances, or movements of people. In the 1st century CE, people known as Kushans came out of Central Asia, occupied part of Parthian territory and demanded their independence. For a while, a new route bypassed Parthia entirely.
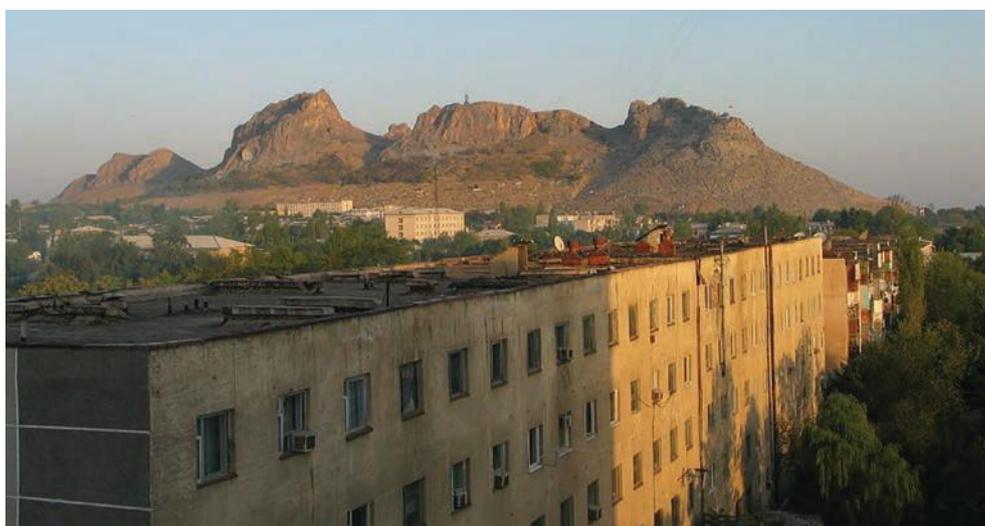
FIGURE 6.13 Sulaiman-Too ('Stone Tower') overlooking the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan

It seems from several sources (Roman and Chinese) that the route up the Euphrates was particularly fraught with difficulties.

The chieftains who live along the river on both sides are each invested with their own domains and exact tribute of no immoderate amounts. For it is hard among so many peoples, and that too many are self-willed, for a common standard of tribute to be set that is advantageous to the merchant.

SOURCE 6.5 Strabo, *Geography*, 16.1.27

One is not alarmed by robbers, but the road becomes unsafe by fierce lions and tigers who will attack passengers, and unless these are travelling in caravans of a hundred men or more, or be protected by military equipment, they may be devoured by these beasts.

SOURCE 6.6 *The Hou Han Shou* cited in F. Firth, *China and the Roman Orient,* 1975, p. 43

For these reasons, many caravans avoided the land beside the river and chose instead to risk a three-day journey through the desert on camels to Palmyra. We know that merchants coming in ships up the Euphrates could transfer to camels at three points on the river. They were a vital form of transport in the desert due to their ability to eat anything including the notorious camel thorn, and their importance is seen in the lesser tax imposed by Palmyrenes on goods carried by camels as opposed to carts.

According to Strabo, the 'tent men' or Bedouin of the deserts were moderate towards travellers. Perhaps this was because the local authorities in Palmyra had raised and equipped their own regional troops to protect their territory from bandits and to keep control over the desert trails leading to their city.
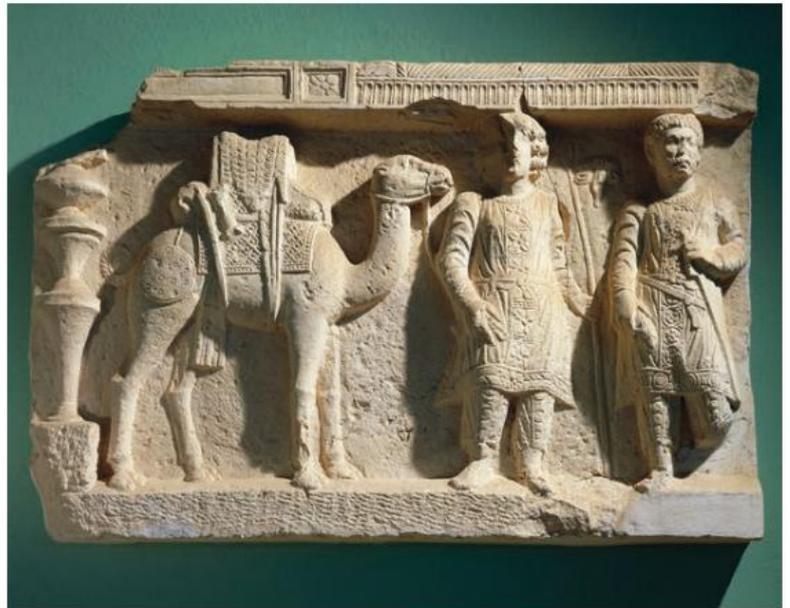
FIGURE 6.14 A Palmyrene funerary sculpture of a camel and inscription belonging to a wealthy merchant

ACTIVITY 6.5

1 Explain why the term 'Silk Road' is misleading.
2 Describe the significance of the 'Stone Tower'.
3 Recall what Strabo is complaining about in Source 6.5.
4 Examine what the Chinese writer in Source 6.6 claims is the most alarming danger of following the Euphrates.
5 Discuss what made a cross-desert route to Palmyra easier over time.

FIGURE 6.15 Modern nomads travelling through Central Asia, often along the ancient Silk Routes

Caravanserais

These were 'stopping-off places', all along the Silk Roads, perhaps an inn, where members of the trading caravan and their pack animals could rest, recover from the day's long and difficult journey and enjoy a good feed. Their presence meant that merchants, and their precious products, were not exposed to the dangers of the road during the nights. Caravanserais also gave merchants an opportunity to trade goods, buy local products and catch up on news. Where possible they were located about every 30–40 km. Over time, these meeting places contributed to an exchange of cultures and ideas. As trade expanded, so too did caravanserais, particularly after the 10th century, and by then they were most generally:

- buildings with a square or rectangular walled exterior with a single entrance large enough to allow entry to heavily laden pack animals into a large courtyard open to the sky
- provided with bays, niches and chambers to store merchandise, house animals and accommodate merchants and their servants and any other accompanying travellers.

FIGURE 6.16 The remains of a caravanserai at Qalat el-Mudiq in northern Syria

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FIGURE 6.17 A painting of merchants gathering in a medieval market along the Silk Road

ACTIVITY 6.6

1 List the features of the caravanserai shown in Figure 6.16.
2 Imagine you are a trader from the Far East and you are keeping a record of a journey you are taking along the Silk Road to Palmyra – or some section of it – during the 2nd to 3rd century CE. Mention the route you are taking, the products carried, the difficulties you have faced, the stopping and meeting places and other observations you make along the way.

6.2 The range of sources available for a study of Palmyra

Written sources

Unfortunately, there is no continuous or detailed account of the history of Palmyra, and the works of the two historians Euphorus and Dexippus, who wrote about the history of their times (the late 3rd century CE), are lost except for a few fragments. Also, the work of the historian Zosimus – a history of the Roman Empire from Augustus to 410 CE – was written in the 6th century and only a few chapters deal with anything relevant to Palmyra. There are only a few useful paragraphs in the 5th-century work of Orosius, and then there are the problems associated with *The Historia Augusta* which many people quote.

The Historia Augusta was written after 395 CE and claims to have been the work of six historians who wrote brief accounts of the Roman emperors from Hadrian (reigned from 117 to 138) to Numerian (reigned for only one year between 283–284). The problems are:

- It is not a history, but a biography which includes character assessments with a collection of odd details.
- It has been proved to be the work of one anonymous person and not six.
- It is believed, by Sir Ronald Syme, to be full of 'forged documents', 'bogus persons', 'invented names' and 'curious fables'.[4]

There is in short, so much that we cannot know. We have no Palmyrene literature, nothing to help us get into the minds of those who master-minded the revolt against Rome or of those who followed them, those who lived, worked, loved and worshipped among the proud columns of Palmyra.

SOURCE 6.7 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*: *Zenobia's Revolt against Rome*, p. 11

So, we are left with the material remains to help build up a picture of Palmyra's past.

Archaeological sources

It wasn't really until two British travellers to Palmyra, Robert Wood and James Dawkins, published a book about their discoveries, accompanied by stunning drawings, that the Western world really became aware of Palmyra.

FIGURE 6.18 *James Dawkins and Robert Wood Discovering the Ruins of Palmyra*, by Gavin Hamilton (1758)

Documented by Italian, then French, Swedish, and German explorers since the 17th century, it was first excavated in the 20th century by Germans, then Czech, mandate-period French, Swiss and Polish archaeologists, in partnership with the Syrian Directorate of Antiquities.

SOURCE 6.8 Maira al-Manzali, *Palmyra and the Political History of Archaeology in Syria: from Colonialists to Nationalists*, October 2016

ACTIVITY 6.7

1 Describe the limitations of the written sources for an understanding of life in Palmyra.
2 List the nationalities of archaeologists who have worked at Palmyra during the 20th and early 21st centuries.
3 What does this suggest to you about Palmyra as an archaeological site?
4 Research the UNESCO site on the internet and describe why Palmyra was placed on the World Heritage list.

Monumental remains

FIGURE 6.19 The monumental remains in the first decade of the 21st century

FIGURE 6.20 The ruins after they were partially destroyed by terrorists

REPORT ON ISIS' DESTRUCTION OF PALMYRA'S MONUMENTAL REMAINS

In August 2015, it was reported that IS had blown up the 1st-century temple of Baalshamin and the Temple of Bel. Satellite imagery of the site taken shortly after showed almost nothing remained.

Between June and September 2015, IS was reported to have destroyed seven ancient tower tombs in Palmyra including the famous Tower of Elahbel.

In October 2015, the Monumental Arch was also blown up.

In January 2017, IS deliberately destroyed the façade of the theatre and destroyed the Tetrapylon.

The monumental remains have been categorised under the following headings:

- temples
- public buildings
- tombs.

Unlike Roman cities elsewhere, Palmyra had no gymnasium or amphitheatre and the building designated as Diocletian's Baths – with nothing above foundation level – is believed to have been the site of Zenobia's palace.

Temples

These include:

- the Temple of Bel – present status: destroyed (see Figure 6.4 on p. 232)
- the Temple of Baalshamin – present status: destroyed

FIGURE 6.21 The Temple of Baalshamin before destruction

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- the Temple of Nabu – largely ruined
- the Temple of Al-lāt – largely ruined
- the Temple of Baal-hamon – ruined.

Public buildings and defensive structures

- The Agora (a 'gathering place')– the political, commercial and religious centre of a Greek city
- The Tariff Court to the south of the Agora
- The Triclinium on the northwestern corner of the Agora, a hall that could possibly hold about 40 of the city's rulers.
- The Great Colonnade, the city's 1.1-km-long main street. Each of the supposed 375 columns was 9.5 metres high. The Great Colonnade was built in three sections over time: the western end was built first (158 CE) with a road width of 11.4 metres and the Tetrapylon at one end; the eastern section next (175 CE) with a width of 22.7 metres and ending in the Monumental Arch; and the middle section, which joined both, built in the early 3rd century. It varied from 10–14 metres wide and had civic buildings along its length.
- The Tetrapylon, a 16-columned platform (in groupings of four) supporting four statues, that was part of the Great Colonnade. Only one of the present remaining columns, before being damaged by ISIS, was original.
- The Monumental Arch (present status: destroyed)
- The unfinished 82-by-104-metre Roman theatre built in the centre of a semicircular colonnaded square that opened up to the South Gate. It was cleared of the sand and restored in the 1950s (present status: façade destroyed).
- The Senate – largely ruined
- The Camp of Diocletian, a 3rd-century military complex (**castra**) that served as the headquarters of the Legion of the Illyrians (*Legio Illyricorum*). It covered an area of about 4 hectares and was separated from the main part of the city by a small wall.

castra a building, or plot of land, used as a fortified military camp

- The town walls. An earlier wall built in 273 was replaced with the walls of Diocletian.

FIGURE 6.22 The Great Colonnade looking towards the Great Arch

FIGURE 6.23 The Tetrapylon before being partially destroyed

FIGURE 6.24 Tetrapylon: Imaginary view of the Colonnade and Tetrapylon of Palmyra, Syria, anonymous artist after Louis-François Cassas, c. 1799. Proof-plate etching. 17.9 x 25.7 in. (45.5 x 65.5 cm). The Getty Research Institute, 840011

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1 Identify the two great Palmyrene temples.

2 Define the terms:
   • Agora
   • *castra*
   • Tetrapylon.

3 In half a page, describe what the city's main thoroughfare might have looked like in the 3rd century CE.

4 Write an opinion piece for a magazine about the destruction of the Palmyrene temples and suggest what the world should be doing for the future of the site.

Tombs

West of the city walls is the Valley of Tombs, a 1-km-long necropolis, which includes the incredible several-storey-high Tower Tombs, constructed up until 128 CE, funerary temples and **hypogea** (underground tombs). Altogether, about 300 funerary monuments have been discovered in Palmyra.

> **hypogea (sing. hypogeum)** underground chambers usually referring to tombs

The Tower Tombs (present status: destroyed) were built on high ground and appear to have been dedicated to family groups. They contained tiers of niches that held the sarcophagi and remains of prominent Palmyrenes. Each niche was fronted by a sculptured funerary portrait and an inscription that provided some information on the family, status and occupation of the deceased.

One of the most famous of these tombs was the Tower of Elahbel, a four-storey sandstone structure, built in 103 BCE for Marcus Ulpius Elahbelus and his three brothers, which contained an internal staircase, a painted coffered ceiling and a sculptural feature that resembles a balcony.

Palmyra's Agora and the Tariff Court

Palmyra'a Agora was huge, with 11 entrances – and, from the evidence of the 200 pedestals that have survived, it featured statues of prominent Palmyrene citizens. Also, judging from the surviving inscriptions they were arranged according to status/occupation around the agora:

• senators on the eastern side
• officials on the northern side
• soldiers on the western side
• caravan sponsors on the southern side.

The Palmyra Tariff Court and its tax laws

In 1882, a Russian prince, visiting the ruins of Palmyra, was shown a huge 5-metre stela inscribed in Aramaic and Greek still partly embedded in the ground. He had it unearthed, took a paper imprint, and commissioned a

FIGURE 6.25 Tower of Elahbel, destroyed by ISIS in 2015 not long after the radical Islamists had destroyed parts of the Temples of Bel and Baalshamin.

FIGURE 6.26 Detail of decoration of the Tower of Elahbel

FIGURE 6.27 The remains of the Agora

photographer to take a picture of it. Twenty years after the discovery, the Russians were able to gain permission from the Ottoman sultan to remove the inscribed stela to St Petersburg as a gift for the Czar, but due to its size, it was impossible to move it in one piece, so it was sawed into four pieces following the arrangement of the text into four columns. The lower uninscribed parts were left behind in Palmyra. In 1904, the inscription known as the Palmyra Tariff – inscribed in 137 CE – went on display in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, its exact location was not recorded when it was removed and had to be confirmed by old photographs and later fieldwork.

It had been originally set up in a walled rectangular space known as the Tariff Court, south of the Palmyran Agora, after a visit by the Emperor Hadrian in 129 CE. It is 'one of the most important single items of evidence for the economic life of any part of the Roman Empire and especially in the taxable services mentioned in the regulations, a vivid glimpse also of the social life of a great middle-eastern city.'[5] Judging from the list of products – both

loculi an architectural compartment that houses a body, as in a catacomb, hypogeum or mausoleum

FIGURE 6.28 Palmyrene **loculi** reassembled in Istanbul Archaeological Museum

imports and exports – and services liable for taxation listed in the inscription, the Agora must have been a busy place. See p. 250 for the products and economic exchange that took place in Palmyra.

Funerary portraiture

The funerary portraiture of Palmyra is 'a most evocative body of evidence'[6] for the people of Palmyra and their society. They are individualised depictions of men, women and children predominantly of the prosperous merchant class. These stone faces represent people who lived between 50 CE and 270 CE.

These portraits, and accompanying inscriptions, provide the names, genealogy and family relationships of many of the people, as well as information about their wealth, social status and role in the community. They reveal details of fashion: traits, trends and style, of hairstyles and jewellery and other details, such as banquets, all of which incorporate elements from the Roman and Parthian worlds.

It has been estimated that there are over 2000 Palmyrene funerary portraits in public and private collections across the world.

Inscription and coins

There are thousands of inscriptions in a dialect of Aramaic, as well as in Greek. The people of Palmyra tended to speak both languages.

A COMMENT ON ARAMAIC

The language of the area was Aramaic, a Semitic language related to Hebrew and Phoenician and written with the same alphabet.

During its approximately 3000 years of history, Aramaic has served as the language of administration of empires and as a language of divine worship. Aramaic became the **lingua franca** from the time of the Assyrian Empire (8th century BCE); was used in the Babylonian Empire (605–539 BCE); various empires of Iran (Persian, Parthian and Sasanian 539 BCE – 651 CE) and was the day-to-day language of Roman Judaea and of Jesus.

lingua franca a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different
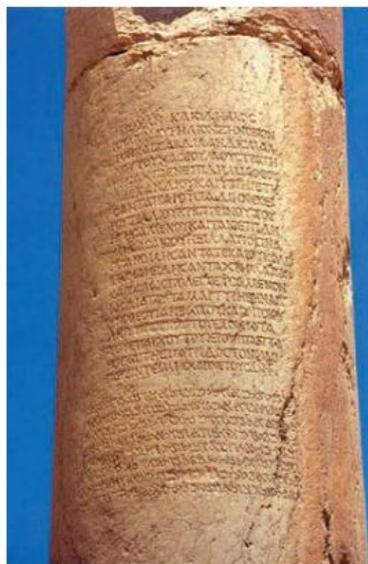
FIGURE 6.29 A Palmyrene inscription on a pillar
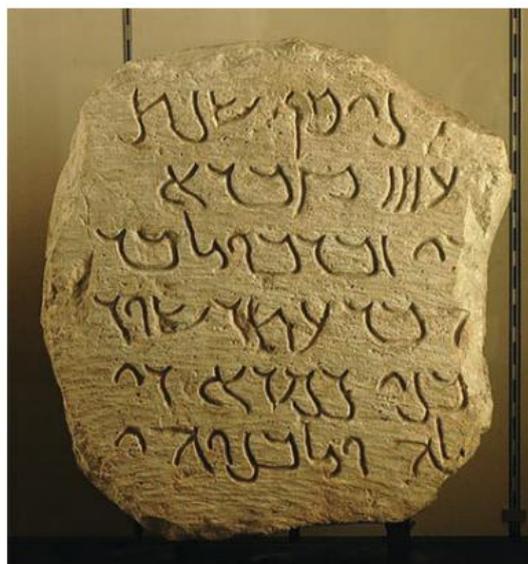
FIGURE 6.30 An example of Aramaic (housed in the Louvre)

The council and the people [honour] Septimius Vorodes … with the rank of **ducenarius**, lawgiver of the mother colony, who escorted the caravans at his own expense and was commemorated by the chief merchants, who led the troops magnificently, who was market surveyor of the mother colony and spent a great deal of his own funds and was pleasing to the council and people and now is glorious **symposiarch** of the god Zeus Bel because of his holiness and glory.

SOURCE 6.9 An inscription from 266 CE dedicated to an important Palmyrene citizen, cited in R. Drexhage (1998), no. 40, cited in R. Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, p. 62

The most useful coins for throwing light on Palmyra are those for the period of Zenobia's regency and expansion at the expense of Rome in the 3rd century CE. However, coins are significant for understanding the reigns of various Roman emperors, while the size, purity of metal and artistic skill of coins can reveal a decline in the value of currency.

ACTIVITY 6.9

1 Define the following terms:
   - necropolis
   - hypogeum
   - loculi.
2 Describe a Tower Tomb.
3 Investigate where you would have once gained some information about:
   - Palmyra's economic life
   - those honoured for services to their city.
4 Describe the material sources you would consult to learn about:
   - the appearance of the people, fashions and some aspects of Palmyrene life.
   - Zenobia's attempt to build an empire at the expense of Rome.
5 To what does the word 'Aramaic' refer?
6 Refer to Source 6.9 and answer the following:
   - Who is the inscription honouring?
   - Who paid for the dedication?
   - What does the term 'mother colony' indicate abut Palmyra's trading activities?
   - What positions, mentioned in the inscription, did the person being honoured, hold?

6.3 The nature of Palmyra as a caravan city as revealed through the sources

An ancient caravan city

From the 1st century CE, Palmyra had been transformed from a minor desert caravan settlement into a large, prosperous and influential 'caravan city', a term first coined by the scholar Michael Rostovtzeff in

caravan a group of traders, pilgrims, or others, engaged in long-distance travel

his 1932 book *Caravan Cities*. Those who travelled the east–west trade routes as part of a **caravan** invariably ended up in Palmyra. Its reputation as a great trading centre, and its people as trade middlemen on the long-distance trade routes, made it politically important to both the Roman and Eastern empires.

FIGURE 6.31 A camel caravan arriving in Palmyra (Tadmor) in the early 20th century

Long-distance trade in silks and spices

According to Ammianus Marcellinus, the two Roman obsessions during the first three centuries CE were 'the lavish use of silk and of the textile arts' and the 'more anxious attention to the kitchen'.[7]

FIGURE 6.32 Chinese silk textiles

More than anything else, it was the great demand in the West for the luxury items of silks and spices that contributed to the growth of Palmyra, but neither can the 'clever policy of its merchants and camel drivers' be discounted. They 'knew how to keep order in the desert between their town and the great factories and warehouses of Lower Mesopotamia' and 'from that time caravans were able to cross the Syrian desert instead of skirting it'.[8]

It is believed that the earliest export of silk to the West occurred in the 6th century BCE, but it was through Persia that silk became known to the Greeks after the expedition of Alexander the Great, and later through the Seleucid rulers. The Roman, Virgil (1st century BCE) is supposed to have been the first 'ancient writer who expressly mentions the soft wool which was combed from the trees of the Chinese'.[9]

The manufacture of silk was a closely guarded secret of the Chinese emperors, and the most stringent precautions were taken by Chinese merchants to make sure it remained so. For this reason, when dealing with Persian traders, usually by clever hand gestures, they remained silent, in case 'an incautious word might have revealed the secrets of where silk came from and thus destroy the source of their livelihood'.[10]

Rome also depended on the costly aromatics such as frankincense and myrrh from Arabia, Yemen, Somalia and Oman for use in religious rites and perfume manufacture, but it was the high demand in the West for the exotic spices – pepper, ginger, saffron, cinnamon, cumin, cardamom, cloves, nutmeg and mace – that led to the distant traffic with India and the East Indies engaged in by Palmyrene merchants. This trade was generally carried on via the ports of India, the Persian Gulf and the Euphrates River and then overland to Palmyra.

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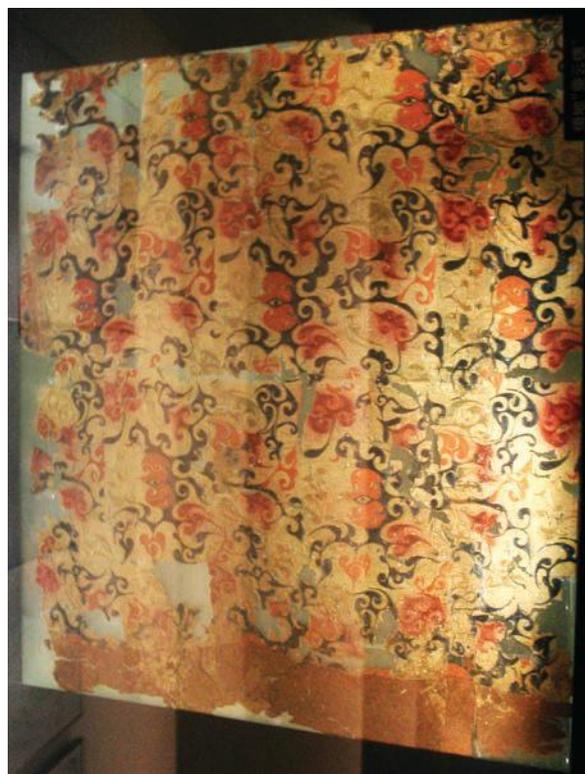
FIGURE 6.33 A modern-day spice market in India

FIGURE 6.34 A Palmyrene funerary depiction of a wealthy merchant's boat

In earlier times, not as many as twenty vessels would dare traverse the Arabian Gulf far enough to get a peep outside the straits, but at the present time even large fleets are dispatched as far as India …

SOURCE 6.10 Strabo, *Geography*, 17.1.13

ACTIVITY 6.10

1 Identify who you might expect to see on a long-distance caravan.
2 Define what a 'caravan city' is.
3 Explain why there might have been a sculpture of a ship on a funerary stela of a wealthy Palmyrene.

The organisation of a Palmyrene caravan

'Much about the caravan trade remains tantalisingly vague' and 'generally the caravan trade leaves few traces'.[11] Some information can be gauged from the surviving honorific inscriptions in Palmyra's Agora, dedicated to those involved in sponsoring the caravans. However, it should be remembered that conditions in Palmyra changed over time.

All the same, it appears that in Palmyra, the caravan trade developed into a communal or civic affair, associated with the 'Four Tribes' of the city. These civic tribes 'emerged as a social and economic organism' from 'the long-standing tribal affiliations'[12] associated with particular religious sanctuaries. These civic tribes may have developed as a response to issues of trade and security. The caravans are referred to as being managed by a body of four, but whether this meant four individuals or four groups is not clear. When the Palmyrene, Soades, mentioned in Source 6.11, was honoured by the city for his part in the caravan trade, four statues were dedicated to him: 'in the Temple of Zeus, the Sacred Grove, the Temple of Ares, and the Temple of Artagatis'.[13]

> The council and the people honoured Soades ... the pious man who loved his native land, who on many and important occasions protected in a noble and generous way the interests of traders and caravans and of his co-citizens at Vologesias ... and now, alone of all citizens ever, has been honoured by his country for his continual beneficence by four statues at public expense on columns in the city square ...

SOURCE 6.11 R. Drexhage (1998) no. 17, cited in R. Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, p. 60

Because there seems to have been a distinction between the 'people of Palmyra' and the 'Four Tribes', the question is: was each tribe an organisation of caravan members?

There seem to have been a number of individuals associated with the caravan trade:

- Sponsors
- Merchants, many of whom were formed into trading companies for the duration of the journey
- A caravan leader or chief, known in Greek as a **synodiarch**
- Those who provided for the caravan's security against any marauding desert nomads. This militia of archers mounted on camels and horses who policed the desert around Palmyra should not be confused with Palmyra's military forces.

synodiarch a caravan leader
entrepôt a port or trading post where goods may be imported and stored usually to be exported again

It is difficult to know with any certainty if the merchants chose the caravan leader from among their own number, or if the caravan leader was, as suggested by Michael Rostortzeff, a specialist individual totally responsible for: hiring the animals and the personnel to take care of them; guiding the caravan; obtaining the necessary food and water; protecting the party from attacks; and carrying out any negotiations along the way. It appears that sometimes a single merchant paid for a caravan out of his own pocket, and occasionally a sponsor would lead a caravan himself.

Most of those whose statues once stood in the Agora are believed to have been sponsors of caravans and not the merchants themselves. In fact, it was probably the merchants who dedicated the statues.

The sponsors are believed to have been town-dwelling Bedouin sheikhs, leaders of their tribes, who owned the lands in the surrounding villages on which the camels were raised and fed, and who had been able to use their close connection with the nomads to 'protect' and 'save' the caravans travelling the deserts. It is believed that some of these sheikhs may have made their wealth originally from banditry.

Syrians in general were traders par excellence and were found in all areas of the Roman Empire as far away as Egypt and Rome. The merchants of Palmyra had trading companies in all outposts and ports associated with the silk and spice trade: at the mouth of the Indus; at Spasinu Charax at the head of the Persian Gulf; in ancient Seleucia on the Tigris River and Vologesias, also on the Tigris; in Coptos in Egypt and even in Merv in modern Turkmenistan. The wealth made from these wealthy merchants who worked in foreign trading **entrepôts** contributed to the vast building program that made Palmyra such a beautiful city.

> Some Palmyrenes were appointed by the king of Mesene (the territory covering the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates and beyond, whose capital was Charax) to govern what is modern Bahrein and other cities of that kingdom.

SOURCE 6.12 Albert E. Dein, *Palmyra as a Caravan City*

1   Explain why a caravan would traditionally leave few traces.
2   Summarise what you think Source 6.11 (on p. 253) means by 'co-citizens in Vologesias' and describe where Vologesias was.
3   Describe the men associated with the caravan trade and why they were usually honoured in the inscriptions.
4   Define the 'Four Tribes' of Palmyra and what their chief role might have been.
5   Describe the role of a sponsor.
6   Define what a synodiarch was.
7   Examine the forms of protection that were provided for caravans leaving and approaching Palmyra.
8   Explain what a trading entrepôt was.
9   Identify the name of the trading entrepôt at the head of the Persian Gulf.
10 Outline what Source 6.12 (on p. 253) indicates about the reputation of Palmyrenes.

Local trade and taxes

Although the vast hinterland of Palmyra was intensively planted with olives, figs, pistachio and barley, and provided forage for animals, other food items needed to be imported to feed the huge population. Also, the wealthy, cosmopolitan population of Palmyra would have demanded a huge array of other goods.

The Palmyra Tariff provides some idea of the regular items of exchange brought into the city and sold to the residents at the local markets, and of the local Palmyrene goods that were sold elsewhere, and the taxes imposed on them.

In 137 CE, the Council of the city of Palmyra agreed to revise the tariff and regulations according to which dues were levied on goods brought in and exported from the city and services provided within it. This was done in order to avert in future the disputes that had arisen between the tax collectors and the merchants, tradesmen and others from whom taxes were due, and to make the situation absolutely clear, the council ordered to be inscribed and displayed in a public place both new regulations and the old ones they superceded.

SOURCE 6.13 J. F. Mathews, 'The Tax of Palmyra', *Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 74 (1984), p. 157

A COMMENT ON THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF PALMYRA FROM THE 2ND TO 3RD CENTURIES

In 129 CE, on a visit to Palmyra, the Roman Emperor Hadrian declared it a *civitas libera* or 'free city' (a self-governing city with minimal supervision by an agent of the Emperor). At this time, the Roman provincial authority set and approved Palmyra's taxes. However, they kept provincial interference to a minimum for they did not want anything to jeopardise Palmyra's luxury transit trade from which the Romans exacted taxes.

In 213 CE, the Emperor Caracalla awarded the status of *colonia* to Palmyra with exemption from all Roman taxation. The first half of the 3rd century was Palmyra's 'golden age'.

Evidence that the Palmyra Tariff referred only to local trade is the absence of any reference to silks and spices, which were predominantly transit goods headed for Rome. The luxury aromatic myrrh *is* mentioned but that was used in the local perfume business.

The following are some of the local trade items mentioned:

- purple-dye and dyed wool
- scented oils in alabaster jars and goatskin bags
- fat, olive oil and Palmyrene salt
- salted fish
- wheat and chaff
- wine
- pine cones
- animal skins
- bronze statues
- clothing and textiles
- sheep fleeces
- animals for slaughter.

Dues were also levied on slaves and prostitutes, some other occupations, animals brought in for grazing on surrounding lands and the use of the city's water supply.

> From those who import slaves into Palmyra, or into its territory, he (tax collector) shall exact, per person 22 denarii.
>
> From one selling a slave within the city and for export, 12 denarii.
>
> For the use of two springs which are in the city, per year, 800 denarii.

SOURCE 6.14 B. Levick, *The Government of the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook*, pp. 90–95

> There is a tax of 3 *denarii* per camel load of dried goods (2 d. per donkey load), 8 d. on each fleece dyed with purples, and 25 d. on aromatic oil brought in … salt, and fats were taxed, –salt at 1 *as* per *modius*. Bronze statues were taxed at the same rate as bullion. Though these were not local goods, equally they did not come from the East and in most cases, they were bought by city residents … perfumes were taxed in bulk and perfumiers paid a further tax; these were not transit goods but imported luxuries.

SOURCE 6.15 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, p. 58

FIGURE 6.35 A denarius of Marcus Aurelius

A culturally diverse city

Palmyra was a Semitic city of tribal Bedouins and Arabs, but due to its unique location, it came under the cultural influences of the Western Graeco-Roman world and the Parthian-Persian cultures of the East. It

syncretistic referring to the fusion or amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought

'existed in a multicultural and multilingual landscape of overlapping and intertwining cultures'[14] and yet was not overwhelmed by either. Instead, because of its tribal Semitic core that always remained strong, it was able to create a new **syncretistic** culture that made its city unique.

It should be remembered that this was not a one-way movement. There is plenty of evidence that, via cities like Palmyra, different cultural influences were imposed on both Rome and Persia, but that is an investigation outside this case study.

First-time visitors to Palmyra from the West, at the beginning of the 3rd century CE might be excused for thinking they had arrived in a Graeco-Roman city when they first saw the soaring colonnaded main thoroughfare, its magnificent arch, its theatre and open spaces, even its temples to Semitic gods. Although they might have seen some Roman porticoed enclosures and basilica-like halls here and there, such visitors would not have had to look too closely to see the architecture's Easternised elements (some Semitic, some Persian). When they ventured to the Agora, they would have been totally surprised to see a place unlike the commercial centres of Greek cities they were familiar with. What they entered was more like an Eastern bazaar or souk, with people speaking a myriad of languages and dialects, dressed in a vast range of costumes, exchanging and purchasing goods. Also, it would have surprised and pleased Greek visitors somewhat that the city was filled with bi-lingual inscriptions in Greek and Palmyrene (but surprisingly no Latin) under the bronze statues lining the agora. The sculptures around the city did have a much stronger Eastern look in their variety of styles and presentation than they were used to seeing in the West, and yet there was something strangely unique about them.

But it would have been the people who surprised these visitors the most. As if making a personal choice about what they wore, Palmyrenes presented a confusing array of Greek and Persian garb: a man, perhaps in a linen or wool chiton and cloak like any upper-class Greek; a woman in an elaborate jewelled headdress and veil, an abundance of ornamentation, perhaps a gently draping dress with familiar Greek designs, or a more flowing gown embroidered in a pearled design from somewhere far to the East, from the head of the Indus perhaps. And then there were their names: a mix of Greek or Roman or Palmyrene.

FIGURE 6.36 A Palmyrene woman

FIGURE 6.37 Palmyrene funerary relief bust of a priest, c. 50–150 CE. © Trustees of the British Museum

The images in Figures 6.36, 6.37 and 6.38 give some idea of the types of clothing, adornments, headgear and even hair styles adopted by the Palmyrenes. Also, look back to Figure 6.14 on p. 241 of the two Palmyrene caravan merchants and notice the clothes they are wearing. They are definitely not Graeco-Roman.

The priest in Figure 6.37 wears the traditional high cylindrical polos hat, worn by both men and women and derived from the crowns of near Eastern goddesses. He also holds several ritual objects. Figure 6.38 shows the garments worn by a Palmyrene and a Parthian. The latter features the typical Phrygian hat. Sculptural images of Parthian soldiers also appear with similar facial hair as many of the Palmyrenes; others follow the fashions of Rome.

The Eastern nature of the city was influenced by the extensive and continued contacts of Palmyrene merchants with fellow citizens and colleagues in various Parthian and Persian trading centres. Aspects of Roman life and culture also pervaded Palmyra, as one would expect of a city under the political sway of the Roman Empire. Neither of these cultures, however, overwhelmed Palmyra.

There were those among the prominent families and officials who adopted Roman imperial names such as

FIGURE 6.38 Palmyrene with a Parthian prisoner

Julius, Aurelian and Septimius, but they retained their local Aramaic names as well. And it was not Latin, but Greek and the Palmyrene dialect of Aramaic that continued to be the language used in the city. Neither did the titles of those in office follow the Roman form.

> From its architecture to its dress, there was never a city in the Roman world outside Alexandria that was more diverse. But Palmyra remained true to a local culture at its core and was even able to export this syncretized culture to influence the two powers that once held cultural sway over its citizens.

SOURCE 6.16 Mathew Selmer, *The Effects of Romano-Persian Interaction on the Cultures of the Cities on the Syrian Limes of the Roman Empire*.

ACTIVITY 6.13

1 Investigate what is meant by a 'syncretistic culture.
2 In what way was Palmyra's culture unique?
3 Use a diagrammatic form to summarise how specific Roman and Eastern influences impacted Palmyra.
4 Make a list of all the features of dress, style and ornamentation you can detect in Figures 6.14 (on p. 241), 6.36, 6.37 and 6.38 (p. 257).

Religion

The gods worshipped in Palmyra were essentially part of the N-W Semitic **pantheon** plus additions from the Mesopotamian and Arab pantheons. It is difficult to identify some of these gods as they often take on the attributes of other deities, have different names in different areas, or are syncretised with other gods.

The two most important gods in Palmyra were the sky gods:

- Bel (Bol). Bol was the name of the chief god of the oasis which was then assimilated with Bel, the traditional name for Marduk supreme deity of the Babylonian pantheon.
- Baalshamin, whose name meant 'Lord of Heaven' was an ancient god of the Phoenicians. He was a supreme weather god and so the patron of farmers and shepherds. This god was often shown with Yarhibol and Aglibol.

pantheon an overview of a given culture's gods and goddesses

Yarhibol was the ancestral god of the oasis, also a judge and giver of benefits, while Aglibol was from northern Syria. Together they became the Sun and Moon Gods and are shown in a sculpture on either side of Baal-Shamin.

The goddess Allat – an Arab cult figure and female companion of Bel – became assimilated with the Syrian/Phoenician goddess Astarte, the Assyrian goddess of victory in battle, Ishtar, and with the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

There was also the Arabian goddess Manawet, the Babylonian deities Herta and Nanai, and the Canaanite diety, Reshaf.

More recognisable were the gods Arsu and Azizu, mounted on camel and horse respectively, who guarded the caravans as they crossed the desert.

Neither the Roman nor the Persian empires tried forcing their religions onto Palmyra; it was only later under Christianity that there was some pressure to toe the line.

It was once thought that there was no Roman imperial cult practised at Palmyra. The cult of the emperors had been introduced by Augustus in the 1st century CE to unify the provinces throughout the empire, and most provincial cities had a temple to the imperial cult. However, there is some inscriptional

FIGURE 6.39 Yarhibol and Aglibol on either side of Baalshamin

FIGURE 6.40 The god Arsu on a camel

evidence that a few Palmyrenes did 'accommodate the cult alongside the worship of Bel'.[15] In 167 CE, a priest named Rabbel, identified as 'Grand Priest or Symposiarch of the priests of the greatest god Bel'[16] raised statues to the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus. He was not the only one to record such an accommodation with the imperial cult. In 271, the Grand Priest and Symposiarch, Septimius Hadduden, also 'accommodated' the Emperor Aurelian and was rewarded with the rank of Roman senator.

By the 3rd century, the religious landscape in Palmyra was very complex.

> The old Arab worship of the heavenly bodies and the sun mingled with the distinctive Syrian ecstatic cults and the dominant cults of the Greek gods. The Christian doctrine opposed both, but at the same time exploded into innumerable heresies. The new religion of Mani encountered all these head on, as well as the extensive Jewish population of the major cities. And even the Persian worship of Mithras and the Zoroastrian religion made its inroads.

SOURCE 6.17 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, p. 139

ACTIVITY 6.14

1 Identify the supreme god of Palmyra and where it originated.

2 Identify the other goddesses that Allat was assimilated with.

3 Explain what each of the gods in Figure 6.39 represented and what feature makes this depiction of them unusual.

4 For whom would the god in Figure 6.40 have been particularly significant?

5 Interpret what the word 'accommodated' reveals about the reaction of some of the priests of Bel to the imperial cult.

6 List the religions mentioned in Source 6.17, apart from the Semitic cults that were present in Palmyra by the second half of the 3rd century.

7 Describe what Source 6.17 indicates was happening to Christianity at the time.

8 Research each of the following:

 • The prophet Mani and the religion of Manichaeism

 • The origin of the worship of Mithras and the group that would have imported it into Palmyra and the Roman empire.

Palmyra and Rome in the 3rd century CE

Political changes were occurring in both the Roman Empire and in the East during the 3rd century CE and this had long-term effects on Palmyra.

For the Romans, the 3rd century was a time of crisis: military anarchy and civil war; invasions by Vandals and Goths on their Rhine and Danube borders; usurpers who broke away from the Roman Empire and set up the Gallic Empire (Gaul, Britain and Spain) in the west; an outbreak of plague (possibly smallpox), climate change and economic depression. The crisis began when the Emperor Severus Alexander was assassinated by his own troops in 235. This initiated a 50-year period during which there were at least 26 claimants to the throne, mostly army generals. Also, during this period Rome suffered serious periodic attacks by the Sasanids who had replaced the Parthians in the East.

It was not until a series of tough soldier-emperors took power, most notably Aurelian, who reigned through the worst of the crisis, that the Roman Empire was once more united. It was during this period that Palmyra's Queen Zenobia used the crisis to break with Rome, seize much of Rome's territory in the east and establish a short-lived empire.

A COMMENT ON THE SASANIDS (SASSANIDS)

The Sasanids were a Persian dynasty that defeated the Parthians in 224 CE and became what is regarded as the most influential of all Iranian cultures.

In time, its empire included modern-day Iran, Iraq, parts of eastern Turkey, Caucasia, Syria, Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. It ruled for 400 years until it was conquered by the Muslims and the introduction of Islam.

During the 3rd century the Sasanids came into conflict with Rome in:

- 229–232
- 241–244
- 252–261, during which the Roman Emperor Valerian was captured
- 283
- 296–98.

Palmyra had always been directly affected politically by Rome and the East, and during this period of upheaval, it reached its greatest political influence under Odaenathus and Zenobia. However, within years, it was destroyed by the Roman emperor, Aurelian.

Odaenathus, a Palmyrene king

Odaenathus was from an aristocratic Palmyrene family. He was the founding king of Palmyra who raised his city into the greatest power in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

- His background and rise to prominence is rather vague, but what is known is that he was a *ras* or lord of the city in the 240s and by the late 250s had the title of *consularis*, a position of high status, either a Roman senator, or a position associated with Roman provincial government.
- He had already begun to increase the Palmyrene military with the addition of desert nomads, and expanded Palmyra's heavy-cavalry units when the Sasanians carried out a full-scale invasion of the

FIGURE 6.41 A bust thought to be that of Odaenathus

Roman provinces, during which they destroyed the Palmyrene trading colonies along the Euphrates. By 260, the Sasanian king Shapur I defeated and captured the Roman Emperor Valerian.

- Odaenathus gave himself the title of 'king', led a military expedition against Shapur before he could cross the Euphrates into Roman territory again, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Sasanians.
- He was then drawn into the Roman conflicts over the position of emperor. He took the side of Valerian's son Gallienus against a usurper, quelled the rebellion and was given exceptional titles by the emperor. What else could the emperor do but formalise Odaenathus' position as king of the east? He needed his continuing loyalty against the Sasanians. It became apparent that 'Odaenathus' Syria was an important player in the destiny of Rome'.[17]
- In the meantime, the middle-aged widower (nothing is known of his first wife) had married again, to a young Palmyrene beauty called Zenobia, with whom he had several more sons.
- Odaenathus 'remained within the bounds of his obligations to Rome'[18], and during 262 carried out several more rapid attacks across the Euphrates and even reached the walls of Ctesiphon, the Sasanian capital on the east bank of the Tigris River, south of modern-day Baghdad. He reclaimed all Roman lands that the Sasanians had taken in the previous decade, sent the prisoners to Rome and declared himself 'King of Kings', and his eldest son as his co-king. By the following year, he was in overall administrative and military control of all provincial governors in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire.
- In Palmyra, he allowed the various government institutions to continue as before, and all positions were held by Palmyrenes. He designated a viceroy while he was away.
- However, while he was on a campaign against Goths carrying out raids into Roman Anatolia (modern Turkey), he and his eldest son were assassinated. There is no agreement in the sources as to exactly when and where the assassination occurred or by whom. It is believed to have happened in late 267 and there are any number of conspiracy theories about who planned his death: from the Roman emperor; to Zenobia who wanted her own son to inherit the throne and was unhappy with her husband's pro-Roman policy; to the king's jealous and ambitious cousin or nephew Maeonius; other Palmyrene traitors, or Persian agents.
- Whoever was responsible for killing the 46-year-old king at the peak of his reputation, there appears to have been no delay in declaring Zenobia's 10-year-old son, Vaballathus, as 'King of Kings', and Queen Zenobia as his regent. Perhaps the immediate transfer of power indicates that she and her son were with Odaenathus in the north.

ACTIVITY 6.15

1. Explain why Odaenathus was given so much power by the Romans, considering the crisis they were facing.
2. Make a list of the titles he was given by the Romans, or took for himself.
3. Interpret what is meant by the statement, he 'remained within the bounds of his obligations to Rome'.
4. Discuss the possible motives for his assassination.

Zenobia and her empire

Like many women who appear briefly in the ancient historical accounts, Zenobia was presented in a distorted and clichéd way, particularly in the unreliable *Historia Augusta,* and over time, in both Western and Syrian sources, has become even more fictionalised as a heroic queen with a tragic end. However, 'the real Zenobia is elusive, perhaps ultimately unattainable'.[19]

It is hard to know much about her early life, since the anonymous author of the *Historia Augusta* wrote what he thought ought to be true.

- Zenobia was a woman of great beauty and chastity, enthusiasm, bravery and wisdom, and with a passionate interest in hunting and a love of learning. Some of these may or may not be true.
- She presumably received the education appropriate to a noble Palmyrene girl, whatever that means
- She spoke Greek and a Palmyrene variant of Aramaic, knew some Egyptian but spoke no Latin
- She claimed descent from Antiochus IV, king of Syria from 175–64 BCE and his wife Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Ptolemy VI of Egypt
- Like all the stereotypical depictions of mothers by Roman writers, she was ambitious for her son and, through him, for herself.

We don't know when she was born; who her parents were, except for some guesswork about the identity of her father; how old she was when she married Odaenathus; if she was involved in any way with the administration of Palmyra while he was alive; if she really had any connection with his death; if the ease and speed of the transfer of power to her son and her presence on the spot indicate that she was already waiting in the wings; if she had any early plans to defy the authority of the Roman emperor, and even – as far-fetched as it seems – to share rule of the empire as claimed by some sources.

We know little of her administration of Palmyra on behalf of her son, or of her army, although we do know the names and some of the military actions of her generals. There are few details of 'her' conquests which she was not apparently involved in directly.

There is evidence of her court and cabinet of intellectuals in Palmyra, which included historians and philosophers like Cassius Longinus, described by Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists* as 'a living library and a walking museum'.

FIGURE 6.42 A painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo showing Zenobia addressing her troops

The traditional account of her rise to power

There appears to be no record – even in the hostile sources – of any unrest on her assumption of the regency, which seems to indicate that the Roman governors and military commanders in the eastern provinces acknowledged her son Vahallathus as the legitimate successor of his father.

She immediately began fortifying settlements along the Euphrates River and renamed the citadel of Hilablye, 'Zenobia'. Perhaps she was preparing for an attack by the Sasanids. There is some evidence that she was already using the Romans' preoccupation with their enemies elsewhere to assert her authority over the desert nomads and the other cities and towns of central Syria.

Perhaps she didn't trust Rome's ability to protect the provinces of the east, and thought she could carry on with the work of her husband. There is also the possibility that Palmyra's economic interests were being threatened at the time by merchants from Bostra, the capital of the Roman province of Arabia Petraea, and from Alexandria in Egypt. Bostra sat on a major intersection of several trade routes such as the one that connected Damascus to the Red Sea. Perhaps that was why her first aggressive act was to send her General Septemius Zabdas against Bostra.

FIGURE 6.43 The ruins of Bostra, the trading centre first attacked by Zenobia

FIGURE 6.44 A coin featuring Zenobia

At this point, Zenobia began issuing coins from the Antioch mint in the name of the Roman emperor and her son, Vaballathus.

In 269–70, two years after assuming the regency, she openly revolted against Rome by sending her general Zabdas to invade Egypt, knowing its importance to Rome as a major source of its grain supply. It was a timely invasion, as the Emperor Claudius had died of plague, the Roman prefect was absent from his province and Zenobia's troops were helped by an Egyptian general. There is no evidence of her ever personally visiting Egypt. Her troops also took Palestine, Galatia and Asia Minor, although this is very poorly documented. By 271, Zabdas was back in Palmyra and Zenobia was queen of a large, but short-lived empire.
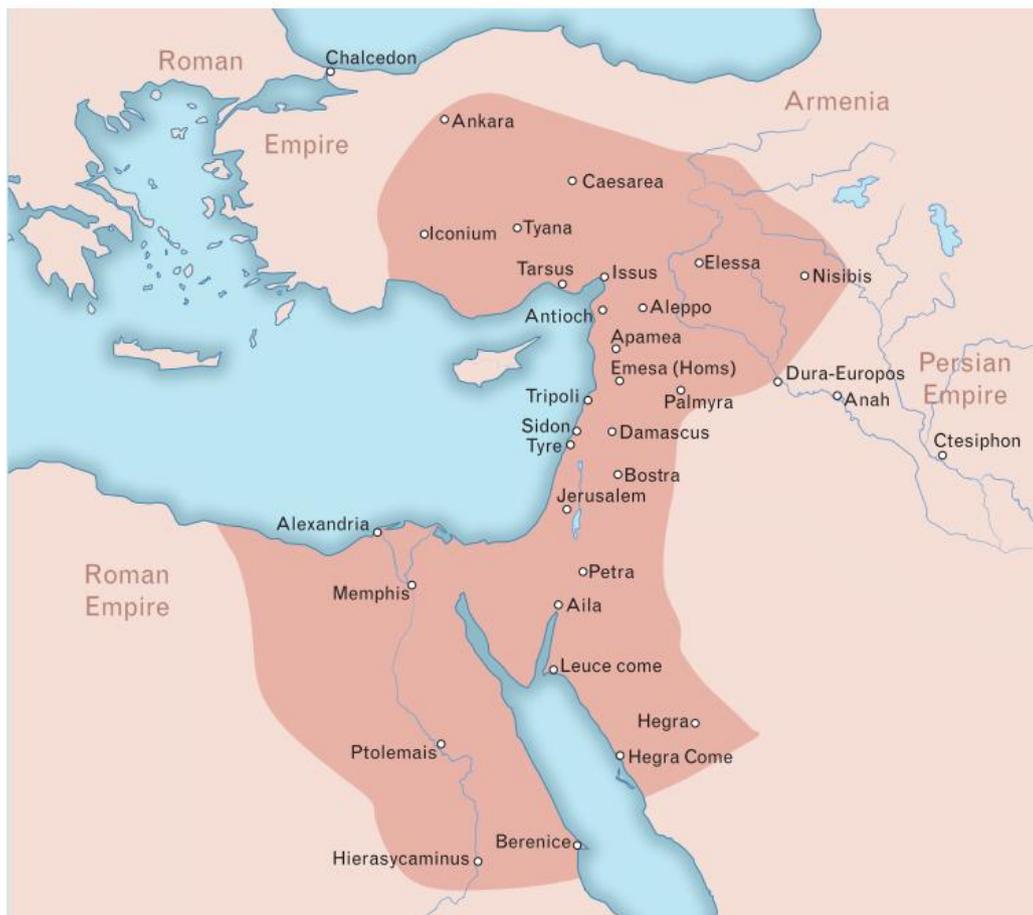
FIGURE 6.45 The dark area shows the extent of the Palmyrene empire at the height of Zenobia's power

CHAPTER 6 PALMYRA AND THE SILK ROAD

Aurelian, a successful military commander, assumed power as Roman emperor and knew what he had to do. Zenobia had underestimated him if she thought he would ignore her invasion of Egypt and the issuing of coins that put her son on an equal footing with a Roman emperor as Augusti (emperors), followed by another issue in 271 of Vaballathus and Zenobia as Augustus and Augusta (Emperor and Empress).

In late 271, Aurelian prepared a two-pronged attack: he dispatched his general, Probus, to Egypt, and led his army on the long march overland to face Zenobia who was waiting with 70000 troops north of Antioch.

Zenobia was defeated at Antioch and fled to Emesa. Aurelian secured Antioch and followed to face the Palmyrene army once again on the plain of Emesa. On the advice of her council, after another rout of her forces, Zenobia fled to Palmyra where she began preparing for a siege by hastily building a circuit wall.

After seizing Zenobia's treasure at Emesa, Aurelian set out to deal with Palmyra, which is described in only one sentence in Zosimus. There is nothing of the horrendous march of 140 km across a waterless desert with 40000 men and cavalry in the height of summer.

Within six months of the beginning of his campaign, Aurelian and his army stood at the gates of Palmyra. The Romans brought all their siege weapons to bear on the walls, Zenobia's Armenian allies deserted her and she escaped with a small party and headed for the Euphrates to get help from the Persians. She was overtaken and captured by the Romans.

ACTIVITY 6.16

1. Although it is difficult to make any real evaluation of Zenobia, based on the limited amount of evidence available, discuss whether you think she was a power-hungry ruler, a selfless hero fighting for a cause, or something else altogether.

2. Examine some of the following:
   - Why would someone with so much power already (given by the Romans to her husband to rule the east) not be content to continue the status quo as her son's regent?
   - It wasn't as if her people were in bondage to Rome, or even under firm Roman authority.
   - Why risk everything that Palmyra had gained and stood for, by provoking the Roman emperor, particularly by invading Egypt?
   - There may have been other situations – about which there is no extant record – that influenced her decision.

The fate of Zenobia

Once she was captured, the city surrendered to Aurelian and the people were left unharmed. Although the Roman troops wanted her blood, the emperor sent Zenobia, her son and most of Palmyra's elite to Emesa to stand trial, although there is no record of the trial. He installed the Roman Prefect of Mesopotamia as commander of Palmyra with a garrison of 600 archers, and marched away with Zenobia in 'golden' chains, eventually to display her in his Triumph in Rome.

There are a number of versions of her fate: that she starved herself to death on the way to Rome; that she was displayed at Aurelian's magnificent Triumph and was then beheaded, and that after her part in the Triumph she was spared and given a villa by Aurelian outside of Rome to live in. This is the most likely.

FIGURE 6.46 A representation of Zenobia in chains

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

While she may have been living her life in a villa north of Rome, unfortunately, there was not such a favourable outcome for Palmyra.

In 272, when Aurelian was in the vicinity of the Danube, he received news that Palmyra had revolted again. He reacted immediately, supposedly turned his army around and marched more than 1000 kilometres back to Palmyra.

There would be no leniency this time. In 273, he allowed his soldiers to sack the city.

> The walls were battered down and dismantled, the city pillaged and many of its inhabitants massacred or driven to flight ... the caravans no longer, or rarely, passed through Palmyra ... the reduction of Palmyra had reduced the arteries of the desert to a shrunken trickle.

SOURCE 6.18 Richard Stoneman, *Palmyra and its Empire*, p. 179 and 188

One hundred years later, the once great city of Palmyra was nothing but an unwalled village, a market centre for locals and nomads with a Roman garrison watching over the people.

Palmyra and Syria were no longer part of the Silk Road and today the site is once again full of soldiers.

FIGURE 6.47 Syrian army soldiers standing on the recent ruins of Palmyra

CHAPTER 6 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

- The city of Palmyra was located in a well-watered oasis in a vast expanse of sand in western Syria. Renowned as a stopping-off point on the Silk Road, it was also strategically located on the crossroads of two great civilisations: Rome in the west and the Parthian (and later the Sassanid) cultures to the east.
- Palmyra was originally under the control of the Hellenistic Seleucid kings, then became part of the Roman Empire in the province of Syria. Throughout this period, it developed from a small caravan settlement into one of the most important trading and cultural centres in the ancient world.

THE RANGE OF SOURCES AVAILABLE FOR A STUDY OF PALMYRA

- Unfortunately, there is no continuous written account of Palmya, and the works of two historians who wrote about the history of their times (the late 3rd century CE) have been lost except for a few fragments. The most often quoted written source, the *Historia Augusta*, is for the most part unreliable.
- So, we are therefore left with the material remains to help build up a picture of Palmyra's past, such as the magnificent monumental remains: public buildings, temples and tombs, as well as the numerous inscriptions written in both Aramaic and Greek.

THE HISTORY OF PALMYRA AS A CARAVAN CITY AS REVEALED THROUGH THE SOURCES

Palmyra was an ancient caravan city and those who travelled the east–west routes invariably ended in Palmyra, where they contributed to the mix of cultures and ideas for which Palmyra became known. Its reputation as a great trading centre and that of its people as trade entrepreneurs and middle-men in the silk and spice trade made it politically important for both Roman and Eastern empires. It became a unique city with a syncretised culture.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation

- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

    As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- wadi
- *loculi*
- caravan
- syncretistic
- *lingua franca*
- entrepôt.

Historical concepts

Change and continuity
Outline the changes that occurred in Palmyra between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE.

Significance
Explain the significance of the location of the caravan city of Palmyra.

Causation
Outline how Queen Zenobia contributed to the destruction of Palmyra.

Historical skills

Analysing sources
1   Describe how the remains of the *loculi* contribute to our understanding of the inhabitants of Palmyra.
2   Discuss what the 17th-century French traveller is saying in the following quote and explain whether you empathise with his thoughts.

> '... when the sands seem at last to disappear, not beneath the verdure of an oasis but beneath an accumulation of marbles and worked stones, silence falls among the travellers ... it is then that a man, even the least civilised, feels himself to be small and, despite himself, meditates on the presence of that mighty ruin as on a mighty sorrow.
>
> A 17th-century description of Palmyra cited in Lucien Double's *Les Cesars de Palmyre*, 1877

Historical investigation
Research the many news items, video clips and visual images that show the destructive activities that have recently occurred at Palmyra. To what extent is there evidence of the use of propaganda in these reports?

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)
Account for the distinctive syncretised culture that developed in Palmyra in the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE.
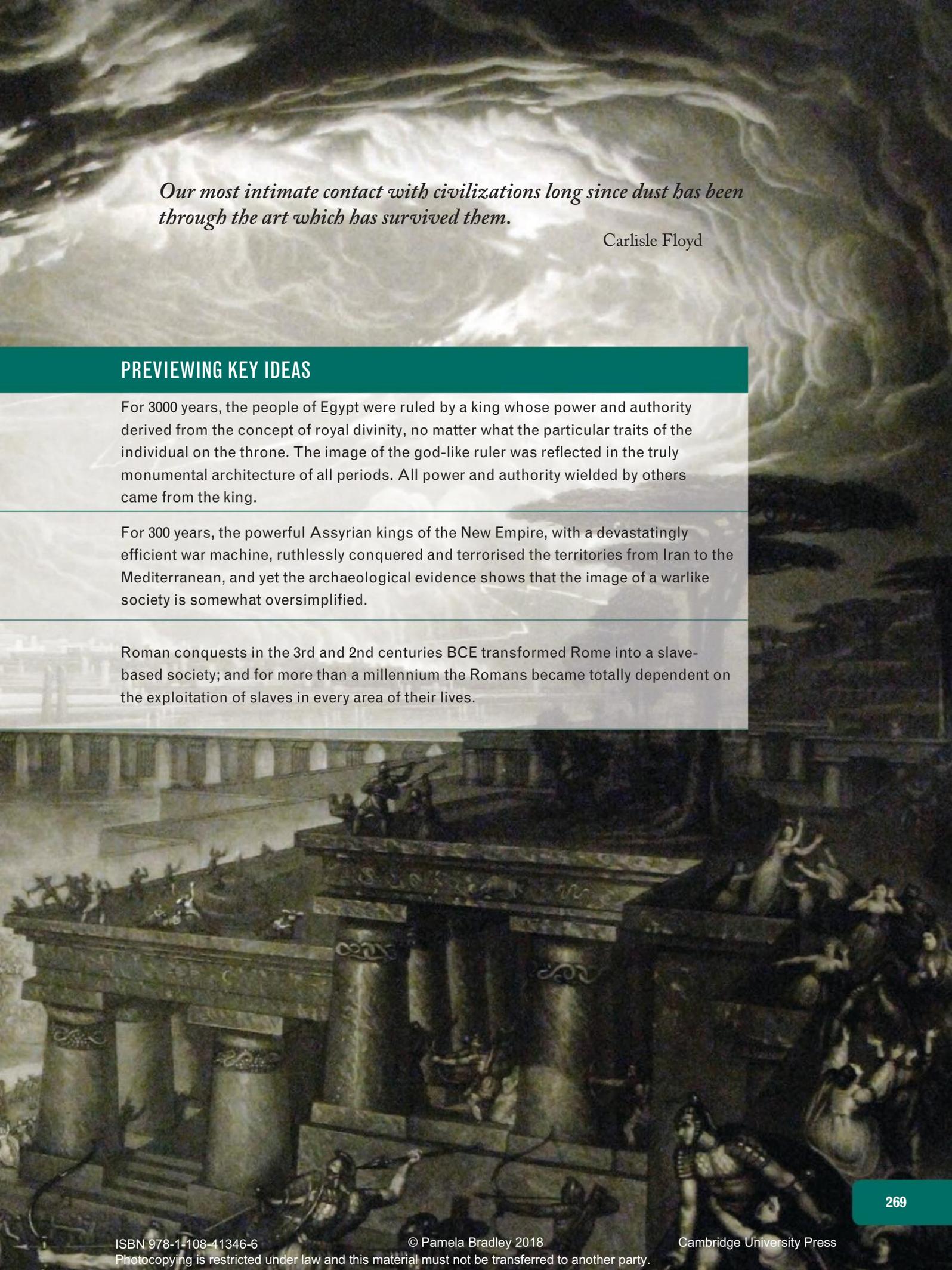
Our most intimate contact with civilizations long since dust has been through the art which has survived them.

Carlisle Floyd

PREVIEWING KEY IDEAS

For 3000 years, the people of Egypt were ruled by a king whose power and authority derived from the concept of royal divinity, no matter what the particular traits of the individual on the throne. The image of the god-like ruler was reflected in the truly monumental architecture of all periods. All power and authority wielded by others came from the king.

For 300 years, the powerful Assyrian kings of the New Empire, with a devastatingly efficient war machine, ruthlessly conquered and terrorised the territories from Iran to the Mediterranean, and yet the archaeological evidence shows that the image of a warlike society is somewhat oversimplified.

Roman conquests in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE transformed Rome into a slave-based society; and for more than a millennium the Romans became totally dependent on the exploitation of slaves in every area of their lives.

CHAPTER 7
Power and image in ancient Egypt
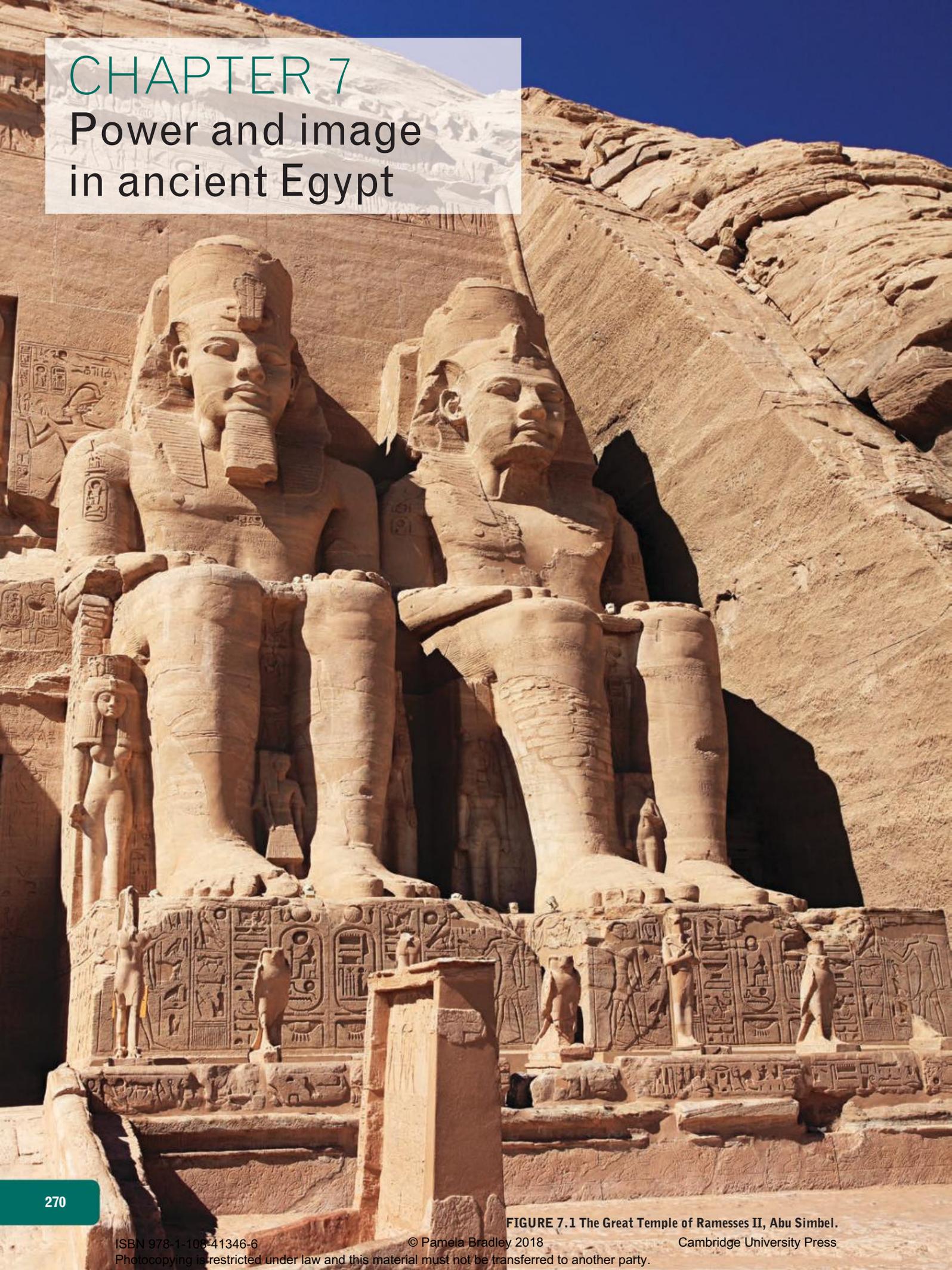
FIGURE 7.1 The Great Temple of Ramesses II, Abu Simbel.

FIGURE 7.2 Map of present-day Egypt

FIGURE 7.2 Map of present-day Egypt

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate power and image in ancient Egypt in order to create a better understanding of the ancient past.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • images of associated cult power throughout Egyptian history • continuity and change in the power and images of Egyptian kings over time • representations of royal women over time • authority and power of state priesthoods and the ruling elite • profile of a significant authority figure – Horemheb.

… The princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp
I stretched my own hands out 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 toes
so that you crushed the rebels and the traitors …

SOURCE 7.1 From a stela at Karnak Temple at the time of Thutmose III,
cited in M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. II

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FIGURE 7.3 King Narmer wielding a mace, from the Narmer Palette

• How were Egyptian kings depicted over time? What was the symbolism of these images?

Study Figures 7.1 and 7.3 carefully. Note what you see in each image. Think about what they reveal about the way Egyptian kings were depicted over time. Consider the symbolism of these images. Keep this in mind as you read further on in this study.

CHAPTER 7 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
For over 3000 years, the power of Egyptian kings was based on divine power and the need to maintain *ma'at* or divine order. 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 need to take and wield power by any means and to advertise that power by propaganda has not really changed since the time of the Egyptians.	• hierarchical • *serekh* • titulary • *ma'at* • House of Life • cartouche • *Khepresh* • *uraeus* • *nemes* • nomarchs • mastaba tombs • obelisks

Painting the picture

The civilisation of ancient Egypt lasted for approximately 3000 years, during which it experienced periods of remarkable achievements under outstanding pharaohs and queens, powerful officials and influential priesthoods. These periods of brilliance were interspersed with times of weak rulers, political and social upheaval, economic distress and even foreign rule. Although the seats of power changed from time to time — Memphis, Ity-tawy, Thebes, Akhetaten and Pi-Ramesse — the institution of divine kingship, and the traditions that supported it barely changed through the whole of Dynastic Egypt.

> **INQUIRY QUESTION**
>
> To what extent did Egyptian queens have power and influence, and how were they represented?

The archaeological remains of Egypt, whether in the form of pyramids; colossal statues; soaring obelisks; massive cult and mortuary temples; beautifully decorated tombs cut deep into rocky ravines filled with magnificent artefacts; the larger-than-life images of kings striding across the landscape smashing the heads of their enemies; or riding, god-like, into battle, all speak of a divine authority. For those who couldn't read, these were powerful images that needed no explanation. For the literate classes, the royal temple inscriptions simply confirmed what they already knew: they were ruled by a god-king, no matter what the particular abilities or personality of the individual ruler who sat on the throne.

7.1 Images associated with power

FIGURE 7.4 The Step Pyramid of King Djoser

FIGURE 7.5 Statue of the 4th Dynasty king, Khafre

FIGURE 7.6 The temple of Ramesses II at Abu Simbel

CHAPTER 7 POWER AND IMAGE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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7.2 The context of power in ancient Egypt

The 'Two Lands'

Ancient Egypt owed much of its character to the nature of the Nile River (*Iteru* or *The River*), the length and shape of the river valley, the enclosing deserts, and the climate.

The river – with its annual flood – and the sun were the two great forces which dominated the lives of the ancient Egyptian people for the 3000 years of their history. The gifts of water, fertile soil and warmth created life. On the other hand, they had the potential to bring destruction and death, as did the deserts (Red Land) that enclosed the valley (Black Land).

The Nile determined all activities in Egypt, from the more mundane tasks of the farmer to the coronation of a king.

- It determined the three seasons of the calendar: Inundation, the 'Time of Coming Forth' (sowing) and Harvest.
- It meant that a centralised government and large bureaucracy were needed to control water supplies and the irrigation policy, as well as to coordinate large-scale agricultural projects.
- It was the chief highway of the country (900 km in length).

FIGURE 7.7 Map of the Two Lands (Upper and Lower Egypt)
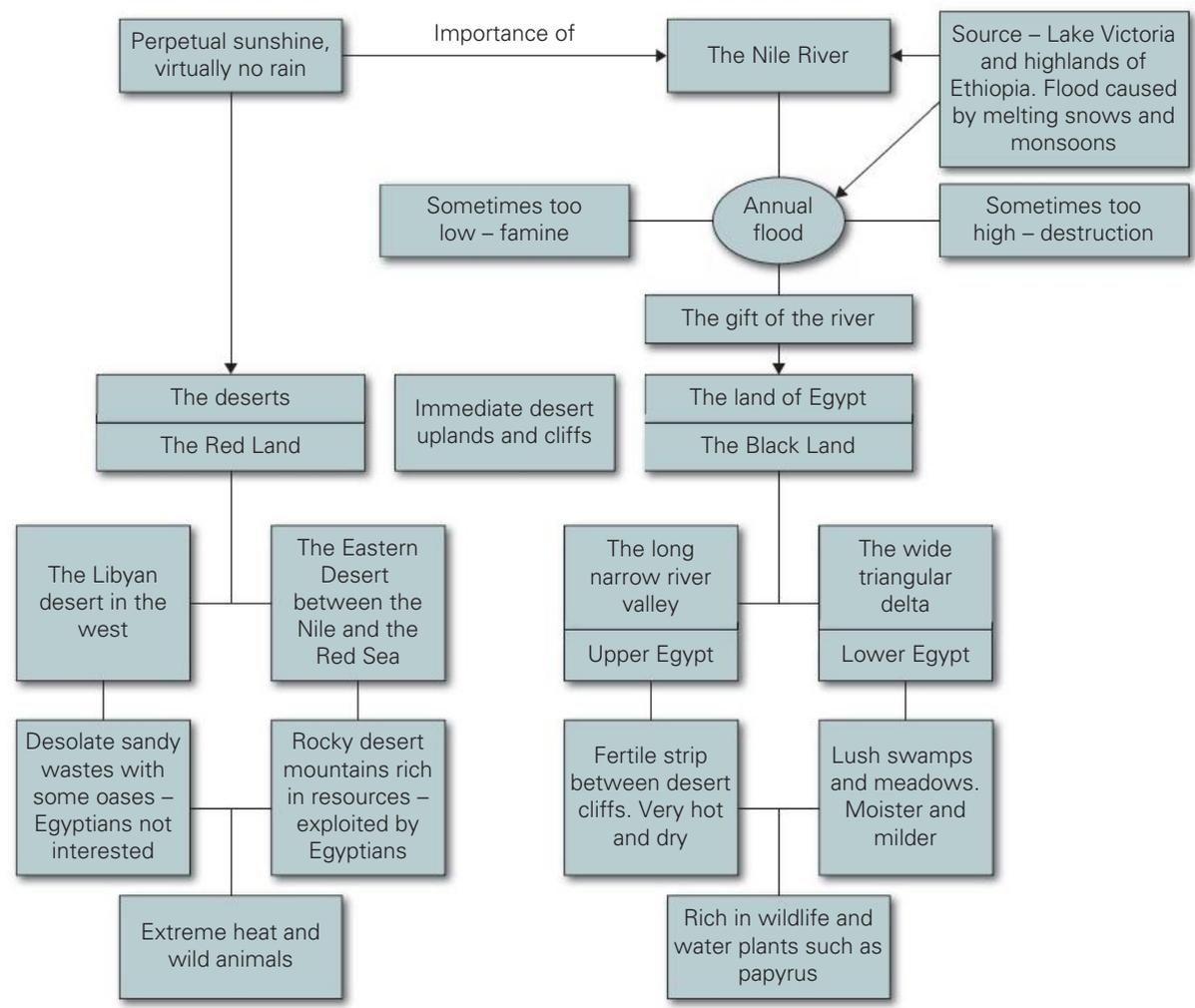
FIGURE 7.8 Diagram of the natural features of Egypt

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

FIGURE 7.9 The Nile, the lifeline of Egypt

FIGURE 7.10 The sun setting behind the pyramids

- Its rich alluvial soil and its swamps and marshes provided food, building materials for domestic architecture (mud bricks), resources for many Egyptian crafts (papyrus) and decorative themes for art.
- The river and the sun determined the Egyptian's view of creation, the afterlife and the nature of their gods Re (the sun god), Hapi (the river god) and Osiris (associated with fertility and resurrection).
- The constant sunshine and regularity of the flood led to a conservative attitude to life with little changing from one period to the next.
- The total dependence on water also affected Egyptian morality. When facing judgement before the gods, Egyptians listed the sins they had not committed, one of which was: 'I have not fouled running water'.

Also, the two most important events in the life of an Egyptian ruler – the coronation and the Sed Festival or king's jubilee – were associated with the river and its calendar (see p. 288)

ACTIVITY 7.1

1 Describe the 'Two Lands' of Egypt.
2 Discuss the aspects of the Egyptian environment that contributed to the:
   - centralised nature of government
   - Egyptians' conservative way of life
   - Egyptians' view of creation.
3 Analyse what Figures 7.9, 7.11, 7.12 and 7.13 (p. 276) reveal about the importance of the Nile in the everyday lives of the people.
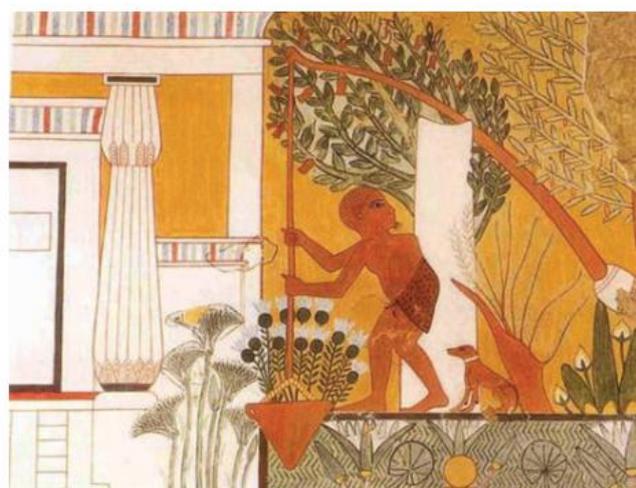
FIGURE 7.11 A wall painting of a gardener using a shadouf, a device for collecting water

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FIGURE 7.12 A wall painting of a Nile boat

FIGURE 7.13 Papyrus growing in the marshland waterways along the Nile

The chronology of power

DYNASTIC PERIOD	DATES	MAJOR EVENTS	AUTHORITY FIGURES
Archaic Period Dynasties 1–2	**c. 2920–2649**	The 'Two Lands' united, the establishment of the pattern of kingship and centralised government	• Narmer or Menes • Queens Neith-hotep and Meryt-Neith
Old Kingdom Dynasties 3–6	**c. 2649–2150**	• The Step Pyramid complex at Sakkara • Three Pyramids at Medium and Dahshur • Massive pyramid complexes at Giza under autocratic rulers sure of their divinity • The political influence of the Heliopolitan priesthood and solar cult. Construction of sun temples and Pyramid Texts on the walls of 5th Dynasty of Unas • 6th Dynasty pyramids • Growing independence of the nobles and a gradual decline in prestige and status of late Old Kingdom kings due to the growth in influence of the cult of Re	• King Djoser and Imhotep, his vizier and architect • King Sneferu, his wife queen Hetepheres (mother of Khufu), and Kanufer, king's vizier • King Khufu, Hemiunu, his architect, King Khafre and King Menkhaure • King Unas, and Ptah-hotep a 5th-Dynasty vizier • Teti, Pepi I and Pepi II

DYNASTIC PERIOD	DATES	MAJOR EVENTS	AUTHORITY FIGURES
1st Intermediate Period Dynasties 7–10	c. 2150–2040	Decline in centralised government and a time of social and economic distress	Two power bases – a line of kings in Heracleopolis in Lower Egypt and another in Thebes in Upper Egypt
Middle Kingdom Dynasties 11–12	c. 2040–1640	A cultural high point, particularly in 12th Dynasty; change in the image of kingship – 'as a more fallible shepherd looking after his flocks'; and change in the status and power of provincial governors (nomarchs)	Amenemhet II; Senwosret II; Senwosret III; Amenemhet III; Amenemhet IV and Sobeknefru, first confirmed female king of Egypt
2nd Intermediate Period Dynasties 14–17	c. 1640–1532	Egypt declined into a state of havoc and confusion. Invasion by foreigners called Hyksos, who occupied Lower Egypt for about 100 years	Apophis, King of Hyksos
New Kingdom Dynasties 18–20	c. 1550–1070	• The expulsion of the Hyksos and reunification of Egypt • Egypt extends its boundaries and develops an empire into Nubia and Asia under the Thutmosid kings; a change in the image of pharaoh – warrior kings, and a series of powerful queens whose influence increased considerably • Incredible influx of wealth in form of tribute and booty – changes in Egyptian lifestyle; massive building programs reflect kings' power – Temples of Karnak, Luxor, Abydos, Abu Simbel and increased powers of the priesthood of Amun-Re (god of empire), viziers, viceroys and treasurers • A brief but dramatic period called the Amarna period featuring a religious revolution (worship of one god only: Aten); and a new capital at Amarna (Akhetaten) • Restoration of order and return to religious orthodoxy • Subsequent power of military leaders; continuing image of warrior kings with a change of dynasty (19th), new capital in the delta at Pi-Ramesse and treaty with the Hittites • Change of dynasty (20th). Slow decline of kingship with internal and external problems. The Ramesside period	• King Kamose and Queen Ahhotep; King Ahmose and Queen Akmose–Nefertari; Amenhotep I; Thutmose I and II; Thutmose III; Hatshepsut (female pharaoh) and her chief official, Senenmut; Thutmose IV, Amenhotep II and Amenhotep III – 'the dazzling sun-disk' and his chief wife, Queen Tiy • Akhenaten the heretic king and his chief wife Nefertiti Tutankhamun and Ay • Horemheb, military leader, becomes last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty • Ramesses I, Seti I and Ramesses II (the Great) • Ramesses III – the last great pharaoh of Egypt

DYNASTIC PERIOD	DATES	MAJOR EVENTS	AUTHORITY FIGURES
3rd Intermediate Period Dynasties 21–24	c. 1070–712	Period of decline, political instability and conquest, and rule by foreigners	King Smendes, a relative of the High Priest of Amun; Sheshonq I of Libyan descent
Late Period Dynasties 25–30	712–332	The last flowering of native Egyptian rulers (Saite dynasty), followed by Persian conquests, the conquest by Alexander the Great and establishment of the Ptolemaic Kingdom	Ptolemy I to Cleopatra, the last ruler of Egypt

ACTIVITY 7.2

1 Identify when the pattern of Egyptian kingship was established.
2 Summarise the meaning of 'dynasty' and the number of dynasties Egyptian history is divided into.
3 Identify the first king of a united Egypt and the last pharaonic ruler.
4 Summarise the main features of the Old Kingdom.
5 Explain three specific changes that occurred in the Middle Kingdom 12th Dynasty.
6 Explain the great 'national humiliation' suffered by Egyptians in the 2nd Intermediate period.
7 Outline the main changes that occurred during the first half of the 18th Dynasty.
8 Identify the brief, but significant, turning point in the 18th Dynasty.
9 Recall the last great king of the New Kingdom.

Features of Egyptian society: classes, economy and government

Egyptian society was always **hierarchical**. The king, with his god-like status, remote and isolated from his subjects, was the capstone of a social pyramid, the base of which rested firmly on the peasant farmers, the backbone of society. Between the god-king, with his absolute power, and the peasants was a hierarchy of:

- royalty: queen consort, dowager queen, princes, secondary wives, royal daughters and concubines
- great nobles, elite officials and high priests
- lesser officials, scribes in every area of society and administration, governors, mayors, police officers, army officers and priests
- skilled craftsmen employed in temple workshops, on royal and noble estates and on tomb construction; with sculptors and goldsmiths at the higher end of this group
- tradesmen such as brick makers, potters, leather workers.

Below the peasant farmers and herders were slaves – captives – employed in all areas of society.

hierarchical arranged in an order from the most to the least important

All land in Egypt, like everything else, belonged to the king, including the estates of the nobles and the temple establishments.

Agriculture was the most important activity in the country, and every class depended on the toil of the farmers, herders and agricultural labourers for its survival. The farmers grew the grain for bread, barley for beer, flax for linen cloth, raised livestock and were liable for the annual corvee (conscription of workers for community tasks such as repairing canals and dykes after the flood). They were taxed on their harvested grain and any yearly increase of livestock, plus the produce of gardens, orchards and vineyards. If they had any produce left after taxes and feeding their families,

they could barter (exchange for other goods) in the local market. The government rationed out what was produced to other groups such as craftsmen and tradesmen.

During the 18th Dynasty, incredible wealth flowed into Egypt as a result of its army's various conquests in Nubia and Palestine/Syria. The royal coffers were increased by:

- booty from conquered territory
- tribute from subject states
- extensive foreign trade.

Also, during this period, the existing hierarchical form of government became more complex as the king relied on the support and cooperation of more trusted officials.
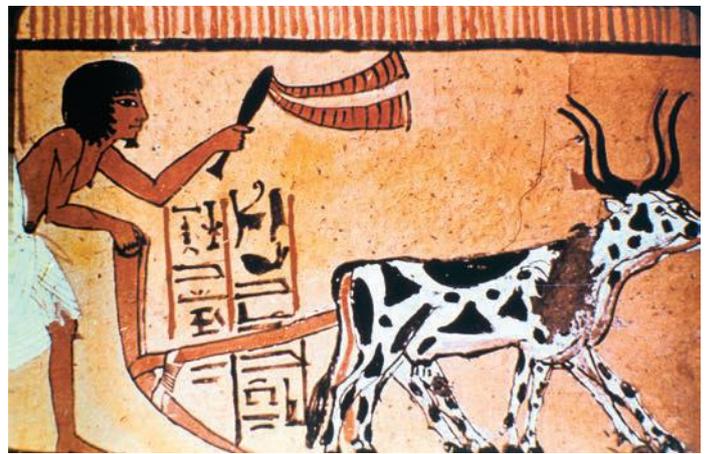
FIGURE 7.14 A farmer ploughing his fields
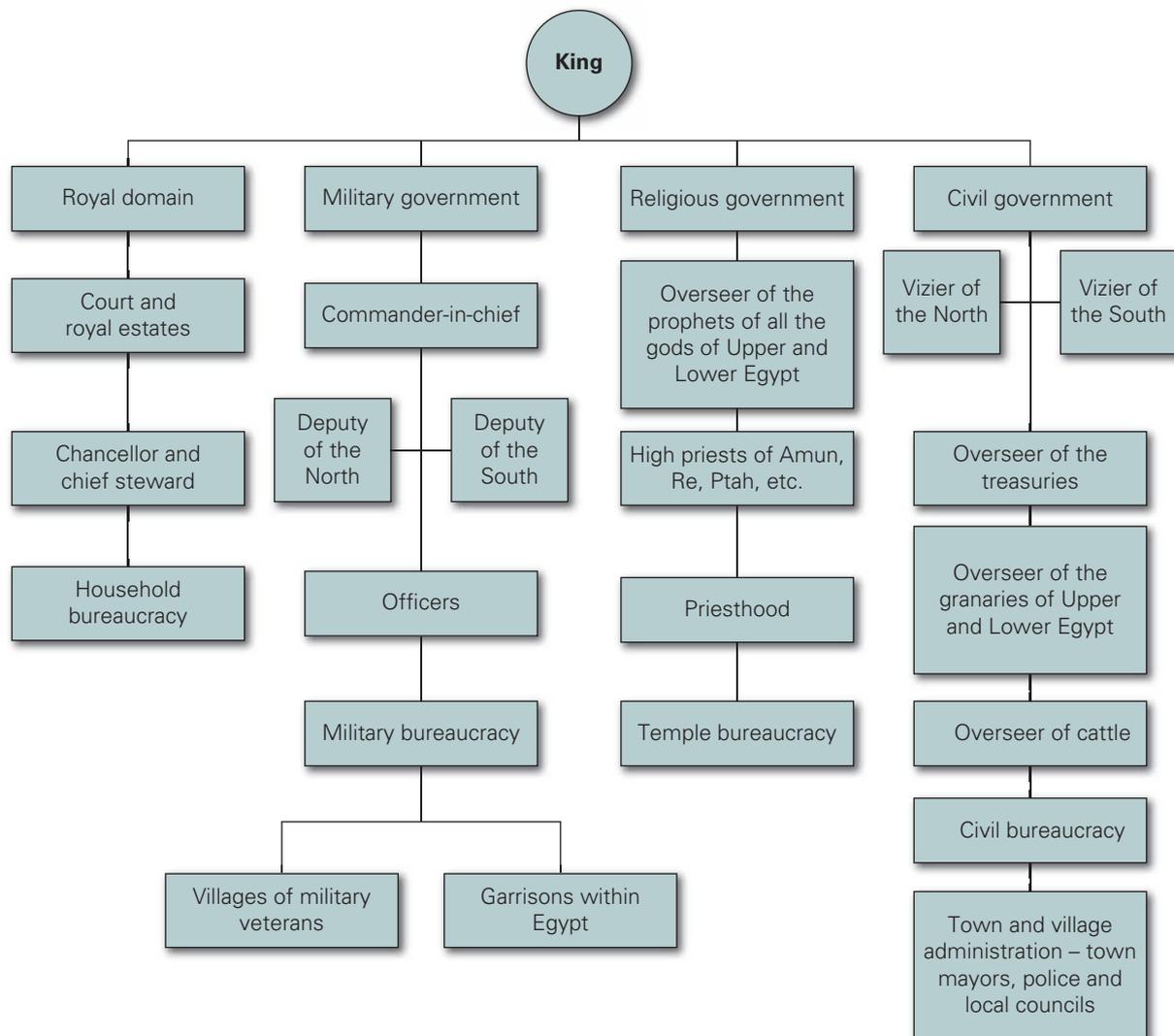
FIGURE 7.15 Diagram of the structure of government during the New Kingdom

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1   Define 'hierarchical'.
2   Draw a diagram to illustrate the hierarchical nature of Egyptian society.
3   Explain why the farmer was regarded as the backbone of society.
4   Identify the form of exchange in ancient Egypt.
5   Summarise the sources of wealth, apart from agriculture, that the pharaohs of the New Kingdom depended on.
6   Identify the four main branches of government under the king's control during the New Kingdom.

Egyptian religion

Egyptian religion was a complex polytheistic system. The Egyptians believed that nature was filled with divine forces and these were associated with particular deities. The depictions of these various gods and goddesses in art were symbolic of the forces they represented, and the religious practices of the Egyptians were attempts to placate these phenomena and turn them to human advantage.

The details of their religious beliefs changed over time as particular gods rose to pre-eminence, declined, formed relationships with other gods, or were syncretised or joined with gods that had different powers or natures.

For a short time, the pharaoh Akhenaten did away with the pantheon of gods and introduced the worship of a single deity, the Aten or sun-disk, but this caused an upheaval in society and the traditional gods were restored.

TABLE 7.1 Categories of Egyptian deities

State gods –Re/Atum, the creator god whose cult centre was at Heliopolis; Ptah at Memphis; and Amun, the god of empire at Thebes. Some of these were in triads (God, goddess wife and son), such as Amun, Mut and Khonshu.   The sun god, Re, was depicted in many forms – a falcon or hawk-headed man with a sun disk on his head, as a scarab beetle pushing a sun disk ahead of him, as child arising from an opening lotus flower.
Funerary gods – Osiris, the mummiform god of the underworld and resurrection; Isis and Nephthys, wife and sister of Osiris; Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the necropolis and embalming; and Thoth, the ibis-headed god of writing, time and magic.
Cult gods – these were gods worshipped in cult temples, such as Hathor, the cow-headed or cow-eared goddess of fertility whose cult centre was at Dendara; Horus, the falcon-headed god at Edfu; Khnum, the ram-headed god at Elephantine; and Sekhmet, the lion-headed goddess of destruction and healing.
Household or village gods – these included Taweret, the hippopotamus goddess of childbirth, Bes, the bearded dwarf god of fertility, dance and music, Meretseger, a snake goddess, and Bast, the cat goddess.
A note on the god Seth (Set)   For a long time, Seth was regarded as a beneficent god, but like most things in Egypt, he had a dual nature, as he was also a god of violence and turmoil associated with the desert or Red Land. To the Egyptians, the desert was a dangerous place full of wild animals. Most of the dangerous and unpleasant animals were associated with him: scorpion, hippopotamus, crocodile, wild ass, the wild boar, and other frightening things such wind, storms and thunder. The desert was also known as the 'foreign land'.   Seth was represented by a strange, almost mythical-type animal with square-topped pricked ears and an erect arrow-like tail.

FIGURE 7.16 Relief of the god Horus from the Temple of Seti I
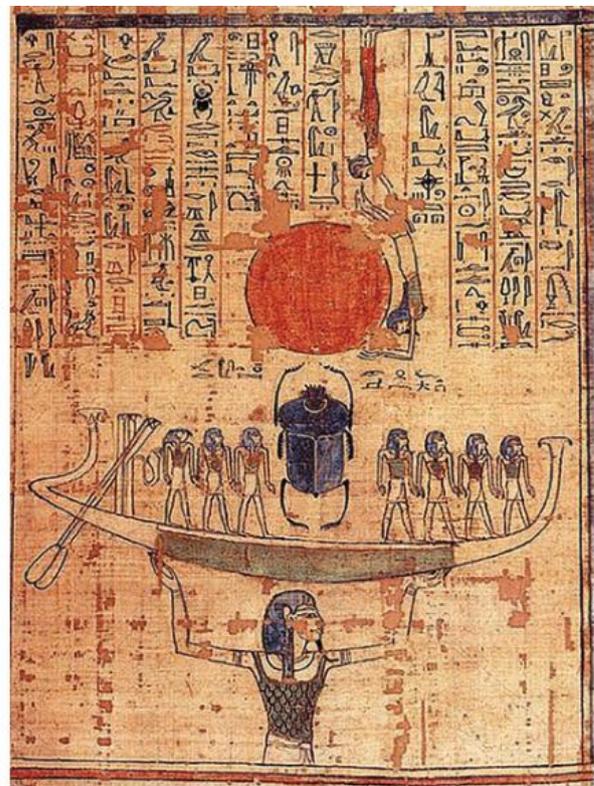
FIGURE 7.17 The sun god as the scarab beetle

ACTIVITY 7.4

1 Define 'polytheism'.
2 Outline how the Egyptians 'saw' their gods and goddesses.
3 Investigate why Hathor was depicted as a cow or with cow ears.
4 Deduce why Sekhmet was depicted with a lion head.
5 Investigate why Osiris was depicted in mummiform, and often coloured black or green.
6 Deduce why Seth, in his nature as a god of chaos, was associated with the desert.
7 Discuss the changes that occurred in the nature of many of the gods over time.
8 Research why the sun god was sometimes depicted as a scarab beetle.

7.3 The power and image of Egyptian kings

All power and authority within the state came from the king. 'Without a king, there would have been no society to speak of, no state, no order; there would be only chaos.'[1] The state (its land and its people) was the king's property and responsibility. 'What the king said was law, what he liked was justice, and what he hated was what was wrong. All property, personal freedom, religious and secular powers, status and rank were transferred by him to others.[2]

The divine basis of kingship

The basis of kingly power throughout Egyptian history was the belief in a ruler's divinity.

All kings from the beginning of dynastic Egypt when the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt were united by Menes/Narmer in c. 3100 BCE – and even possibly during pre-dynastic times – were regarded as the incarnation or earthly form of the falcon god Horus. Falcons were a common sight in Egyptian

skies and these majestic birds, soaring upwards until they disappeared from sight or hovering motionless above the earth, represented everything that was mysterious in nature. To the Egyptians, the falcon's widespread wings represented the sky, and its fierce eyes were the sun and moon. The god was referred to as the *Lord of Heaven*, *Lord of the Horizon* and the *Distant One*. This was the obvious god to be the 'animating spirit of the ruler of Egypt'.[3]

The king as the embodiment of the falcon god was given what was called a Horus name as a statement of his divine qualities. At first this was a king's only official name, depicted in inscriptions in what was called a **serekh**.

When during the Old Kingdom, Re-Horakhte, the sun god, became the pre-eminent god, the king was known also as the 'Son of Re', and another name was added to his **titulary** (list of names and titles). Starting in the 4th Dynasty, and becoming the custom in the 5th, was the practice of compounding *re* with the kings' names.

serekh a rectangular form representing the façade of a palace and surmounted by a falcon, indicating an Egyptian king's official name

titulary list of names and titles (e.g. of an Egyptian king)

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

FIGURE 7.18 A *serekh* with the king's falcon name

TABLE 7.2 Pharaoh's names in the 4th and 5th Dynasties

In the 4th Dynasty the sons (probable) of Khufu were named:	In the 5th Dynasty the pharaohs were named:
• Djedef*re* • Khaf*re* • Bauf*re* • Menkhau*re*	• Sahu*re* • Neferirka*re* • Shepseska*re* • Neferf*re* • Nuiser*re* • Djedka*re*-Isesi

When a new king ascended the throne, he was referred to as Horus, the son of the god Osiris (a different Horus to the falcon god), and when he died, he became Osiris.

During the New Kingdom, a pharaoh was also regarded as the Son of Amun (Amun-Re) the pre-eminent god at that time, and as Montu, a falcon-headed war god.

More importantly, each king was the representative of divine order or **ma'at** that was believed to have been established at the time of creation. The Egyptians believed that without *ma'at* there would be chaos in both the spiritual and physical worlds, and it was up to the king to maintain it at all times.

Ma'at was represented by the feather of truth, and as the upholder of *ma'at* the king supposedly ruled by 'divine utterance'. Court scribes of the New Kingdom never ceased to praise each pharaoh for his divine qualities.

Each speech from 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 does not knowest? Who is there that is as wise as thou? What place is there that thou hast not seen? ... Authority is in thy mouth. And perception is in thy heart: the activity of thy tongue is the temple of Ma'at [Truth]... all is done according to thy will, and whatever thou sayest is obeyed ...

SOURCE 7.2 Written in praise of Thutmose III, cited in G. Steindorff and K. Seele, *When Egypt Ruled the East*, p. 83

1. Explain why the falcon was selected as the 'animating spirit of the ruler'.
2. Draw a diagram showing the 'divine qualities' associated with the ruler.
3. Define *ma'at*. Which god from Table 7.1 on p. 280 do you think would be symbolically opposed to *ma'at*?
4. Write out Source 7.2 in your own words to show what the court eulogists said about the king.

FIGURE 7.19 The Son of Re symbol that accompanied the king's name

The king's divine responsibilities

Each king's responsibility to uphold the divine order of the world (*ma'at*) continued throughout Egyptian history. He was expected to:

- fight evil wherever it was found – either in human, spiritual, or animal form
- defend his land from foreigners
- sustain life by having power over the Nile
- bring fertility to the land and prosperity to his people.

From the end of the pre-dynastic period, kings were always shown on slate palettes and mace heads twice as big as other figures; sometimes represented as a mighty bull; frequently driving captives before them or holding them by a rope; occasionally looking after the land by digging an irrigation canal; and almost always holding a mace ready to smash the head of a captive who they hold by the hair.

Later kings are shown killing the Bedouin of the eastern desert, the Libyans to the west and the Nubians to the south; hunting wild animals, symbols of evil, in the deserts; and spearing the hippopotamus, symbol of Seth, the god of chaos, in the marshlands.

Fifteen hundred years later, the kings were continuing to uphold *ma'at* and being depicted:

- wielding a mace or some other weapon over the heads of the wretched enemies of Egypt who cowered before them
- symbolically trampling them under their feet as in the decoration on their footstools
- single-handedly defeating huge foreign armies
- fighting evil as they engaged in hunting forays in the desert and against the hippopotami in the Nile
- providing life-giving waters. Pharaoh Seti I supposedly divined water in the eastern deserts and Ramesses II was regarded as being able to make it rain as far away as the land of the Hittites.

FIGURE 7.20 The goddess *Ma'at* with the feather of truth headdress

FIGURE 7.21 The Narmer Palette

FIGURE 7.22 An archaic king smashing the heads of his enemies

FIGURE 7.23 A king hunting in the desert – a symbol of protecting his people from the chaos of Seth

ACTIVITY 7.6

Study the Narmer Palette carefully and identify:

1 The *serekh* on both sides.
2 The falcon, who represents the king in his incarnation of the falcon god, holding the head of an enemy.
3 The king, larger than life, holding a mace ready to smash the heads of his enemies.
4 Rows of bound and decapitated bodies with their heads between their legs.
5 Two of the king's enemies who appear to be drowning or fleeing.
6 The king represented as a great bull trampling a rebel and smashing down an enemy town.

On a day-to-day basis, a king' divine responsibilities meant he had to:

- carry out daily rituals in the temples
- check on the rise and fall of the Nile, and the fertility of the soils to make sure of successful harvests
- maintain profitable trade inside and outside Egypt and supervise all traffic along the Nile
- oversee and lead the army as well as supervise all fortresses
- make all laws and legal decisions and decide on punishments.

Obviously, the kings delegated many of these functions to others.

ACTIVITY 7.7

Draw a diagram showing the various ways the kings were depicted throughout history as the maintainers of *ma'at.*

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Symbols of a king's power and authority

The five-part titulary (names and titles)

When a king came to the throne, the priests in the **House of Life** (little-known ancient centres of knowledge, some of them belonging to temples), chose an individualised titulary for the new ruler. The five-part nature of this expressed the concept of kingship.

House of Life little-known ancient centres of knowledge, some of them belonging to temples

cartouche an oval with a symbolic rope at one end, indicating 'that which the sun disc encircles' alluding to the king's authority over the world

1   *Horus* name – identified the king as the earthly form of the falcon god, Horus.
2   *The Two Ladies* name – identified his double nature as the vulture goddess, Nekhbet (Upper Egypt) and the cobra goddess, Wadjet (Lower Egypt).
3   *The Golden Horus* name – significance somewhat obscure but could be associated with the divine flesh of gods and kings, as gold was a metal believed to never decay.
4   *The King of Upper and Lower Egypt* name – identified by the symbols of the sedge and bee. This was the king's throne name and was enclosed in a **cartouche**.
5   *The Son of Re* name – this incorporated the king's personal name given at birth, plus an additional description. This name was also enclosed in a cartouche preceded by the hieroglyph representing the 'son of Re'.

FIGURE 7.24 The cartouches of Hatshepsut

ACTIVITY 7.8

1   Identify which of the king's five names are enclosed in a cartouche.
2   Describe how you can identify each of these names shown in Figure 7.24.

Regalia and insignia

From the beginning of dynastic history, images of kings featured them with the trappings of primitive pastoral chieftains, which included:

- an artificial beard, reminiscent of a goat beard which was attached to the king's chin
- the tail of a bull or lion which hung from a girdle or belt, symbolically protecting the king's back

- a *shemset* girdle with an apron made of pendant beads or narrow strips of leather which covered the king's loins
- a crook (*heka*) and flail (*nekhekh*), symbols of the primitive shepherd which the king carried
- the white crown of Upper Egypt, red crown of Lower Egypt and the double crown of the Two Lands (*pschent*).

These insignia continued to be featured throughout Egyptian history. Added to these were other crowns such: as the plumed crown of double ostrich feathers; the **Khepresh** or blue, gold-studded leather war crown worn during the New Kingdom; the Atef crown (worn predominantly by Osiris) that combined the crown of double plumes with the Upper Egyptian crown; and the gold *Seshad* band surmounted by the **uraeus** or rearing royal cobra (the protector of the king); and various other headdresses such as the **nemes** headdress of striped or pleated linen.

Khepresh ancient Egyptian royal headdress. It is also known as the blue crown or war crown

uraeus a representation of the sacred cobra as an emblem of supreme power, worn on the headdresses of ancient Egyptian deities and sovereigns

nemes the striped headcloth worn by pharaohs in ancient Egypt

ACTIVITY 7.9

Refer back to Figure 7.21 (on p. 284) and note the regalia the king wears on both sides of the palette:

1 the two different crowns: the red and white crowns
2 the false beard
3 the tail of a bull (or lion) hanging from his girdle
4 the *shemset* girdle.
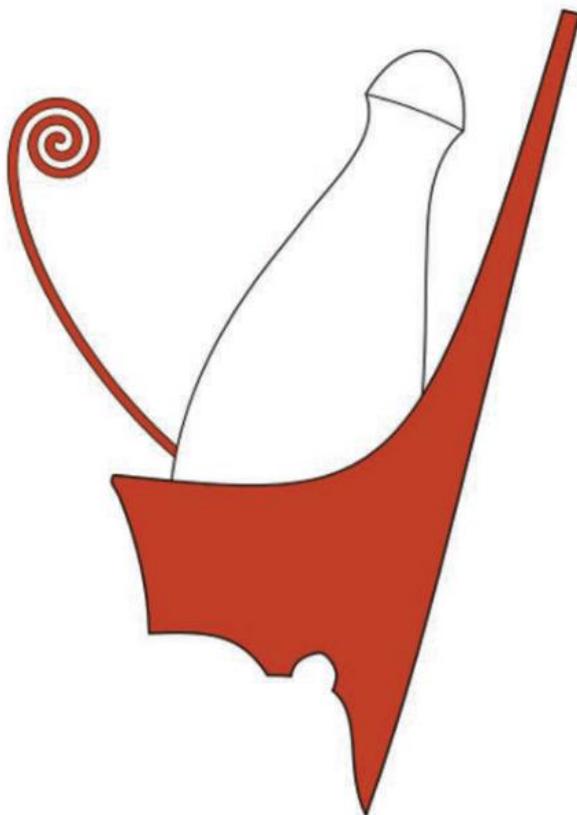
FIGURE 7.25 The *pschent* or double crown of the Two Lands
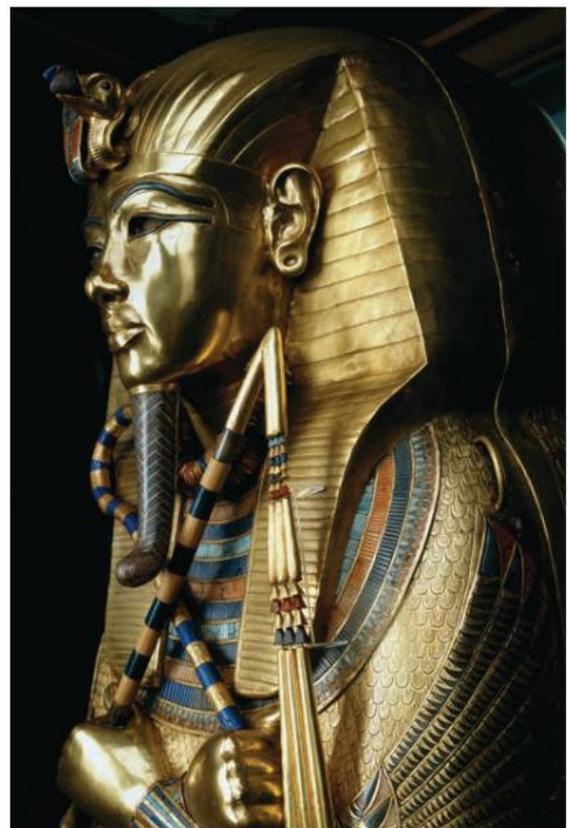
FIGURE 7.26 Tutankhamun, with an artificial beard and with the *uraeus* on his forehead, holding the crook and flail

Identify the features of a king's regalia associated with:

1 a former pastoral way of life

2 the concept of the Two Lands.

The crowning of the king and the Sed festival (heb-sed)

These were the two most important celebrations in a king's life associated with his divine status and his royal authority.

TABLE 7.3 The Pharaoh's coronation and Sed festival

The coronation	The Sed festival
Because the king represented *ma'at*, or the right order of the universe, the people feared that without a king on the throne, chaos might prevail, so it was essential that a new king be crowned as soon as possible after the death of the previous ruler.	The Sed festival or jubilee (heb-sed) was a very ancient ritual designed to rejuvenate the king's powers so that he could continue to rule effectively, and to commemorate the king's accession to the throne by recreating the coronation.
Since the coronation was believed to represent the recreation of the world, it was timed to correspond to one of two important events in the agricultural cycle: the first day of the *Season of Inundation* when the Nile began to rise, or the first day of the *Season of Coming Forth* when the first seeds were sown.	Usually held after the king had been on the throne for 30 years, but sometimes earlier. It could only be held on the first day of the *Season of Coming Forth* as it was meant to illustrate the renewal of all the benefits given by the gods through the person of the king. This ritual continued as long as pharaohs ruled Egypt.
Before the previous ruler was buried, the heir took control, while the priests in the *House of Life* prepared the names and title of the new king. Accompanied by royal princes, high officials and priests, he travelled along the Nile to the major cities presenting the *Mystery Play of Succession.*	A special festival hall and a huge complex were constructed to serve the king and the multitude of elite participants. A key part of the ceremonies was the dedication of the field which represented a ritual race of primitive times and during this 'race' the king carried a whip in one hand and document similar to a will as symbol that he, the god-king, had inherited the land of Egypt.
The coronation took five days and was held in the capital of Memphis. The ceremonies were repeated twice in two pavilions since the king was the ruler of the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt. Once the king was crowned, he performed a symbolic circuit around the walls of Memphis, and the crowns that did not belong to the king, but to the throne, were returned to the temple where they were kept.	As with the king's original coronation the celebrations were spread over many days and were repeated twice as King of Upper and Lower Egypt.

> Kheruef recorded that Amenhotep [III] delved into the archives to discover the way the Sed ceremonies were carried out in remote antiquity and that the king followed the most ancient form of the service described in the writings of the ancients.

FIGURE 7.27 A representation of a scene from King Sneferu's Sed festival

ACTIVITY 7.11

1 Outline why it was imperative for a new king to be crowned as soon as possible.
2 Explain the purpose of King Sed's festival and how often it was held during a king's reign.
3 Investigate why the coronation and Sed festival were tied to a particular time on the agricultural calendar.
4 Explain why the ceremonies of both celebrations were held twice.
5 Extract the evidence from Source 7.3 that the festival or king's jubilee was an extremely archaic celebration.
6 Discuss the purpose of the 'ritual race' during the Sed.

The changing images of the king

Royal statuary of the Old Kingdom

Little is known about the pharaohs of the Old Kingdom except for:

- their massive architectural achievements of the pyramids that required incredible organisation of resources and manpower to provide for the king's welfare in the next life
- the leap forward in technological advancements
- their images in royal statuary that reflect the spirit of the age and reveal the vast gulf that separated the god-king from the rest of the population.

> Royal statues had a specific role: to make manifest the position of the ruler in Egyptian society. The king was the key element of the society, not because of the political power of his position, but because of his centrality to Egyptian ideology and religion … An Egyptian royal sculpture was not an exact representation of a particular human but a depiction of the divine aspect of an individual who held the highest office … The ruling pharaoh was the image of a god on earth; the statue embodied this fact and therefore legitimised the ruler's exalted status.

Two interesting things are associated with some of the materials used in these sculptured figures. Although they were made in a variety of stone, it seems that red quartzite quarried near Heliopolis (cult centre of the sun-god) was used for those with a particular attachment to the solar cult, for example Djedefre and Niuserre. Also, it was recently discovered that the anthrosite gneiss used in the statues of Khafre and Menkhaure, which gives off a deep blue iridescent glow in sunlight, was perhaps the reason for the description of 'the radiant facial expression of Khafre's statues' and 'one could speculate that the blue radiance signifies the celestial connection and association with the cult of Horus'.[4]

The images of Khafre and Menkhaure reveal the absolute majesty of these Old Kingdom rulers.

Hard though it is to imagine these stunning, highly polished statues, when first placed in the king's mortuary temple were probably brightly painted.

FIGURE 7.28 Menkhaure standing between the goddesses Hathor and Bat

… there are traces of red around the king's ears and mouth and yellow on the queen's face. The presence of paint atop the smooth, dark greywacke on a statue of the deceased king that was originally erected in his memorial temple courtyard brings an interesting suggestion –that the paint may have been intended to wear away through exposure and, over time, reveal the immortal, black-fleshed 'Osiris' Menkaure.

SOURCE 7.5 Dr Amy Calvert, *King Menkaure (Mycerinus) and Queen*

ACTIVITY 7.12

1 Using Source 7.4 (on p. 289), summarise the specific role of Old Kingdom royal statuary.
2 Investigate whether there is any evidence that the materials chosen for the statuary had some symbolic significance.
3 Discuss the suggestion made by Dr Amy Calvert to explain the presence of paint on top of the stone statues.

It is important to remember that we will never be able to get into the minds of those ancient Egyptians.

What of the statuary of King Khufu?

There would be few people who have not marvelled at the Great Pyramid at Giza and at the mystery of its construction, and yet there is only one relatively certain image of the king believed to be its builder: Khufu, the father of both Khafre and Menkhaure. It is a tiny seated ivory statuette – 7.5 cm high – discovered in pieces at Abydos and now in the Cairo Museum. The only evidence that it is Khufu is his Horus name inscribed on one side. He appears advanced in age and perhaps – although this is a subjective view – a little disdainful.

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However, the Egyptologist Zahi Hawass believes that it is not a 4th-Dynasty artefact, but a much later reproduction. Would Khufu have ever allowed himself to be depicted like this and for such a badly executed portrait of himself to exist?

But where are the majestic images one would expect to have been sculpted of such an important king?

There are several statue heads that could have once been part of the massive statues of Khufu. One is a larger-than-life red granite head in the Brooklyn Museum. However, without inscriptions or provenance it is impossible to know.

> … the head is one in a series of early large royal statues that evoke the absolute power of the king in a fairly brutal manner.

SOURCE 7.6 Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids,* p. 194
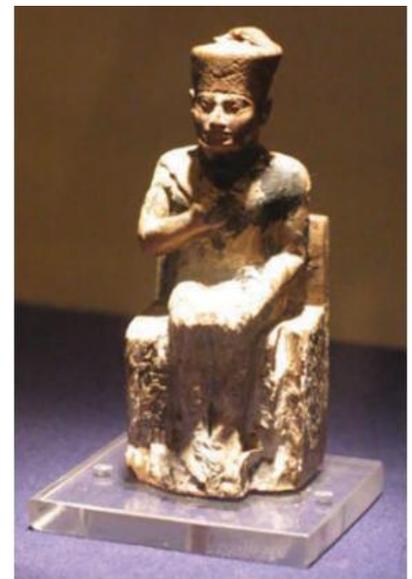
FIGURE 7.29 The tiny ivory statuette of Khufu

Khufu: Tyrant or not?

Apart from a few scant facts, most of our knowledge about Khufu comes from secondary sources, two of which – Herodotus and Manetho – describe him as a tyrant who showed disrespect to the gods, closed down temples, viciously oppressed his people, forced thousands into slavery under the whip, and even commanded his own daughter to become a prostitute to raise money for the project. However, another ancient source – the Westcar Papyrus – describes Khufu in much more benevolent terms as an easy-going but intellectually curious ruler.

There is no archaeological evidence to support the view of the Greek historian Herodotus, who lived about 2000 years after Khufu and who got his information from the priest he consulted. It has been proved that Khufu's alleged cruelty for using slaves in the construction of his pyramid did not happen; the pyramid was built by skilled and unskilled Egyptians who lived and died in a purpose-built settlement close to the site, which has revealed evidence of a bakery, brewery and fish-processing plant.

However, the lack of large-scale statuary belonging to Khufu, when there are quite a few of Khafre and Menkhaure does seem a bit of a mystery.

The Middle Kingdom

The Middle Kingdom was a time of major changes (economic, political, cultural and religious) that included a change in the image and nature of kingship.

Whereas the kings of the Old Kingdom had been confident in their divinity, those of the Middle Kingdom (particularly of the late 11th and the brilliant 12th dynasties) present an image of a more fallible human with heavy responsibilities and anxieties, like a shepherd looking after his flocks: 'He appointed me shepherd of this land, knowing who would herd it for him.'[6] The previous period had seen the power and independence of the **nomarchs** increase at the expense of the kings and it was up to these Middle Kingdom rulers to regain the support of these powerful provincial nobles while, at the same time, keeping them under control.

nomarchs governors of ancient Egyptian *nomes* (provinces)

The burden of kingship and the need to be ever watchful is depicted in the *Instruction of King Amenemhet I to his son Senwosret I*. This was intended to strengthen the dynastic succession. In it, the king displays a tone of resentment as he warns his son of the treachery of his subjects.

When you lie down, guard your heart yourself,
For no man has adherents on the day of woe.
I gave the beggar, I raised the orphan,
I gave success to the poor as to the wealthy:
But he who ate my food raised opposition
He whom I gave my trust used it to plot.

SOURCE 7.7 M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature, Vol. I: The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, p. 136

FIGURE 7.30 The bust of Senwosret III

The sombre portrait of Senwosret III – possibly the greatest pharaoh of the Middle Kingdom – with its deep creases at the mouth, furrows in the forehead and hollows under the eyes, seems to confirm the burden of kingship. Was it perhaps a realistic portrait of him or simply 'a portrait of an age'[7] when there were always inherent dangers to the king from powerful nobles?

The New Kingdom

With the restoration of royal prestige after the expulsion of the Hyksos from their country, the New Kingdom pharaohs replaced the Middle Kingdom image of the good shepherd looking after his flocks with an image of a warrior god of heroic proportions.

Most pharaohs of the New Kingdom were war leaders. Some were true warrior-kings who extended the boundaries of Egypt (like Thutmose I, Thutmose III and Amenhotep I), while others did just enough to maintain Egypt's safety and power abroad and to reinforce the tradition of a warrior-king with divine support and approval. No matter what the particular ability of an individual pharaoh, the scribes and artists of the day depicted them with superhuman qualities. For example:

- The king was always shown larger than life (as he had always been throughout history) but now in the midst of battle. He was shown alone in his chariot, his reins fastened around his waist so that both hands were free for the fight. He was always vastly outnumbered but needed no help from his troops. His arrows always found their mark and the enemy was always powerless against him, no matter the real incidents of history. However, the records of Ramesses II went far beyond anything recorded by previous pharaohs in self-glorification.
- The heroic image of the pharaoh was also repeated in the records of their hunting forays against lions, wild cattle and elephants, especially in northern Syria. No one could equal the kings' 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. They were probably 'intended as a very public demonstration of the king's ability to control wild forces and so bring order to chaos'.[8]

A king is he, mighty of arm, the excellent fortress of his armies, the iron wall of his people. He attacks every land with his sword, without their 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 7.8 An inscription of Thutmose III, a great military leader cited in S. Yeivin, *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, 14:3, p. 194

Source 7.8 expresses the usual boastful propaganda. Nevertheless, Thutmose III was probably the greatest ever Egyptian military leader.

Throughout the New Kingdom, the pharaoh was often depicted with the feathers of Amun his 'father' and the wings of Montu, war-god of Thebes, plus the *khepresh* or blue leather-studded war crown which was worn not only in battle, but whenever the king wanted to emphasise his warlike powers and military feats. A scimitar (a sword-like weapon with a curved cutting edge) was added to the royal sceptres.

The war-like image was also reflected in the names of the 18th–19th Dynasty kings.

TABLE 7.4 Names of 18th–19th Dynasty kings of Egypt

Thutmose III	*Mighty in Strength*
Amenhotep II	*Who Conquers all Lands by His Might*
Amenhotep III	*Great in Strength, Smiter of Asiatics*
Seti I	*Strong-armed, Subduing the Foe, Mighty of Bows in all Lands*
Ramesses II	*Protector of Egypt who Curbs the Foreign Lands*

Not only were these New Kingdom pharaohs depicted as larger than life in the reliefs, but they were represented in statuary on a colossal scale.

ACTIVITY 7.13

Explain how the images of the rulers of each of the 4th Dynasty, 12th Dynasty and the 18th and 19th Dynasties reflected their particular age.

FIGURE 7.31 Ramesses II at Kadesh

FIGURE 7.32 The colossi of Amenhotep III at Malkata on the west bank at Thebes

7.4 The power, influence and image of royal women

Throughout Egyptian history, women were held in high regard, socially, legally and ritually, and more so if one was a member of royalty.

Although men held political authority, and female rulers were in the minority, there were many powerful queens. Despite the lack of documentation of many of these women, it seems that they exerted considerable influence over their husbands, sons, the court and the country.

The status and influence of a *King's Great Wife* and a *King's Mother* can be revealed throughout all periods of Egyptian history by:

- their titles
- their insignia
- the way their husbands or sons treated them
- the nature of their burials.

Three Old Kingdom queens

mastaba tombs flat-roofed, rectangular structures with inward sloping sides, constructed out of mud-bricks, from the Arabic for 'bench'

Very little is known about specific Old Kingdom queens and royal daughters but, for many, the size, location and contents of their tombs indicate that they had a high status. In earlier dynasties, they were buried in huge **mastaba tombs**, and during the 4th and 5th Dynasties they were sometimes buried in small replicas of their husband's pyramids.

Neith-hotep – 1st Dynasty

It seems that many of the earliest queens of whom there is evidence seem to have been connected to Neith, the goddess of war and hunting.

- Neith-hotep was once thought to be a male ruler due to her outstandingly large mud-brick mastaba tomb with a niched enclosure wall, discovered in 1897. It no longer exists.
- Her name was enclosed in a double royal *serekh*.
- She bore several elite titles *Foremost of Women* and *Consort of the Two Lands*.
- Her name was found on clay seals, ivory tags and stone bowls in both her tomb and those of her husband and son, who are now believed to have been Kings Aha and Djer.
- Her name was also found in an inscription in Wadi Ameyra in Sinai with that of her son Djer. It seemed that she might have ordered and arranged an expedition to mine ore. However, such an act could not have been ordered by a queen consort; it usually required the royal power of a king.

Merit-Neith – 1st Dynasty

Merit-Neith was a queen consort and regent, and possibly a ruler in her own right.

- She is believed to have been the daughter of King Djer, wife of King Djet and mother of King Den.
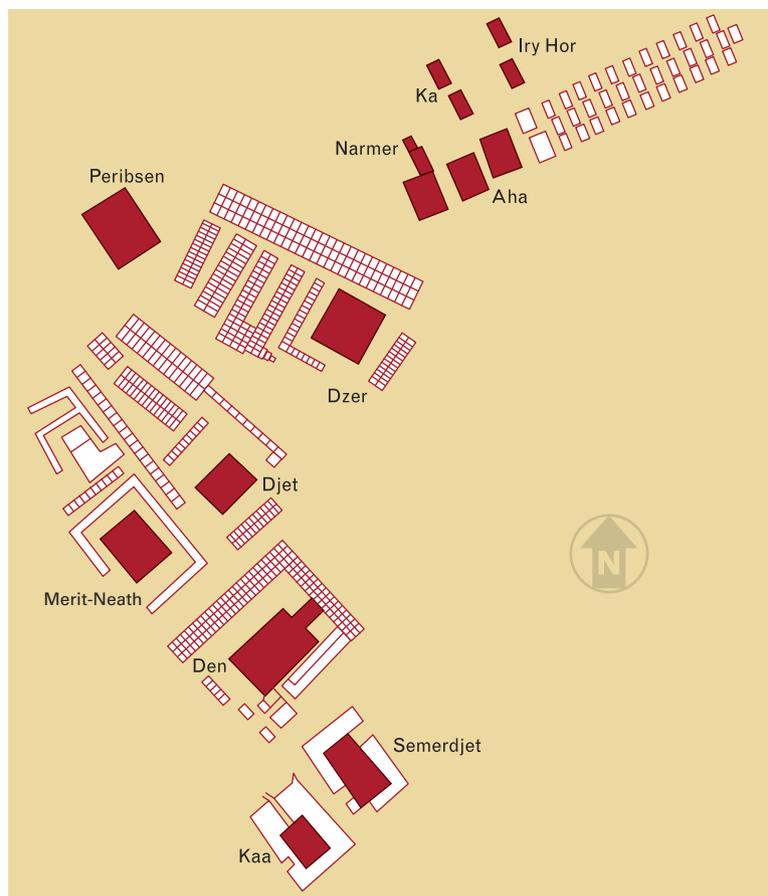
FIGURE 7.33 The location of Merit-Neath's tomb at Abydos, the only female among those of male rulers

- The strongest evidence of her status and authority were her two tombs at Abydos and Sakkara.
- Her tomb or cenotaph at Abydos was the only one belonging to a woman in an all-male necropolis and was close to those of Djet and Den.
- Her huge mastaba tomb at Sakkara was filled with sacrificial objects usually associated with the burial of a king; rows of satellite burials of craftsmen, and a boat pit that would have held a solar boat in which she, like other Old Kingdom monarchs, would sail with the sun god in the afterlife.
- Her name was written in a *serekh* on a clay seal, and her name appears on a seal among the kings of the 1st Dynasty.

Hetepheres – 4th Dynasty

Hetepheres was possibly the most influential queen in the Old Kingdom as she was the daughter of King Huni, the wife of King Sneferu and the mother of King Khufu.

The chance discovery and quality of her funerary equipment in a tomb near the Great Pyramid on the Giza Plateau proved to be one of the most important finds of the Old Kingdom. However, this find was in a secondary, rather rushed-looking burial. There is no evidence what made her reburial necessary.

The following inscription, found in her tomb, reveals her status.

> The mother of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, follower of Horus, she who is in charge of the affairs of the harem whose every word is done for her, daughter of the god (begotten) of his body, Hetepheres.

SOURCE 7.9 I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt*, 1991, p. 117

Middle Kingdom queens

During the 12th Dynasty, the kings moved their capital to Ity-tawy at the entrance to the lush oasis of the Faiyum. This was a time of 'renaissance' in Egyptian history, and at the end of the dynasty, the country was ruled by a female, Sobeknefru. She only ruled for four years, and although physical evidence for her reign is limited, her name was enclosed by cartouches and she was included in most of the King Lists.

FIGURE 7.34 Small pyramid tombs of several queens of the Old Kingdom

ACTIVITY 7.14

1 Explain why Queen Hetepheres was possibly the most influential queen of the Old Kingdom.
2 Identify the strongest evidence for Sobeknefru's position as a female 'king'.

New Kingdom queens

The 18th and 19th Dynasties far surpassed all previous ages in the acknowledged influence of royal women. New Kingdom queens 'were more visible than ever before with increasing emphasis on individuality and divinity'.[9]

During the 18th Dynasty:

- one queen took over the reins of government when the state was experiencing a time of crisis – Ahotep
- one held a highly honoured and influential religious position in the Cult of Amun and was deified for centuries – Ahmose-Nefertari

- another ruled effectively as a pharaoh for 20 years – Hatshepsut
- one was highly respected by and communicated with foreign kings – Tiy
- another ruled alongside her husband and was represented with many of the trappings of a king and played an important role in the Aten cult – Nefertiti.

During the 19th Dynasty, the principal queens of Seti I and Ramesses II (Tuya and Nefertari) appeared beside their husbands on state and religious occasions and their husbands and sons made massive dedications to them, as did the kings of the 18th Dynasty to their chief queens and mothers.

During this period, most queens were identified with the goddesses Ma'at and Hathor and the evidence from the regalia worn by queen consorts seem to confirm this. For example, the cow horns and solar disk of Hathor were now incorporated as part of the queen's vulture headdress.

God's Wife of Amun

This was a priestly title held by some female members of the royal family, particularly during the 18th Dynasty. The institution of *Gods' Wife* 'shows that through ritual roles women in ancient Egypt could obtain a certain amount of power.'[10] At the time of Queen Ahmose-Nefertari, a harem *of Amun* was founded under her control, which included a body of priestesses, singers and musicians to which most of the high-ranking court ladies belonged, and a *Donation Stela* – three inscribed fragments found in the Temple of Karnak – outlined what goods and services Ahmose-Nefertari was to receive in this priestly role. She:

- inherited a large and wealthy estate and the labour to work it
- appointed a male high steward (her brother) to take care of administrative details and a female *supervisor of the harem* who was very influential in court circles
- received goods, including treasures of gold, silver, copper and supplies of grain
- appointed her son to the position as *second prophet of Amun*.

The high prestige of the *God's Wife of Amun* is an example of the balance always observed by the ancient Egyptians in that the position of the High Priest of Amun was balanced by an equally powerful female.

Queen Tiy: one of the most influential New Kingdom royal consorts

Queen Tiy was the Chief Royal Wife of Amenhotep III (c. 1403–1354 BCE), and is one of the best documented royal figures of the New Kingdom.

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 great 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 the features of his beloved wife. Tiy is also shown wearing traditionally divine regalia.

SOURCE 7.10 Joann Fletcher, *The Sun King* (2000), pp. 70–72

- Depicted wearing crowns that incorporated the horns, solar disk, tall feathers and vulture, and a robe of feathers representing the plumage of the vulture goddesses Mut and Nehbet.
- Described as 'beloved of Nekhbet, the goddess who helped the sun-god as he travelled through the sky', 'establishing Queen Tiy as Amenhotep's partner in both the divine and mortal spheres.'[11]

- Accompanied her husband as the earthly embodiment of Ma'at.
- Worshipped as the incarnation of Hathor-Sekhmet when she assumes 'the awesome power of the *Eye of Re*', the daughter and protector of the sun god. In the same way, the king was 'guarded by his omnipresent goddess-queen'.[12]
- Represented as a sphinx, normally the preserve of a king. She 'appears crouched, protecting the royal cartouche, and rampant, trampling the enemy'.[13]
- Worshipped as the incarnation of Hathor at her husband's jubilee and in the temple dedicated to her by her husband at Sedeinga (Nubia).
- Depicted in statuary as the same height as her husband.

SOURCE 7.11 The divine representations of Queen Tiy, cited in Philip Coppens, *Heliopolis, Egypt's Radiance*

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
- gained the respect of and corresponded with foreign dignitaries who were willing to deal directly through her, especially during the reign of her son Akhenaten
- directed both domestic and foreign policies
- worked with officials and scribes overseeing the administrative aspects of the empire.
- was the first queen to have her name recorded on official acts.

FIGURE 7.35 Statue of Queen Tiy with a headdress incorporating the horns, solar disk and tall-feather crown

FIGURE 7.36 Blue faience statue of Queen Tiy wearing the tall-feather crown and a robe of feathers representing the plumage of the vulture goddesses Mut and Nehbet
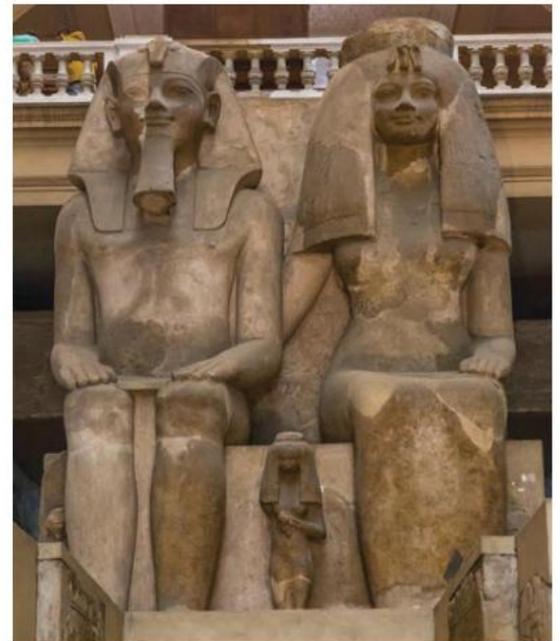
FIGURE 7.37 Colossal statues of Tiy and Amenhotep

1 Describe the changes that occurred in the depictions of queens during the New Kingdom.
2 Discuss the economic power and political influence of the woman who held the title of *God's Wife of Amun*.
3 Discuss the extent to which Queen Tiy fits the image of New Kingdom queens as being more visible, and exhibiting more individual influence and divinity.

7.5 Authority and power of state priesthoods and the ruling elite

Influential priesthoods over time

The king was regarded as the intermediary between the gods and the people but, in practice, the high priests in every cult temple represented the king and carried out the sacred rituals on his behalf. Throughout Egyptian history, it was the priesthoods of Re-Atum at Heliopolis, of Ptah at Memphis and of Amun-Re at Thebes that wielded the greatest power.

Heliopolis: A great centre of religious power throughout Egyptian history

Although the origins of the cult site of Re-Atum at Heliopolis are lost in the mists of the pre-dynastic era, it remained the most influential institution for over 3000 years, as its priests played a prominent role in shaping the country's religious and political history.

Although it was the Greeks who gave the name of Heliopolis ('city of the sun') to the great cult centre of Re-Atum, not far from Giza, the Egyptians called it Innu ('Place of Pillars'), probably in reference to the five temples that once existed in this religious complex.

FIGURE 7.38 The only remaining obelisk at Heliopolis

obelisks tapered pillars of stone surmounted with a pyramidion, which was usually gilded so that it shone in the sun

In one of these temples – the Mansion of the Ben-ben – was a pillar on which sat a magical stone known as the ben-ben that was believed to have been the congealed semen of Atum. It is likely to have been of meteoritic origin. The complex, surrounded by an ancient wall, 15.6 metres thick and over 12 metres high, was supposedly filled with **obelisks**, believed to be the dwelling place of the sun god.

A COMMENT ON THE DISAPPEARANCE OF HELIOPOLIS

- In Ptolemaic times, the Greeks used Heliopolis as a stone quarry for the construction of the Pharos Lighthouse in the harbour of Alexandria.
- In Roman times, its obelisks were taken away to adorn Alexandria, and were sailed across the Mediterranean to Rome.
- Its stones were used for the construction of medieval Cairo.
- The famed 'Cleopatra's Needles' that now reside on the Thames embankment in London and Central Park in New York came from Heliopolis.

The significance of Heliopolis during the Pyramid Age

Egyptologists are in general agreement that the Pyramid Age came about with and through the rise in power of the Heliopolitan priesthood. Some even note that the shape of the benben stone might have been similar to the shape of the pyramid, though there is no general consensus on this issue. There *is* consensus that the pyramidion – the capstone of the pyramid – did symbolise the benben stone. However, the connection between the pyramids and Heliopolis is easily demonstrable ... the pyramids of the 5th Dynasty, at Abusir, were aligned to Heliopolis... Furthermore, Giza and Heliopolis were connected by the 'Sacred Roads of the Gods' that link Giza directly with Heliopolis.

SOURCE 7.12 Philip Coppens, *Heliopolis, Egypt's Radiance*

The early influence of the priests

During the early dynasties and into the 4th Dynasty, the priests of Re-Atum formulated the first state religion by taking various popular beliefs about the sun and superimposing them one upon the other. It was the vast knowledge of these priests of Re – an educated elite with knowledge of astronomy and measurement – which was the basis of the great technological development of this period and which gave them power.

The High Priests of Re-Atum were usually also viziers and architects, such as the legendary Imhotep, who served under 3rd Dynasty King Djoser as master architect of the Step Pyramid complex. He is considered to be the first architect, engineer and physician in

FIGURE 7.39 Imhotep, High Priest at Heliopolis during the reign of the 3rd Dynasty King Djoser

FIGURE 7.40 A wooden figure of Ka-aper, chief lector priest of the Old Kingdom 5th Dynasty

early history; he was one of the very few mortals to be depicted as part of a pharaoh's statue and was one of only a few commoners ever to be accorded divine status after death. His full titles were: *Chancellor of the King of Egypt, Doctor, First in line after the King of Upper Egypt, Administrator of the Great Palace, Hereditary nobleman, High Priest of Heliopolis, Builder, Chief Carpenter, Chief Sculptor.*

Threats to the priests' pre-eminence

Towards the end of the 4th Dynasty, the influence of the priesthood of Re-Atum appears to have been threatened by the rival cult centre of the god Ptah at nearby Memphis.

King Shepseskaf, who succeeded Menkhaure – the last of the three great pyramid builders – broke with the Heliopolitan tradition. Perhaps it was a move to limit the influence of the priests of Re over royalty. He:

- did not build a pyramid (the symbol of the sun-god) as did his predecessors
- chose the Memphite necropolis at Sakkara, rather than Giza, for his large mastaba tomb
- did not include *re* as part of his name
- married his eldest daughter to a palace official loyal to the priests of Ptah and after her marriage declared his son-in-law High Priest of Ptah.

The last king of the 4th Dynasty was named Dedeptah, an indication of the influence of that cult.

Restoration of power

By the start of the 5th Dynasty, it seems that the priests of Re began 'an inspired, imaginative and successful campaign to boost their dwindling reputation'.[14]

- The priests of Re seem to have come to a compromise with the priests of Ptah, since 5th Dynasty viziers were selected from the leading families of Memphis and the cult centre of Ptah. Five of the viziers were named Ptahhotep and were buried at Sakkara.
- The Priests of Re also very shrewdly incorporated into their doctrine about the creation of the world, beliefs associated with the cult of Osiris.
- The practice of compounding *re* with the kings' names was resumed and the title 'son of Re' was added to the king's titulary.
- Six of the 5th Dynasty kings ordered the construction of elaborate sun-temples, based on the plan of the cult temple at Heliopolis, which had names such as *Horizon of Re*, *Field of Re* and *Pleasure of Re*. The causeways of these temples – judging by the sole remaining one – were covered with reliefs described as like a 'visual hymn of praise to the sun-god for all his bounty'.[15] The contrast between these temples and the poorer quality of the king's pyramids seem to indicate some weakening of the rulers' status.
- The *Pyramid Texts*, a famous collection of spells and prayers found in the chambers of the Pyramid of Unas (last king of the 5th Dynasty), mention only Re-Atum and the gods associated with the Heliopolitan view of creation. There is no mention of Ptah.
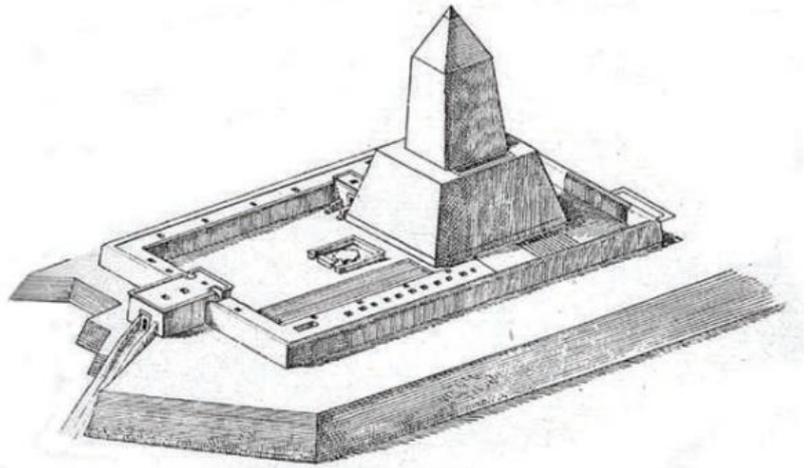
FIGURE 7.41 Drawing of a 5th Dynasty sun-temple

ACTIVITY 7.16

1 Describe why the cult centre at Heliopolis was such a pre-eminent religious site.
2 Summarise the evidence that the priesthood of Re-Atum played an important role in the developments on the Giza Plateau.
3 Recount how the priests of Re reacted to the power threat from the cult of Ptah and increased their power over the kings of the 5th and 6th Dynasties.

The power and influence of the priesthood of Amun during the New Kingdom

'More than any other god Amun was the creation of political circumstances'.[16]

- Amun had been worshipped in Thebes since the Middle Kingdom, but when the princes of Thebes expelled the foreign Hyksos who had occupied Lower Egypt for 100 years, and united the country once more, they credited their success to Amun.
- So that Amun would have no rival, its priests associated him with Re, the creator sun god and protector of royalty, to become Amun-Re.
- The god's status and its priesthood at the great temple complex at Karnak in Thebes increased during the first half of the 18th dynasty, when it was raised above all other gods in power and influence. The High Priest of Amun, as the representative of the king and appointed by him, eventually claimed the right to

supervise the cults of other gods, frequently holding the title of *Overseer of prophets of all the gods of Upper and lower Egypt*.

- The pharaohs of the New Kingdom tried to outdo each other in dedicating to Amun by adding new buildings, pylons, courts, halls, colonnades, obelisks and sphinx-lined processional ways to Amun's temple. They also endowed Karnak temple with vast wealth, estates and captives and with wealth came power.

- The two most important festivals of the year in the religious capital of Thebes, the Opet and Valley Festivals, were dedicated to Amun, reinforcing the dominance of its priesthood.
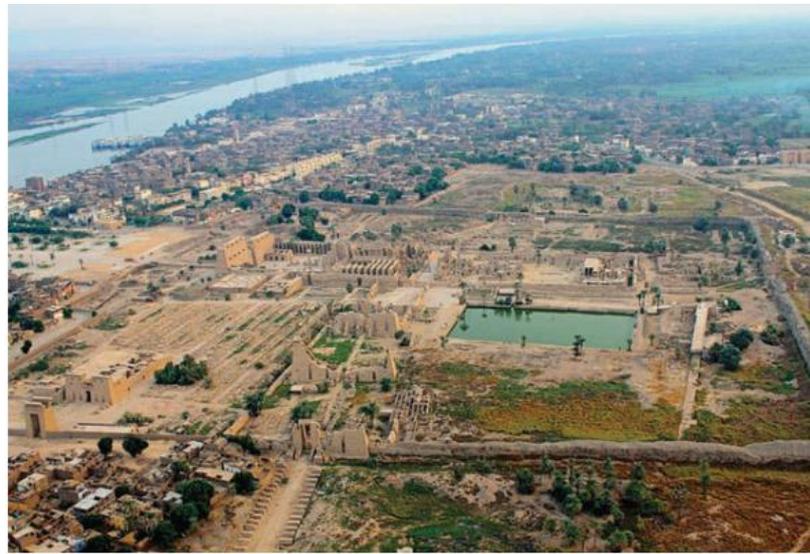
FIGURE 7.42 An aerial view of the religious power centre of Karnak

ACTIVITY 7.17

Explain what Figures 7.42 and 7.43 reveal about the relationship between the priesthood of Amun and Egyptian pharaohs.

The political power of the priesthood

- Amun contributed to the warrior image of the pharaohs.
- Pharaohs continually recorded what they owed their 'father', Amun.
- The priesthood played a part in the succession of the pharaohs, particularly if there was some controversy over the succession, a question of legitimacy, or the introduction of 'new blood' into the royal line.
- The gods' approval was made known via the 'miracle' of an oracle pronounced by the priesthood.
- The pharaohs often associated their Sed festivals with Amun and dedicated their own mortuary temples on the west bank at Thebes 'to a specific form of Amun, and each of these mortuary temples was really an Amun temple'.[17]

Despite the power and influence of the priesthood, the kings were able to maintain royal control over them by:

1 appointing a trusted official as high priest or a nonentity who owed the king everything

2 requiring the second prophet of Amun to be a close relative of the king or chief queen

3 discreetly placing more emphasis on the cults of other gods

4 promoting a Cult of the Living King.
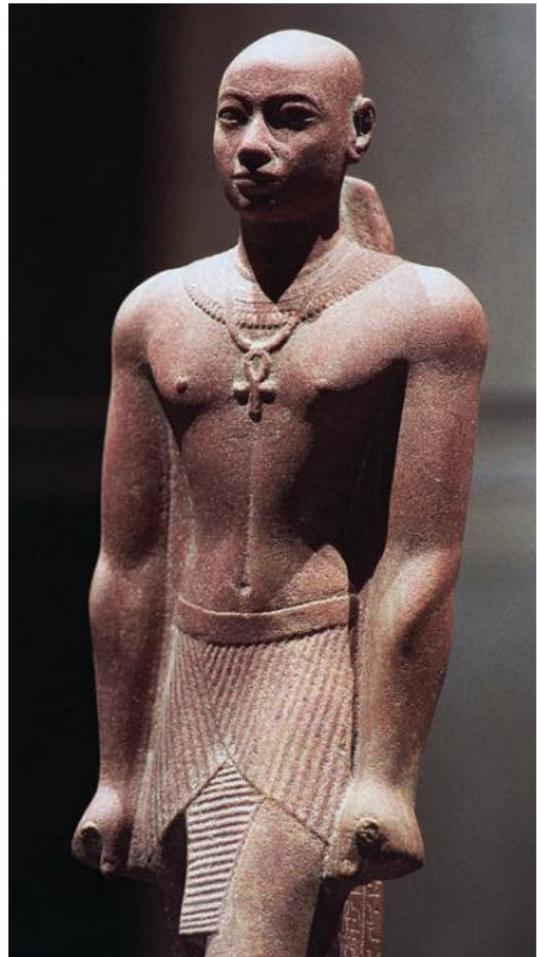
FIGURE 7.43 A priest of Amun

The cult of Amun suffered greatly during the reigns of Akhenaten and Smenhkhare. For a time, all temples except those to Aten, the sun disk, were closed, creating social and economic chaos. Later, Tutankhamun became a pawn in a power game played by the priests of Amun, who believed that by promoting the young prince as future heir, they would be able to regain their power and restore order in the land.

Finally, under Horemheb the cult of Amun was restored, and until the end of the 21st Dynasty, the power of its priests was virtually unchallenged.

ACTIVITY 7.18

1. Explain what is meant by 'more than any other deity Amun was the creation of political circumstances'.
2. Discuss the extent to which the priesthood of Amun had political power over the pharaohs.

Elite officials, their powers, titles and insignia

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. He appointed a group of dedicated, competent and supportive officials to be his closest advisors, to whom he delegated authority and made known his wishes.

Over all the other officials, and second only to the king, stood the *tjaty*, or vizier.

The vizier had been the most important of the king's officials since the beginning of dynastic history, and was regarded as 'the pillar of the whole land'.[18] So powerful was the vizier that in the 4th Dynasty all who held this position were sons, grandsons or close relatives of the king.

Hemiunu: Vizier and overseer of all construction projects of Pharaoh Khufu

Along with Imhotep, Hemiunu was possibly the most important individual in the Old Kingdom. He was the son of Prince Nefermaat and his wife Itet, a grandson of King Sneferu, who built three pyramids at the beginning of the 4th Dynasty, and a relative of Khufu.

He was vizier, architect and High Priest of Thoth, and believed to have directed the construction of the Great Pyramid, beside which his own mastaba tomb was constructed.

FIGURE 7.44 The limestone figure of Hemiunu

Member of the elite, high official, vizier, king's seal bearer, attendant to Nekhen and spokesman of every resident of Pe, priest of Bastet, priest of Shesmetet, priest of the Ram of Mendes, keeper of the Apis Bull, Keeper of the White Bull, whom his lord loves, elder of the palace, High Priest of Thoth, whom his lord loves, courtier, overseer of Royal Scribes, priest of the Panther Goddess, Director of Music of the South and North, Overseer of all Construction Projects of the King, King's son of his own body, Hemiunu.

SOURCE 7.13 Statue inscription of Hemiunu's titles

ACTIVITY 7.19

Interpret what Source 7.13 indicates about officials in the Old Kingdom.

The elite of the New Kingdom

During the New Kingdom, the number of officials increased substantially.

- The vizier was still the most powerful of pharaoh's men, and had huge responsibilities.
- Alongside him, and of only slightly lower status, was the treasurer who was in charge of the resources of the country: taxation, all payments to those who worked on the royal estates and the army, distribution of tribute, and the economic affairs of the temples.
- Another powerful official was the Viceroy of Kush due to his great independence, since he controlled all lands from Upper Egypt to the southern frontier of the empire. He was responsible for the protection of his province from internal uprisings and external threats; construction of temples, fortresses and storehouses; administration of justice and the delivery of all payments to the pharaoh at the right time.
- Although the pharaoh was the head of the armed forces and often led them into war in keeping with his warrior-king image, he delegated this position to the crown prince.
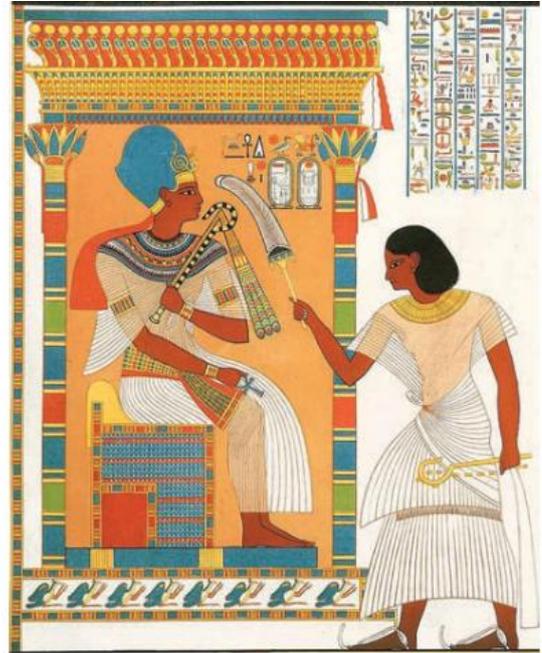
FIGURE 7.45 The Viceroy of Kush, Huy, before Tutankhamun

ACTIVITY 7.20

Research Amenhotep, son of Hapu.

- Recount the steps in his remarkable advancement and rise to power
- Find an image of him and explain why he was depicted that way
- Analyse why he was regarded as the most outstanding official of the brilliant reign of Amenhotep III
- Assess why later generations regarded him as a sage.

7.6 Profile of a significant authority figure – Horemheb

According to Professor Donald Redford, Horemheb was 'one of the most enigmatic power-wielders of the New Kingdom'.[19] He re-stabilised the country after the upheaval of the Amarna period, put an end to the 18th Dynasty and ushered in the 19th Dynasty. (Refer back to p. 277 for the Amarna period.)

> Horemheb is the one protagonist of the period who has suffered a 'bad press'. Thanks to Hollywood and the popular literature, he has been unfairly burdened with the image of a redneck or a Machiavelli, neither of which bears the slightest resemblance to the man. It behooves the careful and intelligent reader to bypass the river of unrelieved nonsense spouted by the contemporary novelist ... and concentrate wholly on the evidence which in text and monument has come down to us.

SOURCE 7.14 D. Redford, *Akhenaten –The Heretic King*, p. 223

1 Define a Machiavelli and a redneck.

2 Find an image of Horemheb from film video, a cartoon, or popular art and explain how he is represented.

3 Watch the YouTube clips entitled 'TUT: Meet General Horemheb' and 'TUT: Meet Ay' and describe the perspectives on both characters who were involved in power plays during this period.

4 Use these for a class discussion.

Horemheb's early life and career under Tutankhamun

Little is known of his early life. He seems to have been a commoner from somewhere near the Faiyum and spent his early life learning the skills of a scribe and later spent time in the army.

In the middle of Tutankhamun's reign, he was given the title of *Royal Lieutenant* with responsibility for foreign affairs in the north. In his Sakkara tomb, he is shown as *Royal Spokesman for Foreign Affairs*. He was also selected by Tutankhamun to lead an expedition to Nubia on the appointment of a new viceroy, and quickly rose to prominence and became commander of the army and adviser to Tutankhamun.

According to his own account he played a key role in the rehabilitation of the country during the social and political upheaval after Akhenaten's religious revolution. He was the one who introduced the reforms of Tutankhamun.

His specific titles recorded in his Sakkara tomb include:

- *Hereditary Prince, Fan-bearer on the Right Side of the King and Chief Commander of the Army*. The position of 'fan-bearer' showed that Horemheb had the 'ear' of the ruler.
- *Attendant of the King in his footsteps in the foreign countries of the South and North*
- *King's Messenger in front of his army to the foreign countries to the South and North*

FIGURE 7.46 Horemheb as a scribe

It seems that Tutankhamun had chosen Horemheb as Crown Prince and 'deputy of the king in the entire land'. Despite being openly recognised as Tutankhamun's heir, Horemheb would not have expected the young king to die so suddenly and without heirs. However, when he did, there is no doubt that Horemheb was entitled to succeed Tutankhamun.

So, if this was the case, why didn't he become pharaoh, and how did Ay, Tutankhamun's old vizier, assume the throne?

Horemheb during the reign of Ay

The period that followed Tutankhamun's death and his mummification is rather confusing and we have no real answers to the questions that this period raises.

1 Firstly, Horemheb seems to have been in Asia with the army at the time of Tutankhamun's death.

2 Secondly, there is the story of Tutankhamun's young widow, Ankhesenamum, who in an unprecedented move, sent a letter to the Hittite king requesting that one of his sons come to Egypt to share the throne with her, as it was distasteful to her to take one of her servants (subjects) as husband. Was she referring to Horemheb or Ay? If the former, was this a case for Ay pushing Horemheb's claim aside?

3   During the time it took to embalm Tutankhamun, messengers travelled backwards and forwards between Egypt and the Hittite capital, where the Hittite king took his time in deciding if he would send his son to Egypt to marry Ankhesenamum.

4   Unfortunately, the Hittite king's son, Zannanza, was murdered before he and his entourage could reach Egypt. Was this an 'act of state'? Did Ay as vizier order his death, or did Horemheb give orders to his *police* to murder the prince? There is no clear evidence that Horemheb was directly involved. Could Zannanza and his entourage have been simply attacked by bandits who were prevalent in the Palestinian area at the time?

5   Horemheb was in Asia and the young king had to be buried. Did the aged Ay deliberately push Horemheb's claim aside in order to bury the king as his 'heir' and then ascend the throne? Ankhesenamum seems to have disappeared at this time. Why did Horemheb wait patiently in the wings for four years for Ay to die if he felt that he had every right to the throne?

6   Once again there are conflicting accounts of who Ay designated as his heir. One view maintains that he chose Nakhtim, possibly a relative; another, that he chose Horemheb, since both men had military backgrounds. At this time Horemheb appears to have been *Chief Overseer of the Army* and is shown in his tomb receiving awards and presenting captives to the king.

7   On his later coronation inscription, Horemheb claims that Ay accompanied him to Karnak to attend the Festival of Opet, using the occasion to 'obtain the sanction of the oracle of Amun to Horemheb's induction as co-regent' with Ay.[20]

8   This event seems to have been consummated by marriage between Horemheb and the next surviving heiress, Mutnodjmet, who is believed to have been the daughter of Ay.

9   On the death of Ay after only four years as pharaoh, Horemheb ascended the throne, possibly with the support of the army and the priests of Amun.

ACTIVITY 7.22

From the limited information available, extrapolate your own scenario for this period.

Horemheb as pharaoh

Horemheb was crowned at Karnak by the priests of Amun, who chose his titulary as *Chosen of Re*.

As king, his chief aims appear to have been to:

1   restore law and order, get rid of bureaucratic corruption and improve the conditions of the lower classes

2   disassociate himself from the previous religious heresy and promote the view that he was the legitimate successor of Amenhotep III. This would mean denying the reigns of Akhenaten, Smenhkhare, Tutankhamun and Ay.

FIGURE 7.47 Horemheb with Amun
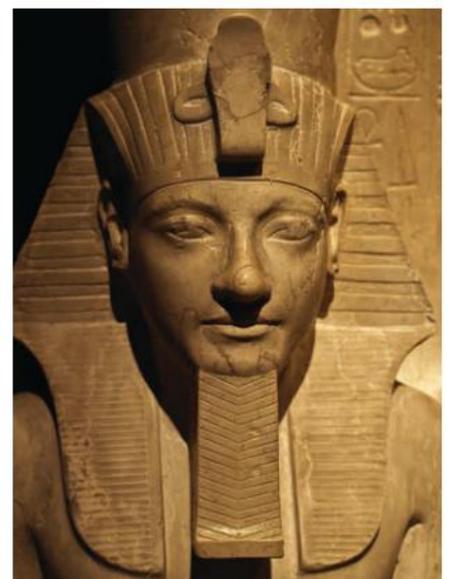
FIGURE 7.48 Horemheb in the traditional garb of a pharaoh

CHAPTER 7 POWER AND IMAGE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

His Great Edict of Reform

After his coronation, he made a grand tour of the country, and as a result of what he saw and heard at this time, he issued an Edict of Reform. This important document – one-third of which is now lost – was inscribed on a stela and erected at Karnak. In it, Horemheb outlined his plan for restoring the welfare of the Egyptian people. It recorded:

- the widespread corruption common among high officials, particularly those in the judiciary
- the exploitation of the poorer classes by tax collectors, who operated with the full knowledge of royal inspectors
- the abuses by soldiers such as robbery and extortion of goods from the peasants
- his promise to return Egypt to an earlier standard of behaviour.

> His most ambitious and beneficial act was the reestablishment of law and order in the Nile Valley. The edict concerned itself with legal abuses taking place because of the laxity of Akhenaten's rule. Horemheb declared that officials of the state and provinces would be held accountable for cheating the poor, for pocketing funds, and for misappropriating the use of slaves, ships, and other properties. The king singled out higher-ranking officials especially, promising swift judgments and the death penalty for offenses. The edict also announces the appointments of responsible men as viziers and gives information about the division of the standing army into two main units, one in Upper Egypt and one in Lower Egypt. Horemheb not only published his edict throughout the land, but also took inspection tours to make sure that all of the provisions were being carried out in the remote areas as well as the cities.

SOURCE 7.15 M. Bunsen, *Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, p. 116

Destruction of all reminders of the religious heresy of Akhenaten and his successors

Horemheb blamed the deplorable state of the country on those he regarded as his Amarna predecessors. He moved the capital back to Memphis in the north and decided to set about destroying everything associated with them. However, it seems he didn't obliterate all traces of the Aten religion until the death of his wife Mutnodjmet.

- His first action was to take for himself all the recent monuments of Tutankhamun and Ay, hammering out their names and replacing them with his own. He usurped and enlarged Ay's mortuary temple in western Thebes and carved his own names and titles over that of Ay on the back of a colossal statue This was not an unusual practice; many pharaohs before him had done the same thing.
- The city of Akhetaten, in middle Egypt, was razed to the ground, every stela and every piece of statuary was smashed, and the royal tomb was desecrated. The site became a quarry for later kings.
- Then he began the wholesale dismantling of Akhenaten's sun temples at Karnak, using the tens of thousands of the brightly coloured and inscribed blocks in the foundation and core of his own buildings at Karnak. Later, Ramesses II also used them as fill for his own buildings.
- The tomb of Ay at Thebes was sacked, his sarcophagus smashed and his names obliterated.
- Akhmin, the birthplace of Ay and his family, was also the focus of persecutions.
- Huy, the Viceroy of Kush, and other nobles who remained faithful to Akhenaten's successors, had their tombs desecrated in some way.
- Tutankhamun's name in the tombs of his nobles was chiselled out, and yet the tomb of Tutankhamun was left untouched.

No part of Egypt escaped Horemheb's attention. His efforts were so effective that in the later king lists, he was recorded as the successor of Amenhotep III. The existence of Akhenaten, Smenhkhare, Tutankhamun

and Ay disappeared from history until the 19th and 20th centuries. The number of years of their reigns were added to those of Horemheb.

Horemheb's building program

He began an extensive building program at Karnak to honour Amun, where he built the 2nd, 9th and 10th **pylons**.

He had two tombs constructed: one at Sakkara when he was a general and official, and one in the Valley of the Kings when he became pharaoh. The tomb at Sakkara is more historically significant as the depictions on the walls identify his duties as general officer of the army, as well as reliefs of his relationship with Tutankhamun.

pylons monumental gateways of temples

In Nubia, he built a rock temple containing statues of Amun, Mut, Khonsu, Sobek, Thoeris, Thoth and himself, and at Avaris in the Nile Delta he built a temple to Seth.

FIGURE 7.49 Scenes from Horemheb's original tomb in Sakkara

Horemheb's successor

It seems that Horemheb and his wife Mutnodjmet failed to produce an heir. She died in the 13th year of Horemheb's reign and was buried in his magnificent tomb in Sakkara. Her mummy was found with a foetus in it.

In his 60s and childless, Horemheb turned to his vizier and trusted supporter, Pramesse (later Ramesses I) to act as his deputy, and then gave him the title of hereditary prince in the entire land, confirming him as his successor. Pramesse had come from a military family, already had a family of his own and, due to Horemheb's revitalisation of the army, had risen through the military hierarchy to the highest ranks of Horemheb's government.

When Horemheb died, he was buried in his partially finished royal tomb in the Valley of the Kings.

He was 'an energetic, down-to-earth manager who brought the country back to its senses'.[21] He restored *ma'at* after the internal chaos of the Amarna period, increased Egypt's power and confidence, revitalised the army and set the stage for the successful and prosperous reigns of the ambitious kings of the 19th Dynasty.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

IMAGES OF POWER

The colossal monumental remains of Egypt, with their texts and images, all speak of the divine status and authority of the kings and the influence of queens. For those who couldn't read, these were powerful images that needed no explanation; and for the literate classes, these simply confirmed what they already knew: they were ruled by a god-king, no matter what the particular abilities of the individual ruler who sat on the throne.

THE POWER AND CHANGING IMAGES OF EGYPTIAN KINGS

The power and authority of a king was predicated on his ability to maintain *ma'at* (divine order) at all times, was reflected in his titulary and his regalia and was rejuvenated during his Sed Festival. These things continued unchanged throughout Egyptian history. However, the image of the pharaoh changed to reflect the spirit of the age.

THE POWER, INFLUENCE AND IMAGE OF ROYAL WOMEN

Throughout Egyptian history, royal women – particularly mothers and chief wives of kings – were held in high regard, socially and ritually. Royal women become more visible from the 18th Dynasty, one even ruling as female pharaoh for 20 years, and others exerting considerable political influence, such as Queen Tiy, the wife of the Amehotep III who reigned at the height of Egyptian power. Like the kings, their image changed over time so that by the New Kingdom they were depicted in the regalia of goddesses such as Hathor and Isis and some were depicted in sphinx form normally reserved for pharaohs.

AUTHORITY AND POWER OF STATE PRIESTHOODS AND THE RULING ELITE

- For 3000 years, the cult centre of Re at Heliopolis and its priesthood exerted political as well as religious authority, and throughout the New Kingdom, the wealthy and influential priesthood of Amun at Karnak were a powerful force in the country.
- No matter what divine powers the king was believed to possess, he relied on the support and cooperation of an elite group of dedicated officials to whom he made known his wishes and delegated authority to them to act on his behalf in running the country. The most powerful of these officials and second only to the king was the *tjaty* or vizier.

PROFILE OF A SIGNIFICANT AUTHORITY FIGURE – HOREMHEB

- Horemheb was allegedly one of the most enigmatic power-wielders of the New Kingdom.
- He was an energetic, down-to-earth manager who brought the country back to its senses, who restored *ma'at* (the ancient Egyptian concept of truth, balance, order, harmony, law, morality and justice) after the internal chaos of the Amarna period, increased Egypt's power and confidence, revitalised the army and set the stage for the successful and prosperous reigns of the ambitious kings of the 19th Dynasty.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

    As you review the chapter make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- hierarchical
- *serekh*
- titulary
- *ma'at*
- cartouche
- *ureaus*
- obelisk.

Historical concepts

Change and continuity

Summarise the evidence of continuity and change in the depictions of Egyptian kings.

Causation

Recount what led:

- the priests of Re-Atum to initiate a campaign to boost their dwindling reputation in the 5th Dynasty
- the early kings of the 18th Dynasty to adopt the 'warrior' image.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

1 Analyse what the temple texts and reliefs reveal about the role and status of kings.
2 Analyse the evidence of self-glorification propaganda.

Historical research and interpretation

1 Discuss the part played by the Egyptian environment in the formation and nature of the Egyptian state.
2 Find any references to Horemheb in popular culture and describe the ways his place in history has been interpreted.

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)

Assess Horemheb's career in the light of Donald Redford's statement that 'he was one of the most enigmatic power wielders of the New Kingdom'. In your answer make sure that you define 'enigmatic' and focus on him as a power wielder.

CHAPTER 8
Weapons and warfare in Assyria

FIGURE 8.1 Relief of Assyrians fighting

FIGURE 8.2 Map of the Assyrian Empire at the peak of its power

FIGURE 8.2 Map of the Assyrian Empire at the peak of its power

The Assyrian Empire
900–607 BCE

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate warfare in ancient Assyria in order to create a better understanding of the ancient past.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the context of ancient Assyria's 'warlike' society • the nature of sources for Assyrian warfare and weapons • warfare in ancient Assyria • the political, economic and social impact of Assyrian warfare and conquest.

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

SOURCE 8.1 Lord George Byron, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*
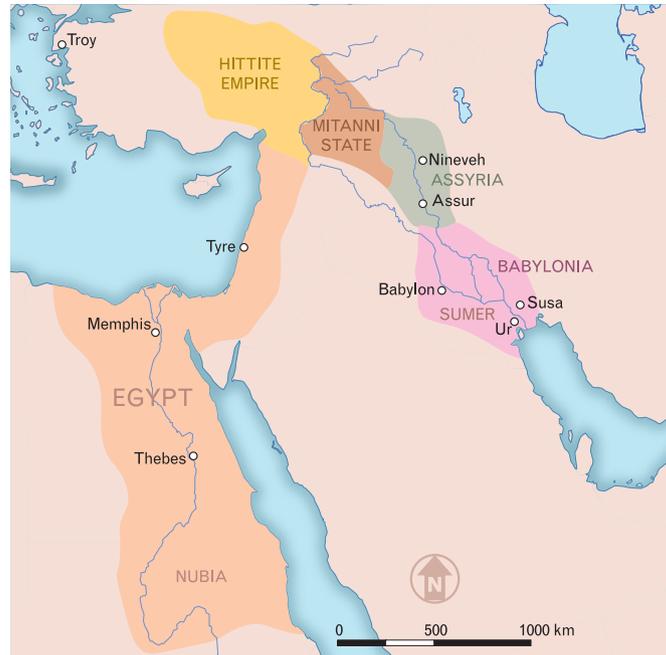
FIGURE 8.3 Map of Assyria and its neighbours
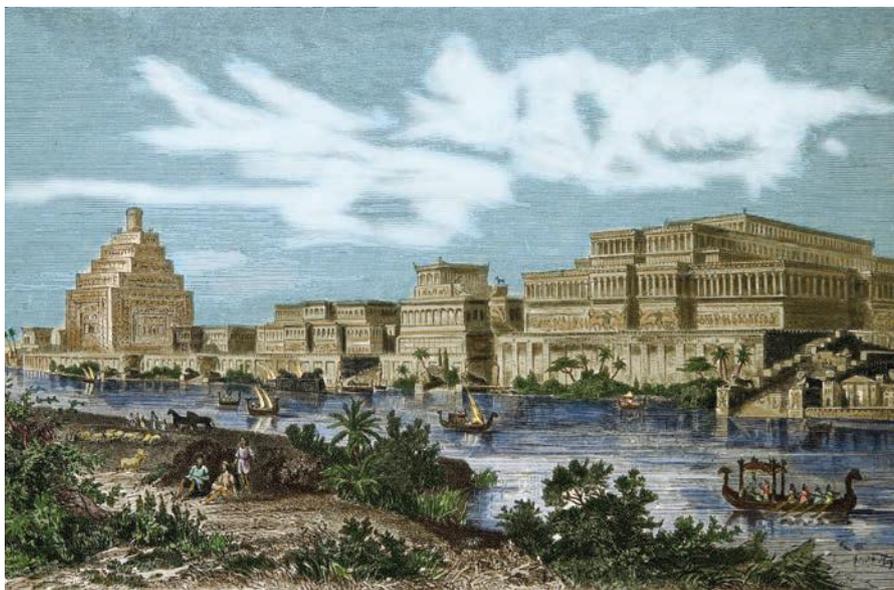
FIGURE 8.4 An artistic reconstruction of Nineveh or Nimrud

Based on the images provided, as a class consider the following question for discussion:

- What do you consider was the impact of Assyria's brutal wars of conquest on its neighbours and on its own culture and society?

Study Figures 8.1, 8.3 and 8.4 carefully. Note what you see in each one. Think about the impact of Assyria's brutal wars of conquest on its neighbours and the benefits for its own culture and society.

CHAPTER 8 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
The historical records appear to have left a lasting impression of the Assyrians only as a violent, war-loving society, bent on conquest but this view is far too simplified and they were no more savage than other nations in the past.	Apart from different weaponry and tactics, nothing has really changed throughout history. Many imperialistic nations right up to the present day have employed similar systematic economic, social and cultural policies like those of the Assyrians to transform those under their control and advertise their achievements in various forms of propaganda.	• vassal • tribute • booty • lamassu • cuneiform

Painting the picture

Assyria was one of the greatest empires the world had ever seen prior to the conquests of Alexander the Great. At its peak, between the 9th and 7th centuries BCE, it stretched from the borders of ancient Iran to the Mediterranean and as far south as Upper Egypt.

It is those 300 years that have left a lasting impression of the Assyrians as a violent, war-loving society, bent on conquest. Even in the 19th century, Lord George Byron, wrote a poem in which he described the Assyrian attempt to capture Jerusalem – mentioned so graphically in the Bible. In the poem, he compares the Assyrians with wolves.

There is no doubt that the Assyrian war machine during that 300-year-period was professional and ruthlessly efficient, and their kings not to be trifled with. In the popular imagination, those kings, with names like Shalmaneser, Tiglath-Pileser, Sennacherib and Ashurbanipal, are often seen as just below Genghis Khan and Adolf Hitler and his Nazis for cruelty, violence and sheer murderous savagery. Unlike the Nazis, however, the Assyrian kings treated those they relocated well, as long as they submitted to the central authority, and they had no concept of a master race: everyone was considered an asset to the empire whether they were born Assyrian or were assimilated into the culture. The only similarity with the Nazis was the efficiency and size of their army, and this same comparison could be made with ancient Rome.

The reason for the 'bad press' received by the Assyrians was their very effective propaganda. Their wall reliefs – among the best, but most graphic in the world – had one purpose: To instil fear into the minds and hearts of those around them who might contemplate opposing their need to expand. 'To them image was everything.'[1]

Some scholars, like Paul Kriwaczek, believe that 'Assyrian warfare was no more savage than that of other contemporary states',[2] and that the archaeological record shows that the image of a totally warlike society is somewhat over-simplified.

8.1 The context of warfare in ancient Assyria

Location and site

The Tigris and Euphrates rivers and their tributaries rise in the Taurus Mountains of eastern Turkey, from where they flow through the modern country of Iraq into the Persian Gulf. Evidence of hydrographic surveys, and the fact that the ruins of many once great towns and cities are now found in what are waterless and uninhabitable deserts, suggest that the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have significantly changed their courses over time.

The 'land between the rivers' was known as Mesopotamia, and it was the northern part of that region (modern northern Iraq, north-eastern Syria, south-eastern Turkey and the north-western fringes of Iran) that was the homeland of the Assyrians.

It was flanked to the north and east by the Zagros mountains and to the west and south by desert. The Tigris River – and its tributaries – flowed through a landscape of rolling hills and valleys. The land was relatively fertile because the majority of the seasonal rains fell in the north, allowing the area to support rain-fed as well as irrigated agriculture. The climate was cooler than in the south, and resources, such as timber, metals and stone, were available from the nearby mountains.

FIGURE 8.5 The Tigris Valley
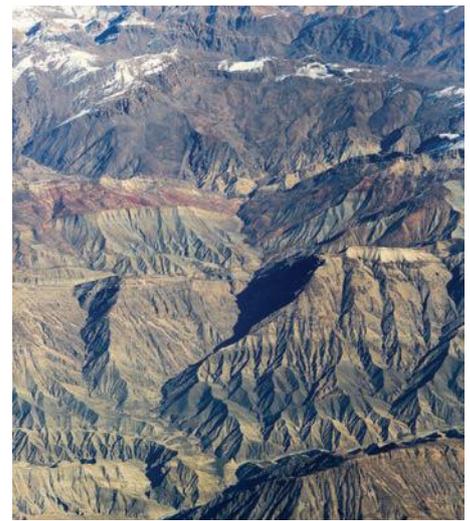
FIGURE 8.6 Zagros mountains

Chronological context

Although Assyria belonged to the world of ancient Mesopotamia, its exposed position, bordering the lands of warlike mountain and desert tribespeople, meant that its people developed a military tradition.

For much of the 2nd millennium BCE, Assyria was a **vassal** of its powerful neighbours, Mitanni and Babylon, but by c.1400 BCE, the surviving royal inscriptions begin referring to it as an independent state whose kings were engaged in diplomatic exchanges with the rulers of Babylonia, Syria, Mitanni and Egypt.

vassal a state in a subordinate position to a dominant one and commonly required to contribute military assistance when requested

Although the rulers of Assyria began their first major military campaigns to the north and west into Armenia and Syria in the 11th century BCE, Assyria was not then a stable empire. Starting about 1000 BCE, and using the foundations laid by those earlier rulers, a series of powerful kings inaugurated a new period of expansion that became known as the New Empire.

FIGURE 8.7 Map showing Mesopotamia's fertile crescent and location of the Assyrian homeland

Cambridge University Press

A SUMMARY OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ASSYRIAN KINGS OF THE NEW EMPIRE FROM 885–669 BCE

888–859	Ashurnasirpal II	• Launched 11 military campaigns using cavalry tactics • Conquered the people of Asia Minor to the north, invaded Syria, conquered the neo-Hittites, advanced without opposition to the Mediterranean and exacted **tribute** from Phoenicia • Infamous for his ferocity and merciless treatment of conquered people • Moved the capital from Assur to Kahlu (Nimrud), dedicated it to the war god Ninurta and populated it with deportees from captured cities • Built many impressive monuments: palaces and temples • A shrewd administrator: installed Assyrian governors in conquered territory
858–824	Shalmaneser III	• In his relatively long career he faced a coalition of 11 states headed by the kings of Damascus and Israel. The result not decisive • Faced his enemies several times until Assyria occupied the Levant (modern Syria and Lebanon) and Israel, from whom he demanded tribute
744–727	Tiglath-Pileser III	• Possibly a usurper who seized the throne during a civil war • Established Assyria's first standing army • Subjected most of the near East • Made sweeping changes to the administration, e.g. thwarted the power of the Assyrian high officials • Improved the empire's efficiency and security, e.g. dividing the empire into provinces and discouraging revolts by the forced deportations of thousands throughout the empire • Built his palace at Kahlu (Nimrud) • One of the most successful military commanders in world history
721–705	Sargon II	• Built a new capital at Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsabad) • Campaigned against unrest in the empire • Conquered the kingdom of the Hebrews and relocated inhabitants • Laid siege to Babylon • Forced Medes to pay tribute
704–681	Sennacherib	• Relocated capital to Nineveh (modern Mosul), making it a truly magnificent city with new streets and squares and built a 'palace without rival' • Subdued Babylonians by totally destroying the city, most of its gods and even the mound on which it was built • Believed to have been responsible for displacing as many as 470 000 • In the western empire, he put down a rebellion by the ruler of Judah, defeated the Egyptians who had come to help and laid siege to Jerusalem • His brutality was legendary and he was killed possibly by a court assassin in a dynastic revolt

> **tribute** payment made periodically by one state or ruler to another, especially as a sign of dependence

A SUMMARY OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ASSYRIAN KINGS OF THE NEW EMPIRE FROM 885–669 BCE

680–669	Esarhaddon	• A popular king • Most noted for the total rebuilding of Babylon: temple complexes and homes of the people, all of which was destroyed by his father • Gained the trust and loyalty of Babylonian army • Secured his borders and launched his successful campaign against Egypt in 671. The Egyptian cities fell and he captured the chief city of Memphis • Died on his way to put down a revolt of Egypt in 669
668–627	Ashurbanipal	• The last of the great kings of Assyria • Achieved the greatest territorial expansion of empire: Babylonia, Persia, Syria and Egypt, although the latter was lost in a later revolt. Finally destroyed Elam and Urartu, Assyria's previously unconquerable adversaries • A scholar king whose greatest achievement was his vast library at Nineveh • The extent of the empire made it difficult to properly defend and it began crumbling towards the end of his reign. With his death it fell apart

The decline of the Assyrian Empire was surprisingly rapid. Egypt had already regained its independence during the reign of Ashurbanipal. Under his two successors, Babylon threw off the Assyrian yoke in 626 by defeating its army, the Medes under Cyaxares conquered Ashur in 616, and Nineveh, a city that had lasted a thousand years, fell to the combined forces of the Babylonians and Medes in 612 and was no more. The Assyrian court sought safety in Haran, their last stronghold, but this fell in 610, bringing the Assyrian Empire to an end. Nahum the biblical prophet, predicts the fall of Nineveh and states, "All who hear the news of your destruction clap their hands for joy. Did no man escape your endless cruelty?[3]"

FIGURE 8.8 The detailed relief of the head of an Assyrian king

FIGURE 8.9 An etching of Sennacherib

FIGURE 8.10 A 19th-century painting by John Martin of the destruction of Nineveh

ACTIVITY 8.1

1 Use the text, figures and the timeline on pages 314–316 to answer the following questions:
- Describe the geographical and site advantages that Assyria had over the southern part of Mesopotamia.
- Explain why Assyria was forced to develop a military tradition from its earliest days,
- List the obligations of an Assyrian vassal state.
- Identify the king in whose reign the Assyrian capital moved from Ashur to Kahlu.
- Identify the two most outstanding achievements of Tiglath-Pileser.
- Justify why King Sennacherib could be regarded as something of an enigma.
- Recall the achievement for which Ashurbanipal is most remembered.

2 Research and then write an account of the downfall of the Assyrian Empire in 612–610 BCE.

An overview of ancient Assyrian society

A COMMENT ON CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Throughout the three centuries during which Assyria was at its peak, there were changes in the make-up of urban society, the administration which had to take into account the ever-expanding territory, and in the empire's economy, especially in its massive royal building programs based on tribute and **booty** from conquests. Those things which remained the same were:

- the position and authority of the king
- their religion based on the 'king of the gods' Ashur
- the importance of agriculture and the peasant farmers.
  As you continue in this study be aware of all the changes that occurred during the Assyrian New Empire period.

> **booty** goods seized in war, such as weapons, gold and even slaves

The king, his role and administration

The king was the divinely appointed, hereditary ruler of the Assyrian people and the earthly deputy of Ashur, the national god.

Ashur was described in the Assyrian sources as 'the sum total of gods'. Initially, Ashur appeared as a solar disc, a circle with wings depicting the father of gods, but later, as the Assyrians began their conquests and expansion, the warrior's bow was added, and everywhere the army went, Ashur was 'encountered in even the most distant places'.[4]

In the official inscriptions, the king was depicted as the creator and maintainer of the Empire. His power was absolute, and every aspect of state life was linked to him. He was chief lawmaker, administrator and commander-in-chief of the army.

His chief functions were to take the lead in devotion to Ashur and the other gods, to secure the economy, to protect his people from invasion and foreign rule, to be prepared for any imminent war or battle, and to continuously expand the empire.

Military conquests were seen as both an act of worship and confirmation of Ashur's support: 'At the command of the god Ashur, the great Lord, I rushed upon the enemy like the approach of a hurricane'.[5] Even the royal hunts, depicted frequently in the reliefs, were a form of religious ritual performed by the king, through which he demonstrated his power. In one relief text, Ashurnasirpal II claimed that god commanded him to hunt the wild animals of the plains where he supposedly trapped and killed 30 elephants, 257 wild oxen and 370 great lions.

FIGURE 8.11 A representation of the god Ashur

FIGURE 8.12 A lamassu

FIGURE 8.13 An eagle-headed guardian of the palace
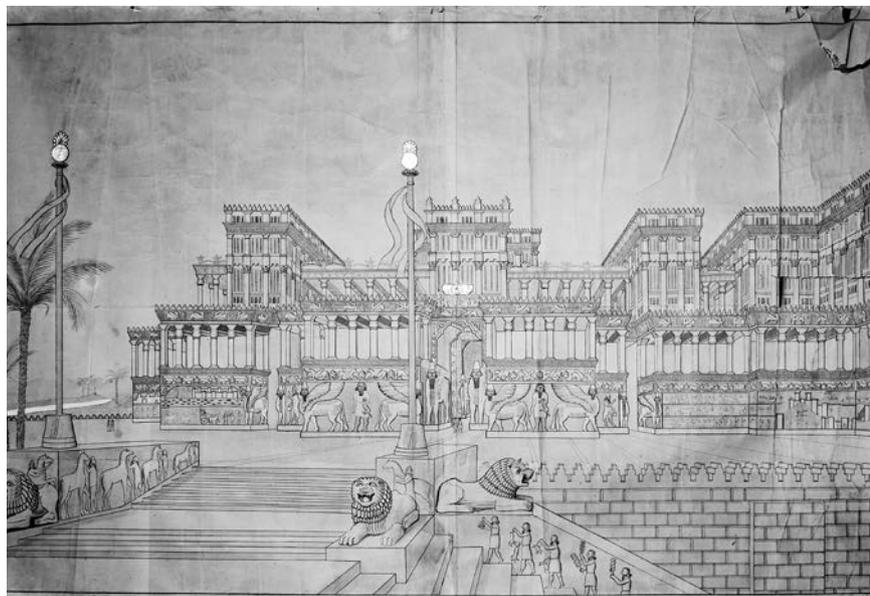
FIGURE 8.14 An artistic representation of the palace

Cambridge University Press

As the high priest of Ashur, the king lived within a sacred space in the royal palace, where he was protected against the dangers of the world by statues of deities and colossal supernatural beings known as **lamassu**, stationed at its gates.

ACTIVITY 8.2

Look up the Metropolitan Museum of Art's digital walk through of the North-west Palace at Nimrud.

The palace, whether it was at Assur, Kahlu, Dur-Sharrukin or Nineveh, was not only the king's residence, but the main seat of government. The king was surrounded by a large court of ministers who headed the administrative staff, and officials and servants who ran the royal household.

Just as Ashur was imagined to rule the universe through an assembly of 'great gods', so too the king ruled through a royal entourage of 'Great Ones'. He consulted them before he made any important decisions. However, the final decision was always his and all laws and decrees were issued in his name only.

- These officials were appointed at the kings' discretion from a class of professional empire builders rather than from the ancient noble families as they were in the early days. Many of these men, who were able to approach the king on an equal footing, were eunuchs who gave up family connections to serve the king.
- As well as the Treasurer, the highest-ranked official involved with civil administration was the Palace Scribe who was in charge of the state archives and the king's correspondence. He also heard petitions, and dealt with all practical matters of administration. A vast staff of scribes dealt with the huge flow of correspondence from all over the Assyrian Empire.
- The king also depended for advice on a group of scholars, experts in many branches of learning, who consulted a wide range of works kept in the temple and palace libraries. It was believed that the king's performance was constantly being monitored from Heaven, and that the gods communicated their pleasure or displeasure via omens, oracles and dreams. It was the duty of these men to carry out the appropriate rituals, and act as the king's spiritual advisors and guardians, often protecting him against demons, black magic and witchcraft. The leading scholar of the king was called the Chief Scribe.

FIGURE 8.15 A high-ranking Assyrian official with the king
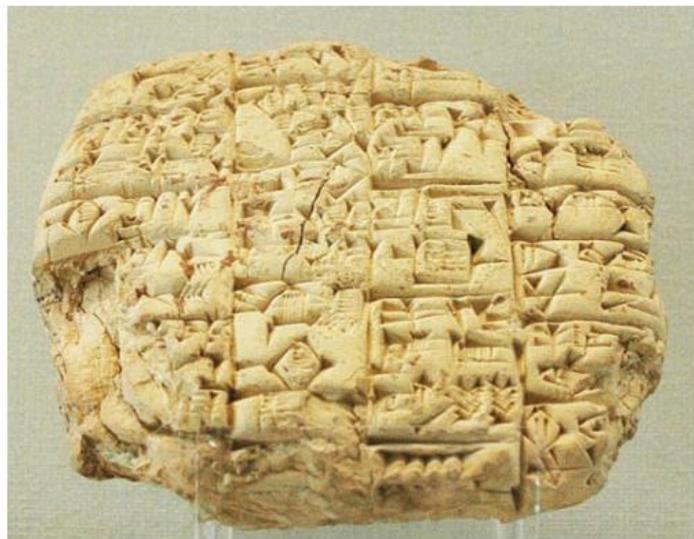
FIGURE 8.16 An Assyrian clay tablet written in **cuneiform**

- A vitally important group of high officials who protected the king's interests throughout the empire were the governors, king's delegates and ambassadors and their deputies. Only through their loyalty could the empire be effectively governed.

The king's court was linked to all provincial governors by an efficient system of communications.

1. Messengers relayed signals from fire towers; special couriers carried dispatches swiftly to and from the king; roads were kept in good repair, wooden bridges were constructed across rivers, and paved ways were driven through mountainous countryside.

2. The kings also ran a state espionage service, to keep themselves informed of potential unrest.

3. The Royal Seal, featuring the king fighting a lion, was recognised throughout the empire, and the people knew that anyone using the seal had the king's complete trust. Any document bearing the seal was as good as a direct command from the king.

4. The 'King's Word' referred to the royal letters written and sealed by the Palace Scribe, in a specific form and language that left no room for misunderstanding.

ACTIVITY 8.3

1. Explain the king's sacred duties as the Earthly representative of Ashur.
2. Recall what provided symbolic protection to the king in his palace.
3. Explain why most of the king's high palace officials were eunuchs.
4. Describe the rather unusual responsibility of the king's Chief Scribe.
5. Extrapolate what the immediate reaction of any official in the Assyrian Empire on the receipt of either the 'Royal Seal' or the 'King's Word' would have been.
6. Research the recent amazing interpretation of the star map found in the ruins of the palace of Nineveh. Explain why this is significant.

Farming, cities and a multi-ethnic population

Surprising as it might seem, considering the abundance of evidence of a warrior society, the mainstay of the Assyrian economy was agriculture and the majority of Assyrians were farmers living in small country villages. The nation's food supply not only depended on the activities of the farmers, but on the work of the king and his officials to build and maintain an irrigation system to boost agricultural production.

As Assyrian power increased and the population grew, greater demands for foodstuffs meant that more elaborate irrigation systems had to be carried out. These were financed by the booty and tribute taken from conquered states, and provided an increased demand for skilled and unskilled labour. The kings – just as they did with their military victories – boasted about their economic and civil engineering projects.

> I had ploughs put into action throughout the whole land of Assyria, whereby I heaped up more piles of grain than my ancestors. I established herds of horses, cattle and donkeys from the booty which by the help of my lord Ashur I had taken from the lands over which I had won dominion.

SOURCE 8.2 Tilgath-Pileser I, cited in Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria*, p. 162

> I dug a canal from the Upper Zab, cutting through a mountain peak, and called it Abundance Canal. I watered the meadows of the Tigris and planted orchards with all kinds of fruit trees in the vicinity. I planted seeds that I had found in the countries through which I marched and in the highlands which I crossed.

SOURCE 8.3 Ashurnasirpal, cited in S. Dalley, *Garden History*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1994

Within Assyria, there were only a few large cities:

1 The original capital, Ashur, was the focal point of the worship of the chief god of the same name, and long after it had ceased to be the centre of government, it continued to be revered as a holy city.

2 Kahlu (modern Nimrud) and Dur-Sharrukin ('Sargon's fortress') were both capital cities for a while.

3 Nineveh became the greatest capital of all under Sennacherib, filled with art that rivalled even Babylon. At its peak, Nineveh is believed to have had a population of 100 000–150 000 and was one of largest cities in the world at that time. Eventually, it covered 7 sq km, with walls described as 'mountains high' and 15 monumental gates. It boasted 150 km of canals and other waterworks that not only improved the economy, but beautified the city and palaces with terraced parks and gardens.

With the continued growth of these cities, even more engineering projects were implemented.

- Sargon built an underground tunnel that allowed water to flow down a mountain.
- Sennacherib dammed rivers, built a reservoir connected to 18 canals with sluice gates, and the earliest known above-ground aqueduct. 'I caused a canal to be dug to the meadows of Nineveh. Over deep-cut ravines I spanned a bridge of white stone blocks. Those waters I caused to pass over it.'[6]

Many of the people living in the Assyrian cities and large towns were a mix of ethnic backgrounds and cultures and spoke a variety of languages and Semitic dialects. The cosmopolitan nature of the cities was due to the Assyrian practice of forced migrations from conquered states, the purpose of which was to provide cheap construction labour for the kings' building projects and to settle potentially rebellious groups far from their homelands.

A COMMENT ON THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON

Recently, evidence has come to light from an Oxford University academic, Dr Stephanie Dalley, that the so-called Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Wonders of the Ancient World, were in fact located in the vicinity of Nineveh. She claims that they were not built by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, but by the Assyrian king, Sennacherib.

Among these workers were: the architects; craftsmen and artists who planned and decorated the great palaces and temples; artisans who made the clay tablets used by the hosts of scribes; metalsmiths and blacksmiths, who made weapons and chariots for the fighting forces and tools for the farmers; traders and business owners; soldiers who defended the cities; skilled and unskilled labourers, servants and slaves.

It appears that there was considerable social and occupational mobility amongst those living in the cities and that some capable individuals, regardless of their origins or status, were able to rise through the ranks of the civil administration. King Ashurbanipal was apparently proud of the number of foreigners and languages spoken at his court, although Aramaic – a language used by people of the Middle East – became the *lingua franca* of the Assyrian empire.

FIGURE 8.17 A fanciful painting of the Hanging Gardens

ACTIVITY 8.4

Describe the role of the Assyrian kings' military conquests in the:

- welfare of the farmers
- provision of water for town and country
- beautification of Assyrian cities
- ethnic diversity of large urban areas
- adoption of Aramaic as the common language of the empire.

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8.2 The nature of sources for Assyrian warfare and weapons

It is ironic that what remains of the warlike society of ancient Assyria is in the 21st century still threatened by rapacious looting and deliberate destruction. Radical Islamists (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS or IS) have gone on rampages with sledgehammers, destroying ancient artefacts, claiming them as 'blasphemous and idolatrous', and made war on the ancient sites using bulldozers and explosives, destroying in 2015 the citadel at Ashur and the city wall at Nineveh.

FIGURE 8.18 Vandalism of ancient artefacts

TABLE 8.1 A summary of the range of written and archaeological sources for Assyrian warfare

Assyrian inscriptions written in cuneiform

• Texts accompanying wall reliefs
• Inscriptions on obelisks, stelae, clay and alabaster prisms and cylindrical seals
  – The Black Obelisk describes the major events in 31 military campaigns of Shalmaneser III
  – The Prism of Sennacherib contains the accounts of the king's campaigns against the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah
• Letters from administrative officials that deal with difficulties in meeting the king's orders, loss of power over whole regions and defections
• Thousands of cuneiform tablets found in the Library of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh

Reliefs
• Detailed reliefs sculpted into the stone slabs that lined the walls of Assyrian palaces at Ashur, Nimrud and particularly in the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh, and engraved into bronze bands that decorated important gateways. These texts and reliefs reveal: • The power of Assyrian kings • All aspects of the Assyrian army and weaponry • The cruel punishments meted out by the Assyrians • The mass deportations of foreigners e.g. 'the 'lost tribes of Israel' • Subjugation of captives before the Assyrian king • The carrying away of booty from conquered states • Enemies and cities conquered • Tribute paid to the Assyrian kings. The propagandist nature of these texts and reliefs is apparent in their wording and selection of images, and unfortunately most histories of Assyria are based on them. Only victories are recorded; failures are overlooked, but this doesn't mean that the Assyrians were never defeated.

TABLE 8.1 *(Continued)*

Biblical accounts

2 Kings 15–19; 17: 3–23, 24–27; 18: 9–12, 13–37
2 Chronicles 32: 1–33
Isaiah 36: 1–22, 37: 21–35
These refer to:

- Assyrian depopulation of the cities of Samaria
- The threats by Sennacherib on Jerusalem
- Sennacherib's invasion of Judah
- Siege of Lachish
- Tribute offered to Assyrian kings.

The authors of *2 Kings* and *2 Chronicles* were not present at the siege, although they seem to have followed the words of Isaiah who supposedly lived at the time. However, *Isaiah* is a book of prophesy not of history which makes it susceptible to religious bias. The writers had a religious agenda – to teach religious lessons: that God actively intervenes in the world, God hears those who repent, and that God will use his people's enemies against them if they refuse to follow his directives.

Monumental remains

- Remains of ancient capitals of Kahlu (Nimrud), Dur-Sharrukin (Khorsahad) and Nineveh (Mosul)
- Restored walls and gateways
- Remains of the ramp of Tel Lachish in Israel

Military artefacts and human remains

- Spear points, arrow heads, blades
- Remains of Assyrian soldiers, e.g. 1500 bodies outside Lachish (Israel) and 16 excavated outside the gate of Nineveh (Iraq)

FIGURE 8.19 A possible depiction of Jehu, King of Israel, giving tribute to King Shalmaneser III

FIGURE 8.20 The prism of Sennacherib

FIGURE 8.21 The remains of King Hezekiah's walls in Jerusalem

FIGURE 8.22 Remains of ancient Nineveh/restored gateway

Like the rulers in many ancient cultures, such as Egypt, Assyria's kings boasted of their achievements and made extensive use of propaganda in the vivid and grisly texts and reliefs all over their palace walls and on official stelae.

Although some of these images and descriptions were undoubtedly true, the reliefs were meant to:

- deliberately terrify anyone who considered resisting the king's might. The palace reliefs would have sent a stark message to any ambassadors or officials visiting the Assyrian courts.
- show that the king, as the representative of Ashur, was carrying out his divine task to suppress and punish his enemies. Apparently, a king who acted with the support of the great gods 'conquered all lands, gained dominion over all highlands and received their tribute'.[7]
- record his heroic deeds. All military acts worthy of being recorded are attributed to the king alone, and no Assyrian king ever fails.

Examples of Assyrian reliefs and inscriptions

With the dust of their feet covering the wide heavens like a mighty storm, they drew up in battle array before me on the bank of the Tigris. They blocked my passage and offered battle. I put on my coat of mail. My helmet, emblem of victory, I placed upon my head. My great battle chariot which brings low the foe, I hurriedly mounted in the anger of my heart. The mighty bow which Ashur had given me I seized in my hands; the javelin, piercing to the life, I grasped. With the weapons of Ashur, my Lord and the terrible onset of my attack, I stopped their advances, I succeeded in surrounding them. I decimated the enemy host with arrow and spear. All their bodies I bored through like a sieve … Speedily I cut them down and established their defeat. I cut their throats like lambs, I cut off their precious lives as one cuts a string. Like the many waters of a storm, I made the contents of their gullets and entrails run down upon the wide earth. My prancing steeds, harnessed for my riding, plunged into the streams of their blood as into a river. The wheels of my war chariot, which brings low the wicked and the evil, were bespatted with blood and filth. With the bodies of their warriors, I filled the plain like grass. Their testicles I cut off, and tore out their privates like the seeds of cucumbers: their hands I cut off: the chariots and the horses, whose riders had been slain at the beginning of the terrible onslaught, and who had been left to themselves, kept running back and forth. I put an end to their fighting. The enemy abandoned their tents and to save their lives they

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trampled the bodies of their fallen soldiers, they fled like pigeons that are pursued. They held back their urine but let their dung go in their chariots during my pursuit of them. I dispatched my chariots and horses after them. Those among them who had escaped, who had fled for their lives, wherever my charioteers met them they cut them down with the sword. 150 000 of their warriors I cut down with the sword.

I flayed as many nobles as had rebelled against me [and] draped their skins over the pile [of corpses] ... some I erected on stakes upon the pile.

I captured many troops alive: I cut off some of their arms [and] hands; I cut off of others their noses, ears [and] extremities. I gouged out the eyes of many troops.

I burnt 200 captives ... with their blood I dyed the mountain red like red wool [and] the rest of them the ravines [and] torrents of the mountains swallowed ... I cut off heads of their fighters and built [therewith] a tower before their city. I burnt their adolescent boys and girls.

ACTIVITY 8.5

1 Describe the limitations of the major written sources for Assyrian warfare.
2 Find examples from Source 8.4 to illustrate:
  • the king carrying out his divine duty to Ashur
  • his heroic deeds
  • his descriptive attempts to terrify any who might think about resisting him in the future.
3 List the brutal forms of punishments that the Assyrians 'advertise' in Source 8.5.
4 Rewrite the account in Source 8.4 as a modern military report minus all the propaganda elements.

Unfortunately, there are only limited material remains to test the historical assumption of excessive Assyrian cruelty.

Several sites do show potential signs of brutality such as knife marks in eye sockets of one individual, a mass burial at a city gate, and a group burial containing individuals who had been decapitated and mutilated. The problem is that they are either individual cases, natural catastrophes or not easily attributed to the Assyrians.

In 2012, a male body with two other adults and seven children were found in a cave near Khirbet Shemsin in Israel, an area where the Assyrians were militarily active in the 8th century BCE. Cohen and his associates carried out an investigation using forensic technology. Their aim was to discover the male's injuries and to see if they matched up with the Assyrian relief images. They found:
• the individual's skeleton was robust with enlarged muscle markers on the right side
• he was estimated to have been between 33 to 42
• his hand bones showed signs of stress

- there was evidence of sharp force trauma to the head, indicative of being struck from behind and while on the ground
- there were three cut marks to the skull
- a cut on his right radius was suggestive of a defensive wound perhaps from preventing a weapon striking his face
- the blunt force on the left radius pointed to punishment, plus the removal of the hand
- there were sharp marks on the ribs on both sides, on the right scapula and a number found on the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae
- an injury to the cervical vertebrae consistent with decapitation.

The forensic team believed that the injuries were consistent with torture and could match the Assyrian relief descriptions.

ACTIVITY 8.6

1 Identify what Source 8.6 says about the 'potential' signs of brutality in many human remains found in areas where the Assyrians fought.
2 Deduce how useful you think this study is in confirming the brutality of the Assyrians. Explain your reasons.

8.3 Warfare in ancient Assyria

The development of a permanent army

- The fertility of the northern plain occupied by the Assyrians created envy in those states around them, so that the early Assyrians were often in conflict with their neighbours: raids, skirmishes, pitched battles and the occasional siege. It is said that the farmers, who were conscripted to fight, had to carry a plough in one hand and a sword in the other.
- The country also suffered from a lack of resources and natural barriers. If Assyria was to survive, it had to expand in order to acquire wood for constructing forts and siege engines, stone for building castles and walls, iron deposits to forge weapons, and horses for chariotry and cavalry. Also, the divine mandate required the king to conquer and develop barren lands. This policy, however, made more demands on the army.
- Although Tiglath-Pileser I (1115–1076 BCE) revitalised the military, it was still only a part-time organisation with farmer conscripts, who fought campaigns in the summer between the planting of their crops in spring and the harvest in autumn. This part-time system was not effective and often led to rebellion.
- As Assyria slowly became a regional power, and a new phase of expansion began in the 9th century under King Shalmaneser III, professional recruits from defeated states were incorporated into the army and an ever-growing force of specialised troops were added. At the battle of Karkara, Shalmaneser III fielded a multinational army of over 65 000 infantry, 1200 cavalrymen and 4000 chariots.
- The transformation of a part-time army to a professional standing army was fully achieved by the time of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727). Young men from within the borders of Assyria could now be hired to make a career out of the military. These trained and equipped soldiers were supplemented by auxiliaries from all adjoining areas and, when needed, temporary drafts of farmers might still be called up for seasonal service. The king increased trade to acquire the resources necessary to produce iron weapons, chariots and siege machines, and he sent official agents to obtain horses from northern Iran. The permanent army was fed, clothed and armed at the king's expense, and since these soldiers now served on longer campaigns, they were able to gain a higher level of experience and training. Also, there were more men available for permanent garrison duty in strategic parts of the empire.

- By the 8th century BCE, the Assyrian armed forces consisted of at least 150 000–200 000 men, but the sources are too ambiguous and fragmentary to really know about the structure of the army, and even though there are a large number of officer titles, it is difficult to identify distinctions between ranks and reconstruct a precise chain of command.

> Under Sargon, the standing army consisted of the royal guards, the equestrian forces (cavalry and chariotry), heavy infantry and some units of auxiliary infantry comprised of Itu'ean archers, Gurrean spearman and occasionally other tribal peoples. The Assyrians did not hire mercenaries, although they did maintain a special relationship with certain tribal groups who served the army in an auxiliary capacity …

SOURCE 8.7 Sarah C. Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721–705 BC*

> The Assyrian army was in reality many armies, each with its own command structure; its composite character can be seen as the intentional product of royal strategy which aimed to neutralize the military's otherwise unbridled power … The different contingents were allowed and encouraged to preserve and develop their own customs – its individual components found themselves in intense competition for royal recognition and favour.

SOURCE 8.8 K. Radner, *The Assyrian Army, Assyrian Empire Builders*, University College London, (2012), www.ucl.ac.uk
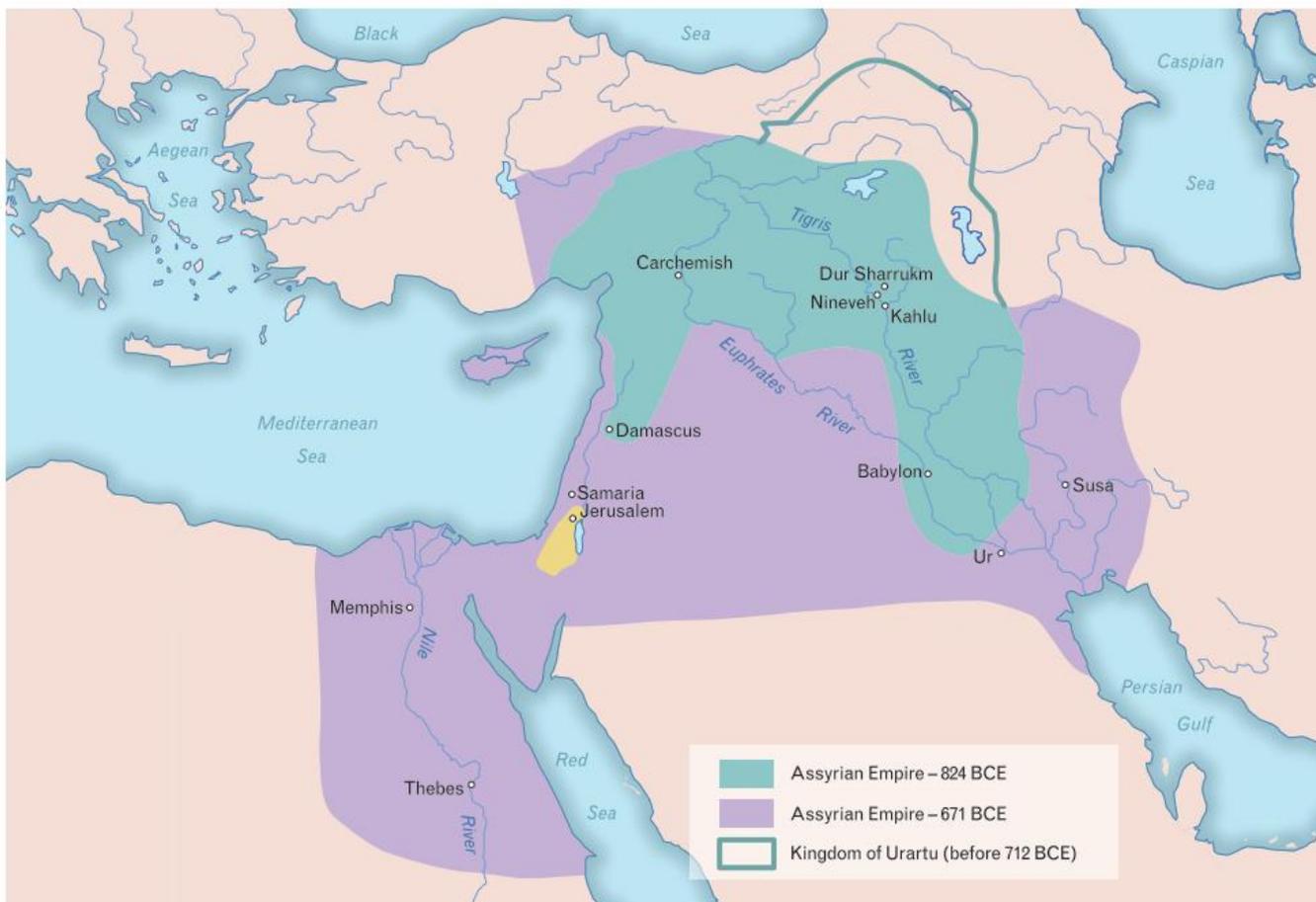
FIGURE 8.23 The two phases of the Assyrian conquest and expansion

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1 Contrast the army of Tiglath-Pileser III with that of Tiglath-Pileser I.

2 Describe what Source 8.7 indicates about the Assyrian's reasons for not hiring mercenaries.

3 Explain what Source 8.8 means when it says 'the Assyrian army was in reality many armies' and describe the royal strategy behind this.

Technology and the changing nature of Assyrian weaponry and equipment

Compared to their opponents, the Assyrian troops were better trained, better organised, more mobile and better equipped with the deadliest weapons the ancient world had ever seen.

TABLE 8.2 Assyrian army units, equipment and tactics

Combat units	Comments	Armour and weapons
Chariotry	- Was the dominant elite force until the introduction of the cavalry in the 9th century. - Always maintained its status and was listed in the inscriptions before the cavalry. - Was one of the greatest assets of the Assyrian army on flat terrain such as in Syria/Palestine and Babylonia. - Its dominance decreased with more campaigns in mountainous territory. - The impressive shock capabilities of chariots were used to smash into enemy lines, creating chaos, and a gap for the rest of the army to move into.	- The earlier clumsy 4-wheeled chariots were replaced with much stronger, more manoeuvrable ones with two metal-rimmed wheels and drawn by two to four faster and larger horses from Egyptian Nubia. - The reliefs show that charioteers wore no armour except for the standard Assyrian conical helmet. - Typically, there were three charioteers: – a driver with a whip but no weapons – a fighter armed with a spear and a bow – a third man who protected the other two with shields and watched the rear.
Cavalry	- Assyria was the first civilisation in the West to exploit the potential of cavalrymen. - The importance of cavalry increased towards the end of the 8th century due to the need for greater mobility over the rugged, high terrain of the upper Tigris (Taurus Mountains) and east into the Zagros ranges. - The smaller, faster horses needed for the cavalry came from the east (Iran) - The cavalry was constantly evolving. Originally, bare-back riders could not discharge their arrows without dropping their reins and so during the 9th century, the riders worked in pairs: one holding the reins of both horses, the other using his bow. - In the 8th century, due to the invention of the rein holder, they rode singly.	- Cavalrymen wore robes hitched up for ease of movement, leggings, boots, but no armour except for the helmet. - Light cavalry rode small, fast horses firing arrows from composite bows on the run. These horsemen were referred to as 'hurricanes on horseback'. - The heavy cavalry was armed with both swords and long lances and small shields. They thrust out with their spears at the enemy as they passed.

TABLE 8.2 *(Continued)*

Combat units	Comments	Armour and weapons
Because the mounted divisions maintained the army's edge over its opponents, the acquisition and care of horses was paramount. Not only did the Assyrians face the constant problems of keeping the numbers of the right kind of horses at an adequate level, but also of providing food and fodder for the equestrian units, and in making sure that the horses were kept battle-ready wherever they were located in the off season, and available in an emergency.		
Infantry	There is some evidence from the stone bas-reliefs that these Assyrian heavy infantrymen fought in squads of 10, each headed by an officer and grouped into companies of five to 20 squads under the command of a captain. The light infantry was recruited predominantly from: • auxiliaries, who were distinguished by their costumes • the Itu' archers from central Mesopotamia, who in the palace reliefs appear bare-chested and bare-footed. • the Gurreaus, possibly from northern Syria and Anatolia, who wore crested helmets, small chest plates and knee-length tunics. Slingers: • They are often depicted in the reliefs standing behind the archers, although it appears that there were no slingers until the reign of Sargon. • A slingshot was a deadly weapon capable of throwing stones up 400 metres. • Sling stones found among the ruins of Lachish, a Judean city destroyed by the Assyrians in 701 BCE, can be seen today in the British Museum in London.	The members of the heavy infantry were protected by: • a conical iron helmet • a knee-length shirt/coat of laminated layers of leather sown or glued together, then fitted with iron plates • knee-high, hob-nailed leather army boots, inserted with iron plates to protect the shins which allowed the soldier to fight on any terrain and in any weather • a long spear (about 3 metres long) consisting of a wooden shaft tipped with a lethal iron spearhead • short double-edged iron swords and daggers for close combat • a variety of shield types, including tall ones made from leather or plaited reeds, and smaller circular ones consisting of a wooden disk faced with a thin layer of bronze. Assyrian archers: • wore a slightly shorter coat of 'mail' but the same conical helmet as their heavy infantry counterparts • used different kinds of bows. Some were simple ones made of wood, others were composite bows reinforced with horn and animal sinew, which had a range of up to 650 metres against an advancing infantry • used quivers that could hold up to 50 iron-tipped arrows. Some arrows were fitted with heads capable of launching combustible materials. These flame arrows, used during sieges and aimed at enemy homes and crops, were called 'the messengers of death'. • were protected by a shield-bearer carrying a large, rectangular shield, curved backwards across its upper edge to provide extra cover. These were made from densely matted reeds covered with oiled skins or metal.
Few weapons, apart from their metal blades, spear points and arrow heads, have survived due to the perishable nature of their material (wood, leather), and most of the information of types of shields comes from the palace reliefs.		

The invention of iron smelting, cold forging and tempering created a military revolution in the ancient world and the Assyrians were the first to take full advantage of iron's potential. The advantages of iron for warfare were its:

- plentiful supply, unlike the deposits of tin and copper needed to produce bronze
- cheapness, which meant they could equip larger armies
- strength compared with bronze and less brittle because it was heated and hammered into shape rather than cast
- ability to be ground sharper and to hold a keen edge for far longer.

The Assyrian state was able to produce enormous quantities of cheap, reliable weapons for even the lowliest soldiers: iron swords, iron spear blades, iron conical helmets and even iron scales sewn onto their tunics. Also, Assyrian ironsmiths were able to design a stronger chariot.

However, iron did not entirely replace bronze for the manufacture of military equipment as bronze was lighter and could be recast repeatedly.

FIGURE 8.24 Assyrian chariots
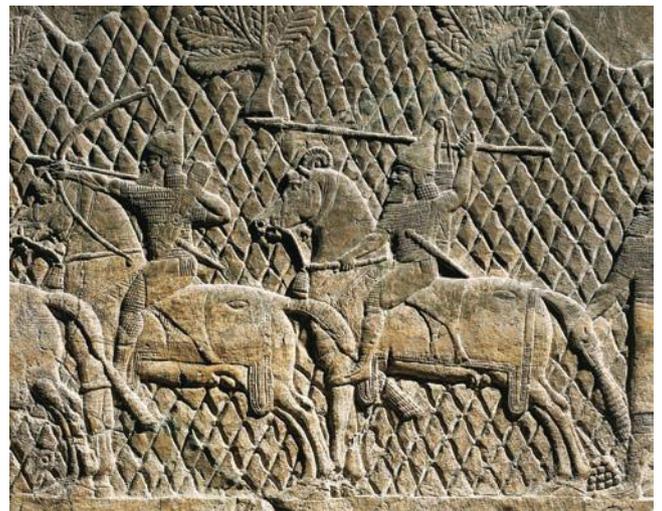
FIGURE 8.25 Assyrian cavalry

FIGURE 8.26 Assyrian infantry

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The army on campaign and the conditions faced by the ordinary soldier

Despite the large military numbers available, and their superior weaponry, the Assyrian army would not have been effective without careful planning, superior military strategies and the kings' willingness to do whatever it took to succeed. By the time of Sargon II, 'military campaigns were models of efficiency, brilliant military tactics, courage, and ruthlessness'.[8]

ACTIVITY 8.8

1 Refer to Table 8.2 (on p. 329) and Figures 8.24–8.27 (on pp. 331–2) to identify the part each of the following played in the success of the Assyrian army:
   - iron technology
   - horses
   - chariots
   - composite bows
   - large curved shields
   - flame arrows
   - slingshots
   - rein holders.

2 You are a foreign scout, sent to report on an approaching Assyrian army. Write a dispatch to your general on the composition of the enemy's forces that you have observed.

Preparations for a new campaign

> Get together your officers plus the horses of your cavalry contingents immediately. Whoever is late will be impaled in the middle of his own house … do not hold back; leave your work, come right away.

SOURCE 8.9 Sarah C. Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721–705 BC*, p. 33

The troops had to assemble in late spring or early summer at a designated review palace or armoury. The king set a deadline for the mustering of troops, but such a huge and complicated procedure could take a month or more to complete as it involved constant communications between the king, governors and the officials overseeing troop movements. Recruitment officers or cohort commanders collected the men in their designated areas and, after deciding which ones were fit to serve, delivered them to the provincial governor who marched them to the muster site. Vassal states were also expected to present troops as part of their tribute and failure to do so on time could be seen as an act of rebellion. The vast fortified muster complexes housed a camp, board for up to 3000 or more thoroughbred horses, pack

FIGURE 8.27 Assyrian horses

animals such as mules and occasionally camels, chariots and military equipment. Here the soldiers trained before being outfitted with armour, clothing and packs or saddlebags, water skins and food rations such as barley and oil.

The logistics for a campaign depended on the king's overall strategy and involved the provisioning of an army on the move and the feeding of its animals. This meant:

- creating forward supply depots such as granaries which became part of the Assyrians' provincial policy
- choosing a route that took into account the availability of food supplies in the areas through which they were to travel, such as lands suitable for animal foraging and the availability of water supplies
- considering the terrain and weather conditions.

There are inscriptions that report armies on the move being hindered by storms, horses freezing in snow falls, swamps, swollen rivers and currents so strong that it was impossible to launch their inflated goatskin floats and rafts.

In a letter King Sargon sent back to the city of Ashur, regarding his campaign in 714 against Urartu (the mountainous plateau between Anatolia, Mesopotamia, the Iranian Plateau, and the Caucasus Mountains), he described the difficulties they faced.

As for Mount Simirriu, a lofty peak that thrust up sharp as a spear point … whose top-most summits indeed reach to the very sky and which offers no way to pass on either flank, and the ascent of which, from front and back is exceedingly difficult, on the sides of which yawn chasms and mountain ravines, a fearsome spectacle to behold, discouraging the ascent of chariotry and to the high spirits of steeds, the worst possible going for the ascent of infantry … I provided my engineers with heavy copper picks, so they broke up the sharp peak of the mountain into fragments as if it was limestone, and made good going.

SOURCE 8.10 Sargon II, Letter to Assur, cited in Sarah C. Melville, *The Campaigns of Sargon II, King of Assyria, 721–705 BC*, p. 43

FIGURE 8.28 A relief of soldiers crossing rivers on inflated goatskin floats

ACTIVITY 8.9

1 Deduce who you think is making the demands in Source 8.9, and to whom is it addressed.
2 Identify the steps needed to complete a muster of troops and animals.
3 Explain why an Assyrian army was unlikely to be able to respond immediately to any threat outside the summer months.
4 Describe what you consider would have been the most important thing to take into account in the way of logistics.
5 Use Source 8.10 and Figure 8.28 to describe the difficulties an Assyrian army often faced.
6 How accurate do you think the description in Source 8.10 might be? Explain your reasoning.
7 Draw a mind map summarising all the factors involved in the planning of an Assyrian military campaign.

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An Assyrian army on the move

With the arrival of the king and his royal entourage – family members, household staff of scribes, personal servants and domestics, advisors, healers and those who took the omens – bulls and goats were sacrificed.

Also, accompanying the army were the households of nobles, engineers to build bridges and siege engines, scouts and spies, craftsmen to create and replace weapons and armour and repair chariots, plus grooms and mule drivers.

The army marched in unit order under the standard of their primary god Ashur and the prominent deities associated with different regiments. The order of march probably changed depending on the conditions of war, such as the possibility of ambush and harassment.

The king, surrounded by his bodyguard, with the support of the main chariot divisions and cavalry, the elite of the army, was probably in the vanguard, followed by the infantry, the auxiliaries, the siege train, supply wagons and then the camp followers.

Except in unusual circumstances, the king and elites travelled in relative comfort: chariots and horseback during the day and in the comfort of well-equipped tents at night with servants seeing to their every need.

FIGURE 8.29 The king travelling in his chariot

In contrast, the experience of the ordinary soldier was sure to be extremely difficult, although little information has survived concerning them. Based on the circumstances under which they served, it's not too difficult to imagine their lot. They:

- walked all day carrying their weapons and supplies
- constructed a fortified camp at the end of each day's march
- erected their tent and built a fire if the conditions permitted
- cooked their own basic meal and looked after their equipment before retiring
- faced the mental stresses at the prospect of death or capture
- suffered injuries and probably had to treat each other as best they could and with whatever they could find, such as honey and cedar resin as antiseptics
- had to put up with close-quarter living, poor food, lack of hygiene, as well as infected water that could cause outbreaks of typhoid, cholera and dysentery
- faced the possibility of accidents traversing mountains and crossing flooded rivers; they did not swim, but carried their weapons and packs strapped their backs as they floated across on inflated animal skins
- suffered the exhaustion and danger of long sieges.

However, soldiers did receive their share of the plunder and – in some cases – honours and rewards from the king for acts of outstanding bravery, although the recipients of these were more likely to have been high-ranking officers.

ACTIVITY 8.10

Write an account of the Assyrian army on the move during a campaign, from the perspective of an ordinary infantry soldier.

Strategy

Once the Assyrians entered enemy territory, sacrifices were once more made to Ashur and to Ishtar, goddess of war, then the king and/or his commanders adopted one of three strategies:

1 battle

2 devastation

3 siege.

If the enemy chose to meet the Assyrians in battle, the king or his general would decide on their tactics, which would depend on the morale and fitness of his troops, the terrain and the quality of the enemy. The king in his chariot possibly led the attack surrounded by his elite warriors, chariotry and cavalry. Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II were both portrayed as operational fighters who personally led their men into the fray. Unfortunately, there is not much ancient evidence of actual Assyrian battles.

> An opponent would have seen, in the centre of the formation, the main body of infantry, compact phalanxes of spearmen, their weapon points glittering in the sun, each arranged in ten files of twenty ranks. He would have marvelled – and perhaps trembled – at the discipline and precision of their maneuvering, a contrast to the relatively freewheeling manner of previous armies.

SOURCE 8.11 Paul Kriwaczek, *Babylon: Mesopotamia and the Birth of Civilization* (2010), p. 236

If the enemy dared not risk battle, the Assyrian army devastated the countryside, razing small towns and villages and terrorising their populations. By plundering the countryside and destroying their food supplies, the Assyrians weakened their opponents, hoping to put pressure on enemy leaders to fight or submit.

However, if the enemy continued to refuse to submit, the Assyrians, before committing to a siege with its costs in time and men, tried encouraging or threatening cities to open their gates.

Before Sennacherib decided to lay siege to Jerusalem, he dispatched his supreme commander with a large army to negotiate with King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. Hezekiah sent out his palace administrator, secretary and recorder to listen to the Assyrian king's message. The following extract is recorded in the Bible (*2 Kings*, 18:13–37).

> Tell Hezekiah: This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: 'On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have the counsel and the might for war – but you speak only empty words.'... Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses – if you can put riders on them! How can you repulse one officer of the least of my master's officials ... Do you think I have come to attack and destroy this place without word from the Lord? The Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.
>
> Then Eliakim and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, 'Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.'
>
> But the commander replied, 'Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall – who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?
>
> Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, 'Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the Lord ...
>
> This is what the king of Assyria says: 'Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern,

until I come and take you to a land like your own – a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death!

Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, "The Lord will deliver us." Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? … Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the Lord deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'

But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply …

SOURCE 8.12 The Bible, *2 Kings*, 18:13–37

ACTIVITY 8.11

1 Suggest a reason why there might not be much evidence for face-to-face battles in the Assyrian records.

2 Explain the Assyrian's purpose in devastating an enemy's lands.

3 Use the Biblical account in Source 8.12 to answer the following questions about a pre-siege demand by the Assyrians at Jerusalem:
- Explain why King Hezekiah's' spokesmen were anxious for the Assyrian general to speak to them in Aramaic rather than Hebrew.
- List the bribes that were offered for Hezekiah and his people to submit.
- Outline the threats that were made in Sennacherib's offer.
- Evaluate how reliable you think this source is.

4 Research the siege of Jerusalem from the Biblical and Assyrian records. The Biblical account is in *Isaiah, 2 Kings* and *2 Chronicles*, while the Assyrian view is found on a hexagonal clay prism known as Sennacherib's Prism. Compare and contrast the two records. Also take into account the following comment.

A COMMENT ON THE RESULT OF THE SIEGE AGAINST JERUSALEM

The Biblical account (*Kings II*, 19: 31–36) says that prior to and after the siege, their Lord said the following about the king of Assyria.

'He will not enter this city
or shoot an arrow here.
He will not come before it with shield
or build a siege ramp against it.
By the way that he came he will return;
he will not enter this city,
declares the Lord.
I will defend this city and save it,
for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.'
That night the angel of the Lord went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning – there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

Assyrian sieges

The Assyrian army excelled at siege warfare. In Samaria and Judah alone, Sennacherib laid siege to, and claimed on his Prism to have destroyed, 'forty-six strong, walled cities and small towns'.

The following source reveals the standard siege tactics used by the Assyrians for breaching enemy walls.

Assault was their principal tactic against the heavily fortified cities of the Near East. They developed a great variety of methods for breaching enemy walls: sappers were employed to undermine walls or to light fires underneath wooden gates, and ramps were thrown up to allow men to go over the ramparts or to attempt a breach on the upper section of wall where it was the least thick. Mobile ladders allowed attackers to cross moats and quickly assault any point in the defences. These operations were covered by masses of archers, who were the core of the infantry. But the pride of the Assyrian siege train were their engines.

SOURCE 8.13 S. Anglim, *Fighting Techniques of the Ancient World 3000 BCE–500 CE* (2013), p. 186

The Assyrians prepared for a siege by setting up camp behind an oval wall with defensive towers where their engineers constructed the siege engines. These were multi-storied wooden towers on four wheels with a small tower (turret) on top for archers to provide covering fire as the engine moved forward up earthen ramparts to the walls. When it had reached its destination, its primary weapon, one or two battering rams at its base – a large tree-trunk-like spear, with an iron tip – battered and chipped away pieces of the enemy wall. Vulnerable to burning arrows, it was covered in wet animal skins and throughout the siege soldiers with ladles of water put out any fire and kept the leather damp. Over time, as walls became stronger, larger engines were built that could accommodate more archers.

FIGURE 8.30 Relief of an Assyrian siege

Draw up a chart of two columns and list the methods used in a siege in one column and their effectiveness in another.

The siege of Lachish

This is the best documented of all Assyrian sieges as it is recorded in both the Bible and in vivid reliefs taken from Nineveh and now in the British Museum.

Lachish was a prosperous city about 40 km from Jerusalem, on the major trade route to Egypt. Its leaders would have felt confident of holding out against the Assyrians, protected as they were by steep slopes and double walls with battlements, towers and fortified outworks.

To capture this stronghold, Sennacherib claimed to have built a ramp against the walls of Lachish composed of 10 banks of compacted stones and earth, covered with timber. In the meantime, the besieged inhabitants thronged the walls and defended themselves with showers of arrows and blazing torches.

The Assyrians then launched a two-pronged attack. The siege tower was brought up against the mid-section of the wall, and 'bowman on the ground pushed up close to the wall to cover the infantry assault on scaling ladders'.[9]

The final assault seems to have been intense and probably lasted two days. The city was looted, hundreds of inhabitants were put to the sword and the ring-leaders were taken and impaled on stakes in front of the city as a threat to those still holding out. King Sennacherib is shown in one of the reliefs sitting on a throne as a procession of captives beg for mercy at his feet. Lachish would serve as a reminder to other cities of the futility of resisting the Assyrian army.

However, judging from a mass grave holding the remains of 1500 Assyrians found outside the gates of Lachish, the assault did not go all the Assyrians' way.

The Assyrians did not always raze the cities they successfully besieged. A city and the fate of its inhabitants often depended on military and political factors.

FIGURE 8.31 The siege of Lachish
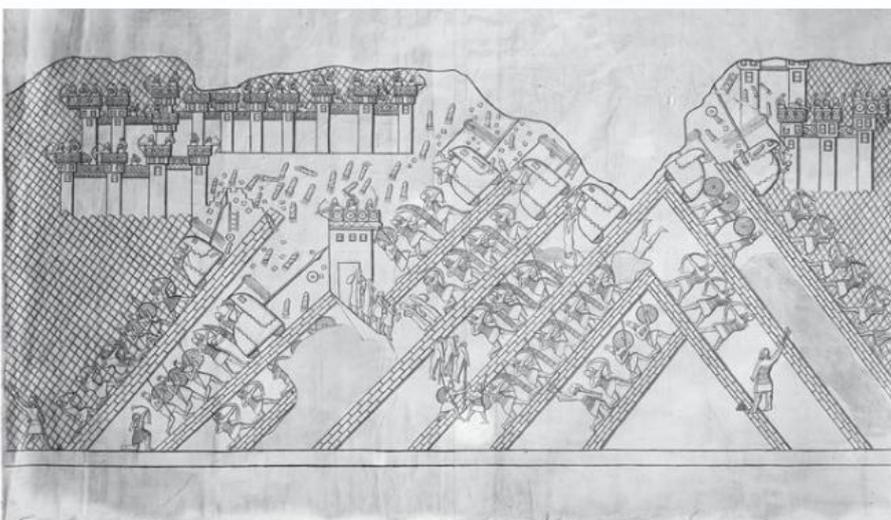
FIGURE 8.32 An artistic representation of the Assyrian attack on Lachish

Punishments, plunder and deportations

We have already seen how severe the punishments supposedly meted out by the Assyrians were. They also looted and plundered every city they sacked. When they boasted about the booty that was taken, silver and gold were always at the top of the list. Ashurbanipal bragged in the following way at the spoils he took from the city of Thebes in Egypt.

> Silver, gold, precious stones, the goods of his palace, all there was, brightly colored and linen garments, great horses, the people, male and female, two tall obelisks ... I removed from their positions and carried them off to Assyria. Heavy plunder, and countless, I carried away from Ni' [Thebes].

SOURCE 8.14 Daniel David Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, 2:296, 778
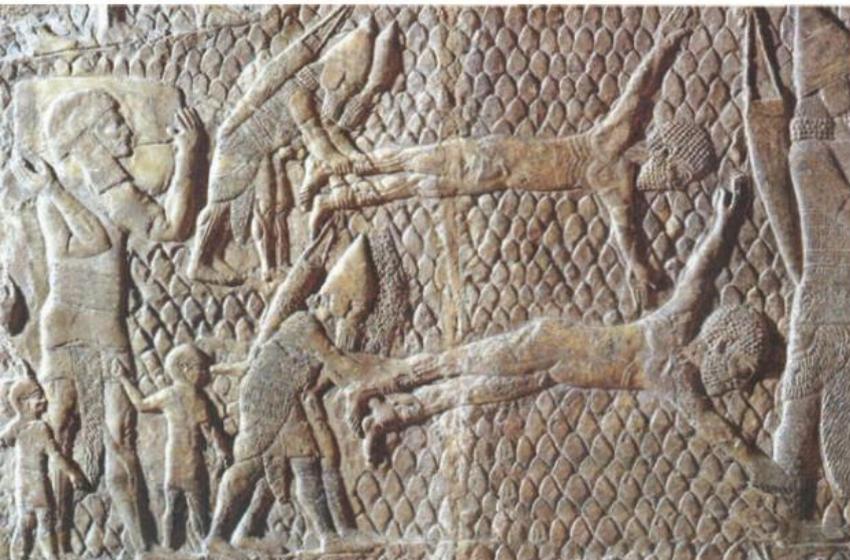
FIGURE 8.33 Punishment of prisoners

FIGURE 8.34 Punishment of prisoners

ACTIVITY 8.13

Describe the punishment being meted out to the prisoners in Figures 8.33 and 8.34.

The Assyrians also followed a carefully planned and organised policy of relocating conquered people. They regarded deportees as a valuable asset to the Assyrian state. It has been estimated that four and a half million people were forcibly relocated in this manner.

Not everyone among a conquered populace was chosen, however. Those who had actively resisted the Assyrians were usually killed. The purpose of forced migrations was to settle potentially rebellious groups far from their homelands, but deportees, who were not slaves, were carefully selected for their abilities and sent to regions of the empire which could make the most of their talents.

It appears that families were not separated; men, women and children travelled in groups. The reliefs indicate that they travelled safely and under conditions – often riding on vehicles or animals and never in bonds – that allowed them to arrive at their destination in good order. That is not to say that they did not suffer the loss of their homeland, such as the 30 000 Samarians deported from Israel – the 'lost tribes of Israel' – or that they did not harbor grudges or hatred, but, eventually, many of these deportees were assimilated into Assyrian society.

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FIGURE 8.35 Deportees under King Tiglath-Pileser III

FIGURE 8.36 Deportees leaving Lachish

In conjunction with their deportation policy, the Assyrians also sent some of their own people into vassal states as colonists to:

- establish a loyal power base
- reliably raise taxes, food and troops
- counter rebellions
- assist provincial governors.

A COMMENT ON PUNISHMENTS, PLUNDER AND RESETTLEMENTS

Throughout history, other armies have been just as destructive and brutal as the Assyrians, while looting was not only an expected 'reward' for the ordinary soldier, but also a way for ruling elites to display their power and express their wealth.

Long before the Assyrians, the Egyptian reliefs showed their kings smashing the heads of their enemies with maces and clubs, and trampling them underfoot. The pharaohs also boasted of their military successes – even when they didn't win – and had themselves depicted in battle as larger than life. In order to record the numbers they killed they cut off hands, some pharaohs impaled the heads of their enemies on stakes to display as a lesson to others who might think of opposing them, and the walls of Egyptian temples are covered with illustrations of the hundreds of bound captives being dragged back to Egypt to be sold into slavery. The wealth they looted and demanded as tribute was used to build massive monuments to the glory of the pharaohs.

And yet in the population imagination there is a degree of admiration for these Egyptian pharaohs while the Assyrians are regarded as 'barbaric'.

The legendary Alexander the Great, who came after the Assyrians, did not hesitate at times to kill on a gigantic scale in seeking revenge and pursuing glory, and he also relocated populations. Similarly, the Roman legions trampled all over those whose countries they wanted, didn't hesitate to line their major roads with crucified victims who rebelled against them, and their looting was carried out on a vast scale. The whole of Roman society was based on slavery of people removed from their homelands.

It should be remembered that the law of war in ancient times 'did not encompass humanitarian ideals … these laws were indifferent to considerations of mercy and the protection of combatants'.[10]

1. Interpret what Figures 8.35 and 8.36 indicate about the Assyrian treatment of deportees.
2. Explain the reason behind the Assyrian deportation policy.
3. Discuss the controversial aspects of Assyrian warfare in the light of the comment that the law of war in ancient times "did not encompass humanitarian ideals … these laws were indifferent to considerations of mercy and the protection of combatants".'

8.4 The political, economic and social impact of Assyrian warfare and conquest

Assyrian imperialism was the forerunner of the later attempts by Alexander the Great and his successors to spread Hellenic culture throughout the Mediterranean and Near East, and the later Roman system of 'Romanisation' of conquered states that were added to their empire.

The Assyrians used a systematic policy of economic, cultural and ethnic integration to transform vassals into provinces. It is sometimes referred to as 'Assyrianisation'.

> The reducing of a country to a province was carried out according to a standardised procedure, involving the utter destruction of the vassal's urban centres, massive deportations, and rebuilding of the capital in Assyrian style; the installation of an Assyrian governor, the construction of Assyrian garrisons and forts, the imposition of a uniform taxation and conscription system, imperial standards and measures, cults and a single lingua franca. The inhabitants became Assyrian citizens, its economy was completely reorganised in line with Assyrian commercial interests and the seat of the governor, a copy of the imperial court in miniature became a channel through which the Assyrian culture was systematically spread to the country. … Ambassadors and visitors to the capital were lavishly entertained and honoured at the court and exiled princes and aristocratic youths held at court received a thorough education in Assyrian literature, science and ways of life in general. … The overall goal was to integrate all foreign elites and then to work on the masses through the elites.

SOURCE 8.15 W. F. Albright, *Symbiosis, Symbolism and the Power of the Past*, pp. 100–101

Identify all the features employed by the Assyrians – mentioned in Source 8.15 – to reduce a conquered country into an Assyrian province.

There were certainly many negative aspects of Assyrian imperialism:

- brutality
- the heavy exactions of tribute from vassal kingdoms
- the booty plundered from conquered states
- an economic disparity between subject people and the Assyrians, as evidenced by a lack of flourishing cities and long-distance trade outside Assyria in the archaeological record. Perhaps the tribute levied
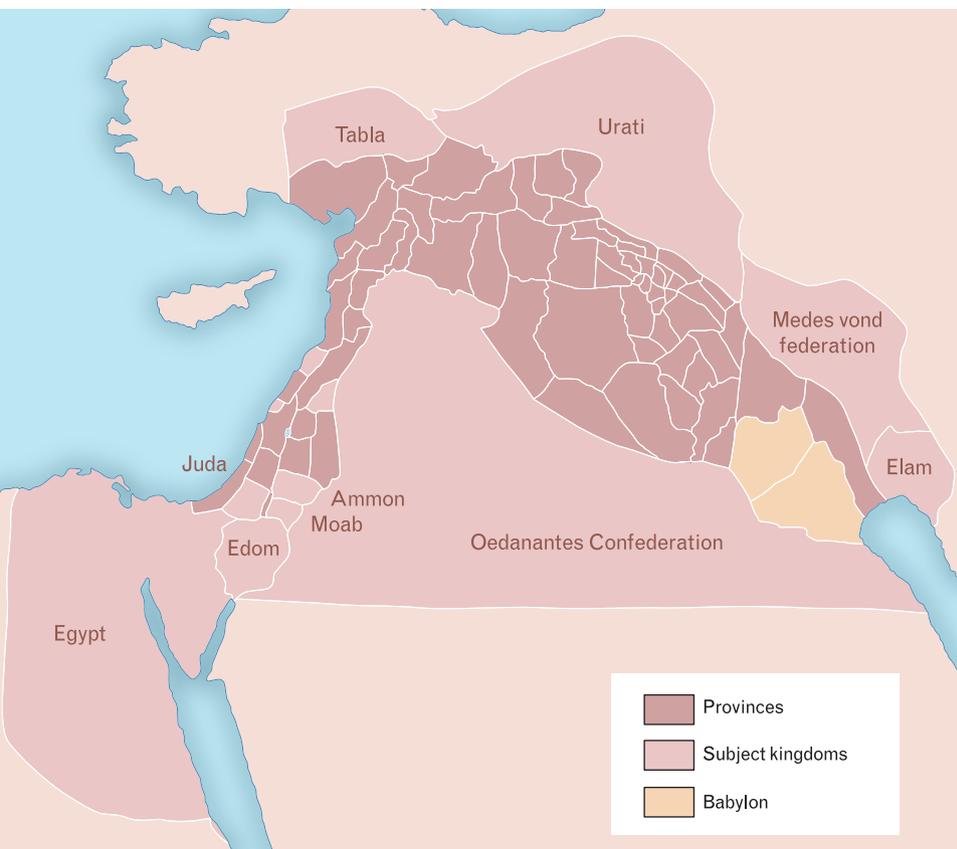
FIGURE 8.37 Territorial organisation of the Assyrian Empire at the time of Ashurbanipal

by the Assyrian government was simply too high to leave much wealth for commerce and economic development

- uprooting of entire populations with a loss of identity and feelings of being second-class citizens, which often resulted in revolts even though conquered populations became free subjects of the Assyrian king, no matter where they were resettled.

However, despite all the 'bad press' received by the Assyrians from contemporary cultures, as well as from modern historians, their impact was not entirely negative. For example:

- Assyrian expansion and conquest did not result in a vast slave trade in which human beings were traded on the free market as happened in other cultures, such as Rome.

- Deportations led to the growth of cosmopolitan urban populations in Assyria where foreign craftsmen contributed to the creation of magnificent palaces such as Nineveh and landscaped gardens and parks.
- Under Assyrian patronage, foreign artists and craftsmen reached a peak of perfection in their work. The royal tombs of Nineveh and Nimrud have yielded jewels of such quality and quantity to utterly astonish the archaeologists who found them. It has been estimated that the amount of gold discovered in the tombs of Kahlu was over 57 kg; and the skill with which they were fashioned, combining gold with ivory, alabaster, glass and semi-precious stones, made the hundreds of jewellery items objects of immense beauty. Also, their wall reliefs – intricate and exact in their workmanship – are of superb quality.
- Cheap foreign labour, and the benefit of booty and tribute, was utilised in massive building programs: networks of canals, and aqueducts and in the development of agriculture in under-populated regions.
- There was an opportunity for mobility among foreign workers in Assyrian cities.
- Aramaic – the language, most widely used by deportees – became the *lingua franca* and helped break down local barriers and spread literacy throughout the region. This was one of the enduring legacies of the Assyrians and Aramaic remained spoken in everyday life in the Middle East until the coming of Arabic.
- The Assyrians left a legacy of siege warfare which continued until the Middle Ages; whether this is good or bad is debatable.
- The modern scholar has much for which to be grateful to the Assyrians. In their need to boast of their achievements, the kings left a vast collection of inscriptional material concerning the development of their empire, the government of the provinces and military life.

CHAPTER 8 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE CONTEXT OF WARFARE IN ANCIENT ASSYRIA

- The homeland of the ancient Assyrians was in the northern part of Mesopotamia and the 'fertile crescent', but its exposed position bordering the lands of warlike mountain and desert tribesmen meant that its people developed a military tradition.
- It developed into one of the greatest empires the world had ever seen and at its peak, between the 9th and 7th centuries BCE, it stretched from the borders of ancient Iran to the Mediterranean and as far south as Upper Egypt. It is those 300 years that have let a lasting impression of the Assyrians as a violent, war-loving society, bent on conquest.

THE NATURE OF THE SOURCES FOR ASSYRIAN WARFARE

- Like the rulers of many ancient cultures, Assyrian kings boasted of their achievements and made extensive use of propaganda in the vivid and grisly texts and reliefs all over their palace walls and on official stelae. The reliefs were mainly meant to terrify and deter anyone questioning the king's might; to show that the king was carrying out his divine task to suppress and punish his enemies, and to record his heroic deeds. Apart from the propaganda texts, there is only limited material remains to testify to the historical assumption of excessive Assyrian cruelty.
- Another source for Assyrian warfare is found in the Old Testament books of the Bible.

WARFARE IN ANCIENT ASSYRIA

- Compared to their opponents, the Assyrian troops were better trained, better organised, more mobile and better equipped with the deadliest weapons the ancient world had ever seen. The invention of iron smelting, cold forging and tempering created a military revolution in the ancient world and the Assyrians were the first to take full advantage of iron's potential.
- Despite the large military numbers available, and their superior weaponry, the Assyrian army would not have been effective without careful planning, superior military strategies and the kings' willingness to do whatever it took to succeed. Once the Assyrians entered enemy territory, religious sacrifices were made, then the king and/or his commanders adopted one of three strategies: battle, devastation, or siege.

THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT OF ASSYRIAN WARFARE AND CONQUEST

- The Assyrians used a systematic policy of economic, cultural and ethnic integration to transform enemy countries into Assyrian provinces. This involved the utter destruction of the enemies' urban centres, massive deportations and rebuilding of the capitals in Assyrian style: the installation of an Assyrian governor, the construction of Assyrian garrisons and forts, the imposition of a uniform taxation and conscription system, imperial standards and measures, cults and a single spoken language.
- They used the booty from conquest to build and beautify their cities and palaces with gardens and parks, to carry out massive engineering feats, particularly in irrigation projects and ways to provide more water for the cities. One king even founded a vast library.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

As you review the chapter make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- vassal
- booty
- cuneiform
- *lamassu.*

Historical concepts

Change and continuity

- Identify those aspects of Assyrian society that remained the same throughout the 'new empire'.
- Describe how the methods of warfare changed during this period.

Causation

- Explain what caused the Assyrians to embark on a policy of expansion.
- Explain what brought the Assyrian Empire to an end.

Perspective

Is the perspective of Assyria as a blood-thirsty, ruthless and violent society somewhat over-simplified?

Historical skills

Analysing sources

1 Compare and contrast the accounts in the Bible with the texts of Sennacherib in regard to the siege of Jerusalem.
2 Explain what the reliefs reveal about the treatment of the defeated inhabitants of Lachish.

Historical research and interpretation

1 Describe how the remains of Nineveh/Nimrud have been interpreted by artists in their various representations.
2 Describe what life was like for an ordinary Assyrian soldier on the march and during battle.

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)

Account for the great successes of the Assyrian war machine throughout a 300-year period.

CHAPTER 9
Slavery in ancient Rome

FIGURE 9.1 A mosaic of a slave pouring wine, from the Roman city of Dougga in modern Tunisia

FIGURE 9.2 Relief map of Italy, showing the location of the Plain of Latium and the city of Rome

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Using different historical sources, you will investigate the nature and extent of Roman slavery in order to create a better understanding of the ancient past.
KEY ISSUES	In this chapter, you will explore: • the context within which Roman slavery developed • features of Roman society – classes, government, the economy and religion • the written and archaeological sources for slavery • the nature of Roman slavery • slave revolts.

The Carthaginians had committed no irretrievable offense against their opponents, yet the Romans had inflicted penalties which were not only harsh but final, even though the enemy had agreed to accept all their conditions and obey their commands.

SOURCE 9.1 The Roman attitude to Carthage prior to its destruction in 146 BCE, cited in Polybius, *The Rise of the Roman Empire*, XXXVI:9

FIGURE 9.3 *The Last Day of Corinth (1860)* by Tony Robert-Fleury depicts the destruction of the Greek commercial city of Corinth in 146 BCE

Study Figures 9.1 and 9.2 carefully, noting what you can see in each one. Think about the extent of Rome's empire and what the images indicate about Rome's early attitude to conquered territories. How might the event featured in Figure 9.3 have contributed to change in Roman society?

CHAPTER 9 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS

KEY IDEA

The creation of the Roman Empire transformed all aspects of Roman society, but more particularly it contributed to the institution of slavery, which became a pillar of Roman society for almost a thousand years.

WHY IT MATTERS TODAY

Throughout history, the Romans were not alone in their exploitation of one group by another. Despite the outlawing of slavery in the modern world, it still exists in many places in one form or another and often for many of the same economic reasons as those that existed in ancient Rome.

KEY TERMS

- patriarchal
- *clientele*
- *liberti*
- manumission
- *servi*
- consuls
- praetors
- *imperium*
- *comitia*
- princeps
- auspices
- epitaphs
- *murmillo*
- *peculium*
- *contubernium*
- *latifundia*

Painting the picture

Slavery in one form of another was prevalent in most ancient cultures, and in the words of the 2nd century CE Roman jurist, Gaius: 'Indeed this is the basic division of the law of persons, that all men are either free or slaves'.[1]

As the state grew from a small agricultural settlement, and expanded via conquests, first through the Italian peninsula and then throughout the Mediterranean basin – both west and east – slavery became one of the most striking features of Roman society.

The origins of slavery changed over time, from conquests producing massive numbers of captives and the kidnapping activities associated with widespread piracy, to those domestically bred in the Roman household, and to the practice of enslaving foundlings, based on the large number of instances of child exposures and abandonments throughout the Mediterranean.

For more than a thousand years, through both the republican and imperial phases of Roman history, the state was based on the exploitation of one group of people who provided for the rest. The institution of slavery has been described as a 'critical pillar' of Roman society, and as the Romans became more aware of their complete dependence on the services of slaves, the government made more laws regarding their treatment.

Slavery continued until the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE, but began to finally wither away due to economic and social reasons in the early Middle Ages and was replaced by serfdom.

> **INQUIRY QUESTION**
>
> What was the historical context within which Roman slavery developed?

9.1 The context of slavery in ancient Rome

'Geographically and chronologically slavery was always an integral element of Roman civilisation and experience.'[2]

Location and site

The growth of Rome – from a small agricultural village built on seven hills adjacent to the Tiber, struggling to maintain itself against its neighbours, to a world power dominating the whole Mediterranean basin –

cannot be explained by one factor alone. However, two aspects: location and site, contributed to its success:

1 Rome's location on the fertile plain of Latium, midway along the western side of the peninsula, and Italy's central location within the Mediterranean.

2 The geographical assets of the site of Rome.

The largest and most fertile of Italy's plains – except for that of the Po in the north – all lay along the western side of the peninsula: Etruria, Latium and Campania. These plains of the west supported dense populations of farmers who formed the reliable backbone of the Roman army, and since the centres of population were in the west, it was natural that Rome's first expansion beyond Italy (the Punic Wars against Carthage) should be into the western Mediterranean.

The plain of Latium had an important geographical advantage. It was the junction of several great natural and direct routes to the surrounding regions: a route running north to Etruria and another south to Magna Graecia ('Greater Greece') an area of southern Italy colonised by Greek city-states.

Italy's central position in the Mediterranean basin gave access to the lands of the west (Spain and Gaul), south (North Africa) and later to the Hellenic east. When Rome became an imperial power, this position made it easier to maintain control, while the Mediterranean Sea linked the provinces within the empire.

Rome grew at a site on the River Tiber where volcanic outflows had produced a group of tightly knit hills which were easily defended by the early communities of shepherds and farmers. The Tiber not only gave the growing city access to the sea and further inland, but at the site of Rome there was an island in the river – the only one – that allowed it to be easily crossed. Rome also had a central position as a road junction.
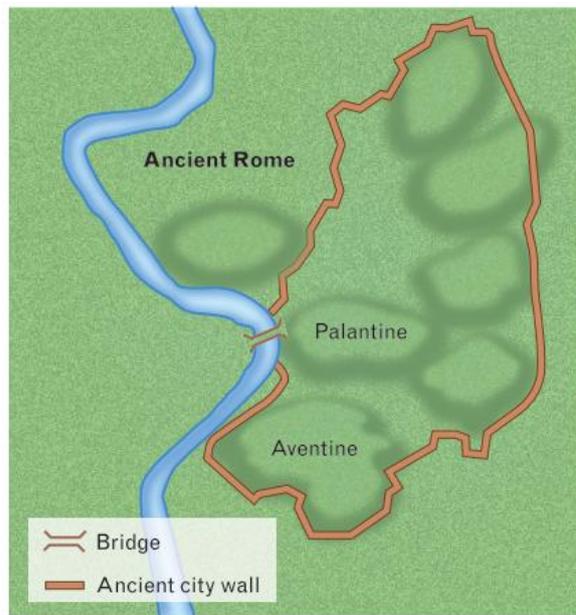
FIGURE 9.4 The original site of Rome on its hills with the River Tiber

FIGURE 9.5 Roman soldiers, who transformed the settlement on the Tiber into the leading power in the Mediterranean

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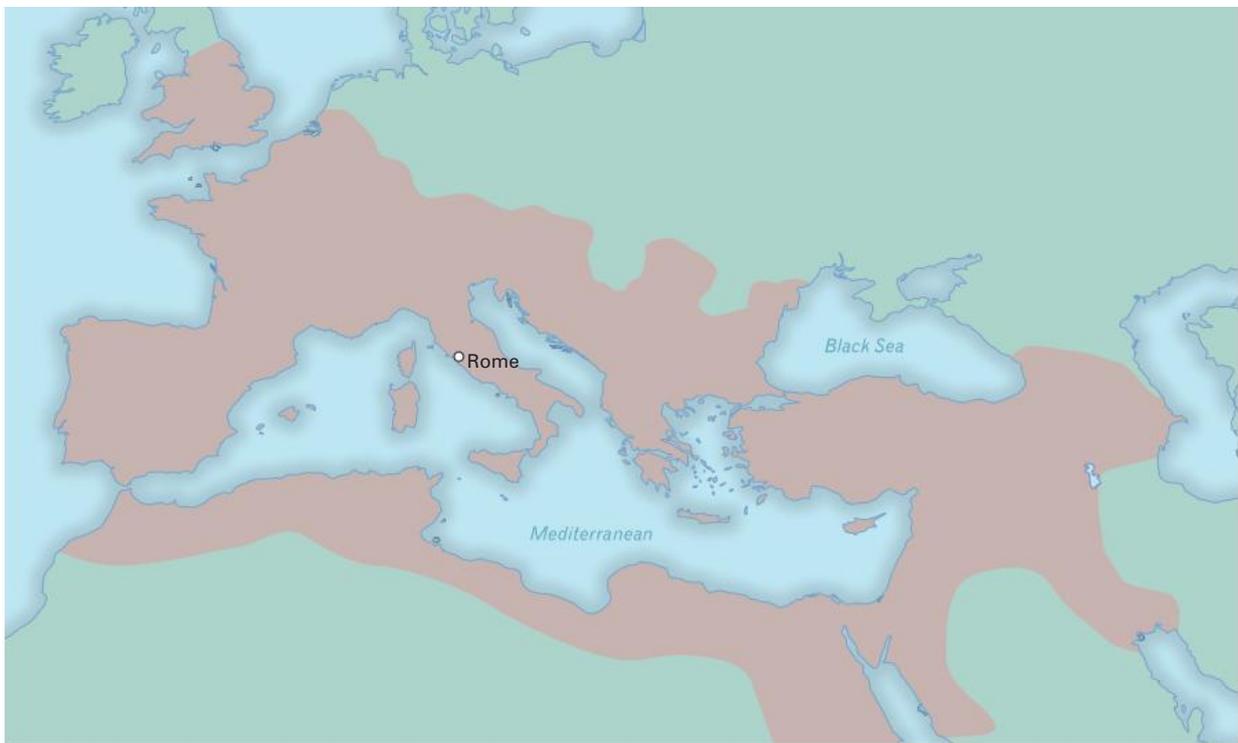
FIGURE 9.6 The pink area shows the extent of the empire from which Roman slaves came in the early 2nd century CE

FIGURE 9.7 A model of the imperial city of Rome, the city built by the conquests of the legions and the efforts of slaves

Explain what Source 9.1 (on p. 347) and Figures 9.5 (p. 350) and 9.6 (p. 351) reveal about the growth of Rome's empire and of the nature of slavery.

The historical context of slavery during the Roman Republic and early Empire

THE REPUBLIC	
509–275 BCE	• The establishment of the Roman Republic • From 509 to 275, while the new government struggled with a number of internal political issues, such as the conflict between the ruling class and the rest of the population, the city grew to become the dominant military and civil power in the Italian peninsula
496–275 BCE	• Through its military expansion within Italy the social and political structure of the republic gradually evolved and slavery became more common
264–201 BCE	• The Romans became engaged in a series of wars against the Carthaginian Empire in the western Mediterranean: the First Punic War (264–241) and the Second Punic War (218–201). After the defeat of the Carthaginians in the Second Punic War, there were tens of thousands of slaves from former Carthaginian colonies in Spain, Sardinia and Sicily available for Roman use.
200–146 BCE	• In the 50 years after the Second Punic War, Rome became involved in events in Macedon (four wars) and in Greece. In 166, the Roman general Aemilius Paullus captured 150 000 people in Epirus • The Romans made the island of Delos into a free port and it became the centre of a very lucrative slave trade • During this time the Roman attitude to overseas possessions hardened until in 146, it totally destroyed the ancient trading cities of Corinth and Carthage in the Third Punic War. These wars established Rome as the dominant power in both the western and eastern Mediterranean
146–78 BCE	• After the destruction of Carthage, it is believed around 30 000 men and 25 000 women were enslaved • It has been estimated that there were approximately 250 000 prisoners of war taken by the Romans in the first half of the 2nd century BCE • Before the end of the 2nd century BCE, Rome had seven provinces and all aspects of Roman urban and rural life were affected: from rural land use, the size of properties, food supply, population structure, employment, family life, living conditions, trade, business, entertainment, religion and education. But these foreign influences widened the gap between the rich and poor as the wealthy bought up vast tracts of land and replaced free agricultural labourers with slaves. Those displaced flocked to Rome leading to overpopulation, food and housing shortages and violence • As vast amounts of wealth flowed into the hands of the upper classes the demand for household slaves increased, but many were sent to work in the mines and in chain gangs on large estates. This exploitation led to a number of serious slave uprisings in Sicily and Italy

THE REPUBLIC	
	• The First Slave War occurred in Sicily in 135–132 BCE • The changes brought about by conquest highlighted some of the weaknesses in the republican form of government and the inability of its ruling class to adjust to the changing conditions. Landless peasants, unable to compete with slave labour, flocked to Rome and joined the ranks of the urban mob, demanding land reform • The Second Slave War in Sicily occurred in 104–100 BCE • A reform of the Roman army into a professional fighting force also changed the political scene throughout the empire
78–28 BCE	• Piracy had become a serious problem in the Mediterranean. With well-organised fleets, they raided and plundered the length and breadth of the Mediterranean. As well as disrupting regular commerce, they operated a lucrative slave trade, kidnapping and then selling captives at the slave market on Delos. The Roman government at first turned a blind eye since wealthy Roman landowners employing slaves made a profit out of the pirates' trade • The Third Slave War occurred in Italy between 73–71 BCE. This was the most serious of the slave uprisings, led by Spartacus, and it inspired real fear in the Romans. • Between 67–62 the great general Pompey ended piracy when it threatened Rome's grain supply, and added more provinces in the east: a ring of provinces around the coastline from the southern shore of the Black Sea to Syria • Between 58–51 BCE Julius Caesar conquered Gaul, which became the province of Gallia Comata; he is said to have conquered 800 towns and captured a million people • Caesar's power caused resentment among the nobility and he was assassinated in 44 BCE by a group of senators in the Senate House • The years 44–28 saw Caesar's heir, Octavian, fight for the future of the empire against Mark Antony and Cleopatra, eventually annexing Egypt as an imperial province in which slavery was to play a large future role • Octavian adopted the name Augustus Caesar and instituted a new political order: the 'principate' or 'rule of the first citizen'
THE EARLY EMPIRE	
27 BCE – 200 CE	• Augustus Caesar became the first emperor of Rome and ruled until his death in 14 CE. He reformed the laws of the city and the provinces, secured Rome's borders, initiated vast building projects and set in place a time of relative peace and prosperity (*Pax Romana*) throughout the empire, which lasted for almost 200 years • Slavery continued to be a vital part of the social and economic life of the imperial society and because the upper classes realised their complete reliance on them, there were more legal regulations made concerning the treatment of slaves • Two laws passed in 2 CE (*lex Fufia Canina*) and 4 CE (*lex Aelia Sentia*) were passed on the request of the Emperor Augustus to place certain restrictions on the manumission (freeing) of slaves, since the number of manumissions at the end of the republic and beginning of the empire were so large as to affect the social system at the time • Augustus' successors (Tiberius, Gaius/Caligula, Claudius and Nero) ruled as the Julio-Claudians, and during the reign of Claudius, Britain was added to the empire as the province of Britannia (43 CE), a source of further slaves and wealth, and between 44–46 he annexed Judaea and Thrace

- Also during his reign, he established an imperial bureaucracy that employed a large number of freed slaves (freedmen) in administrative positions. Some became quite influential and wealthy
- Although there were no longer any slave revolts as in the Republic, there were still runaways and during the reign of Nero (61 CE) there was a notorious case that involved the murder of the city official Pedanius by one of his slaves, which led to the senate's controversial decision to execute his entire slave household
- In 69 CE, a Jewish rebellion was put down by Emperor Vespasian, and the conquests of his son Titus produced 97000 slaves and the steady expansion of the empire
- The empire grew stronger and slaves had to be found from sources other than conquests
- The institution of slavery continued for the remainder of the Roman Empire even during a time of Christian influence. More slaves entered Rome when the 'barbarian' Visigoths and Germans entered Roman territory and brought the Western Roman Empire to an end in 476 CE

Two events that changed the Roman world – the destruction of Carthage and Corinth in 146 BCE

These were the events that played a transformative role in the future of Rome and changed the nature of slavery and numbers of slaves in Roman society. The city of Carthage had dominated the western Mediterranean both politically and economically, while Corinth was the powerhouse commercial city in the eastern Mediterranean. Carthage had already been stripped of its Sicilian and Spanish territories, but by 146 BCE, Rome's attitudes had hardened. In the same year they totally destroyed both Carthage in northern Africa and Corinth in Greece (see Figure 9.3 on p. 348), giving Rome access to untold wealth and hordes of slaves.

Polybius also recorded that the great Roman general Scipio Aemilianus 'when he looked upon the city of Carthage as it was utterly perishing and in the last throes of its complete destruction, is said to have shed tears and wept openly for his enemies'.[3]

FIGURE 9.8 The great commercial and naval city of Carthage depicted in Claude Lorrain's painting, *Aeneas and Dido in Carthage*, (1604–1682)

FIGURE 9.9 The remains of Carthage today

> At first though the gates were open, Mummius hesitated to enter Corinth, suspecting an ambush had been laid within the walls. But on the third day after the battle he proceeded to storm Corinth and set it on fire. The majority of those in it were put to the sword by the Romans, but the women and children Mummius sold into slavery. He also sold all the slaves who had been set free and had fought on the side of the Achaeans [Greeks] but had not fallen on the field of battle. The most admired votive offerings and works of art were carried off by Mummius …

SOURCE 9.2 Account of the taking of the Greek city of Corinth in 146 BCE, cited in Pausanius, *Description of Greece,* VII.xvi, 7–10

ACTIVITY 9.2

Use the information in the timeline, Figures 9.8 and 9.9 and Sources 9.1 (on p. 347) and 9.2 to answer the following:

1 Recount the first *significant* step on the Romans' path to becoming a society based on slavery.
2 Describe the role the island of Delos in the Aegean Sea played in Rome's slave trade.
3 According to Source 9.1, what is Polybius' personal opinion on the way the Roman government treated the Carthaginians in 146 BCE?
4 Outline four things Pausanius attributes to the Roman general Mummius in his treatment of Corinth in 146 BCE.
5 Explain why the period 146–78 BCE was such a transformative time for Roman society.
6 When did the three major slave (servile) revolts occur and which was the most serious?
7 When was piracy in the Mediterranean at its peak and what was its effect on slavery?
8 Why did the imperial government of Augustus feel the need to make laws concerning slavery?
9 What events occurred in 58–51 BCE, 43 CE, 69 CE and 132 CE that had a significant effect on Roman slavery?

9.2 Features of Roman society – classes, government, the economy and religion

The elements of Roman society and the slave's place in it were bound to change over time, although there were some features that remained the same.

These included the:

- importance of the *familiae* and its **patriarchal** nature (control by a leading male)
- significance of being freeborn and having Roman citizenship
- multiple social hierarchies that often overlapped, so that a person's position in one might be different than in another. An example of this was the patron–client relationship known as *clientele*, one of the most long-lasting features of Roman society and of considerable influence in politics. In these important social networks, a patron could himself be a client of a more powerful patron, and his clients could have multiple patrons. Later, when Rome acquired overseas provinces, officials and generals became the patrons of very large groups of foreign people.

patriarchal ruled or controlled by men

clientele refers to the relationship between a patron and a client in which both have responsibilities to the other

> It was essential in Rome to fit into social groups in order to gain acceptance from one's peers and to facilitate patronage connections with those more powerful.

SOURCE 9.3 Tim G. Parkins and Arthur J. Pomeroy, *Roman Social History: A Sourcebook*, 2007, p. 3
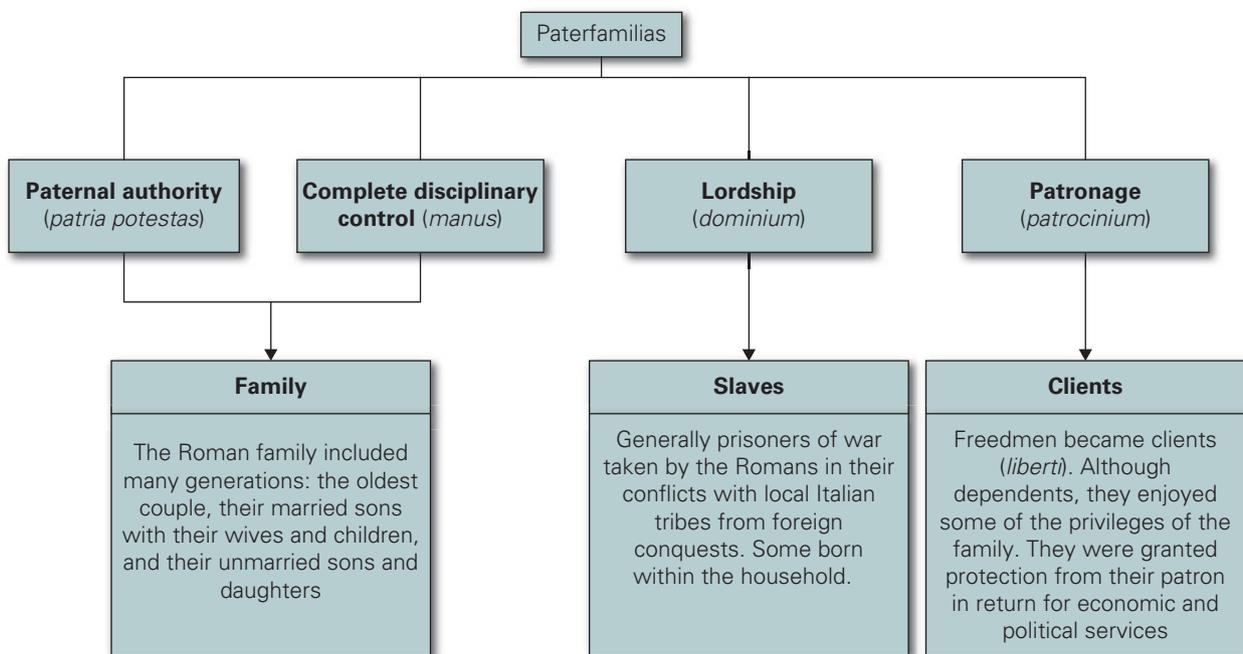
FIGURE 9.10 Diagram of household

Social classes
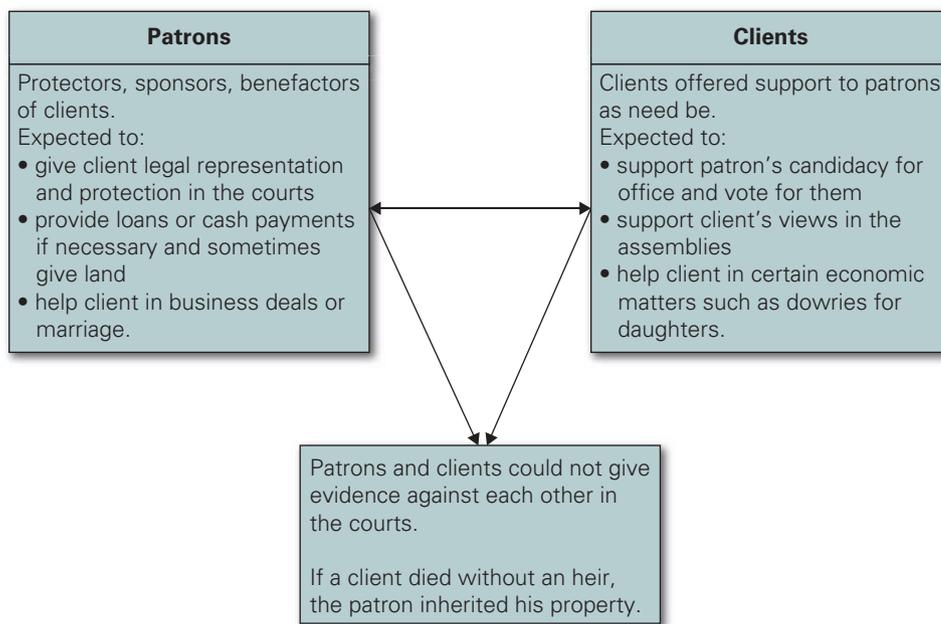
FIGURE 9.11 Diagram of patron–client relationships

Roman society was divided into the following groups:

1 Freeborn (*ingenui*) – within this group there had always been hierarchies based on one's:

- ancestry – patrician (nobles) or plebeian (commoners)
- rank, based on wealth and political privilege – senators and equestrians

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- citizenship, which itself was divided into various grades in which some people had only partial citizenship rights. Some communities had what were called Latin Rights. They could not vote but their leading magistrates could become full citizens
- gender – women, although citizens, could not vote or hold office and so were always lower in the hierarchy. The form of Roman marriage called *conubium* required that both partners had to be a citizen, *cives*. A woman's legal status affected her son's citizenship.

2 Freedmen and women (*liberti*) – these were people who had been slaves but who had gained their freedom by **manumission**. Any children born of freedmen were classified as freeborn. A freed slave was the *libertus* of his former master, who became his patron (*patronus*). The two had mutual obligations to each other within the traditional patronage system. Freedmen could vote and participate in politics, but could not run for office or be admitted to the ruling class. During the empire, many freedmen had roles in the imperial bureaucracy and the emperor's household. Others got involved in commerce and became extremely wealthy and influential.

3 Slaves (*servi*) – those legally enslaved. Although they had certain rights, they were generally regarded in Roman society as little more than property. In the 2nd century BCE, it was recorded that 'it appears that the law places in the same category with slaves, animals which are included under the head of cattle and are kept in herds …'.[4]

liberti freedmen and women

manumission the process of freeing a slave

servi slaves in the Roman republic and empire

Roman government

The Romans did not have a written constitution, but rather one that evolved over time.

By 264 BCE, the republican government had virtually acquired the form it was to retain, although it did go through some further changes in the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE. Its administrative structure included:

1 the Senate

2 magistrates

3 peoples' assemblies.

The Senate was a purely advisory body, but in practice it became the real governing body in republican Rome. Its power was not based on law, but on custom, precedent and the prestige of its members. Its power increased during the wars against Carthage and its supremacy in the state became firmly established during the 2nd century BCE. The members of this body made up the ruling class of Rome.

A magistrate was an elected government official, occupying a position of power and prestige, both of which increased with the rank of his office. The two highest magistrates were:

FIGURE 9.12 A funerary urn for the freedman Tiberius Claudius Chryseros and two women, probably his wife and daughter

- **consuls** – commanded the army, conducted chief elections, presided over meetings of the Senate and implemented Senate decisions
- **praetors** – supreme civil judges of Rome, sometimes commanded an army, could summon the assembly of the centuries and introduce legislation.

consuls two highest Roman magistrates who commanded the army and presided over the Senate

praetors ancient Roman magistrates, ranking below consuls

Theses magistrates had what was called **imperium**. Also, only those who had held these positions could lead an army and be sent out to the provinces as governors.

There were three popular assemblies of the people (**comitia**) summoned to gather in a particular way for particular functions.
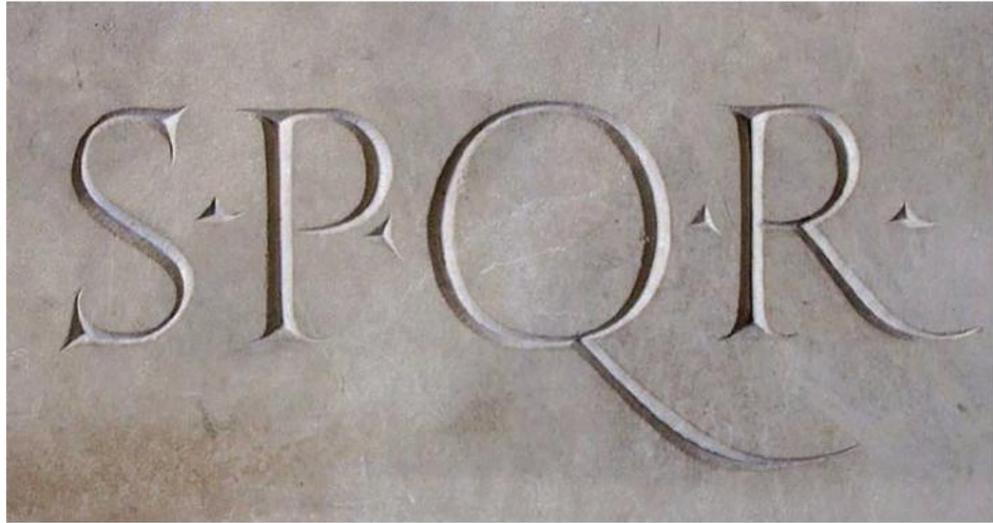
FIGURE 9.13 The lettering *SPQR* refers to the government of the Roman republic

After the chaos of years of civil wars during the 1st century BCE was brought to an end, Octavian/Augustus believed that centralised power in the hands of one man was the only solution for the future. Because he wanted assumption of this power by himself to appear constitutional and to share the workload of running the empire with the Senate, he adopted the title of **princeps** or 'first citizen'. However, he kept supreme power in his own hands by controlling the army.

ACTIVITY 9.3

1   Describe the system of clientele and its importance within Roman society.
2   On what basis was a male's citizenship assessed?
3   Identify the term used for 'freeing of a slave'.
4   Explain the obligations of a freedman to his former master.
5   How were slaves generally regarded in Roman society?
6   Who comprised the ruling class of Rome?
7   What were the two highest political positions a magistrate could achieve and what was the power that went with them?
8   Investigate what the letters SPQR mean.
9   Discuss how did Roman government changed under Augustus.

The economy

'Ancient Rome was an agrarian and slave-based economy whose main concern was feeding the vast number of citizens and legionaries who populated the Mediterranean region.'⁵ Trade – supplemented by small-scale industrial production and mining – also dominated Rome's economy.

Wheat, consumed as bread or as broth, was a staple of the ancient diet. Yet, because of the size of Rome (conventionally set at a million people), maintaining grain supplies year-round required considerable effort. In 57 BCE, the new post of *cura annonae* (Curator of the Grain Supply) was created and bestowed on Pompey; those eligible for a grain handout were registered and provided with regular supplies. Under Augustus, the numbers eligible were limited to 200 000, but food shortages still occurred, often leading to riots and even leading to threats against the emperor himself.

SOURCE 9.4 Tim G. Parkin and Arthur L. Pomeroy, *Roman Social History: A Sourcebook*, p. 260

Claudius always interested himself in the proper upkeep of the city and the regular arrival of grain supplies … Once, after a series of bad harvests had caused a scarcity of grain [51 CE], a mob stopped Claudius in the Forum and pelted him so hard with curses and stale crusts that he had difficulty in regaining the palace … as a result he took all possible steps to import grain, even during the winter months – insuring merchants against the loss of their ships in stormy weather (which guaranteed them a good return on their ventures), and offering a large bounty for every new grain transport ship, proportionate to its tonnage.

SOURCE 9.5 Suetonius, *Claudius*, 18–20

FIGURE 9.14 The remains of warehouses at Ostia Antica, the port of ancient Rome, modernised by the Emperor Claudius

Polybius mentions the silver mines at New Carthage (in Spain) and says that they are very large, that they are about 20 stades from the city and cover an area of 400 stades in circumference, and that 40 000 workers stay there. In time, they brought into the Roman state each day 25 000 drachmas.

SOURCE 9.6 Strabo, *Geography,* 3.2.10
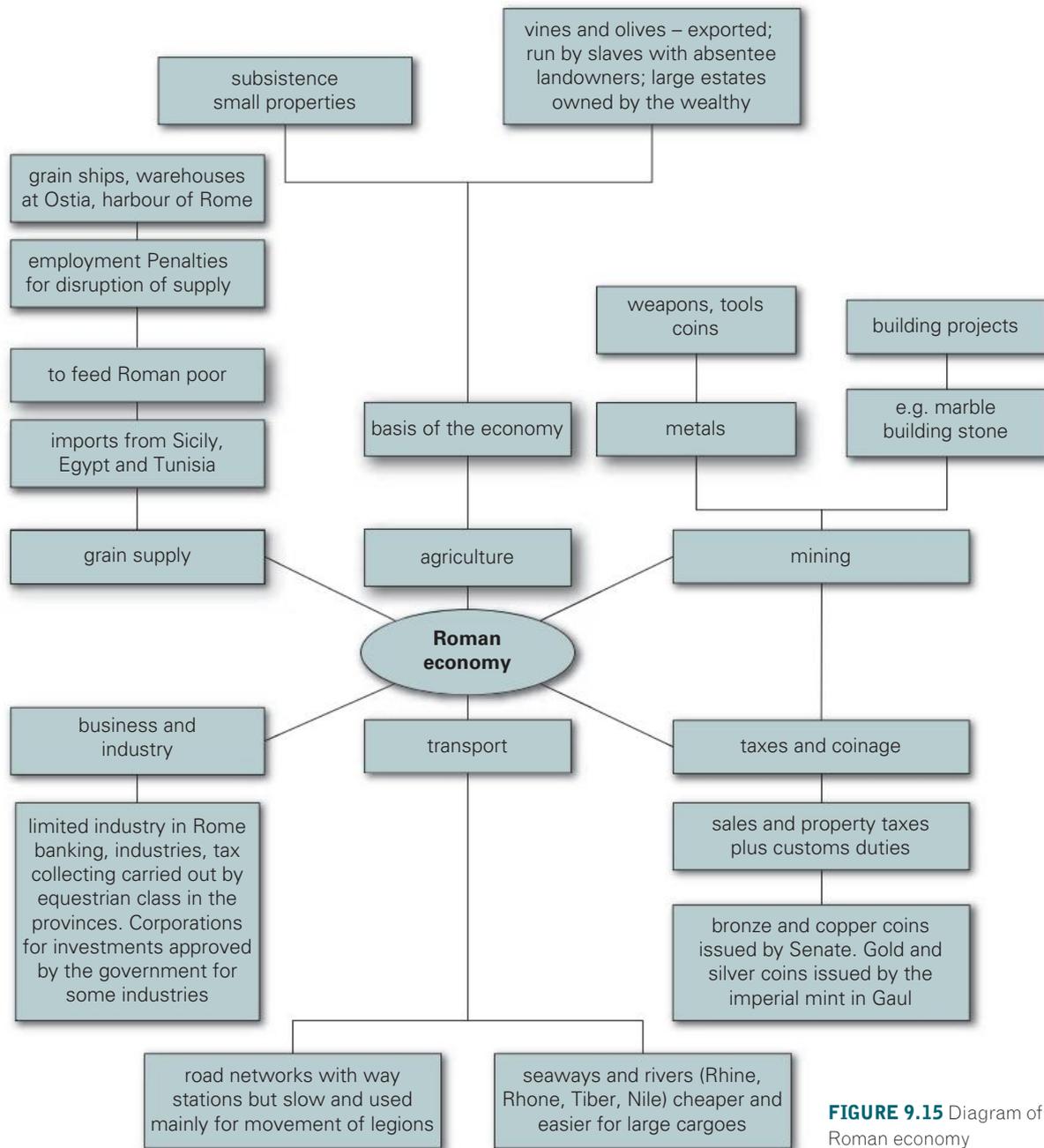
FIGURE 9.15 Diagram of the Roman economy

The diagram shows the Roman economy with the following connected elements:

- subsistence small properties
- vines and olives – exported; run by slaves with absentee landowners; large estates owned by the wealthy
- grain ships, warehouses at Ostia, harbour of Rome
- employment Penalties for disruption of supply
- to feed Roman poor
- imports from Sicily, Egypt and Tunisia
- grain supply
- basis of the economy
- weapons, tools coins
- building projects
- metals
- e.g. marble building stone
- agriculture
- mining
- **Roman economy**
- business and industry
- transport
- taxes and coinage
- limited industry in Rome banking, industries, tax collecting carried out by equestrian class in the provinces. Corporations for investments approved by the government for some industries
- sales and property taxes plus customs duties
- bronze and copper coins issued by Senate. Gold and silver coins issued by the imperial mint in Gaul
- road networks with way stations but slow and used mainly for movement of legions
- seaways and rivers (Rhine, Rhone, Tiber, Nile) cheaper and easier for large cargoes

ACTIVITY 9.4

Use Sources 9.4–9.6 (on p. 359) and Figure 9.15 to answer the following:

1 Explain what the Roman grain handout (dole) is.
2 Examine why it was a constant concern for Roman authorities.
3 Summarise what you think the task of a Curator of the Grain Supply was.
4 Where did most of Rome's grain come from?
5 Clarify why Augustus limited the numbers eligible for the grain dole.
6 What significant innovations did Emperor Claudius introduce to improve the grain supply?
7 Apart from agriculture, what other sources of wealth contributed to the Roman economy?

Roman religion

Religion in Rome involved the correct performance of ritual: sacrifice and prayer. Only when the proper procedures on both a state and household level were observed, would the gods answer their prayers.

The state religion – which centred on a triad of gods, Jupiter (protector of the state), Juno (protector of women) and Minerva (patron of craftsmen) – represented a special branch of the administration. Religion was subordinated to the interest of the state, and played an important part in political decisions. The priests – who were usually active politicians such as magistrates or senators – belonged to a number of colleges. For example, the Augurs were responsible for divination or taking the **auspices**. These auspices took several forms: the observation of natural phenomena; the studying of the vital organs of animals; and taking note of portents – unusual events such as earthquakes and eclipses. These could all be used to influence political events, such as the timing of holding an election or going to war.

auspices various omens indicating if the gods approved or disapproved of state decisions

Changes were made to the state religion as Rome's empire grew.

1   The influence of Greek culture resulted in Roman gods being identified with their Greek counterparts: Jupiter with Zeus, Juno with Hera, Minerva with Athena, and so on.

2   The worship of foreign gods, such as the cults of Dionysus introduced from Greece, Isis introduced from Egypt, and Mithras introduced by soldiers returning from the East, became popular in Rome.

3   With the advent of the empire under Augustus, a cult of Caesar-worship, which took the form of the cults of 'Rome and Augustus' and 'Rome and the Deified Julius', became common in the provinces and was a way to unite all provincials in loyalty to Rome.

All Romans also had their own household shrines at which they worshipped:

- Janus, the spirit of the doorway
- Vesta, guardian of the hearth
- The Lares, guardians of the fields and family property
- The penates, guardian spirits of the store chamber
- Genius, the male procreative spirit.

A family's ancestors, represented by wax masks, as keepers of the family's lineage, were also kept in the house.

9.3 The nature of the written and archaeological sources for slavery

The sources of information for Roman slavery come from a wide geographical area: Rome and Italy to Asia Minor and Egypt.

Written sources

> All historians are victims of their sources. But the historian of Roman slavery is at a special disadvantage, for although a great volume of information is on hand, it is all subject to the fundamental flaw that there is no surviving record, if indeed any ever existed, of what life was like from a slave's point of view … Roman slavery is almost entirely represented from what the historian of a modern slave culture would call pro-slavery sources, items of evidence that reflect the attitudes and prejudices of the slave-owning sectors of society and that contain, at most, minimal sensitivity.

SOURCE 9.7 Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome*, 1994, p. 7

If we rely on literature and law for our understanding of Roman society, we rely on a story that excludes for the most part the position of slaves and lower-class Romans … law and literature do not truly represent the non-privileged.

ACTIVITY 9.5

Analyse what Sources 9.7 (on p. 361) and 9.8 say about:

1 the difficulties faced by a historian researching Roman slavery
2 the uses of the ancient written sources on the topic of slavery.

The written sources from which historians have attempted to gain information about the institution of slavery in Roman history cover a wide range of categories, shown in Table 9.1.

TABLE 9.1 The range of ancient written sources that indicate features of Roman slavery

Type	Dates	Comments
Histories		
Polybius – *Histories*	c. 200–118 BCE	Details of Rome's conquests in the 3rd–2nd centuries BCE
Diodorus Siculus – *Bibliotheca historica*	c. 60 – 30 BCE	The full story of the First Slave revolt in Sicily and conditions of those who worked in the mines.
Livy – *From the Foundation of the City*	c. 59 BCE – 17 CE	The Carthaginian and Macedonian Wars
Tacitus – *Annals*	c. 59–120 CE	An account of the murder of the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, by his slave and its repercussions
Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*	c. 69–122 CE	The reign of Claudius, conquest of Britain and the emperor's freedmen
Florus – *Epitome of Roman History*	c. 70 –130 CE	The First Slave war and the Roman war against Spartacus
Appian – *Roman History*	c. 95–165 CE	Spartacus' revolt
Biographies		
Plutarch – *Lives* (of Cato and Crassus)	c. 46–120 CE	The life of Crassus and the war against Spartacus. A brief account of how Cato treated his slaves
Letters		
Seneca the Younger – Letter 47 to Lucilius on masters and slaves	4 BCE – 65 CE	Makes dozens of very good and even persuasive points about the treatment of slaves
Pliny the Younger – Letters	61 –113 CE	Reveals how he viewed and treated his slaves
Agricultural manuals		
Cato the Elder – *De Agri Cultura* (*On Agriculture*)	234–149 BCE	Outlines how to manage farm slaves
Columella – *Res rustica* (*On Agriculture*)	4–70 CE	Reveals his attitude to slaves and describes how to house them
Natural History		
Pliny the Elder – *Natural History*	23–79 CE	Describes gold mining by Roman slaves

TABLE 9.1 *(Continued)*

Type	Dates	Comments	
Plays			
Plautus – *Amphitrion* and *Pseudolus*	c. 254–184 BCE	Gives a picture of an inconsiderate master, and the kind of treatment his slaves were likely to get	
Inscriptions			
Funerary **epitaphs** On slave collars Inscriptions on punishments Government edicts	Most inscribed during the imperial age	Reveal the place of a slave in the *familia*, the manumission of slaves and the status of freedmen	**epitaphs** short inscriptions written about an individual on a headstone or stela
Roman laws			
Gaius, *Institutes* Justinian, *Digest of Roman Laws*	c. 110–79 CE c. 530–533 CE	Details the elements of Roman law, the latter compiled by order of the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Emperor Justinian I in the 6th century	

Two views regarding slaves

1 Seneca was a Roman Stoic philosopher, statesman, tutor and later advisor to Emperor Nero. Part of his work included a series of moralistic letters. The extracts below reveal his attitude to the treatment of slaves.

> I am glad to learn, through those who come from you, that you live on friendly terms with your slaves. This befits a sensible and well-educated man like yourself. 'They are slaves,' people declare. Nay, rather they are men. 'Slaves!' No, comrades. 'Slaves!' No, they are unpretentious friends. 'Slaves!' No, they are our fellow-slaves, if one reflects that Fortune has equal rights over slaves and free men alike. … That is why I smile at those who think it degrading for a man to dine with his slave. But why should they think it degrading? It is only because purse-proud etiquette surrounds a householder at his dinner with a mob of standing slaves. … All this time the poor slaves may not move their lips, even to speak. The slightest murmur is repressed by the rod; even a chance sound, – a cough, a sneeze, or a hiccup, – is visited with the lash. There is a grievous penalty for the slightest breach of silence. All night long they must stand about, hungry and dumb. … I shall pass over other cruel and inhuman conduct towards them; for we maltreat them, not as if they were men, but as if they were beasts of burden. When we recline at a banquet, one slave mops up the disgorged food, another crouches beneath the table and gathers up the left-overs of the tipsy guests. … I do not wish to involve myself in too large a question, and to discuss the treatment of slaves, towards whom we Romans are excessively haughty, cruel, and insulting. But this is the kernel of my advice: Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters. … Associate with your slave on kindly, even on affable, terms; let him talk with you, plan with you, live with you.

SOURCE 9.9 Seneca the Younger, *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, 47, Slaves and Masters
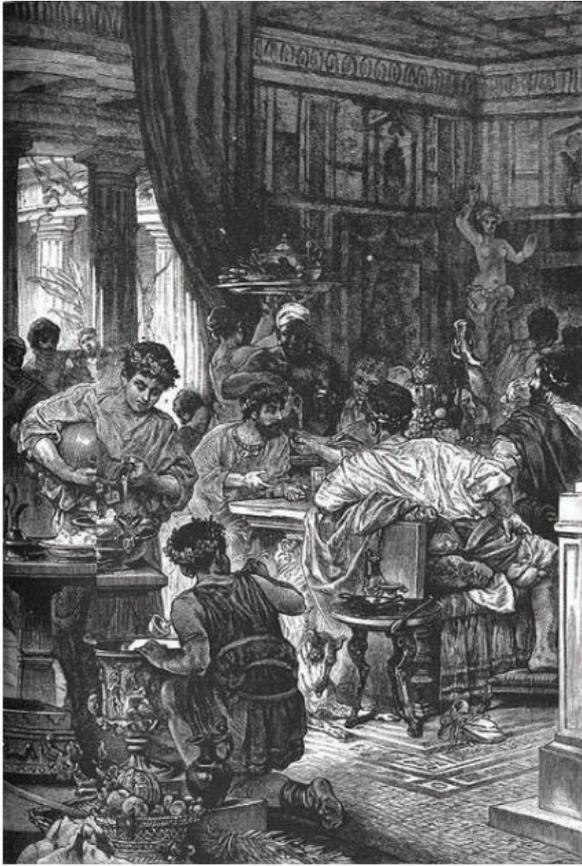
FIGURE 9.16 A representation of a Roman banquet

2 Pliny the Younger wrote and published a series of letters to influential people in imperial Rome, but although he does not devote any one letter to slavery, by reading them all, one can get a typical aristocratic view of slaves. He considered himself a considerate owner of slaves on his various estates, and claimed that he was worn out by the illnesses of his slaves – and deaths as well, including those of some who were quite young, but he still regarded them as lazy, unreliable and possibly brutal.

> Slaves were important to Pliny as a means to an end. The labour that slaves provided and the skills that slaves possessed promoted Pliny's political opportunities and provided the income by which Pliny maintained his luxurious lifestyle and political connections. … His benevolent management of slaves provided an opportunity to express his virtues to the Romans reading his letters. … Pliny's Letters were politically motivated.

SOURCE 9.10 Matthew Carter, *Slavery in the Letters of Pliny the Younger*, academia.org

ACTIVITY 9.6

1 According to Table 9.1 (on p. 362–3), what written sources would be the best to consult for:
  - the conditions of rural slaves?
  - the place of domestic slaves with in the family?
  - the slave revolts?
  - rights and obligations of a slave under the law?
2 Despite Seneca's apparent, 'sensitivity' towards slaves expressed in Source 9.9 (on p. 363), find a statement that reveals:
  - a rather patronising attitude to his friend in the letter
  - his hypocrisy with regards to slavery.
3 Outline the treatment of slaves, expressed in Source 9.9, that Seneca singles out as particularly reprehensible.
4 Discuss what Source 9.10 reveals about Pliny the Younger's attitude to slaves.
5 Are you convinced by either of these writers that they care for the welfare of the slaves? Explain your answer.
6 Rewrite Seneca's letter in your own words.

Archaeological sources

Although there is an abundance of material remains available, there are also problems with them because 'it is often difficult to identify individual men, women and children as slaves in sculpture, relief and painting'.[6]

These material remains range from small artefacts, such as mosaics, coins, sculptures and slave paraphernalia, to the large and monumental, such as amphitheatres.

Mosaics depict:

- gladiators fighting and being torn to pieces by wild beasts
- slaves attending to their masters and mistresses inside the home
- slaves accompanying female members of the household outside the home
- slaves pouring wine and performing other domestic duties
- slaves entertaining at banquets
- the way slaves were dressed.

murmillo a class of gladiator who wore a distinctive bronze helmet with plume crest and an elaborate face visor

Sculptures depict:

- Roman soldiers leading bound captives
- slaves attending to their masters and mistresses
- trading vessels
- slaves serving wine
- funerary portraits of freedmen
- funerary stelae.

Some of the artefacts associated with slaves include:

- shackles
- slave collars
- helmets worn by the **murmillo** gladiator.

Buildings include:

- amphitheatres in Rome, Italy and the provinces
- brothels – places of slave prostitution.

FIGURE 9.17 A Roman mosaic of slaves from Dougga in Tunisia (2nd century CE)

FIGURE 9.18 The Roman amphitheatre at el Jem in Tunisia
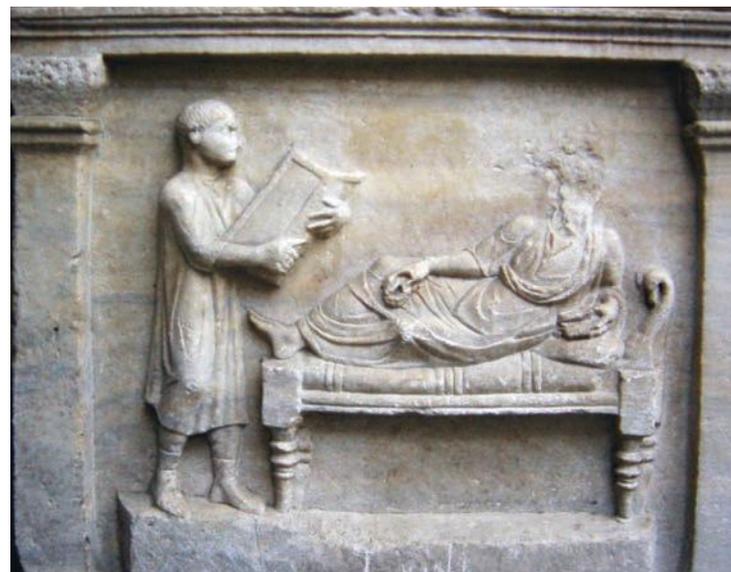
FIGURE 9.19 A funerary sculpture

1 Discuss the limitations of mosaics, reliefs and sculptures in understanding Roman slavery.

2 Explain why you think a place in North Africa would have had such a massive amphitheatre.

3 Identify what the scenes in Figures 9.17 and 9.19 (on p. 365) depict.

9.4 The nature of Roman slavery

In *Roman Slavery and Society*, Keith R. Bradley makes clear something that should always be recognised when studying Roman slavery: 'its enormous diversity and variability'. He stresses that any attempt to seek general features, 'must constantly allow for the unanticipated and the exceptional'.[7]

Numbers and origins

Many scholars have attempted to estimate the percentage of slaves in Roman society, but any numbers mentioned with regard to the ancient world must be suspect. It is almost impossible to put an accurate figure on the number of slaves in Rome and Italy, and particularly in the provinces of the empire, as conditions differed from time to time and from one place to another. Most agree that it could have been somewhere between 20–30 % of the total population. The table below shows just one estimate of slave numbers.

TABLE 9.2 An estimate of the number of slaves in Rome and Italy at the time of the reign of Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE)

Rome	300 000–350 000 slaves in Rome out of a population of 900 000–950 000
Italy	Around 2 million out of a population of 6 million
The provinces	Based on conjecture from isolated provinces: Possibly 16–20% of the population

Source: Adapted from K. Hopkins, 'Conquerors and Slaves', *Sociological Studies in Roman History*, Volume 1, Cambridge, 1978

FIGURE 9.20 A Roman soldier leading captives in chains from Smyrna (present-day Izmir, Turkey)

FIGURE 9.21 Captives being led away by Roman soldiers

FIGURE 9.22 A Roman coin with the head of a captive Gaul (from present-day France)

Apart from conquest, the practices of kidnapping by bandits and pirates also contributed to slave numbers, but their activities had been severely curtailed, although not entirely eradicated, by the Roman government. There came a point when these methods would no longer fill the shortfall of slaves needed for running Roman society. So, what other sources of slaves were there?

> Slavery is a human invention and not found in nature. Indeed, it was that other human invention, war, which provided the bulk of slaves, but they were also the bounty of piracy ... or the product of breeding.

SOURCE 9.11 The 2nd-century CE Roman jurist, Gaius, *Institutiones*, translated by Dr Nic Fields

> We must turn our attention to other sources of slaves in the early centuries of the empire. Some have taken the view that since the slave body at this time was already very great, the bulk of the new slaves required each year would have been provided from their own class, i.e. that the slave body would have been almost self-propagating. **Vernae** – slaves born at home and kept within the *familia* in Roman law, any infant born to a slave woman was in turn a slave – are certainly mentioned frequently in our sources. They were normally preferred by the Romans, who tended to get on well with them: their background was known, they spoke Latin from the beginning, and they were accustomed to slavery ... and could be taught whatever skill their master intended for them.

vernae slaves born within the Roman *familia*

SOURCE 9.12 John Madden, 'Slavery in the Roman Empire: Numbers and Origins', *Classics Ireland*, Vol. 3, 1996

However, slaves born and kept at home could not have provided for the annual requirements for new slaves because:

- the evidence suggests (records of wealthy families and indications from literature) that domestic staff were predominantly male, just as they were in those occupations where the work was difficult, such as mining and building
- granting slaves their freedom (manumission) made it difficult for the slave population to propagate itself and it seems that marriageable females were more often manumitted.

So, how were the slave numbers maintained?

Until 374 CE, when it was made illegal, 'the abandonment of infants was widespread over much of the Roman world, and, no doubt, occurred more frequently whenever circumstances became especially difficult'.[8] The practice of child exposure was particularly prevalent in the Roman provinces of Egypt, Asia Minor, Greece and Bithynia-Pontus. Some abandoned children were found inadvertently, and either kept or sold on, while it appears that there were those in the slave trade who made them available on request. 'Baby-farming' of both sexes appears to have been common in Egypt where foundlings were collected from what one Egyptian legal papyrus called 'the dung-pile for enslavement'.[9] In a letter to his wife (1 BCE) an Egyptian husband advises her 'if you do give birth, if it is a male, let it live, if it is a female, cast it out.'[10] These abandoned babies may have been raised by wet nurses in expectation of a later sale (see Source 9.13).

ACTIVITY 9.8

1 Assess what Figures 9.20 (on p. 366), 9.21 and 9.22 (p. 367) reveal about the origin of most slaves, particularly during the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE and the early imperial period.

2 To what method of maintaining slave numbers do Sources 9.11 and 9.12 (on p. 367) refer?

3 Outline why most Romans preferred the method of acquiring slaves from *vernae* to any other.

4 Define 'baby-farming'.

Buying and selling slaves

During the Republican wars of conquests, slaves were usually purchased wholesale by dealers who followed the armies. Julius Caesar is believed to have once sold 53 000 Gauls – an entire community – on the spot to a dealer, but there were slave markets all over the Roman world. Apart from those in Rome, the two main venues for slave auctions were the free port of Delos in the Aegean and at Ephesus on the coast of Asia Minor. While most slaves were sold at auction, some were sold in shops and others sold privately, especially if the slave was regarded as valuable property (perhaps a highly educated Greek). Source 9.13 records one such private deal done in Egypt.

> I acknowledge that I have sold to you from now in perpetuity the female slave that I own [Name], who is at present 3 years old, honey-complexioned, at a price agreed between us of … [i.e. 30–90] talents of silver coin which I have received in hand in full here, in return for which [she will remain with you] and you will have control and ownership of the purchased goods and the right to supervise and manager her however you like: I guarantee this in perpetuity.

SOURCE 9.13 *Bodleian Papyrus 1.44*, trans. Tim G. Parkin and Arthur L. Pomeroy

Slaves were generally presented to prospective buyers naked, as the purchaser wanted to see exactly what he was getting. Seneca wrote that buyers often examined and felt every part of a naked woman for sale, but it wasn't just women who were the subjects of these physical examinations, known as *catasta*. 'It was as though the slave were an animal – an ox, a cow or mule, that had to be put through its paces before a deal could be made'.[11]

Slaves also wore a sign hanging around their necks indicating their origin, health, character, intelligence, education and other pertinent information. Prices varied accordingly. By the time of Augustus, there was a 2% tax on the sale of slaves, which apparently added 250 000 sesterces annually to the imperial coffers. This was increased in 43 CE to 4%. These auctions were overseen by Roman officials.

Most slaves were sold with a buy-back guarantee within six months, if for some reason there were defects that were not obvious at the time of sale. Slaves at auction wearing a cap were sold with no guarantee. Occasionally, the seller of a female slave attached a *ne serva* clause to the ownership papers. This meant that she could not be prostituted and if any owner in the future used her as a prostitute, she could be freed.

aediles Roman magistrates responsible for public works, markets and festivals
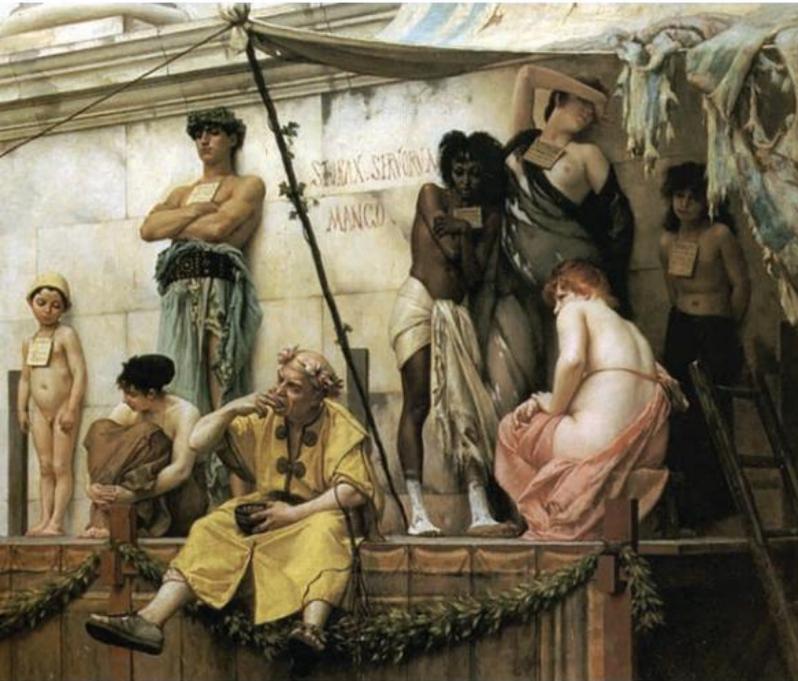
FIGURE 9.23 A painting by 19th-century French artist Gustave Boulanger called *The Slave Market*

The **aediles** declare: 'Those who sell slaves should make the buyers aware of each's diseases and defects, which are runaways, which are truants, and which are subject to a claim for damages. They should announce all this openly and plainly when they sell the slaves. If a slave turns out otherwise or things turn out differently from what was said and promised when the sale was being made, we will pronounce as to what is owed in respect of the slave and we will allow court action for the return of the slave to the buyer …

SOURCE 9.14 *Digest* 21.1, Ulpian, *On the Edict of the Curule Aediles*, Bk. 1, trans. Tim G. Parkin and Arthur L. Pomeroy

ACTIVITY 9.9

1 Recount what the seller and buyer agreed to in Source 9.13.
2 How do the slave markets depicted in Figures 9.23 and 9.24 differ?
3 Investigate what these 19th-century paintings reveal about the interests of many European artists at that time.
4 Imagine you are in the market for a new slave. Write an account of your attendance at a slave auction and any dealings you might have with the slave dealer.

FIGURE 9.24 A painting called *The Slave Market* by 19th-century artist Jean-Léon Gérôme

The roles and status of slave groups within Roman society

Slaves were used in all areas of Roman life except in positions of elected public office. There were roughly five major categories of slaves depending on their occupations, but within each occupation there would be a hierarchy of status. Romans seemed to have had 'a fixation with categorization and hierarchy'.[12]

Household slaves

Epitaphs have recorded at least 55 jobs a household slave might have and all domestic slaves were under the power of the master and at his constant disposal.

Some households had just a few slaves while very wealthy Romans kept hundreds of slaves as a means of display or for their 'show value'.

Seneca records that one went so far as to pay 100 000 sesterces each for slaves to remind him of names and quotations from literature and poetry. 'Calvisius Sabinus, the millionaire … bought slaves at great expense, one to recall Homer, another to recall Hesiod, and he assigned one to each of the lyric poets.'[13]

A large elite household in town or in the countryside might employ hundreds of slaves covering jobs such as:

- managing business outside the home and buying supplies (*procurator*)
- managing the house (*atriensis*)
- controlling supplies and their storage (*dispensator*)
- disciplining the slaves and keeping the home quiet (*sileniarius*).

S. M. Treggiari, in his work *Domestic Staff at Rome during the Julio–Claudian Period*, makes a list of all those domestic slaves mentioned in the records that might have been employed in well-to-do and elite households.

Although there were others in more lowly positions, such as those who attended the fires, toilets and cleaning, the living conditions of household slaves, though simple – a small cell, a thin mat and an old blanket – were often superior to that of many free urban poor in Rome.

TABLE 9.3 The jobs of domestic slaves in a wealthy Roman household compiled from epitaphs

Servant in charge of screening guests (front doorman)	Wet nurses and nursery attendants
Litter bearers	Spinner
Architect	Clothes mender (male)
Chaser	Glazier
Physicians and surgeon	Servant in charge of windows
Chef, cooks, dairymen	Servant in charge of statues
Butlers, food tasters, dining room supervisors and waiters	Secretary/accountant and cashier (male)
Tutors and readers	Musicians, male and female singers
Servant in charge of bedroom	Comic actor, dwarfs, jesters
Hand maids	Weaver (male)
Masseur	Gardener
Barbers and hairdressers	Male tailors
Foot washers	Seamstresses
Cup bearers	Marble cutter
Occultist	Fuller
	Servant in charge of pictures and busts
	Gilder

ACTIVITY 9.10

1 Identify the chief type of ancient source for our knowledge of the roles of domestic slaves.
2 Write one or two sentences describing what you think is happening in Figures 9.25–9.27.

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

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FIGURE 9.25 A mosaic featuring Roman domestic slaves

FIGURE 9.26 A wall mural featuring Roman domestic slaves

FIGURE 9.27 A mosaic featuring a Roman domestic child slave

Urban crafts and services

Slaves in industry could be either skilled or unskilled. Some masters allowed their slaves to set up a business on their own.

In urban workplaces, slaves might be employed:

- as launderers, engravers, shoemakers, bakers, mule drivers, or baggage porters
- to load and unload boats and could be found pulling barges by rope upstream and downstream on rivers

- in the construction industry, on the docks and on road-building projects
- in public baths, as entertainers and even to perform tasks in certain cult rituals
- as prostitutes and gladiators.

FIGURE 9.28 A relief of slaves pulling a river boat

FIGURE 9.29 A mosaic of gladiators at training

Agriculture

Very large estates were generally owned by absentee landowners who lived and worked in Rome, such as Cato the Elder and Pliny the Younger. The workforce on large agricultural properties, producing grain, cattle, wine and olives, were mostly slaves, managed by an overseer (*vilicus*) who was often a slave himself. For many, their lot was miserable as they were usually housed in barrack buildings (*ergastula*) in poor, prison-like conditions and some worked in chain-gangs. Their lives were usually short. See p. 373 for sources on the treatment of rural slaves.

As well as those who worked in the household of the county villa, there were slaves categorised as fowlers, ploughmen, ditchers, shepherds, herdsmen, foresters, trackers, muleteers and water carriers. These '*rustici* were regarded inferior to *urbani*'.[14]

Mining and quarrying

These were public slaves known as *Damnati in metallum* ('those condemned to work in the mines') who, numbering in the tens of thousands, were forced to work in the gold and silver mines and marble quarries. They suffered notoriously brutal conditions and treatment and their status under the law was different

from that of other slaves; they could not buy their freedom, be sold, or be set free. They were expected to live and die in the mines.

ACTIVITY 9.11

1 Discuss why the *rustici* were regarded as inferior to *urbani*.

2 In what ways were slaves condemned to work in the mines different from other slaves?

Public or imperial service

A *servus publicus* was a slave owned not by a private individual but by the state. Some worked:

- in temples doing basic tasks as servants of the various priesthoods
- in public buildings in Rome and municipalities as accountants and secretaries for magistrates and other officials
- on government building programs
- on maintaining the aqueduct system
- for a time, protecting the city from fire.

Imperial slaves were those attached to the emperor's household, the *familia Caesaris*.

Treatment of slaves

The treatment of slaves varied according to the attitude of their owners, and to the particular slave's status within society. There was certainly much abuse, but there were also masters who treated their slaves reasonably well. For example, there seems to have been a stronger obligation to care for *vernae* or those slaves born within a household, since some of them may have been children of the free males within that household. However, slaves were always regarded as property and generally treated as such.

The written sources present a range of attitudes towards slaves and some of these have been highlighted already (in Sources 9.9 and 9.10 on p. 363–4). Below are further examples of the type of treatment meted out to slaves.

The Roman playwright Plautus, writing his comedies about the end of the Second Punic War (201 BCE), gives a picture of an inconsiderate master, Ballio, and the kind of treatment his slaves were likely to get.

Ballio: Get out, come, out with you, you rascals; kept at a loss, and bought at a loss. Not one of you dreams minding your business, or being a bit of use to me, unless I carry on thus! [He strikes his whip around on all of them.] Never did I see men more like asses than you! Why, your ribs are hardened with the stripes. If one flogs you, he hurts himself the most: [Aside.] Regular whipping posts are they all, and all they do is to pilfer, purloin, prig, plunder, drink, eat, and abscond! Oh! they look decent enough; but they're cheats in their conduct.

[Addressing the slaves again.] Now, unless you're all attention, unless you get that sloth and drowsiness out of your breasts and eyes, I'll have your sides so thoroughly marked with thongs that you'll outlive those Campanian coverlets in color, or a regular Alexandrian tapestry, purple-broidered all over with beasts. Yesterday I gave each of you his special job, but you're so worthless, neglectful, stubborn, that I must remind you with a good basting.

SOURCE 9.15 Plautus, *Pseudolus*, Act I, Sc. 2

Cato the Elder, who lived in the 2nd century BCE, was a harsh statesman who was the most persistent advocate for the total destruction of Carthage and is remembered for his repetitive statement *Delenda est Carthago* or 'Carthage must be destroyed' every time he rose to speak in the Senate. He was also the owner of a large agricultural property and many slaves. His manual on agriculture and animal husbandry, *De Agri Cultura,* or *On Agriculture* includes suggestions on how to manage farm slaves and what rations they should receive in summer and winter. Although he did not advocate deliberate cruelty, his impersonal attitude was to treat his slaves 'according to cold regulations, like so many expensive cattle'.[15] He gave advice on keeping slaves continually at work, on reducing rations when they were sick, and recommending that old and sick slaves should be expelled from his house. Plutarch, in his *Life of Cato* added further comments about Cato's treatment of his slaves.

> He used to entertain his friends and colleagues at table, no sooner was the dinner over than he would flog those slaves who had been remiss at all in preparing or serving it. He was always contriving that his slaves should have feuds and dissensions among themselves; harmony among them made him suspicious and fearful of them. He had those who were suspected of some capital offence brought to trial before all their fellow servants, and, if convicted, put to death.

SOURCE 9.16 Plutarch, *Lives*, *Cato*, 1–4

1. Triclinium
2. Bakery
3. Baths
4. Kitchen
5. Cow shed
6. Yard
7. Rooms for pressing grapes
8. Fermenting yards
9. Servants' rooms
10. Oil-pressing rooms
11. Barn
12. Threshing floor
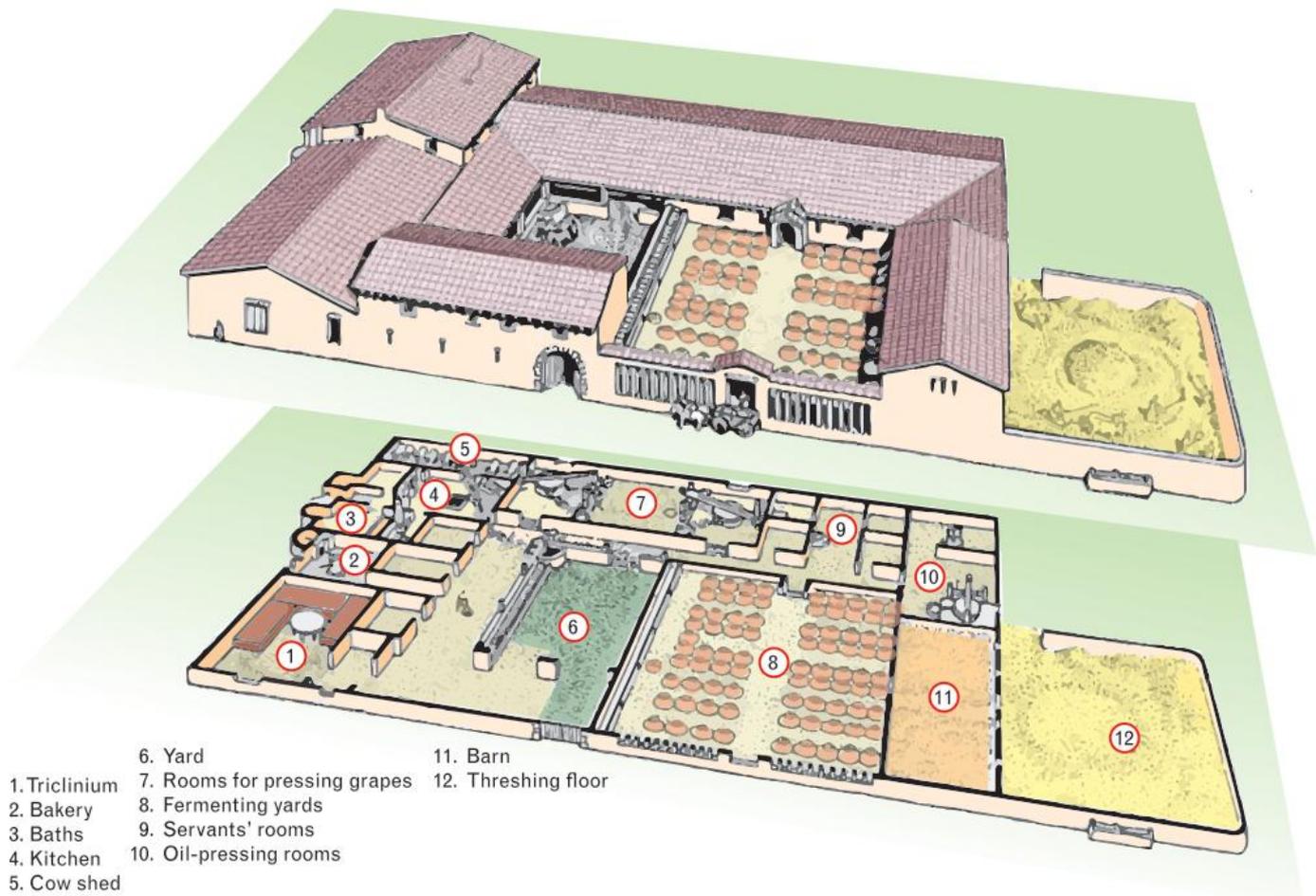
FIGURE 9.30 A drawing of a country estate in Italy. Note the size of the space allocated to slaves and where they were located in the villa.

Diodorus Siculus or Diodorus of Sicily was a Greek historian who lived between 90–30 BCE. He is known for his accounts of the first two slave revolts that occurred in Sicily at the end of the 2nd century BCE. In the following source, he gives some information of the treatment of slaves employed in the mines.

> But to continue with the mines, the slaves who are engaged in the working of them produce for their masters' revenues in sums defying belief, but they themselves wear out their bodies both by day and by night in the diggings under the earth, dying in large numbers because of the exceptional hardships they endure. For no respite or pause is granted them in their labours, but compelled beneath blows of the overseers to endure the severity of their plight, they throw away their lives in this wretched manner, although certain of them who can endure it, by virtue of their bodily strength and their persevering souls, suffer such hardships over a long period; indeed, death in their eyes is more to be desired than life …

SOURCE 9.17 Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, Bk 5, 38
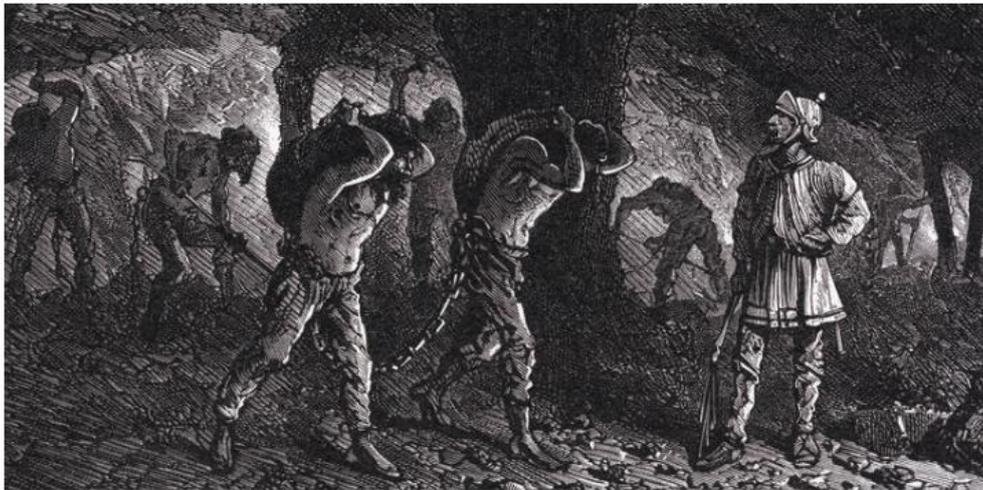
FIGURE 9.31 A depiction of slaves in the Roman salt mines

Columella was the most important writer on the agriculture of the Roman Empire. After a career in the army, he turned to farming, and his *Res rustica*, in 12 volumes, provides information on rural slavery: the qualities needed in slaves and particularly their slave overseers, and the best form of treatment.

> Nowadays I make it a practice to call them [his rural slaves] into consultation on any new work, as if they were more experienced, and to discover by this means what sort of ability is possessed by each of them and how intelligent he is. Furthermore, I observe that they are more willing to set about a piece of work on which they think that their opinions have been asked and their advice followed … Again, it is the established custom of all men of caution to inspect the inmates of the workhouse, to find out whether they are carefully chained, whether the places of confinement are quite safe and properly guarded, whether the overseer has put anyone in fetters or removed his shackles without the master's knowledge. For the overseer should be most observant of both points – not to release from shackles anyone whom the head of the house has subjected to that kind of punishment, except by his leave, and not to free one who he himself has chained on his own initiative until the master knows the circumstances

SOURCE 9.18 Columella, *Res rustica*, Bk 1, 15–16

1. How reliable do you think Plautus would be as a source for slavery? Provide reasons for your view.
2. Explain what kind of slaves would have been employed on rural estates.
3. In what ways did Cato treat his rural and domestic slaves? Remember when he lived.
4. What does Figure 9.31 on p. 375 illustrate about the living conditions of slaves?
5. Deduce why Diodorus Siculus suggested that those who worked in the mines preferred death to life.
6. In your own words, describe how Columella treats his rural slaves.
7. Research Cato's *On Agriculture*, and write a report on what he says himself about the treatment of his rural slaves.

Punishments

Due to the frequency of 'runaways' mentioned in the sources, it seems that many were badly treated.

- Romans were forbidden from harbouring fugitive slaves and if anyone 'with malice aforethought shall be declared to have sheltered another's slave, male or female, the praetor made a judgment against such a person at double the value of the cost of the damage'.[16]
- Advertisements were posted with precise descriptions of escaped slaves, rewards offered, and professional slave-catchers were hired to hunt down runaways.

[A reward is available if anyone finds X] an Egyptian from the nome of Athreibites, who does not know Greek, [and is] tall, thin, bald-headed, with a scar on the left side of his head, of olive complexion, jaundiced, thinly bearded and having no hair at all on his chin, smooth-skinned, narrow-jawed, with a long nose, a weaver by trade, who walks around like he's somebody, rambling on in a high-pitched voice. He is about 32 years old. He is wearing a brightly co-loured cloak.

SOURCE 9.19 Oxyrhychus Papyrus 51.3617, trans. Tim G. Parkin and Arthur L. Pomeroy

- If a fugitive was caught, he or she could be flogged, fitted with an inscribed metal collar around the neck, describing his or her misdemeanour, or branded on the forehead with the letters FUG, for *fugitivus*.

- Grab me I'm a runaway.
- [I'm an] adulterous whore; grab me, I'm a runaway from Bulla Regia.
- Grab me, I'm a runaway, and recall me to my master the eminent senator Cethegus at The Libianan market in the third region [of Rome].
  - I fled, hold me. Bring me to my master Zonino, you will receive a solidus.
  - Grab me, I'm a runaway, and recall me to Victor the acolyte at the Church of Saint Clemens.

SOURCE 9.20 Corpus Inscriptionum Latinaium, 15.7192

FIGURE 9.32 An identifying collar

FIGURE 9.33 A scene from the 1960s movie *Spartacus*, showing the treatment of a rebellious slave

Punishments for more serious slave crimes

- putting in chains
- torturing
- imprisoning
- forced to become a gladiator (see pp. 380–387 on the revolt of Spartacus)
- crucifixion.

In certain places in Italy there was a contracting service for the punishment of slaves. This was carried out by those who removed dead bodies from the city and conducted public funerals. They inflicted torture or capital punishment on behalf of the owners or at the command of the magistrates.

FIGURE 9.34 Iron shackles

If someone wants to inflict punishment on a male or female slave privately, he will get the punishment inflicted according to his wishes. If he wants to affix the slave to a cross or gibbet, the contractor should provide planks, chains and ropes for the whipmen and provide the whipmen …Whenever the magistrates inflict punishment publicly and give the order, the contractor must be ready to inflict the punishment, to set up the crosses, and he must offer for free nails, pitch, wax and tapers … If he is ordered to drag off the body with a hook, a workman dressed in red will drag off the body, or several bodies, to the ringing of bells …

SOURCE 9.21 Inscription from Puteoli, *On the Public Funeral Service*, cited in Tim G. Parkin and Arthur L. Pomeroy

Cambridge University Press

In 61 BCE, a notorious crime – recorded by Tacitus – shocked Roman society. A household slave murdered his master, the city prefect, Pedanius Secundus, either due to some argument over the price promised for manumission, or because the slave 'was in love with a male prostitute and could not bear having his master as a rival'. [17] Due to an ancient custom that required that the whole slave household be executed for such a crime, the people of Rome went out into the streets and protested against such excessive harshness against the innocent. Despite some in the Senate speaking up against the punishment, those who insisted on the death penalty for the whole household, including women and children, won the day. However, the sentence could not be carried out due to the fact that 'the populace had banded together and was threatening to use rocks and burning torches'.[18] The emperor was forced to use military guards to close off the entire route along which the condemned were led to their execution.

ACTIVITY 9.13

1 How were 'runaway' slaves tracked down? How does the writer of Source 9.19 (on p. 376) make sure he gets his slave back?
2 Explain what happened to a first-time runaway.
3 Discuss what other fate could await a slave accused of a more serious crime.
4 Outline the process described in Source 9.21 (on p. 377) for carrying out a crucifixion.
5 Read Tacitus' account in the *Annals* (Bk 14.40) of the murder of Pedanius Secundus and write an eyewitness account of the public reaction to the punishment to be meted out to his slaves.

Rights and responsibilities of slaves

Roman society legally considered slaves as chattels or property, but masters were not required to mark their slaves in any way to distinguish them from free people – unless they had run away – although later in the empire there were some restrictions on the type of clothing they could wear.

Despite being at the bottom of the social scale, slaves did have some rights and most owners allowed their domestic slaves some measure of freedom.

1 They could hold property. This was usually in the form of money referred to as the **peculium**. The slaves' 'pocket-money' technically belonged to the owner, and would revert to him on the slave's death. A slave could occasionally use it to purchase a slave of his own, but more commonly the *peculium* was used to purchase his or her freedom (manumission). More educated slaves were able to earn their own money and were often freed in the terms of their master's will.

peculium the rights of slaves to hold money to purchase a slave of their own; but more commonly the *peculium* was used to purchase his or her freedom

contubernium a form of civil union between a slave man and woman, though not equivalent to marriage

2 Legal rights. In the Roman republic, a slave's testimony against the bad treatment of a master would not be accepted except in the case of torture, but in the early empire several emperors granted slaves more legal rights. For example, Claudius ruled that any slave abandoned by his master became free; Nero granted slaves the right to complain in court for mistreatment, and during the 2nd century CE, Antonius Pius ruled that any owner killing his slave would be charged with homicide.

3 Slaves could not technically be married although they could enter into **contubernium**, with the consent of their masters. This was a form of union, valid according to natural law but without any legal or civil rights. 'The only relationship legally validated was that of a mother and child, for it was through the mother that the child was born a slave.'[19]

4 Slaves were permitted some freedom during religious festivals, such as the Saturnalia when the 'social order was inverted'. Slaves did not have to work, were waited on at meal times, and were permitted to wear their master or mistress' clothing, and to gamble.

Manumission

Manumission, either granted by a master – sometimes stated in a will – or purchased with a *peculium,* might be absolute or come with certain limitations. These might include paying the master a portion of the slave's earned assets. There were usually continuing social obligations between master and former slave.

A freedman became the *client* of his former master. This might involve campaigning on his behalf if he chose to stand for election, and carrying out other requested activities. The patron, in his turn, would ensure the freedman's physical and material security. In some cases, the freedman took on his former master's name.

Freed slaves could become citizens if they fulfilled certain conditions, but some would never become citizens even if manumitted: those chained by their masters for punishment, branded, found guilty of a felony, or handed over to be a gladiator.

9.5 Slave revolts

During the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE, there were a number of serious slave uprisings against the Romans:

1 The First Servile (slave) War in Sicily: 135–132 BCE
2 The Second Servile War in Sicily: 104–100 BCE
3 The Third Servile War in Italy: 73–71 BCE.

It is the Third Servile War led by the gladiator Spartacus that is known in the popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries through various films and TV series, literature (plays and novels), music, ballet and even video games.

The First and Second Servile Wars

'The potential for violent resistance of slaves in the late 2nd century was both enormous and constant, with opportunity and resolve being all that was necessary for the potential to be realized.'[20] However, the first question that comes to mind is why these uprisings, only a generation apart, occurred in Sicily?

The background

When Rome defeated Carthage in the First Punic War (264–241 BCE) and annexed the Carthaginian-controlled island of Sicily as its first overseas province and its principal supplier of grain, it was the beginning of a transformation in the traditional Roman way of life. Two of the major changes were:

FIGURE 9.35 A map of Sicily showing the town of Enna

1 the growth of *latifundia* owned by the upper classes who were the beneficiaries of the wealth that began to flow into Rome

2 the lives of the upper classes became more luxurious as did the number of slaves they employed.

In Sicily, wealthy Romans took the land previously owned by the Carthaginians, and according to Diodorus Siculus, 'after sixty years of good fortune in all respects', during which they 'shot up in all prosperity', they bought droves of slaves and began 'at once to apply "marks and brands" to their bodies'.[21]

latifundia extensive rural estates

> But they treated them with a heavy hand in their service, and granted them the most meagre care, the bare minimum for food and clothing. As a result, most of them made their livelihood by brigandage and there was bloodshed everywhere, since the brigands were like scattered bands of soldiers … distressed by their hardships, and frequently outraged and beaten beyond all reason, could not endure their treatment. Getting together as opportunity offered, they discussed the possibility of revolt, until they at last put their plans into action.

SOURCE 9.22 Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*, Bk 34. 2–2 and 4

ACTIVITY 9.14

1   Research the First Servile War 135–132 BCE.
2   Find answers to the following questions:
    • What was the specific cause of the uprising?
    • Who led the revolt?
    • What actions did he and his supporters take?
    • How did the Romans react?
    • How was the revolt finally quelled?
3   Present your answers in any format you choose.

A COMMENT ON THE SECOND SERVILE WAR 104–100 BCE

The record of the second uprising, barely 28 years later, appears to be in many ways a carbon copy of the first, as if the Greek and Roman historians who told the story simply copied the narrative pattern.[22]

The Third Servile War of Spartacus

The three best sources on the war of Spartacus against the Romans are:

1   Plutarch, *The Fall of the Roman Republic, Crassus*, 8–11
2   Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.111–121
3   Florus, *Epitome of Rome*, 2.8.20.
    However, these are often contradictory.

Who was Spartacus?

There is little known about Spartacus until he led a number of Gauls and Thracians in an escape bid from the gladiatorial school run by Lentalus Batiatus in Capua. However, there are a few brief words in the sources about his origin, and some vague references that might explain how he ended up as a gladiator in southern Italy.

1   Plutarch says only that he was 'a Thracian from a nomadic tribe',[23] but was later taken to Rome to be sold.
2   Appian describes him as 'a Thracian by birth who had once served as a soldier with the Romans, but had since been a prisoner and sold as a gladiator'.[24]

3   Florus says he was originally a Thracian mercenary, who had become a Roman soldier, then 'a deserter and robber, and afterwards, from consideration of his strength, a gladiator'.[25]

Historians believe that he may have come from the independent Maedi tribe of Thrace, who occupied the south-western part of Thrace, near the border of the Roman province of Macedonia (present day Bulgaria) which the Maedi frequently raided. In ancient times, Thracians were known as great warriors. Spartacus' link with the Maedi is also suggested by the fact that his wife, who was enslaved with him, was a Maedi prophetess.

There is no doubt that at some time he was in the Roman army, but how this occurred and for how long he was part of it is unknown. Was he a mercenary volunteer or was he somehow forced into the legions? That he had been trained as a Roman legionary is obvious from the accounts of his brief, but significant, revolt against Rome. Unlike most of the rebels he led, he was disciplined, skilled in manoeuvres, and aware of the need to take up defensive positions, he knew when to hold back when he wasn't ready to face the Romans, and he was insistent on arming his men with proper Roman military weapons, regarding anything less as 'barbarous and dishonourable'.[26] When his officers were killed in battle, he celebrated their funerals in the tradition of Roman generals.

FIGURE 9.36 A map of Thrace – homeland of Spartacus

Was he a deserter and robber as Florus maintains, or was it some other twist of fate that landed him in the gladiatorial training 'school' (*ludus*) in Capua in southern Italy among foreign slaves and criminals? How long he survived the brutal life of a gladiator before he led the revolt is unknown.

We know he was strong and was probably a heavily armed gladiator called a *Gallus* gladiator in Spartacus' time, after the so-called 'barbarian' Gauls. The name of this category of gladiator was later changed to *murmillo*, when the Gauls were integrated into Roman society.

The city of Capua – on the fertile plain of Campania – had once equalled Rome in wealth and size and by the time of Spartacus, it was vital to Rome's economy as a centre of grain production, olives and particularly wine; many Romans had villas in the area due to its delightful climate. Also, Capua had become known for its gladiatorial training 'schools' in the 1st century BCE.

Like many things in history, the view of the gladiator world has been made to appear somewhat remarkable, glamorous and even, at times, honourable. Although it is true that some gladiators did achieve temporary fame, it was a vicious and pitiless world that Spartacus was thrown into.

- Most were hardened criminals or slaves who had offended their masters in some way.
- The training was rigorous and the discipline brutal.
- No one willingly entered the arena to be pitted against each other or torn to shreds by wild animals for the entertainment of the Romans.
- Their daily life in the *ludi* was tough, being confined in close quarters until required to fight, and most owners, such as Lentulus Batiatus, were cruel.
- Most gladiators lived with the thought of death every day.

FIGURE 9.37 A painting of Jerome, a gladiator in the arena

The gladiators among whom Spartacus 'lived' appear to have been predominantly Gauls and Thracians. Was Plutarch correct in suggesting that perhaps Spartacus and others had done nothing to deserve such brutalisation? He provides the only direct reference to Spartacus' character which might explain his motivation to escape.

> ... a man not only of high spirit and valiant, but in understanding, also, and in gentleness superior to his condition, and more of a Grecian than the people of his country usually are.

SOURCE 9.23 Plutarch, *The Rise of the Roman Empire: Crassus*, 8

Escape and building up a rebel force

Apparently 200 gladiators had originally decided to make an escape, preferring to take their chances and fight for their freedom than spend their days entertaining bloodthirsty Roman citizens. Was Spartacus reacting to the humiliation of having been demoted from a position as Roman soldier and forced to live and defend himself like an animal?

The escape plan was discovered and only 70–78 who had anticipated the situation managed to escape, using for protection various kinds of cooking utensils which they took from the kitchen. As they made their way through the city they came across several wagons filled with gladiator's equipment with which they armed themselves. Others joined them as they made their way to Mt Vesuvius, the best defensible base in the area and where they organised themselves and decided on matters of leadership. Probably under Spartacus's leadership, they created a military-like hierarchy. It seems that the rebel group was divided into two factions, one under Spartacus, and another under two Gallic slaves named Crixus and Oenomaus. This body of rebels, as it later turned out, was not a homogeneous group, and its individual members revealed different motivations once they had freed themselves and attracted tens of thousands of followers.

FIGURE 9.38 Mt Vesuvius

Roman reaction

Plutarch provides details of the Romans' first attempt to deal with the rebels while they were still encamped on Mt Vesuvius. The praetor, Gaius Claudius Glaber, with a force of 3000 men, marched south from Rome and took control of the only access route to the mountain camp: a steep, narrow passage with precipices on all sides. Having successfully contained the rebels, and prepared to wait while they starved or submitted, he had not banked on the ingenuity of the slave force. According to both Plutarch and Florus, they made rope ladders out of vine branches and escaped down the other side of the mountain, and in a surprise attack from the rear they defeated the Roman force and took their camp.

The rebel force then raided throughout Campania (Nola and Nuceria) and as far as Thurii and Metapontum. Florus said they caused widespread devastation and, as they were joined by new forces every day, they began forming themselves into a regular army.

> … they made for themselves out of osiers and beasts' hides a rude kind of shield, and out of iron from the slave-houses forged swords and other weapons. And that nothing proper might be wanting to the complement of the army, they procured cavalry by breaking in the herds of horses that came in their way, and conferred upon their leaders the ensigns and fasces that they took from the praetors.

SOURCE 9.24 Florus, *Epitome*, 2.8.20

According to Appian, the Romans as they had done in Sicily, 'did not consider this a war as yet, but a raid, something like an outbreak of robbery' and sent 'forces picked in haste and at random.'[27] The first Roman forces were led by praetors, not consuls. At the time, most of the Roman legions were in Spain under the command of Pompey, and in the East under Lucullus, two of Rome's most successful military leaders. After the failure of Glaber, the Romans sent out more praetorian forces under Varinius and Cossinius, and each time they faced Spartacus they were defeated; as a result, even greater numbers flocked to his army, which is said to have numbered 70 000.

It was at this time that Spartacus marched his army towards the Alps, 'intending when he had passed them, that every man should go to his own home, some to Thrace, some to Gaul'.[28] Had this been his real aim from the beginning or, as suggested by Plutarch, that he came to realise that he would eventually be no match for the legions of Rome?

But many of his rebel forces, overconfident with success and preferring to plunder and ravage the country, did not listen to Spartacus. It was then that the Senate finally grew alarmed at the nature of the insurrection and decided to send out two consular armies. Perhaps it was the memory of the great Carthaginian general Hannibal who moved about Italy for 15 years, with one victory after another, that put fear into the government.

FIGURE 9.39 The routes taken by Spartacus to evade the Roman forces

The legions led by of Lentulus Clodiana and Gellius Publicola attempted to deal with the divided rebel force. Gellius overcame Crixus and 30 000 of his men, who in their overconfidence had straggled from Spartacus. They were cut to pieces and Crixus was killed. Lentulus and his large army hindered Spartacus' march towards the Alps and Gellius approached from the rear. According to Appian, Spartacus dealt with each consular army in turn, and they retreated in confusion.

As Spartacus moved towards the Alps, he was met at Mutina, by Gaius Cassius, a praetorian governor of those parts, with 10 000 men. Spartacus destroyed Cassius' camp and killed large numbers of his men.

Although his way across the Alps was now free of opposition, for some inexplicable reason, Spartacus decided to return south.

Florus says that he had considered marching on Rome, but Appian says he changed his mind because 'he did not consider he was ready as yet for that kind of fight, as his whole force was not suitably armed, for no city had joined him, but only slaves, deserters and riffraff'.[29] Instead he headed to the mountains around Thurii in southern Italy and took the city.

Enter Marcus Licinius Crassus

Although Crassus was the wealthiest man in Rome, he was ambitious to attain a military reputation. When he was elected to the praetorship in 73 BCE, he apparently offered to equip, train and lead new troops at his own expense against Spartacus. The Senate appointed him to the command against the rebel army with eight legions (40 000 men). He hoped this would enhance his military prestige and help him gain popularity with the people of Rome.

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

Initially, he had several problems:

- He had difficulty anticipating Spartacus' movements and inspiring his army.
- His subordinate, Mummius, disregarded his orders, and openly attacked Spartacus, during which his forces were routed and his supply of arms abandoned.

Crassus, furious at his subordinate's disobedience, employed the ancient punishment of **decimation** on 500 of Mummius' men, where one in 10 legionaries were killed by their fellows in full view of the whole army. Thereafter, discipline was restored, and Crassus had several successes against the rebel forces, pushing them further and further south.

By 71, Spartacus was encamped in Rhegium near the Strait of Messenia, from where he planned to take several thousand of his troops across to Sicily to 'rekindle the war of the slaves, which was but lately extinguished'.[30] However, the Cilician pirates Spartacus paid to ferry him and his men across the strait took their money and abandoned them.

Rhegium, being on a peninsula, gave Crassus the opportunity to wall the rebels in and cut them off from their provisions and a way of escape. According to Plutarch, Crassus dug a ditch from one side of the isthmus to the other, about 15 feet wide. Appian refers to it as a defence line composed of 'ditch, wall and paling'.[31]

FIGURE 9.40 A bust of Crassus

Spartacus and his men retaliated by making frequent attacks on the fortifications with burning branches. So determined were they to break out, that they waited for a dark wintry night during a storm, and after filling in the ditch with earth, timber and branches, Spartacus managed to lead a third of his forces to escape.

Pompey had just returned from Spain, and Lucullus was approaching Italy. Crassus, fearing that they would be given the credit for bringing the war to an end, needed to face Spartacus as soon as possible.

decimation an ancient punishment in the Roman army, where one in 10 legionaries were killed by their fellows in full view of the whole army

The final battle

Spartacus had retired to the mountains of Petelia but he could not stop his rebellious men from making a direct attack on Crassus' army; and seeing there was no way to avoid a battle, 'he set up his army in array'.[32] The final battle is believed to have been fought near the mouth of the modern Sele River in southern Campania.

> … when his horse was brought to him, he drew out his sword and killed him, saying, if he got the day he should have a great many better horses of the enemies, and if he lost it he should have no need of this. And so, making off directly towards Crassus himself, through the midst of arms and wounds, he missed him, but slew two centurions that fell upon him together. At last being deserted by those that were about him, he himself stood his ground, and, surrounded by the enemy, bravely defending himself, was cut to pieces.

SOURCE 9.25 Plutarch, *The Rise of the Roman Empire: Crassus*, 11

FIGURE 9.41 Modern Strongolia, near to where Spartacus is believed to have fought his last battle against the Romans

> As was fitting for a gladiator captain, they fought without sparing themselves. Spartacus himself, fighting with the utmost bravery in front of the battle, fell as became their general.

SOURCE 9.26 Florus, *Epitome*, 2.8.20

> The battle was long and bloody, as might have been expected with so many thousands of desperate men. Spartacus was wounded in the thigh with a spear and sank upon his knee, holding his shield in front of him and contending in this way against his assailants until he and the great mass of those with him were surrounded and slain. The remainder of his army was thrown into confusion and butchered in crowds. So great was the slaughter that it was impossible to count them. The Roman loss was about 1000. The body of Spartacus was not found.

SOURCE 9.27 Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 1.120

Modern estimates put the rebel dead as high as 36 000. Six thousand survivors – on Crassus' orders – were crucified along the Appian Way, the main Roman route from Campania to Rome. He ordered that they were not to be taken down, but left hanging to rot as a lesson to others who might consider rebelling against Rome. Pompey captured and killed 5000 others who had escaped and claimed victory for bringing the slave war to an end.

ACTIVITY 9.15

1   Discuss what Sources 9.25 (on p. 385). 9.26 and 9.27 say about the way Spartacus died.
2   The popularity of Spartacus over time is based on the interpretation of his rebellion against Rome as that of a group of oppressed people fighting for their freedom against a slave-owning oligarchy and an attempt to eradicate slavery. To what extent do you support this view?
3   Research the various representations of Spartacus and make a collage of these images.
4   In what way did the leadership of Spartacus in the 3rd slave insurrection against Rome differ from that of the 1st and 2nd uprising?

FIGURE 9.42 A painting of the 6000 crucified survivors by 19th-century artist Fyodor Bronnikov

FIGURE 9.43 A modern sculpture of Spartacus in Bulgaria (ancient Thrace)

CHAPTER 9 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH ROMAN SLAVERY DEVELOPED

- Slavery, in one form or another, was prevalent in most ancient cultures. As the Roman state grew from a small agricultural settlement and expanded via conquests, particularly in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, slavery became one of the most striking features of Roman society.
- The institution of slavery was a 'critical pillar' of Roman society. For more than a millennium, the Roman state was based on the exploitation of one group of people who provided for the rest. Slavery continued until the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 CE, and finally withered away due to economic and social reasons in the early Middle Ages.

FEATURES OF ROMAN SOCIETY – CLASSES, GOVERNMENT, THE ECONOMY AND RELIGION

- The elements of Roman society and the slave's place in it were bound to change over time, although there were some features that remained the same. These included: the importance of the patriarchal family structure; the significance of being freeborn and having Roman citizenship; and the multiple social hierarchies that often overlapped so that a person's position in one might be different in another.
- Although the republican form of government of Senate, magistrates and peoples' assemblies remained, when Augustus became 'princeps', he made changes in all areas as well as keeping effective control in the hands of one man.
- 'Ancient Rome was an agrarian and slave-based economy whose main concern was feeding the vast number of citizens and legionaries who populated the Mediterranean region.' The state religion in Rome was an administrative branch of the government. As Rome's empire grew, so too did the number of imported gods.

THE NATURE OF THE WRITTEN AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES FOR SLAVERY

- The written sources from which historians have attempted to gain information about the institution of slavery in Roman history cover a wide range of categories.
- Although there is an abundance of material remains available, there are also problems with them because 'it is often difficult to identify individual men, women and children as slaves in sculpture, relief and painting.' Artefacts relating to slavery range from mosaics, coins and sculptures to large monuments such as amphitheatres.

THE NATURE OF ROMAN SLAVERY

- Many scholars have attempted to estimate the percentage of slaves in Roman society, but any numbers mentioned with regard to the ancient world must be suspect. Most agree that it could have been somewhere between 20–30% of the total population.
- Slaves were usually purchased wholesale by dealers who followed the Roman armies and bought captured peoples. The treatment of slaves varied according to the attitude of their owners, and to the particular slave's status within society. There was certainly much abuse, but there were also masters who treated their slaves reasonably well.

- During the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE, there were a number of serious slave uprisings against the Romans. These were: The First Servile (slave) War in Sicily: 135–132 BCE; The Second Servile War in Sicily: 104–100 BCE; and the Third Servile War in Italy: 73–71 BCE.
- It is the Third Slave War led by the gladiator Spartacus that is known in the popular culture of the 20th and 21st centuries through various films and TV series, literature (plays and novels), music, ballet and even video games.

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance.

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication.

  As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- patriarchal
- *clientele*
- *servi*
- *vernae*
- manumission.

Historical concepts

Change and continuity

In what ways did the institution of slavery change over time?

Causation

Analyse what led to the outbreak of slave revolts in Sicily in the 2nd century BCE.

Perspective

To what extent do the Roman written sources reveal a pro-slavery attitude?

Significance

- Explain the significance of the date 146 BCE to the increase in slavery in Roman society.
- Assess the significance of the *pax Romana* (Roman peace) for the institution of slavery.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

1   Investigate what the material remains tell us about the treatment and punishment meted out to runaway slaves.
2   Identify the best category of source for an understanding of the wide range of roles carried out by domestic slaves.
3   Which written sources would be the best to analyse for the treatment of rural slaves?

Historical research and interpretation

How has Spartacus and his revolt against Rome been interpreted in popular culture?

Explanation and communication – extended task (essay)

To what extent was the institution of slavery a 'critical pillar' of Roman society between 200 BCE–200 CE?

CHAPTER 10
The role and impact of women in ancient Greece and Rome
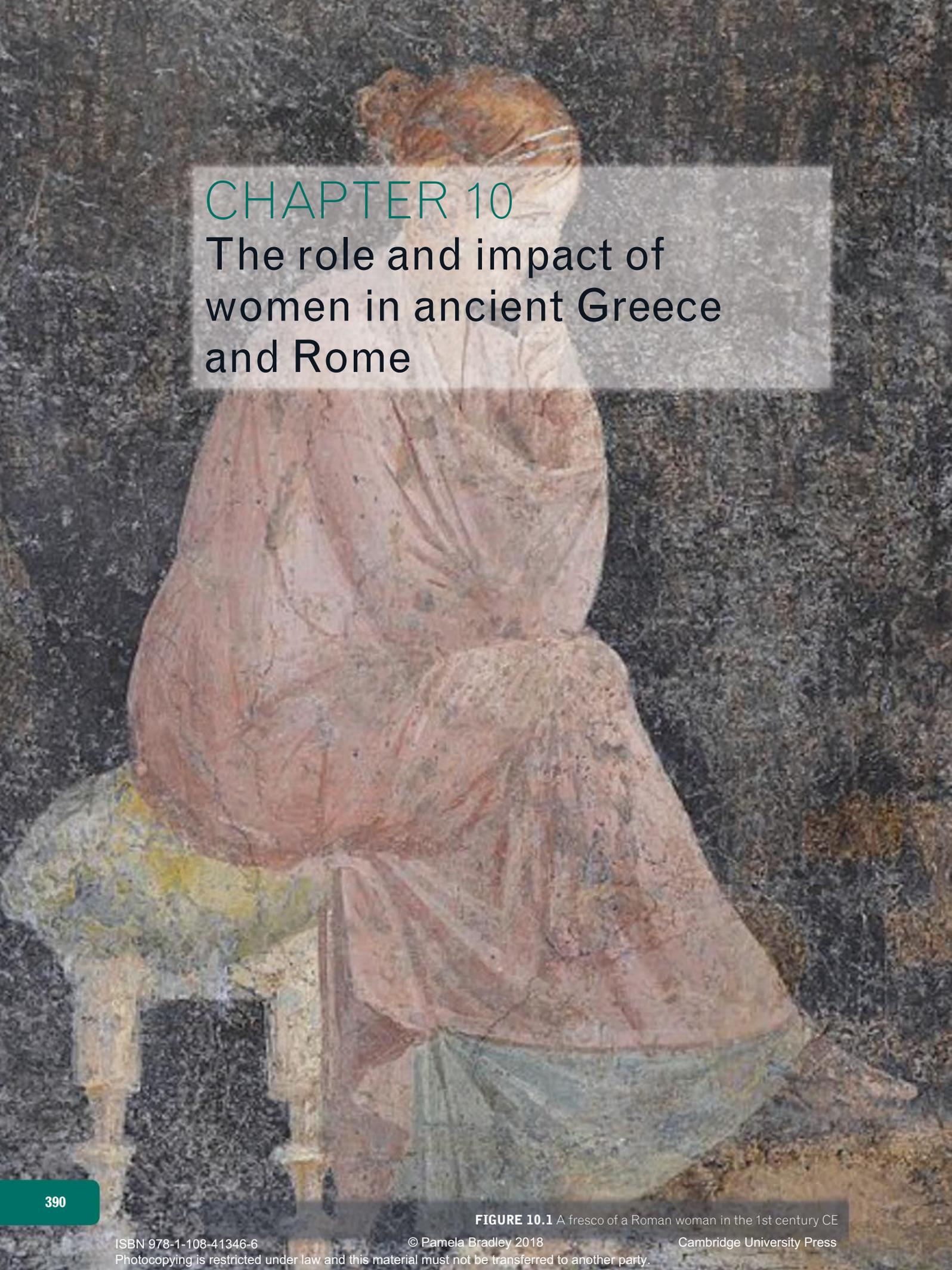
FIGURE 10.1 A fresco of a Roman woman in the 1st century CE

FIGURE 10.2 Map of the extent of the Roman Empire, c. 2nd century CE

FIGURE 10.2 Map of the extent of the Roman Empire, c. 2nd century CE

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

FOCUS	Through the interpretation of historical sources, students investigate key features of ancient Greece and Rome to develop an understanding of the nature of the ancient past.
KEY ISSUES	Students investigate: • the context of women in the Greek and Roman world • the range, nature and reliability of the sources for women • the private and public roles of women • the impact and representation of influential and notorious women.

Do you know of any human concern in which the male sex is not superior to the female? Or shall we embark on a tedious discussion of weaving or pot–watching or baking, in which the female sex prides itself, and looks most ridiculous in when bested by men?

That's true, replied Glaucon, one sex wins out over the other in virtually everything …

SOURCE 10.1 Plato, *Republic*, 5.455, c. 4th century BCE

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FIGURE 10.3 A fresco of a 1st-century CE woman

Study Figure 10.3 carefully and note what you see about this Roman woman. What do you think would have been her status? Consider what the image indicates about some women in antiquity. Do you think this women's qualities would have been the norm and would they have made her desirable as a marriage partner?

CHAPTER 10 Overview

KEY IDEA	WHY IT MATTERS TODAY	KEY TERMS
In any study of women of the past we have to be constantly aware of the genre of the sources, their often fragmentary nature, as well as the degree of male bias towards women. We have to recognise that most women throughout history will remain anonymous.	While a study such as this makes us aware that there were women in all eras who were highly educated, creative, determined, courageous, ambitious, prepared to take risks and demand change, we will never know about the individual lives of the majority of women, no matter what history continues to turn up. We can also not judge the women or men of the past from our modern viewpoint on men's and women's behaviour.	• aristocracy • democracy • principate • metics • epigraphic • muse • stereotypes • gynaecium • andron • *hetaerae* • symposium • Pythia • Vestals • *Pontifex maximus*

Painting the picture

In any study of antiquity, few things can be said with certainty and 'in a period when the history of men is obscure, it naturally follows that the documentation for women's lives is even more fragmented'.[2]

Since the chief role of women throughout history was determined by biology, their lives tended to display a sameness or continuity, unlike the men whose lives – involved with the various political and military upheavals of the time – were thought more worthy of recording. The majority of women were largely ignored, or remained anonymous, but where information *is* available, a woman is often added as an afterthought, in a context of the actions of men, or 'as an appendage of a significant man'.[3] In many cases, all we are offered in the way of evidence for a notable woman is 'a string of entertaining anecdotes', recorded by male writers 'to add colour' or to serve a personal or political agenda and often tailored 'to fit some imaginary pre-conceived type model'.[4]

Added to these difficulties in studying women of the past are the biases of 19–20th century scholars who studied the Classical works of educated males living in ancient patriarchal societies. Despite the extensive modern work carried out in the field of women's history, we will probably never really know what the majority of women of the past thought about their own lives: about children, marriage, domestic activities, the attitude of men who saw them as inferior, about politics, the never-ending military conflicts and the various social changes of their day.

> ### INQUIRY QUESTION
>
> What were women doing while men were active in all the areas traditionally emphasised by classical scholars?[1]

In order to really understand this topic on Greek and Roman women, historians would need to dredge for evidence from the:

- wide and varying geographical context of the Greek and Roman world
- extensive historical context stretching from the Greek Bronze Age (c. 1200 BCE) to the death of the Roman Emperor Constantine in 337 CE, and the changing political and social conditions that occurred over such a vast historical period.

However, in a study of this size, it is impossible to cover such a vast geographical and chronological framework, and to analyse the fragmented evidence for every class of women, so the material chosen is of necessity selective, focusing chiefly on:

- Classical Greece and early republican and imperial Rome
- women of the citizen class (particularly the elite about whom we know most) and those from what were regarded as the most 'disreputable' class such as *hetaerae* and prostitutes.

Even within these time frames and categories, certain material has not been covered due to the need to avoid repeating information on female slavery, already studied in *The Ancient World Transformed*: Preliminary Course, Chapter 9, and to avoid overlapping material set for the HSC.

10.1 The context of women in the Greek and Roman World

The Greek world

The three centuries that preceded what is known as Classical Greece was a period of great change. There were intermittent conflicts between individual Greek city states (**poleis**) which had developed in relative

poleis pl. of *polis*, a Greek city-state

aristocracy rule by nobles

oligarchy a government or a small group of powerful people

democracy rule by the people (*demos*), which in the ancient world meant only male citizens

hoplite a heavily armed Greek infantryman

isolation, each one valuing its independence and choosing its own particular form of government and way of life. Population increased, leading to severe land shortages and a mass movement of people from city-states in a search for areas around the Mediterranean with available land for farming and suitable conditions for future trade. It was also a time of experimentation in forms of government (**aristocracy**, benevolent tyranny, **oligarchy** and the initial steps towards **democracy**); the development of the earliest **hoplite** armies (heavily armed infantry), and the evolution of Sparta into a unique military state where women were highly valued as the producers of future warriors, where they were exempted from sitting quietly and working with wool, and had greater freedom outside the home than in other parts of Greece.

> When a woman heard that her son had deserted the army, she killed him. 'He's not my offspring … away to the darkness cowardly offspring … This son unworthy of Sparta, was not mine at all.'

SOURCE 10.2 *A Collection of Sayings from Plutarch on Sparta*, trans. J.A. Talbert, p. 35

In Athens, various reformers and lawgivers addressed the political, economic and social grievances of the day. One such lawgiver, Solon, introduced the first steps to democracy, and made laws that impacted on the lives of Athenian women. 'He made a law concerning women's appearance outside their house, as well as their mourning and their festivals to prevent disorder and their licence.'[5] He also tried to regularise prostitution by establishing state-run brothels staffed by slaves, and allowed anyone found to be an adulterer killed.

> It is curious that in the cradle of democracy (Athens) where each individual male citizen had rights to full civic participation, women's movements were restricted ... At the same time the militaristic structure of Spartan society ended up allowing women far greater freedom of movement and financial independence than any other contemporary Greek city-state.

SOURCE 10.3 J. Gaughan, *Women in Classical Athens and Sparta*

It was during this period that the voices of female poets, such as Sappho from the island of Lesbos, gave a different perspective on the lives of women.

FIGURE 10.4 Map of the Greek world in Archaic and Classical times

FIGURE 10.5 Greek vase representation of hoplites in battle

FIGURE 10.6 A statuette of a Spartan girl exercising

CHAPTER 10 THE ROLE AND IMPACT OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

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FIGURE 10.7 Oil Painting by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (1826) of a Spartan woman giving a shield to her son as he leaves for war, possibly telling him to come back with it (a victor) or be carried back on it (having died bravely in battle)

FIGURE 10.8 The earliest image of the female poet Sappho

ACTIVITY 10.1

1 Describe the difference between an oligarchy and a democracy.
2 Explain what the references to Spartan women in the text, in Figures 10.7 and 10.8 and Sources 10.2 and 10.3 reveal about Spartan women.
3 Analyse to what extent the reformer Solon restricted the activities of Athenian women.
4 Examine the life and writings of the poet Sappho.

The following timeline provides a summary of the chief developments/events that occurred during the Classical and Hellenistic eras in which the lives of Greek women were played out.

THE CLASSICAL (500–323 BCE) AND HELLENISTIC ERAS (323 TO 30 BCE)

The Classical era: the 5th and 4th centuries	The 5th and 4th centuries were defined by: • the 1st and 2nd Persian Invasions of Greece led by the Persian King Darius in 490, and by the Persian king Xerxes in 480–479. During the 2nd invasion, Athens was evacuated and destroyed by Xerxes. • the division of Greece into two powerful alliances: a naval league of democratic allies led by Athens (Delian League) and a military league of oligarchic states led by Sparta (Peloponnesian League). • a major change in the definition of the Athenian family with the introduction of a new citizenship law in 451 – only the offspring of two Athenian citizens could be eligible for citizenship. It seems that the democratic movements throughout the 5th century led to more repression of Athenian women as the mothers of future citizens were more secluded from public life.

- the Athenian empire and its cultural 'Golden Age' under the leadership of Pericles.
- growing tension between Athens and Sparta that led to the outbreak of a disastrous civil war (the Peloponnesian War).
- plague in Athens in 430, 'which caused suffering almost beyond the capacity of human nature to endure',[6] killing approximately one-third of the Athenian population (including Pericles) and permanently weakening the city's strength and ability to defend itself.
- the defeat of Athens in 404 and loss of the leadership of Greece to Sparta.
- failed Spartan leadership due to internal problems, such as the dramatic reduction in the number of Spartan citizens, and its impact on the role and status of Spartan women; its reliance on mercenaries, abuse of power, greed and inability to adapt military tactics.
- a short-lived leadership by the city of Thebes.
- Macedon's rise to power under Philip II, and Alexander's conquests of Greece and the Persian Empire, from Egypt to India.
- Alexander's death in Babylon in 323 and the resultant wars between his generals to decide the future of his empire.

The Hellenistic era (323 BCE – 30 BCE)	This was a world dramatically different from that of the preceding Classical period, a time when: • Alexander's generals fought over his empire – the eastern Mediterranean, Near East and Southwest Asia were divided into large kingdoms ruled by dynasties of Macedonian/Greek kings and powerful royal women: the Ptolemies in Egypt, Seleucids in Asia and the Antigonids in Macedon and Greece. • cosmopolitan Alexandria, the capital of Ptolemaic Egypt, and Antioch, the capital of Seleucid Syria, became political, economic, cultural and intellectual powerhouses. • god-like Hellenistic monarchs ran their kingdoms as royal estates, employed mercenaries to protect their kingdoms from external and internal threats, and acted as patrons of the people, built extensively and promoted Greek culture and language. • court life was often marked by intrigues, conspiracies, child kings, puppet rulers, exiles, power-hungry mothers plotting on behalf of their sons, removal of rival queens and royal murders, usually by poison. • free women tended to have expanded options 'with regard to marriage, public roles, education and the conduct of their private lives'[7] due to the cosmopolitan nature of Hellenistic societies, and their cultural achievements. • in 51 BCE, Cleopatra, came to the throne with her brother in Egypt and Rome's influence in the Ptolemaic kingdom increased. • Cleopatra's liaison with Mark Antony contributed to their defeat by Octavian (Augustus) at the Battle of Actium in 31, and their suicides in 30 BCE brought the Hellenistic Age to an end, and marked the beginning of Egypt as a province of Rome.

FIGURE 10.9 An oil painting of the Athenian Acropolis during the Classical period, by Leo von Kenze (1846)
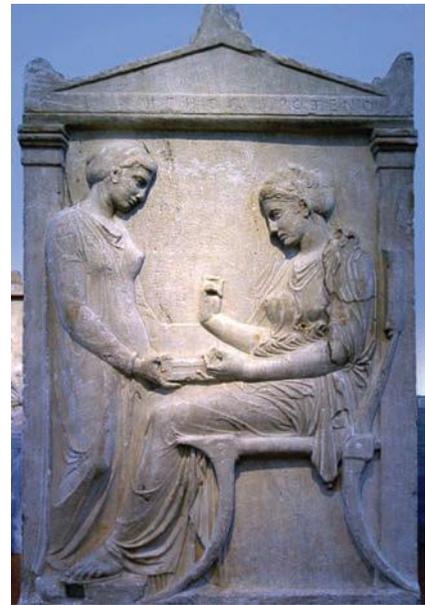
FIGURE 10.10 A grave stela of a respectable Athenian woman named Hegeso
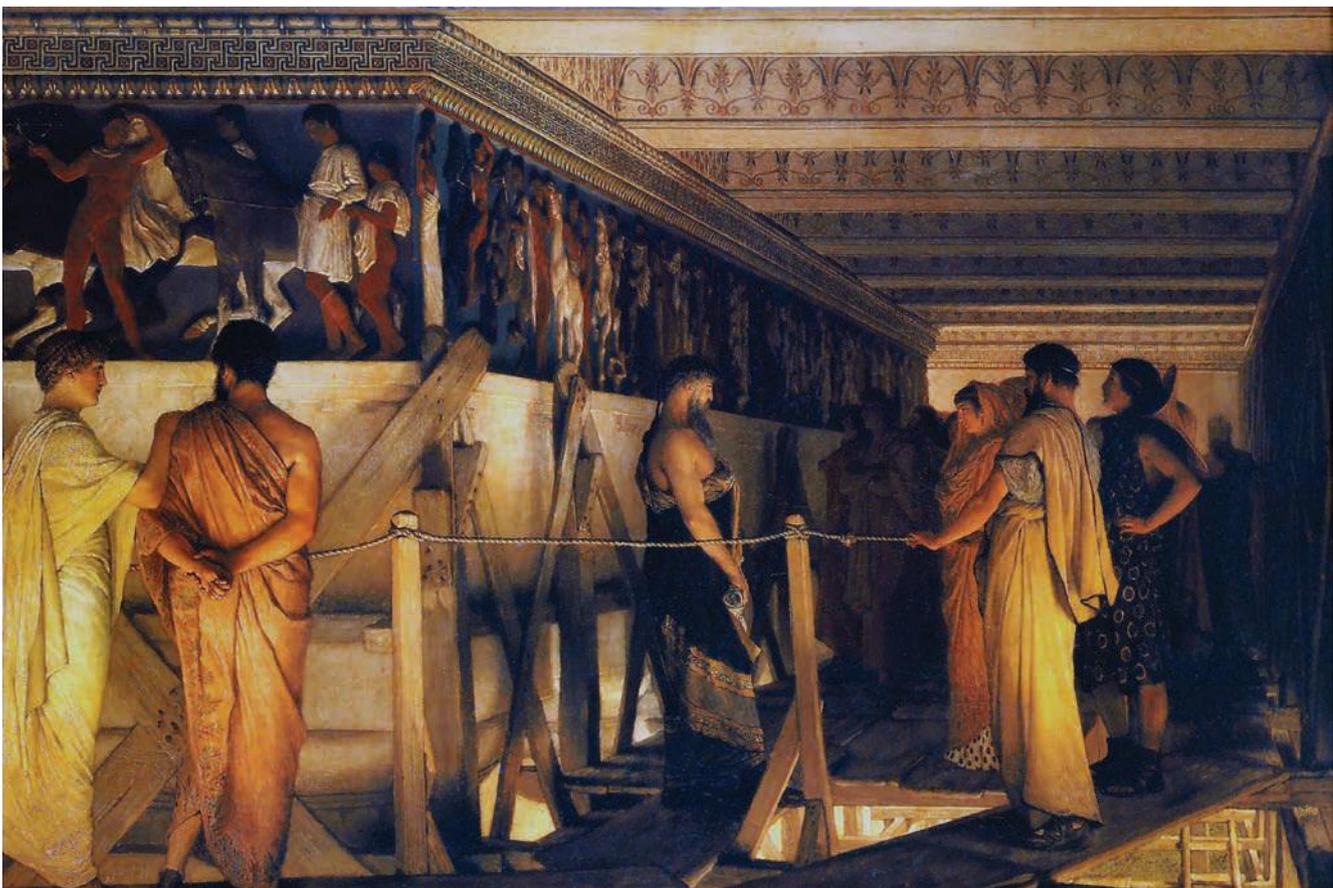
FIGURE 10.11 Pericles and Aspasia examining work on the Athenian Parthenon

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

Cambridge University Press

FIGURE 10.12 A painting of the effects of the plague

They (Spartans) had not been many days in Attica when the plague first broke out in Athens … People in perfect health suddenly began to have burning feelings in the head; their eyes became red and inflamed; inside their mouth there was bleeding from the throat and tongue … the skin was reddish and livid, breaking out into small ulcers and pustules … words indeed fail when one tries to give a general picture of this disease … the most terrible thing of all was the terrible despair into which the people fell … The bodies of the dying were heaped one on top of the other. And half-dead creatures could be seen staggering around the streets …

SOURCE 10.4 The Plague in Athens (429 BCE) Thucydides, *The Pelponnesian War* trans. Rex Warner, 2.47–55

At the court of her husband, Philip II, Olympias struggled against rival wives, mistresses, and their children to assure Alexander's succession to the throne of Macedonia … While Alexander was absent on campaign, Olympias presided over the court of Macedonia. She competed for power with Antipater, whom Alexander had left at home as viceroy.

SOURCE 10.5 Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, p. 122

FIGURE 10.13 Queen Arsinoe II of Ptolemaic Egypt

1 Assess what the previous timeline indicates about the main preoccupation of Greek males during the Classical era.
2 Identify what specific event would have affected Athenian women during the invasion of Xerxes in 480 BCE.
3 Read more of the details of the Plague of 429 BCE described in Thucydides' *The Peloponnesian War*, 2. 47–55 and try to imagine what life for Athenian women of all classes must have been like at that time. Write an eyewitness account from the point of view of a wife and mother.
4 Explain what effect the wars of the 5th and early 4th centuries BCE had on Spartan women.
5 Examine what the timeline as well as Source 10.5 reveal about court life and its impact on royal women during the Hellenistic age.
6 Explain how the lives of elite women changed during the Hellenistic period.

The Roman world

While the Athenians and Macedonians were expanding eastward during the Classical era and establishing vast and wealthy kingdoms during the Hellenistic Age, the Romans were conquering their Italian neighbours until they had control of the entire peninsula. Once they had dominance within Italy, the Romans were drawn into a series of wars against the Carthaginians who controlled the western Mediterranean, and it was via these wars – the First Punic War (264–241) and the Second Punic War (218–201) – that the Romans gained their first overseas provinces. In the 50 years after the Second Punic War, Rome became involved in events in Macedon (four wars) and in Greece, during which their attitude to overseas possessions hardened, until in 146 BCE Rome totally destroyed Carthage in the Third Punic War, and also the ancient Greek trading city of Corinth. These wars established Rome as the dominant power in both the western and eastern Mediterranean and totally transformed Roman society.

All aspects of urban and rural life were affected by Rome's expansions: from rural land use, the size of properties, food supply, population structure, employment, family life, living conditions, trade, business, entertainment, religion and education. But these foreign influences also widened the gap between the rich and poor as the wealthy bought up vast tracts of land and replaced paid agricultural labourers with slaves. Those displaced people flocked to Rome looking for work, leading to overpopulation, food and housing shortages and discontent.

ACTIVITY 10.3

Investigate how the lives of Roman women in all classes might have been affected by the changes brought about in society by Rome's overseas conquests.

LATE REPUBLICAN AND EARLY IMPERIAL ROME (C. 146 BCE – C. 180 CE)

The late republic	The period was defined by:
	• the determination of Rome's ruling class (senatorial class) to maintain its power in the face of changing conditions required to run an empire.
	• demands for land reform by landless peasants, unable to compete with slave labour, and demands for the protection of Roman citizenship from disgruntled allies who had fought for Rome.

- attempts at reform by brothers Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus to deal with these two problems in 133 and 123 BCE, resulting in their deaths, which led to future factional in-fighting among the ruling class, and constant urban violence.
- political chaos caused by rival street gangs in Rome, a disastrous war against Rome's Italian allies, and a serious slave uprising in the peninsula.
- reform of the Roman army into a professional fighting force of career soldiers and the rise of competing ambitious generals (Marius, Sulla, Pompey, Crassus, Caesar, Antony and Octavian), with loyal armies vying for military and political pre-eminence and resulting in three civil wars.
- large numbers of betrothals, marriages and divorces to cement vital political friendships and alliances
- many outstanding women during this period, who often exercised leadership during the absence of their husbands for long periods during military and governmental missions.
- the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 CE by his senatorial opponents, the liaison of Antony and Cleopatra and their suicides, the acquisition of Egypt as a Roman province, and the rise of Octavian/Augustus, who in 27 BCE established a new political order: the **principate** or 'rule of the first citizen' and took the name Augustus Caesar. The days of the republic were over.

Early imperial period: 27 BCE – 180 CE (the death of Marcus Aurelius)	This period was defined by: - the rule of Augustus Caesar who became in effect the first emperor of Rome, who reformed the laws of the city and the provinces, initiated vast building projects and set in place a time of relative peace and prosperity (*pax Romana*) throughout the empire. - Augustan morality laws that defined things that concerned women such as regulating sexual relations, adultery, divorce, marriage and rearing of children. - the dynasty of Augustus' Julio-Claudian successors: Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius and Nero, a family obsessed with questions of succession and imperial power, marked by forced marriages, divorces, adoptions, as well as intrigues, murders and bloodshed. - a series of determined, ambitious, manipulative and notorious Julio-Claudian women who were able to secure de-facto power and influence. - a brief period of unrest after the suicide of Nero, followed by the Flavian dynasty of Vespasian, Titus and Domitian characterised by massive building projects and economic prosperity. - the Nervan-Antonin Dynasty, known for its 'Five Good Emperors': Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, a time of stability, increased prosperity and expansion of the empire. This period ended with the violent reign of Commodus.	**principate** a form of government ruled by a *princeps* ('first citizen'), adopted by Augustus at the end of the Roman republic *pax Romana* 'Roman peace', the long period of peacefulness inaugurated by Augustus

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FIGURE 10.14 An image of imperial Rome

FIGURE 10.15 Senators hearing charges against Catiline who was believed to have threatened the safety of the state

FIGURE 10.16 Livia, wife of Augustus
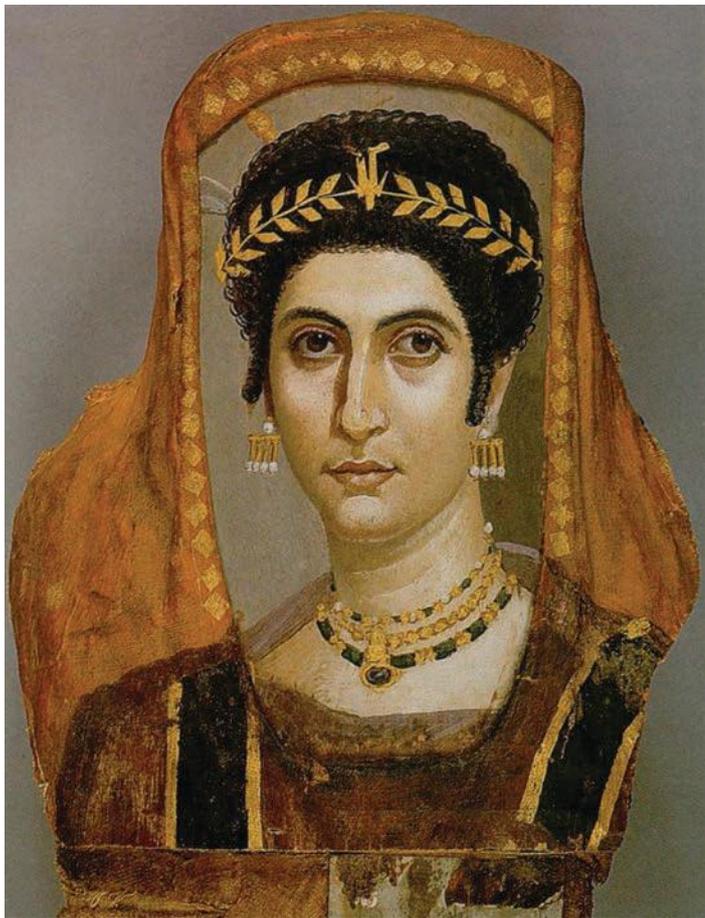
FIGURE 10.17 An image of a Roman-Egyptian woman (mummy portrait)

> It is apparent that the upper-class Roman woman – at least from the time of the late republic – had more freedom than the woman of similar status in Classical Athens. The Roman woman had choices; the Athenian had none ... lifestyles varied and more than one role was tolerated by society. ... Compared to Athenian women, Roman women were liberated, but compared to Roman men they were not.

SOURCE 10.6 Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, p. 188–9

> ... in narrowly aristocratic or monarchic states, women who belonged to the elite often wielded considerable power, even if illegitimately.

SOURCE 10.7 Roger Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (1989), p. 13

ACTIVITY 10.4

1 Evaluate what the previous timeline indicates about:
   - the main preoccupation of Roman males during the late republican Age
   - the main preoccupation of Augustus and the Julio-Claudian emperors during the early imperial period.
2 Evaluate what the previous timeline and Sources 10.6 and 10.7 indicate about:
   - the effect of the political situation during the late republic on elite Roman women
   - the nature of many of the women of the Julio-Claudian women.

A COMMENT ON STATUS IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLD

A person's status within the Greek and Roman worlds was based on several things:
- Citizenship – Those who were classed as citizens were freeborn, adult males. This group had the highest status. Wives and children of citizens were part of the citizen class but did not have any political rights.
- In Rome, status also depended on ancestry, political rank and prestige (senatorial class and those who had been consuls), and wealth.

> **metics** resident foreigners working in Athens

- Below the elite were various social classes on whom the elite depended. In Athens, for example, were **metics** (both male and female foreign workers, many of whom became influential) and slaves, while in Rome there were freedmen and women who had been slaves but had gained their freedom (many of whom became very wealthy and influential), *peregrini* (foreigners) and a hierarchy of slaves.

The written sources reveal few details about the lives of women in most of these classes.

10.2 The range, nature and reliability of the sources for women

All written sources 'either dramatise or are slanted to specific bias', and material evidence 'can be subjected to more than one interpretation'.[8]

TABLE 10.1 The range of sources for women

Written	Archaeological
mythology	sculptures
histories	vase paintings
biographies	frescoes
orations	mosaics
letters	dedications on tombstones (epitaphs)*
philosophy	coins
laws	household utensils, looms and furniture
poetry	inscriptions on ancient monuments and stelae*
tragedies	the remains of houses and public buildings
comedies	
graffiti	

*These **epigraphic** sources can also be regarded as written sources

epigraphic referring to epigraphy, the study of inscriptions

muse one of the Nine Muses, inspirational goddesses of literature, science and the arts in Greek mythology
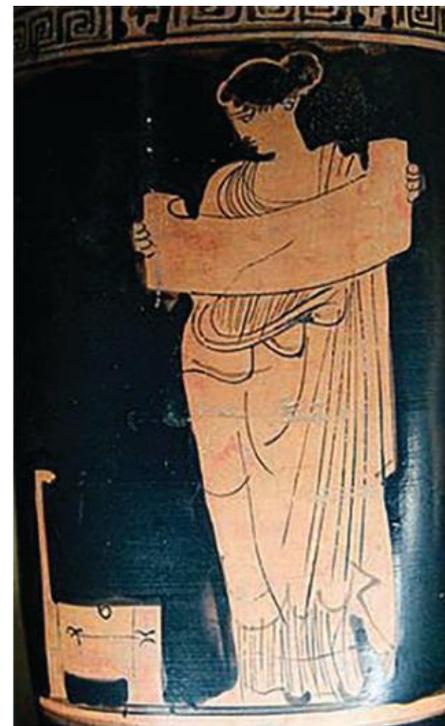
FIGURE 10.18 A Greek vase painting of a **muse** reading

FIGURE 10.19 A Roman mosaic of actors wearing masks, depicting old women from a Greek play.

FIGURE 10.20 The remains of the House of the Vestal Virgins

Written sources

In any period of historical writing there can be no such thing as an untainted judgement since, despite any genuine desire to be honest and precise, the historian will inevitably be corrupted by an inherited way of viewing the world.

SOURCE 10.8 Anthony A. Barrett, *Agrippina*, foreword, p. xiv

Since the history of Greece and Rome was written predominantly by men from the ruling classes, the women known from Greek and Roman sources tend to belong to the elite groups in society. These male writers present an educated/upper-class male point of view of women, how they believed a 'good' women should behave, or how they thought women *would* behave if allowed too much freedom. In many cases, references to women by historians and biographers 'tend to be anecdotal, and so not necessarily pinned down to particular times and events; rather, they are illustrative of character in general and timeless ways'.[9] Women are often treated as **stereotypes**. Since literary sources give completely different perspectives on women, it is extremely 'difficult to determine how women were perceived at the time, or even the realities of their lives'.[10]

stereotypes a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person

Orators and speech writers provide information on the roles of women and their legal status and yet they are often negative about particular women; philosophers are useful because their moralistic attitudes reflect contemporary society and many actually recommend education for women.

Personal letters can reveal how politically important men interacted on the domestic front with wives and daughters, and some reveal their admiration for their wives' abilities. However, it should be noted that many letters (as in the case of Cicero and Pliny the Younger) were meant to be published. The rare surviving letters written by women (like the one attributed to the Roman matron Cornelia to her son Gaius) do give a better insight into the thoughts of some women.

Poets vary in reliability but, as Sarah Pomeroy asks, just how reliable 'are satirists or the rejected lovers of elegiac poetry?'[11] She also suggests that tragedies, meant to teach moral lessons, cannot be used as an independent source for the life of the average woman. The comedy writers provide vivid glimpses of ordinary men and women, although always seen through the eyes of men. These snapshots are useful for the social historian, but since comedies were meant to entertain they were usually highly exaggerated.

Epitaphs and other dedicatory inscriptions (on votive reliefs, funerary monuments and statue bases) reveal minor details about a wide range of women, including priestesses. These suggest a greater role for women in public life than previously thought. However, most are so brief that they tell us very little about the individual lives of women. As in the case of eulogies read at modern funerals, the ancient epitaphs focus chiefly on the positive, loving and appropriate aspects of the deceased. Also, dedications inscribed to honour women were partly meant to commend their husbands' own virtues, especially if they were politically ambitious.

ACTIVITY 10.5

1 Summarise in a list the limitations of each of the sources described above in any study on women.
2 Explain which would you consider the most reliable.

A selection of men's views of women over time

Not all men's views about women were entirely negative – many appear positive, but only when the woman fulfilled what a man considered the appropriate behaviour and role of woman. The following views range from 7th century BCE to 1st century CE.

Greek

1 Hesiod and Simonides, Greek poets of the 7th and 6th centuries BCE, appear to have been particularly biased against women, seeing them of little value except in terms of service to their husbands. They described women in some of the following ways:

- as 'a curse', 'a snare', 'a futile thing for men', womanhood as 'the deadly race bringing great pain to men', and implying that if it weren't necessary to have children or as companions and support in one's old age, one could simply avoid the problem of living with the 'race of women'.[12] Simonides in a social satire compares different types of women to various animals and sums up his work with the words that women 'are the greatest plague that Zeus has made, and that he bound them to men with fetters that cannot be broken'.[13]

2 Pericles, the great Athenian statesman, believed 'the greatest glory of a woman is to be least talked about by men, whether they are praising you or criticizing you'.[14]

3 Euripides, the Athenian playwright, put in the mouths of his female characters, 'I am only a woman, a thing which the world hates'.[15] 'No cure has been found for a woman's venom, worse than that of reptiles. We are a curse to man.' 'Men of sense should never let gossiping women visit their wives, for they work mischief.'[16]

4 Aristotle, an Athenian philosopher, although believing that women were capable of virtue and understanding, said that man is by nature superior to the female and so the man should rule and the woman should be ruled.[17]

5 Demosthenes, an Athenian orator, wrote, 'We keep *hetaerae* for the sake of pleasure, females slaves for our daily care and wives to give us legitimate children and to be the guardians of our households.'[18]

6 Menander, an Athenian playwright, is thought to have written that 'a man who teaches a woman to write should know that he is providing poison to an asp'.[19]

Roman

Throughout the Roman republic, men seemed to have had an 'irrational fear of the danger that the growing independence of women posed', and were 'obsessed with the notion of moral decay'.[20]

1 Cato the Elder's speech when Roman women demonstrated in the streets in support of overturning of the law that restricted personal female extravagance, outlined the following:

> **forum** an open public space in the centre of a Roman city, a place of assembly and of judicial and business affairs

- Men have lost control over their wives.
- Excessive female independence has overwhelmed freedom in the home and now threatens to overwhelm it underfoot in the **forum**.
- If women are allowed to gather together and confer in secret, men will be in danger of destruction.[21]

2 Cicero, normally a man with reasonably liberal views, expressed the following:

- Unless wives obey their husbands, anarchy will prevail.
- 'What an unhappy state it would be where women seize the prerogatives of men, the senate, the army and the magistracies.'[22]
- 'Women's passions must be checked'.[23]

3 Aulus Caecina in a senate debate lists some of the reasons why women should be left at home when their husbands take up military appointments in the provinces:

- 'A female entourage stimulates extravagance in peacetime and timidity in war.'
- 'It makes a Roman army resemble an oriental progress for women are frail and easily tired.'
- 'Relax control and they become ferocious, ambitious schemers, circulating among the soldiers, ordering company commanders about.'
- 'Wives attract every rascal in the provinces.'
- 'It is they who initiate and transact business.'
- 'Women give the most wilful and despotic orders.'
- 'They are rulers everywhere – at home, in the courts and now in the army.'[24]

1 Outline in your own words of what these men are recorded as having said about women.
2 Discuss why, if pagan goddesses were, in their own way, as powerful as gods, and Greek and Roman legends were full of strong, powerful female figures, did these men regard human females as generally so inferior to men?

Views of women from epitaphs

She made all her sons equal heirs, after she gave a bequest to her daughter. A mother's love is composed of her affection for her children and equal distribution to each child. She willed a fixed sum to her husband (the speaker's stepfather) … Recalling my father's memory, and taking account of the trust she owed him, she bequeathed certain property to me …

… My dearest mother deserved greater praise than all others, since in modesty, propriety, chastity, obedience, wool working, industry and loyalty she was an equal with other good women, nor did she take second place to any woman in virtue, work and wisdom in times of danger.

SOURCE 10.9 Part of a longer epitaph inscribed on marble in which a son praises his mother Murdia's generosity in her will and her loyalty to her two husbands, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions,* CIL V1. 10230, 1st century BCE

Here lies Amymone, wife of Marcus, best and most beautiful, worker in wool, pious, chaste, thrifty, faithful, a-stayer-at-home (*domiseda*).

SOURCE 10.10 *Greek and Latin Inscriptions,* CIL V1.11602, 1st century CE

Views about a wife from the *Letters* of Pliny the Younger

Pliny the Younger was a well-known and influential Roman lawyer, author and leading magistrate, friend of the writer Tacitus and on intimate terms with the Emperor Trajan. He is best known for his two *Letters* written about the eruption of Vesuvius and the death of his uncle, Pliny the Elder. However, he wrote hundreds of letters of which 247 survived, including those to his young third wife, Calpurnia, in which he appears as a loving and caring husband.

I never complained more about my duties than when they kept me from accompanying you to Campania, when you had to go there for your health, and even from following you there immediately. Now especially I would love to see you with my own eyes whether you are getting stronger and putting on some weight … Indeed, I would still worry about you when you were away even if you were not ill; there is an anxious suspense in not knowing about someone you love dearly. …

It is incredible how much I miss you – first of all because I love you, but then because we are not used to being apart. I stay awake at night conjuring up your image, and during the day at times when I usually visit you, my feet literally carry me to your rooms. But when I do not find you there, I retreat, lovesick, like a lover locked out. …

SOURCE 10.11 Extracts from two of Pliny's letters, Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 6.7 & 7.5

FIGURE 10.21 A mosaic of a love scene

A COMMENT ON THE LAWS PERTAINING TO WOMEN

Throughout the Greek and Roman world there was a vast body of laws defining the legal status of women, both for their control and supposed protection, drawn up by men. These included everything from contracts and wills; questions of inheritances; ownership of property; matters of guardianship, marriage, dowries, divorces, remarriages, social status and sexual behaviour, adultery, seduction and rape; the operation of brothels and taxes paid by prostitutes.

During Roman times, laws were constantly re-written and reinterpreted, especially to do with ownership of property because people either ignored the law, or found a way to avoid it.

Archaeological sources

An important source for understanding women in antiquity are the remains of housing, but because most Athenian houses were small and made of mud-brick which crumbled away and had to be rebuilt over time, it is sometimes hard to identify those areas that might have been set aside for women and men. There is far more evidence for Roman housing from such well-preserved sites as Pompeii and Herculaneum, although the identity and exact usage of some areas within the house are still in doubt.

gynaeceum the women's quarters of a Greek house

andron the male/public quarters of the house

atrium decorated central hall of a Roman house

peristyle inner courtyard surrounded by colonnades

tablinum a room where business affairs were conducted
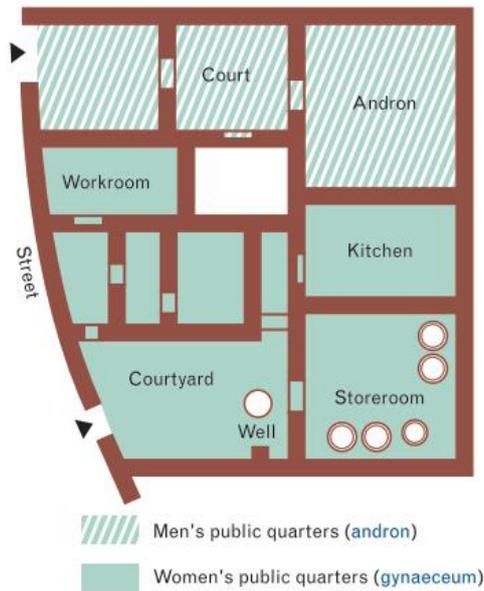
FIGURE 10.22 A plan of an Athenian house of someone of moderate means
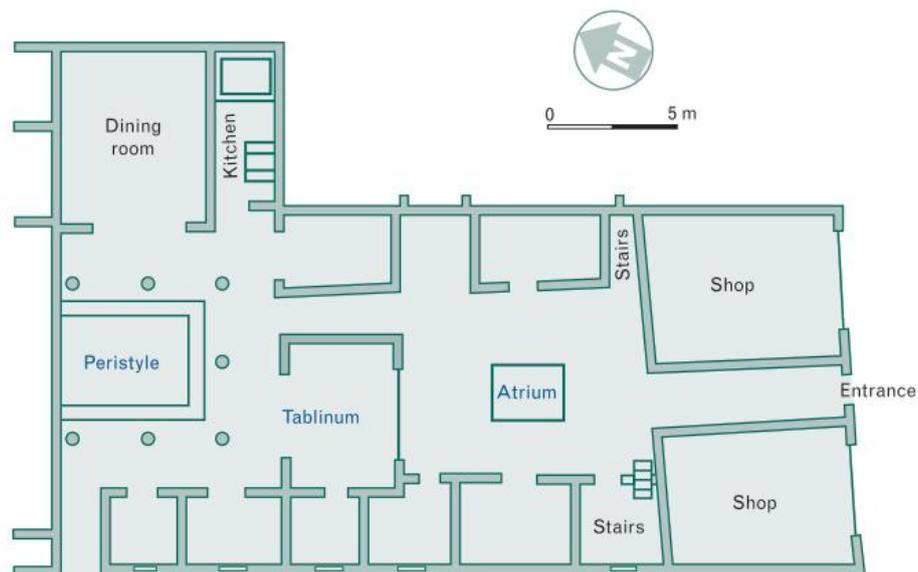
FIGURE 10.23 A labelled plan of a Roman house of someone of moderate means

Poor housing may have been an expression of the modesty that surrounded an Athenian family, modesty required of the wives and daughters of Athenian citizens in their behaviour and in their dress, on which legal controls were occasionally imposed.

SOURCE 10.12 Susan Walker, 'Women and Housing in Classical Greece: The Archaeological Evidence' in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt, p. 83

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1   Summarise in a list the features you can see in Figure 10.22 and explain why the house is arranged in this way.

2   Assess whether it conforms to the description in Source 10.12. If so, what might be the reason behind that?

3   Examine how a house in Classical Athens differed from one belonging to someone of similar status in Roman society.

Interpreting women in Athenian vase painting

The use of Greek figured vases can add detail to the ancient literary sources on women, but we need to be cautious in the interpretation of the figures and activities depicted.

Quite often it is easy to interpret the scenes by:

1   the purpose of particular types of pots: for example, those used for funerary or marriage purposes, cups and mixing bowls for wine, necessary for **symposia** or drinking parties

2   the specific subject matter, for example:

• women depicted involved in music or reading could be Muses (they may be named or associated with the god Apollo), others might be professional musicians of the slave class, and those reading could be well-educated **hetaerae**, as most women of the Greek citizen class were not well-educated.

• women shown at symposia are *hetaerae* or slaves.

• groups of women gathered around a fountain are either slaves, or poor free women, as no citizen woman would be outside and would have sent slaves to collect their water. In one case it is easy to identify the women by the names on the pot (those most appropriately used for slaves).

symposia pl. of *symposium*, a drinking party and discussion often held after a banquet in ancient Greece

hetaerae pl. of *hetaera* a high-class and well-educated courtesan or 'companion'

Usually when women are depicted as sitting in a high-backed chair passing a child to a slave, with evidence of her industriousness (distaff, spinning with dyed roves of wool, a loom for weaving textiles for use in the home) she can be interpreted as a respectable, dedicated housewife of the citizen class. However, this is not always the case as there are similar depictions of *hetaerae*, one even shown teaching a young *hetaera* to spin wool, and another of wool working – with spindles and baskets of wool – in a brothel.

A COMMENT ON THE POTTERS AND VASE PAINTERS OF ATHENS

Kerameikos, the neighbourhood of Athens where potters and vase painters tended to live, was a by-word for prostitution and the home of brothels. Most prostitutes, and possibly many of the potters and vase painters, were either slaves or, like *hetaerae*, foreigners. These women, including wives of the artisans, would have inevitably provided the subject matter for many of the depictions on the painted pottery vessels, many of which would have been sold to the male population for use in their many drinking parties.
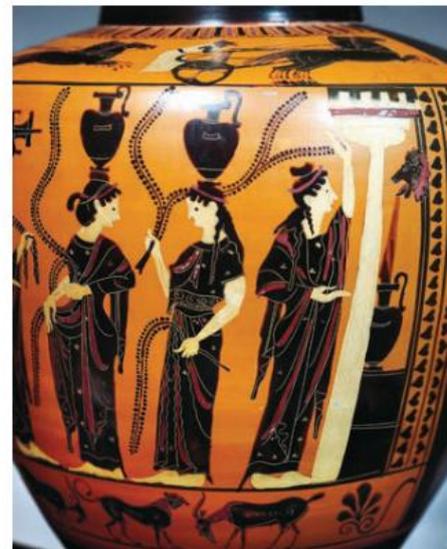
FIGURE 10.24 Women gathered around a fountain in Athens

The picture of women that we find on vases, therefore, is often indistinct, but in the social attitudes that we can observe there is much that echoes the bias preserved in other historical sources. After all, vase-painting was essentially a man's view of a man's point of view.

SOURCE 10.13 Dyfri Williams, 'Women on Athenian Vases: problems of Interpretation', in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, edited by A. Cameron and A. Kuhrt, p. 105

ACTIVITY 10.9

1 Explain why caution is necessary in interpreting painted scenes on Greek vases and pots.
2 Explain what Source 10.13 says about the bias in art.

10.3 The private and public roles of women

Throughout antiquity:

- 'The course of women's lives from birth to death, was set by men: fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, other male guardians and by the male citizens by whom governments were formed.'[25]
- The status of most women compared to males in their own class was regarded as inferior.
- Females had no political rights.
- Marriage was the preferred status for all women.
- Choice of spouses was made on the basis of political and/or economic considerations.
- Girls were married at a very young age.
- The main aim of marriage was for the procreation of children.
- The highest praise for women was reserved for those that devoted themselves to their children.
- A woman's chief role was to manage a household, and memorials to women recognised their domestic qualities far more often than any intellectual achievements.
- All women, no matter what their class (the Greek and Roman elite, the lower classes including *hetaerae* and even among the female members of Roman emperors' households) were involved in some form of wool/textile working which was a major contributor to the economy.
- Women's lives and behaviour were controlled by a large body of laws covering everything from sexual behaviour to divorce and inheritances.
- The role played by prostitutes and brothels in society was regarded as necessary and acceptable.
- Religion was the major sphere of public life in which women participated.

Within this generalised framework, there were some differences between elite women of Greece and Rome, and always exceptions in both societies.

The role of women in the home and in the economy

Marriage and divorce

In citizen families in ancient Greece, a virginal girl was usually married around 14 years of age to a man no younger than 30. The age differences were for the following reasons:

- young girls were regarded as lustful, and since the main purpose of a female of the citizen class was to produce legitimate heirs for the family and provide male citizens for the state, they needed to be wed as early as possible.

- men were expected to spend around 10 years in the army and because of the youth of the girl she needed to be protected by a mature husband once she left her father's house.

In Rome (under Augustus) a girl was often betrothed between 12–15 with the boy a little older, and as in Greece there were always pragmatic reasons for the alliance (economic and political). It has been suggested that the youth of the girl and boy was so that families did not have to delay in getting the profits and prestige from the alliance.

In both societies, betrothals were negotiated between the girl's fathers or male guardians and prospective spouses and/or their families, often without the girl having any say in the matter. In fact, she may not have seen her future husband until the marriage, although in late republican Rome, some girls were permitted to choose, depending on their fathers, or refuse a potential husband, but only if she could prove that he was morally unfit. Also, occasionally a woman initiated her own alliance.

The girl's family was expected to provide a dowry intended for her continuing upkeep and no one could legally dispose of the dowry, including the woman herself.

In Greek law, a wife came immediately under the control/protection of her new husband and for the reminder of her marriage she was kept relatively secluded in the women's quarters of the house and, according to the sources, her duty thereafter was to 'remain at home and send the slaves to do jobs outside the house'.[26]

Women were secluded so they could not be seen by men other than their close relatives. Although this usually protected them from unwelcome attention, there apparently were occasions when a free woman was seduced by a man. One such case recorded describes how a husband used to watch his wife as much as possible when they were first married, but that when their son was born he felt he could trust her as she was a good wife 'clever, economical, and kept everything neat in the house',[27] but when his mother died, his wife was seen at her funeral by a man who over time seduced her. He explains that even though the women's quarters were upstairs, he had moved them downstairs to make it easier for his wife to tend the baby. He never became suspicious of what was going on until he came home unexpectedly; the man had been in the house. He waited until he caught them in bed together and he and his friends killed his wife's lover. In Athens, seduction was a more heinous crime than rape for it implied a relationship over a period of time during which the seducer gained access to the husband's household and access to his wife. Therefore, the aggrieved husband had the right to kill the seducer.

In Rome during the late republic, unlike in Greece, when a woman was married and moved to her husband's home, she continued under the authority of her father. This, and the fact that many men were away for long periods of time in the provinces or at war, gave a Roman woman greater freedom both inside and outside the home.

In both societies, divorce was socially acceptable and a relatively simple affair as property was kept separate. Divorces could be initiated by either partner, although it was rare that a woman did so. If a Greek man wanted to divorce his wife he simply had to send her from the house, but if a woman desired divorce, she had to do it through her father or a male citizen who took it to court before the *archon* (chief magistrate). The dowry had to be returned in full, or the ex-husband had to continue to pay her family 18% interest so that she was able to

FIGURE 10.25 A Greek wedding procession to the home of the husband. The normal marriage was celebrated over three days.

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remarry. If a husband died before his wife, the dowry came under the guardianship of her sons if they were grown, or another male relative. In Rome, divorce involved a woman leaving her husband's house and taking back her dowry. In both societies, the children remained with the husband. However, in Rome there are many examples of extremely close relationships between mothers and sons even when the parents were divorced.

Motherhood

The purpose of marriage was procreation and the birth of a son was considered the fulfilment of the goal of marriage.

In Classical Athens, since boys were expected to go into the army, take their political responsibilities seriously either by holding public office, voting on important issues in the assembly and participating as jurors in the courts, the form of their education was vastly different to that of girls. The qualities, most admired in a girl were 'silence, submissiveness and abstinence from men's pleasures'[28] and, as their role was to manage a household, it was enough for them to be educated in domestic duties by their mothers, or occasionally by a husband if a wife came to him too young to know anything.

Like their counterparts in Classical Greece, Roman women were expected to bear children, and were valued for the number they produced and their attempts to educate them to become good citizens. However, some among the elite of the late republic and early empire were disinclined to devote themselves to traditional motherhood, and the number of children a woman had declined so much that Augustus was forced to introduce laws and incentives to encourage women to have more. Citizen women were given special honours if they had at least three children, and freedwomen if they had four. Also, during this time, many women avoided breastfeeding, preferring to employ wet-nurses.

In Rome, the role of the mother to educate her children, both males and females, was made easier since most elite women were educated and many were highly praised for their intellectual accomplishments. Girls in elite households were often taught Greek and Latin from an early age.
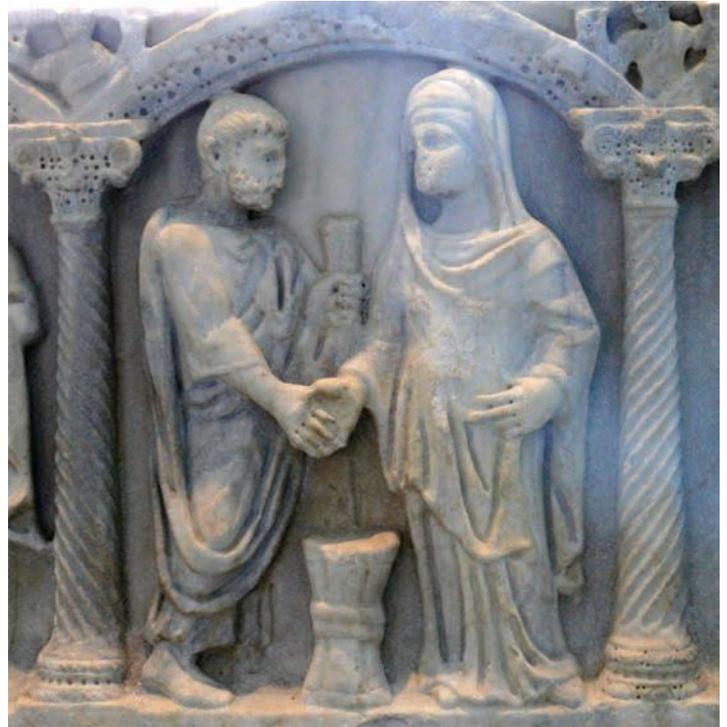
FIGURE 10.26 A sculpture of a Roman marriage

FIGURE 10.27 A Roman mother breastfeeding

FIGURE 10.28 Empress Messalina with her son Britannicus

FIGURE 10.29 A family scene on a Greek vase

FIGURE 10.30 A statuette of a Roman girl

Household management

One of the most important tasks of women in antiquity was to manage a household.

The following source tells, in part, what Xenophon emphasised as the role of the 'good' wife in Classical Athens.

> You must keep an eye on those who work at home and check what is brought in from outside. If the wool is brought into the house, you must take care that everyone is clothed. You must make sure that the grain is kept dry and prepared well for eating. When anyone in the house is sick, you must see that they are nursed back to health. Keep everything in the right place: the men's clothes and the women's clothes, the bedclothes for the women's rooms and those for the men's, women's shoes and men's shoes, each in a separate place. Weapons have their own special place, as do the various utensils for wool spinning, the grinding of corn, the preparation of vegetables, washing, baking and eating. The more you are a good helper for me and protector of the children, the more you will be respected and honoured.

SOURCE 10.14 Xenophon, 'The Estate Manager' in *Conversations with Socrates*, p. 73

Friend, I have not much to say: stop and read it through. This is the unlovely tomb of a lovely woman. Her parents named her Claudia. She loved her husband with her whole heart. She bore two sons, one of whom she leaves on earth; the other she has placed beneath. She was pleasant to talk with, and her conduct was appropriate. She kept house, she made wool. That is all. You may go.

SOURCE 10.15 *Greek and Latin Inscriptions, CIL* V1.15346, 2nd century BCE

FIGURE 10.31 A scene from the Greek women's quarters

FIGURE 10.32 A woman spinning

Running a household in ancient Rome, especially among the upper classes, was rather different from running a household in Classical Greece. Due to greater wealth and the availability of slaves, many women, while still expected to carry out the traditional roles of educating children and wool working, might be required to supervise several households, in both city and country as well as entertaining social and political guests and visiting dignitaries from abroad. Such a complex task would have involved considerable expertise, but due to her access to competent slaves, she would also have been freed from some of the routine household tasks and could spend more time outside the home in social activities.

When the Emperor Augustus wished to instil respect for old-fashioned virtues among the sophisticated women of his household, he set them to work on wool.

On all but special occasions, he wore house clothes woven and sewn for him by either Livia, Octavia, Julia, or one of his grand-daughters.

SOURCE 10.16 Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars*, Augustus, 73

As well as running households and contributing to the textile industry, some Roman women of the elite ran successful businesses, such as:

- investing funds and lending money to their peers
- shipping corporations, especially at the time of the Emperor Claudius
- owning and operating brick factories.

1   Describe what you think is depicted in Figures 10.29, 10.30 and 10.31.

2   Explain how we know of the importance of wool work in the Roman economy.

3   Draw a table with two columns headed 'similarities' and 'differences' and list the ways in which life for a Greek citizen woman was different from that of a Roman matron.

4   Explain how did the dowry arrangements protected a divorced woman and made it easier to get remarried.

5   Examine why seduction was regarded more seriously under the law than rape.

6   Discuss to what extent Athenian law, and the age and education differences between husband and wife in ancient Greece, tended to lead to:
   • the wife being regarded 'as a veritable child'
   • 'lack of friendship in the modern sense between husband and wife'.[29]

The role in the economy of lower class women

Many freewomen both in Greek and Roman societies were forced to go out to work. These may have included poor citizens who had fallen on hard times, women of the metic class (resident foreigners) in Athens including *hetaerae*, and freedwomen (those who had once been slaves) including non-slave prostitutes in Rome. Although not a lot is known about these lives of these women, there are references to the types of work they did and the contributions they made to their society's economy.

> … I should like to tell you what I've been through myself, you see my husband died in Cyprus and left me with five young children to look after, it was as much as I could do to keep them half alive, selling myrtle in the market. … Well, I must be getting back to the market myself, I've got some gentlemen waiting for twenty wreaths – specially ordered.

SOURCE 10.17 Aristophanes, *The Poet and the Women*, trans. D. Barret, p. 114

Epitaphs, and the material remains from Pompeii and Herculaneum provide valuable information on the role of these women and we know that many of them became quite wealthy by buying property and renting out flats, investing in the grain market and outfitting ships.

Most, however, just continued to work in small-scale retail businesses or those related to the textile industry, many using the skills they may have learnt as former slaves.

TABLE 10.2 Some types of occupations of lower class women

- Bread vendors, 'dealers in beans', grocers, salt vendors, honey sellers, sesame seed sellers, dealers in grain, vendors of vegetables, vendors of chickens and eggs, olive oil importers
- Cloak, clothing and shoe sellers, garland makers, sellers of exotic merchandise like frankincense, purple dyes and perfumes
- Waitresses in taverns and take away food shops and bars
- Laundresses and washerwomen, unguent boilers
- Spinners, weavers, dressmakers
- Hairdressers
- Entertainers: musicians, singers, dancers, acrobats
- Wet nurses, midwives and female doctors
- Scribes
- Owners of brothels, *hetaerae* and prostitutes.
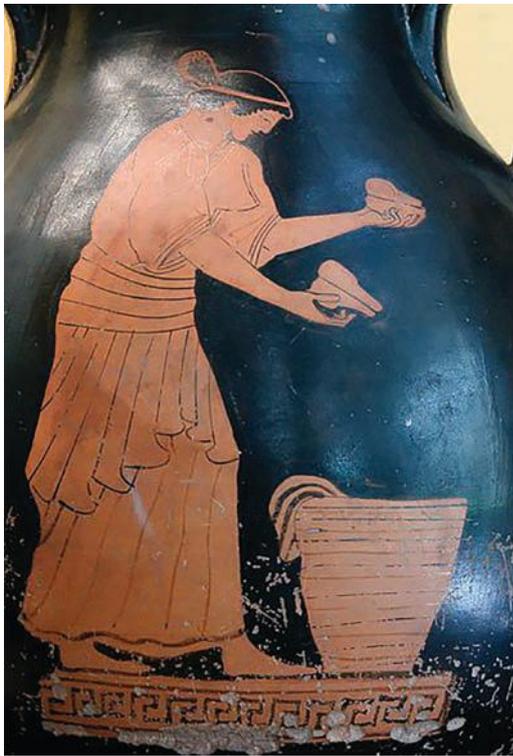
FIGURE 10.33 A street vendor
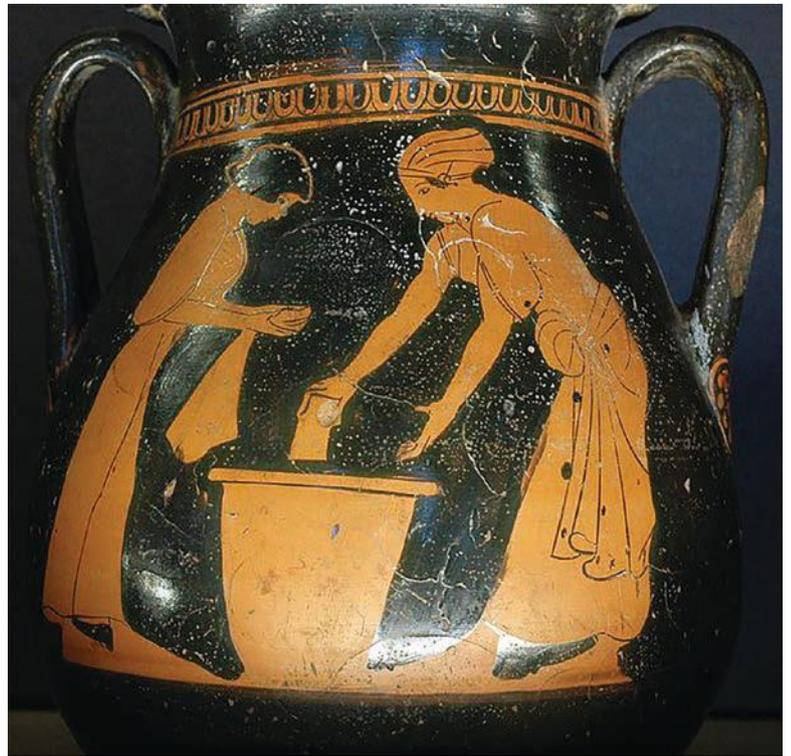
FIGURE 10.34 A launderer

Prostitution

Prostitution was an integral part of both Greek and Roman societies. There was nothing 'hidden' about it, or shameful for those males who made use of it – it was closely regulated, and contributed to the economy.

In Athens at the end of the 6th century, Solon saw the need for legal, public, state-run brothels in order to curb adultery in a society where males did not marry until at least 30. Later, as Athens became the hub of an empire, it attracted merchants and sailors from all over the Mediterranean who needed entertainments, and foreigners were given permission to settle and work in Athens, many of whom found work as prostitutes. Brothels abounded in the port area of Piraeus and in the Kerameikos or potters' area of Athens.

Also in Rome, as in all major cities of the empire, brothels were very common. The graffiti and erotic art at one brothel in Pompeii has been well documented; however, this kind of art is not always an indicator of a brothel.

Prostitutes were either:

* foreign slaves
* freed slaves
* free foreign women
* female children left abandoned
* poor free Athenians or Romans who had fallen on hard times.
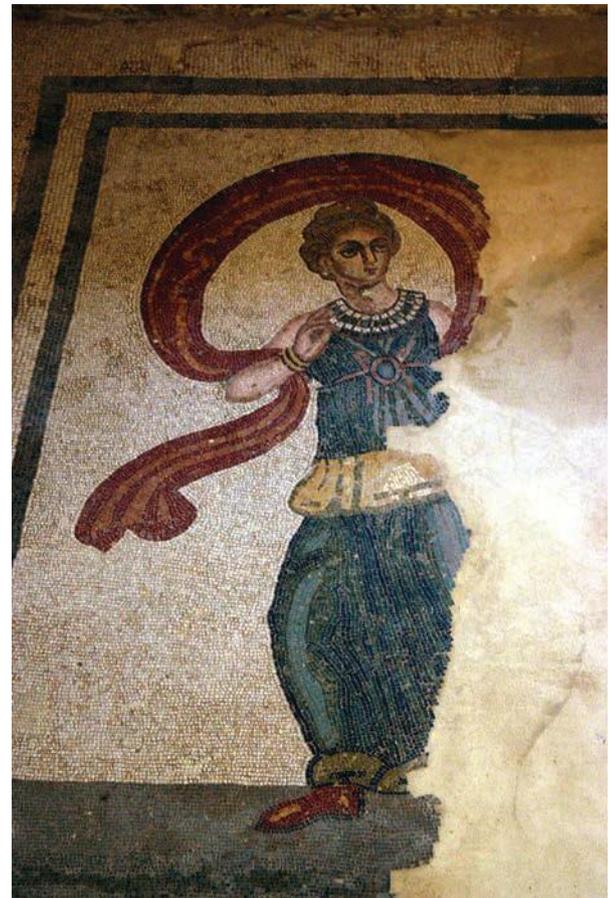
FIGURE 10.35 An entertainer

Those employed in the prostitution business in Greece were divided into:

1 prostitutes (*pornai* from the word meaning 'to sell') who worked under the control of a madam in a brothel

2 independent prostitutes who worked the streets, described as wearing a lot of make-up, displaying their wares and publicising themselves by wearing sandals with specially marked soles that left a message saying 'follow me'

3 *hetaerae*, at the top of the scale, who were called 'companions' to men, because of their beauty, intellect and interest in art, and skill in entertaining men at symposia especially in comparison with the women left secluded at home with little education. The most famous of these 'companions' in Athens was Aspasia, friend of the philosopher Socrates who admitted he learnt about rhetoric from her, and who was also the live-in companion of the great Pericles to whom she had a son.

A COMMENT ON GREEK SYMPOSIA

The symposium, or drinking party, was a social institution that provided for elite males in Greek societies and was held in the male quarters of a Greek house. It followed an evening meal or banquet and usually began with a **libation** and a hymn to Dionysus, the god of wine. Although a male affair, it allowed for the roles of various women such as *hetaerae* (companions) and female flute girls and dancers. Symposia were noted for their:

libation a drink poured out as an offering to a god

elegies poems of a serious reflective nature written in couplets

- sexual character (homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual)
- philosophical and political discussions
- creative competitions
- **elegies** sung to the accompaniment of the flute and lyric songs to the lyre
- excessive wine consumption, although usually watered down, leading to sexual activities.

These were carefully planned by a person (symposiarch) who decided on the form of the entertainments and the degree to which wine should be watered down. These gatherings often ended with a boisterous procession to other drinking parties.

Evidence for these are to be found especially on the red-figured drinking cups used especially in symposia.

FIGURE 10.36 A symposium

FIGURE 10.37 A *hetaera* with a client (courtesy of the San Antonio Museum of Art)

FIGURE 10.38 A painting of Aspasia, the most famous *hetaera* in Athens with Socrates and Alcibiades

FIGURE 10.39 A painting of Phyrene, a *hetaera*, being tried for impiety

In the first place, she dresses attractively and looks neat; she's gay with all the men, without being so ready to cackle as you are, but smiles in a sweet bewitching way; later on, she's very clever when they're together, never cheats a visitor or an escort, and never throws herself at the men. If ever she takes a fee for going out to dinner, she doesn't drink too much – that's ridiculous, and men hate women who do – she doesn't gorge herself – that's ill-bred, my dear – but picks up the food with her finger-tips, eating quietly and not stuffing both cheeks full, and, when she drinks, she doesn't gulp, but sips slowly from time to time … Also, she doesn't talk too much or make fun of any of the company, and has eyes only for her customer. These are the things that make her popular with the men. Again, when it's time for bed, she'll never do anything coarse or slovenly, but her only aim is to attract the man and make him love her; these are the things they all praise in her.

SOURCE 10.18 Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, http://penelope.uchicago.edu

Although many prostitutes were marginalised in society (unable to marry, or take part in any public ceremonies) and had to pay a special tax on their earnings, they were probably the only group in Greek society (except for the slaves) who had any real independent power from male control. Because they handled their own money, some became very wealthy and even funded public buildings. The comedy writers were fond of charging them with greed, but Source 10.19 provides another insight.

When such women (*hetaerae*) change to a life of sobriety, they are better than the women who pride themselves on their respectability.

SOURCE 10.19 Athenaeus, XIII, 38

Of course, there was a negative side: some *hetaerae* were charged with impiety, others mothered children. Their sons never became citizens despite the status of their fathers, although this ruling was later revoked when the number of Greek citizens declined dramatically at the end of the 5th century. Female children were often killed or trained to follow their mothers into prostitution.

1 Describe what you can see in Figures 10.36, 10.37 and 10.38.
2 Make a list of the positive and negative things about being an ordinary prostitute in Classical Athens.
3 Explain why you think the writer in Source 10.19 believes that a former prostitute might be better than a respectable woman once she leaves her profession.
4 Write a short imaginative piece from the perspective of either a *hetaera* or a male guest about a symposium.

The status and roles of women in political and religious life

Throughout antiquity, women had no political rights or direct political role to play.

This was most obvious in Athens, the cradle of democracy. While 'each individual male citizen had rights to full civic participation, women's movements were restricted' and 'they were excluded from most civic obligations and privileges'.[30] A woman's only role was to provide legitimate parentage for a son to become a citizen.

> It must be stressed that the Athenian *polis* was both a citizen's club and a men's club, and by definition women fell outside both.

SOURCE 10.20 Roger Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life* (1989), pp. 13 & 23

In Rome, women from politically powerful, wealthy and socially prestigious families were politically aware, but due to the fact they had no direct role to play in government, they were forced to resort to what Ronald Syme describes as 'the real or secret power'.[31] This involved exerting influence behind the scenes, either through husbands, brothers, or sons, 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 the Emperor Augustus, worked tirelessly on behalf of her husband and son (Tiberius), had her own political clients and pushed many protégés into political offices, while still retaining the appearance of a traditional wife.

> The Roman imperial system was unfair to a woman … whose talents and energies were such that she would have achieved high office had she been a man.

SOURCE 10.21 Anthony Barrett, *Agrippina the Younger,* p. xiv

Earlier, during the late republic, there *were* women who did try to step into the political roles of a male and take independent action when a significant problem arose or in an emergency, but they were never in a position of real political power.

Religious roles for women

Religion offered an outlet for those who were without political power and 'whose lives were circumscribed in other ways'.[32] It appears that women enthusiastically participated in cult activities, particularly those in the worship of powerful goddesses, and those that allowed some form of ecstatic experience. Some women held high religious positions as priestesses, some full-time and some part-time. Official inscriptions and funerary dedications provide evidence for the privileges and honours many of these women received. However, there are three things to consider:

1 Any woman involved in a state religion was still under the influence of men.

2 Some religions and cults were designed to enlist divine aid in upholding the traditional ideals of female conduct.

3 The mystery religions and all-female celebrations are not described in any detail in the written sources.

Cults associated with birth and death were popular with women, and female-only cults gave women a chance at experiencing a temporary form of power and release without the interference of men.

It is impossible to cover all areas in which women played a religious role, so only a few are mentioned below.

Priestesses

1 The Pythia – mouth piece of the god Apollo at Delphi in central Greece

2 The Priestess of Athena Polias in Athens

3 The Vestal Virgins in Rome

The Pythia

From the 8th century BCE, the site of Delphi, in the mountains of central Greece, a centre for the worship of the god Apollo, was a place visited by official delegations from cities and kings, as well as individuals to seek answers from the god. This was the home of the most famous **oracle** in the known world.

In Delphi, the medium through whom Apollo spoke was a woman, known as the **Pythia**.

She rarely figures in the sources as an individual but is believed to have:

- been over the age of 50, having passed the change of life
- not been chosen from any special family
- lived a blameless life, even if she had been married and had children
- had no special gifts when not inspired by Apollo
- not been given any special training.

Once she was selected, she ceased living with her husband, observed certain taboos and lived in a residence of her own in the sacred enclosure.

Very little is known of this woman, but some scholars think she might have been part of the guild of holy women whose sole duty was to keep alight the eternal flame in the temple. In fact, it has been suggested that there may have been several women working at one time in shifts.

There is no straightforward version of how she prepared herself to be inspired by the god, to become his mouthpiece. 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, that 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 and were eventually interpreted by the priests.

oracle can refer to a medium through whom advice or a prophecy was sought from the gods in ancient times, or to the response given by an oracle

Pythia a prophetess of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi
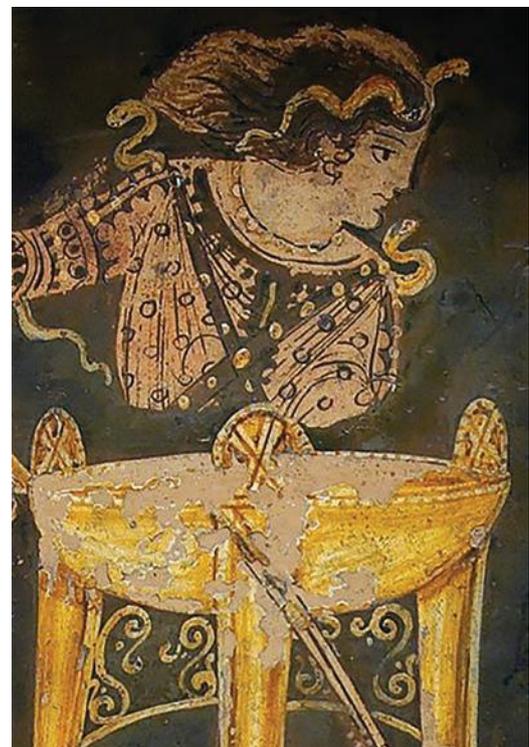
FIGURE 10.40 A vase image of a Pythia (oracular priestess) at Delphi with her tripod

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> The oracle of the god Apollo spoke through the medium of a prophetess called the Pythia. That a woman was the mouthpiece of a male deity may be explained by the hypothesis that Delphi was formerly the site of a female chthonic (underworld) cult, although in historical times no woman but the Pythia was admitted to the temple. A male prophet put the questions to her. Her response was delivered in a state of frenzy, and interpreted by male priests. Ironically, although the Delphic oracle was supreme in Greece, the woman through whom the god communicated with mortal men served merely as a courier of sorts and had no direct influence on the meaning of the prophecies.

SOURCE 10.22 Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, wives and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (1994), p. 33

The priestess of Athena Polias

The woman who held this possession was of great importance and influence. Her appointment was hereditary and only candidates of the leading aristocratic family, the Eteoboutadae, were eligible; she presided over the festivals held annually (Panathenaea) and every four years (the Great Panathenaea) to celebrate Athena Polias, the patron goddess of Athens. The woman who held this position twice intervened in problems between democratic factions.

FIGURE 10.41 Women taking part in the procession of the Great Panathenaea, carved into the frieze on the Parthenon in Athens.

Vestal Virgins

The six women of the College of Vestals were Rome's only full-time professional 'clergy'.[33] The cult of Vesta was supposed to have been instituted at the very beginning of Roman history and to have lasted well into the 4th century CE until the Christian emperors dissolved the order.

Vesta was the goddess of the Hearth and the six priestesses were charged with keeping the sacred flame of the goddess alight in the round temple in the Roman Forum.

A Vestal Virgin's term of service was for 30 years and when a replacement was needed, a young girl between the ages of 6–10, with no blemish or defect, was selected from upper class candidates by the **Pontifex Maximus**, chief state priest (a political appointment for life and with great powers) and thereafter was under his supervision.

Pontifex Maximus the High Priest of the College of Pontiffs

During their time of service, they were expected to spend the first decade learning their duties, the middle decade carrying out what they had learned and the third teaching others. Although their lives were severely regulated, they were free from the restrictions of ordinary women.

> They were the only women permitted to drive through the city of Rome in a two-wheeled wagon (*carpentum*), which conferred great status on its occupant. Like magistrates, priests and men of certain distinctions they were preceded in the streets by a lector (attendant) who cleared the way before them. When other women were relegated to the top tiers of seats at theatrical performances and games, the Vestal retained places on the imperial podium.

SOURCE 10.23 Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*, pp. 213–4

FIGURE 10.42 An artistic representation of Greek women celebrating the Thesmophoria

However, they were beaten for minor infringements, and if found polluting their office or breaking their vow of virginity due to seduction, they were buried alive.

At the end of 30 years, they were free to marry if they wished to, but it seemed as if most remained virgins into old age.

Women-only religious cults and ceremonies

1. The Thesmophoria in Athens
2. The Bona Dea in Rome

The Thesmophoria

The women of Athens participated in two major celebrations annually in honour of the goddess mother Demeter and her daughter Persephone. One was the most revered Greek cult until the end of paganism in the 4th century CE, the Mysteries celebrated at Eleusis; the other was the Thesmophoria. The Mysteries were open to both men and women although there was a hereditary Priestess of Demeter, two other priestesses who held their positions for life, and a group of priestesses who lived in segregated buildings and had no contact with men.

FIGURE 10.43 A Roman Vestal Virgin

However, it was the Thesmophoria, the female-only celebration for free women of unblemished reputation, that allowed its participants to indulge in bawdy, rustic behaviour. It was an agricultural/fertility festival, held at the time of the sowing of the seeds, and lasted three days.

Day 1 – the women went down into caves where they recovered the remains of pigs which they mixed with grain and placed on an altar.

Day 2 – they fasted and sat on the ground just as Demeter did when she lost her daughter

Day 3 – they took the mixture of pig remains and grain seeds and scattered them over the fields.

The only part men played in this was to pay a tax on behalf of their wives.

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The Bona Dea rites

The worship of Bona Dea, an exclusively female cult, is reminiscent of the Greek Thesmophoria to Demeter and might have originated in Greek-controlled southern Italy in the early days of the republic.

The real name of the goddess was secret and never spoken, especially around men. She was referred to simply as the 'Good Goddess'. Because men were forbidden to know anything of the secret rites – and they were the ones who recorded the past – little is known of it, except what happened in 62 BCE: a scandalous intrusion by a male into the household of Julius Caesar's house where his wife Pompeia was officiating at the rites.

There were two celebrations during the year: one on the night of 3rd to 4th of May, and the other during winter on 3rd to 4th December. It is this latter, celebrated in the home of the leading magistrate (consul, praetor) resident in the city, about which something is really known.

- The goddess was supposed to look after virgins, matrons and bless the earth with fertility.
- The Vestal Virgins officiated over the rites.
- Snakes – symbolic of renewal, sexuality, fertility and the underworld – as well as wine and myrtle were sacred to the goddess.
- The rites were nocturnal.
- The house where they were held was decorated with masses of greenery and flowers, although myrtle was forbidden.
- All signs of maleness were removed from the house. Men stayed elsewhere, all male animals were removed and all images (sculptures and paintings) were covered.
- Women wore garlands of vine leaves at the banquet where female musicians entertained and there was much dancing, fun, games and wine. Since wine was not normally consumed in large amounts by Roman matrons, it was referred to by the participants as 'milk', and the wine containers as 'honey-jars'.
- All the constraints normal in ordinary life were removed, as the sexual energy of virgins and matrons alike was apparently given free rein away from any male context.

ACTIVITY 10.12

1 Identify what participation in religious activities provided for women.
2 Explain how despite her sacred role, the Pythia was a tool of the priests.
3 Identify to whom were the Vestal Virgins answerable.
4 Explain why the six Vestal Virgins are of varying ages.
5 Explain what the all-female cults allowed women to do. Do you consider men might have been suspicious about these rites, perhaps even 'feared' them?
6 Research the myth of Demeter and Persephone to understand why it was so important to women.
7 Research the scandalous intrusion by Clodius into the Bona Dea celebrations in 62 BCE and write a short account in your own words.

10.4 The impact and representation of influential and notorious women

In any ancient society, there were those who were highly educated, those who stepped out of the traditional roles demanded of women and made a name for themselves in the world of men, those whose 'fame' and even influence was based on promiscuity and ruthlessness, and those noted in the sources as models of virtue.

A selection of these types of women, plus various visual and written representations of them, is highlighted below.

It must be remembered, however, that:

- we still know very little about their lives
- they have usually been described through the filters of bias and the specific agendas of male writers
- many of them appear to be little more than stereotypes
- some of the anecdotes about them appear more fictional than historical
- several have been so savagely treated by a universally hostile tradition, that 'the truth at times seems hopelessly buried in exaggeration and misinterpretation'.[34]

TABLE 10.3 Some notable women in antiquity

Classical Greece and Hellenistic era	Late republican Rome	Early imperial Rome
Gorgo, daughter of King Cleomenes and wife of King Leonidas of Sparta	**Aemilia Terta**, a noble woman from a line of consuls (the highest political position in Rome) and the wife of one of Rome's greatest generals, Scipio Africanus. According to the historian Polybius, who lived during her lifetime, her husband Scipio was atypically liberal, as Aemilia Tertia had unusual freedom and wealth for a patrician married woman.	**Livia**, loyal wife of Augustus, first empress of Rome and constant adviser to her husband. Considered a fine example of the Roman matron who stayed in the background although she had her own political clients and pushed many protégés into political offices. She campaigned tirelessly for her son Tiberius (not an offspring of Augustus) to succeed her husband. She was the first woman to be officially deified.
Thargelia of Miletus, a beautiful and clever courtesan (*hetaera*), a pro-Persian Greek who gained information for the Persians and was known as an enemy to the cause of Greek freedom.		
Artemisia 1, queen of the ancient Greek city-state of Halicarnassus under Persian control, who commanded five of her own ships as an ally of King Xerxes and fought in the naval battles of Artemisium and Salamis against the Greeks. She is mainly known from Herodotus who was a native of her city and she was admired by Xerxes for her advice.	**Cornelia Africana**, daughter of Scipio Africanus, iconic Roman matron, mother, wife and intellectual. Although Cornelia married Tiberius Gracchus the Elder when he was already old, they had 12 children together. After the death of her husband, she chose to remain a widow, refused an offer of marriage to King Ptolemy VII of Egypt, and set about the education of her children. She studied literature, and took advantage of the Greek scholars she brought to Rome, particularly many noted philosophers. Only three of her children survived to adulthood: the ill-fated reformers Tiberius and Gaius and a daughter Sempronia. She has been depicted as politically active during the careers of her adult sons and it has been suggested that they used their	**Antonia the Younger**, daughter, niece, wife, mother, aunt and grandmother of powerful Roman men, and in her own right one of the most powerful women in Roman history.
Hydna of Scione, known for her ability to dive deeply and swim long distances. She and her father played a part in damaging many of the Persian ships at Salamis in 480.		**Julia the Elder**, Augustus' daughter, clever and witty but forced into three successive marriages while still young to secure a Julian successor for Augustus. She was exiled eventually by her father for her wild, immoral behavior and 'treason'.
Aspasia ('desired one') was born a citizen in Miletus (modern Turkey). How she came to Athens as a non-citizen metic is not known. She was highly educated, became a *hetaera* and entertained the most powerful men at Athens. Her house became a fashionable place for the elite of Athens. She attracted Pericles the great statesman and lived as his companion for some 20 years. They		**Agrippina the Elder**, granddaughter of Augustus, wife of the general Germanicus, who, along with her children, accompanied her husband on his military campaigns, and arch enemy of the Emperor Tiberius. Mother of Emperor Gaius

TABLE 10.3 (Continued)

Classical Greece and Hellenistic era	Late republican Rome	Early imperial Rome
were both intellectually curious and on the cutting edge of philosophy, art, architecture and politics. This period ushered in the 'golden age of Greece'. However, the gossips were always vicious, and the pair were ridiculed by the comedy writers. Some accused her of persuading Pericles to go to war with Samos in order to help her native Miletus. Some even blamed her for the war with Sparta (the Peloponnesian War). **Arete** of Cyrene, a **hedonist** philosopher, who is said to have written 40 philosophical books and been a single mother and schooled her own son. **Hipparchia of Maroneia**, a **cynic** philosopher, whose beliefs were in direct contrast to those of Arete of Cyrene. She dressed as a man, travelled widely with her husband, Crates, and is the only female philosopher whose work was included alongside Socrates and Plato in the 3rd century CE work *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*. **Agnodice of Athens** who was the first female doctor in ancient Athens and whose challenge to	mother's reputation as a chaste, noble woman to their advantage in their political rhetoric. **Aurelia Cotta**, mother of Julius Caesar, from a prominent consular republican family and highly regarded in Rome for her intelligence, independence and common sense. As a young widow, she raised Caesar and his two sisters alone and she petitioned the dictator Sulla to save Julius' life when he was a youth of 18. **Hortensia**, daughter of the great Roman orator, Quintus Hortensius, and herself a student of rhetoric. She is known, via the historian Appian, for her speech before the triumvirs, Octavian, Antony and Lepidus, against an edict demanding evaluations of the property of the 1400 wealthiest women, in order to collect money from them. That her speech was preserved and read many years after it was delivered reveals its impact at the time. **Fulvia**, wife of three prominent political figures, all supporters of Julius Caesar, including her 3rd, Marc Antony, was a determined, courageous, independent woman with political skill who went outside the traditional role of the 'good Roman wife' and became the most politically involved woman in the Roman republic. Unfortunately, she 'represented all the characteristics that the Romans feared as the outcome of female emancipation and the perversion of the idealized notion of the Roman matron.'[35] Although she is thought to have	Caligula and Empress Agrippina the Younger. **Valeria Messalina**, wife of the Emperor Claudius, mother of his two children, Britannicus and Octavia, and one of the most powerful and influential women in Rome but with a notorious reputation for excessive promiscuity (probably due to political bias). She was accused of conspiring to kill Claudius and was executed when the plot was discovered. **Agrippina the Younger**, great-granddaughter of Augustus, and one of the most prominent women in the Julio-Claudian dynasty, 4th wife of the Emperor Claudius and mother to the Emperor Nero. Described in the sources as ruthless, ambitious and domineering and often accused of poisoning Claudius. Ruled as regent for her son Nero who eventually had her murdered. **Vibia Sabina**, well-educated and well-travelled grand-niece of the Emperor Trajan and wife of the Emperor Hadrian. Played little role in court politics, remained independent in private life, had no children and sought gratification in love affairs as her husband appeared more interested in his male lovers. She was deified by her husband on her death. **Lucilla**, daughter of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who accompanied her father during his Danube campaigns, and who, after his death, plotted unsuccessfully to kill her brother, Commodus (featured in the film *Gladiator*).

hedonist a person belonging to a school of thought known as hedonism, which argued that the pursuit of pleasure and happiness are the proper aim of human life

cynic a member of a school of philosophical thought that had an ostentatious contempt for ease and pleasure

TABLE 10.3 *(Continued)*

Classical Greece and Hellenistic era	Late republican Rome	Early imperial Rome
the male-dominated profession changed the laws regarding women practising medicine. **Phyrene of Thespiae**, a well-known and wealthy high-class *hetaera* and model for the famous sculpture of Aphrodite by Praxitiles. She was accused of impiety for organising an immoral club and corrupting young women, but was successfully defended by her lover and acquitted. **Olympias of Macedon** wife of King Philip II and mother of Alexander the Great, a mystical, determinedly ambitious woman. **Arsinoe II**, daughter of Ptolemy I and sister/wife of Ptolemy II **Anyte of Tegea**, poet, more of her works survive in the present day than any other female Greek poet and are still admired as they were by her contemporaries. She is thought to have run a school for the study of poetry in the Peloponnese. **Cleopatra VII**, also known as Queen Cleopatra of Egypt, the last ruler of the Ptolemaic dynasty, came to the throne at the age of 18 and ruled with her 10-year-old brother as co-regent. Not long after she came to the throne, she was forced to flee to Syria. In 48 BCE, she returned to Egypt with a military force. She is known for her supposed powers of seduction, however she should be remembered as one of the most famous female rulers in history.	been politically active with all her husbands, she is most known for her activities on behalf of her third husband, Antony, and her involvement in the Perusine War of 41–40 BCE. Her arch enemy for many years had been the orator and politician, Cicero, against whom she took great pleasure taking her revenge on his severed head by piercing his tongue with her golden hair-pins (according to Dio Cassius). **Servilia Caepionis**, the one-time mistress of Caesar, and mother of his assassin, Brutus, influential through her connections to many famous Romans. **Porcia Catonis**, wife of Marcus Junius Brutus, the most famous of Julius Caesar's assassins, and noted as a brave and devoted wife, lover of philosophy, and the only woman to be involved in the conspiracy against Caesar. She is reputed to have intimidated her husband into telling her about the conspiracy by slashing her thigh, and later to have committed suicide after hearing of his death, possibly by burning charcoal in a room without ventilation. **Octavia**, sister to Octavian, later Augustus, and 4th wife of Mark Antony was one of the most prominent women in Roman history, admired by contemporaries for her loyalty, nobility and humanity, and for maintaining traditional Roman feminine virtues. Among her most famous/notorious descendants were the emperors Caligula, Claudius and Nero.	

FIGURE 10.44 A drawing of Artemisia, Carian queen

FIGURE 10.45 Bust of Aspasia

FIGURE 10.46 Aspasia with Socrates and Alcibiades

THE ANCIENT WORLD TRANSFORMED

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Now, since it is thought that he (Pericles) proceeded thus against the Samians to gratify Aspasia, this may be a fitting place to raise the query what great art or power this woman had, that she managed as she pleased the foremost men of the state, and afforded the philosophers occasion to discuss her in exalted terms and at great length. That she was a Milesian by birth, daughter of one Axiochus, is generally agreed; and they say that it was in emulation of Thargelia, an Ionian woman of ancient times, that she made her onslaughts upon the most influential men. … And so, Aspasia, as some say, was held in high favour by Pericles because of her rare political wisdom. Socrates sometimes came to see her with his disciples, and his intimate friends brought their wives to her to hear her discourse, although she presided over a business that was anything but honest or even reputable, since she kept a house of young courtesans. And Aeschines says that Lysicles the sheep-dealer, a man of low birth and nature, came to be the first man at Athens by living with Aspasia after the death of Pericles. And in the 'Menexenus' of Plato … there is much of fact, that the woman had the reputation of associating with many Athenians as a teacher of rhetoric. However, the affection which Pericles had for Aspasia seems to have been rather of an amatory sort. …

About this time also Aspasia was put on trial for impiety, Hermippus the comic poet being her prosecutor, who alleged further against her that she received free-born women into a place of assignation for Pericles … The people accepted with delight these slanders, and so, while they were in this mood, a bill was passed, on motion of Dracontides, that Pericles should deposit his accounts of public moneys … and that the jurors should decide upon his case …

SOURCE 10.24 Plutarch, *The Rise of Ancient Athens*, Pericles, 24

FIGURE 10.47 Painting of Cornelia refusing the offer of marriage by King Ptolemy

FIGURE 10.48 Cornelia with her children

The following source, preserved in the works of the biographer Cornelius Nepos, is part of a letter supposedly written by Cornelia from retirement in Misenum to her son Gaius Gracchus after the assassination of her other son, Tiberius. While they are probably not genuine extracts from her letters which were preserved after her death, they give us an impression of what this model Roman mother might have been expected to say to her grown son, Gaius, who is planning to campaign for the tribunate to carry on his slain brother's political program. Cornelia attempts to discourage him.

I would take a solemn oath, that apart from those who killed Tiberius, no one had given me so much pain as you in this matter, who ought to undertake the part of all the children I have ever had to make sure I should have as little worry as possible in my old age, and that, whatever your schemes might be, you should wish them to be agreeable to me, and that you should count it a sin to take any step against my wishes, especially considering that I have only a little part of life left.

Is it possible to co-operate for even that short space of time without your opposing me and ruining our country? Where will it all end? Will our family ever cease from madness? ... Do what you like so far as I am concerned, when I am not there to know it. When I am dead, you will sacrifice to me and invoke me as your hallowed parent. ... May Jove above not let you persist in this or let your lunacy enter your mind! But if you do persist, I fear that through your own fault you will encounter so much trouble throughout your life that at no time will you be able to rest content.

SOURCE 10.25 A letter from Cornelia to Gaius Gracchus, *Cornelius Nepos*, Fr. 2.

Why should we pay taxes when we have no part in public office or honours or commands or government in general, an evil you have fought over with such disastrous results? Because, you say, this is a time of war? And when have there not been wars? and when have women paid taxes? By nature of their sex women are absolved from paying taxes among all mankind. Our mothers on one occasion long ago ... when your whole government was threatened and the city itself, when the Carthaginians were pressuring you. They gave willingly ... but only from their own jewellery, and not with a fixed price set on it, nor under threat of informers and accusers or by force ... Why are you now so anxious about the government or the country? But if there should be a war against the Celts or Parthians, we will not be less eager for our country's welfare than our mothers. But we will never pay taxes for civil wars, and we will not cooperate with you against each other. We did not pay taxes to Caesar or to Pompey, nor did Marius ask us for contributions, nor Cinna nor Sulla, even though he was a tyrant over this country. And you say that you are re-establishing the Republic!

SOURCE 10.26 Part of a speech by Hortensia to the Triumvirs, Appian, *Civil Wars*, 4.32–4

FIGURE 10.49 An artistic representation of Fulvia with the head of Cicero

FIGURE 10.50 An artistic representation of Porcia cutting into her thigh

… 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 10.27 The treatment by Augustus of his only offspring, Julia the Elder, Suetonius, *The Twelve Caesars, Augustus,* 63–65

FIGURE 10.51 An artistic representation of the murder of Messalina

ACTIVITY 10.13

1 Read Herodotus Bk 7.99 and Bk 8 67–69, 87–8 and 101–103 and analyse what he has to say about Artemisia and the supposed advice she gave Xerxes.

2 Use Table 10.3, Figure 10.46 and Source 10.24 to answer the following:

- Where did Aspasia come from originally?
- Identify all the qualities, apart from her possible beauty, that attracted the leading men of Athens, such as Pericles and Socrates, to her.
- Recall what the gossips and comedy writers accused her of. Suggest a reason for their malicious comments.
- Identify the evidence that Pericles truly loved her.
- Explain what is meant by 'impiety'. Why was she charged with it and what other woman faced similar charges?

3 Use Table 10.3 and Source 10.25 to answer the following:

- Identify the purpose of the letter.
- Explain what happened to Cornelia's other son.
- Examine why Cornelia talked about taking an oath.

- Explain how she used her age to persuade her son.
- Identify what she says he will do when she is dead.
- Explain what she says will happen if he does not follow her advice.

4 Outline the main theme of Hortensia's speech in Source 10.25. Investigate how effective it was.

5 Investigate and describe Fulvia's marriage to Marc Antony, her part in the Perusine War on behalf of her husband and the way he treated her afterwards.

6 Identify what event Figure 10.50 illustrates and what it reveals about Porcia.

7 Discuss whether Augustus' harsh treatment of Julia in Source 10.27 may have had to do solely with morality or something to do with those men with whom she was consorting, as an emperor's daughter would always attract the politically ambitious.

8 Investigate by reading Tacitus' *Annals* why and how Messalina was murdered.

9 While remembering that we can't judge women of the past by the standards of our own day, explain in a piece of extended writing which of the women in this table you either have most empathy or admiration for. You must provide evidence from the ancient sources.

CHAPTER 10 REVIEW

CHAPTER SUMMARY

THE CONTEXT OF WOMEN IN THE GREEK AND ROMAN WORLD

- In a study of this kind, the context of the lives of women is too broad in terms of time and place to cover totally, and so the geographical and historical context is of necessity specific and limited predominantly to the Classical world of ancient Greece, the late republic and early empire of Rome.
- The lives of women during the Classical Greek period were impacted by a series of devastating wars, a terrible plague, the development of democracy, conflicts between democratic and oligarchic regimes and the changing leadership of Greece, when first one city-state then another had political hegemony over the others.
- The lives of republican Roman women were impacted by overseas conquests that brought about significant changes in society, including slavery on a great scale, domestic political conflict and street violence, civil wars between ambitious generals and the assassination of Julius Caesar.
- During the principate of Augustus (in reality, the first emperor) there was a period of peace within the Roman Empire (*pax Romana*) and Augustus brought about radical social changes that impacted women while trying to restore the moral values of the past. Upperclass matrons had a much freer life and more political influence (behind the scenes) than ever before, but were still expected to fulfll the traditional roles always expected of women.

THE RANGE, NATURE AND RELIABILITY OF THE SOURCES FOR WOMEN

- There is a large range of sources, both written and archaeological, that can provide some insight into the lives of citizen women. Most of these written sources are fragmentary, and suffer from the typical male gender biases that range from outright hostility to stereotypical images. Since literary sources give completely different perspectives on women, it is extremely difficult to determine how women were perceived at the time and almost impossible to gauge how women saw their own lives. Funerary inscriptions, personal letters and some legal documents reveal some valuable details about women in general but not a lot about their individual lives.
- Archaeological sources must be treated with caution as it is often hard to identify specific classes of women from painted pottery, sculpture and mosaics where they cannot be cross-referenced with witten sources.

THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC ROLES OF WOMEN

- The course of women's lives from birth to death was set by men: fathers, husbands, brothers, uncles, other male guardians and by the male citizens through whom governments were formed. This applied particularly to choosing a husband, providing a dowry, legal transactions,and the degree of social freedom they were permitted.
- The status of most women compared to males in their own class was regarded as inferior and females had no political rights.
- Marriage was the preferred status for all women. Their chief roles were having children and managing the household. Despite some being highly educated, memorials are more likely to recognise their domestic qualities far more often than any intellectual achievements.

- All women, no matter what their class (the Greek and Roman elite, the lower classes including *hetaerae* and even among the female members of Roman emperors) were involved in some form of wool/textile working, which was a major contributor to the economy.
- Religion was the major sphere of public life in which women participated. This was particularly the case in 'women-only' festivals, where they were permitted to act without the oversight or control of men.

THE IMPACT AND REPRESENTATION OF INFLUENTIAL AND NOTORIOUS WOMEN

- There are records of influential and notorious elite women in antiquity; but in most cases, they have have been described in less-than-flattering ways, especially if they tried going outside the traditional roles expected of women, and some of the anecdotes about them appear more fictional than historical. Some of these include: Aspasia (Athenian *hetaera*); Cornelia Africana, daughter of Scipio Africanus (iconic Roman matron, mother, wife and intellectual); Fulvia (most known for her political and military activities on behalf of her third husband, Marc Antony, and her involvement in the Perusine War of 41–40 BCE); and Julia the Elder, only daughter of Augustus (exiled by her father for her wild, immoral behaviour and 'treason').

Historical concepts and skills

All chapter activities address the following important concepts and skills that students are expected to master throughout the course.

Concepts

- continuity and change
- causation
- perspectives
- significance

Skills

- understanding and use of historical terms
- analysis and use of sources
- historical interpretation
- historical investigation and research
- explanation and communication

As you review the chapter, make sure you can identify where examples of each of these concepts and skills may have been called for.

Key terms and names

Use the following historical terms in a sentence for each to show that you understand what they mean:

- metics
- muse
- gynaecium
- andron
- *hetaerae*
- symposium
- Pythia
- Vestals.

Historical concepts

Continuity and change

Review this study and note instances of changes that occurred in the lives of women from Classical Greece to imperial Rome.

Signficance

How significant was the role played by ancient women within the home and the economy?

Perspectives

Identify some of the perspectives of men towards women in Classical Greece.

Historical skills

Analysing sources

1 Explain what is meant by the following statements:
   - A woman's chief role throughout history was determined by biology.
   - Acounts of women were tailored to fit some preconceived type model. [Anthony B. Barrett, *Agrippina*]
   - The Roman woman had choices; the Athenian had none. [Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves*]

- Women who belonged to the elite often wielded considerable power, even if illegitimately. [Roger Just, *Women in Athenian Law and Life*]

2 Compare the value of funerary inscriptions and personal letters as sources for women.

Historical research and interpretation

1 Examine the context within which the women of Hellenistic Egypt lived.

2 Explain how the typical Greek house in Classical Athens reflected the positon of women of the citizen class.

3 Investigate one of the high-profile Roman women who lived during the late republican era or early empire, and evaluate her contributions, if any, to Roman society.

Explanation and communication

Explain why women throughout history have remained virtually anonymous.

Extended answer

Evaluate the political, economic, religious and legal rights of either a citizen woman in Classical Greece or late republican Rome.

Possible topics for a historical study

A historical investigation:

- takes the form of an inquiry into something.
- is based on a hypothesis that takes the form of a chief focus question, one that requires not just a description of something, but an understanding of the why? and how? usually expressed in terms such as analyse, explain, compare, evaluate, assess, conclude, decide, compare, account for.
- formulates a number of supporting questions as a guide in the investigation.
- uses a range of sources, both primary and secondary, ancient and modern, that have been checked for reliability and recent scholarship and selected for relevance.
- evaluates different perspectives and interpretations, and makes judgements about them.
- uses historical terms and concepts appropriately.
- synthesises all the material deemed suitable into a historical argument.
- communicates and presents conclusions in an appropriate format.

The list of broad topics below provides for a range of possible focus questions.

1 The impact of myths and legends on the past and present
2 Maritime archaeology in the Mediterranean
3 Revolutionary leaders of the ancient world

   (These can include those who may have changed people's way of thinking and behaving, those who revolutionised science and healing, and others who have founded significant movements.)

4 The effects of modern conflicts on ancient sites and cultures
5 The relatively sudden collapse of ancient societies
6 The Silk Road through the ages
7 Representations of the ancient world in popular culture.

Glossary

absolute dating the process of determining an age on a specified chronology in archaeology and geology

acolyte anyone who follows or helps a priest in some religious ceremonies

aediles Roman magistrates responsible for public works, markets and festivals

agora a public open space used for assemblies and markets

amulets protective charms

andron the male/public quarters of the house

aristocracy rule by nobles

artefacts objects that are made by a person, such as a tool or a decoration, especially one that is of historical interest

atrium decorated central hall of a Roman house

auspices various omens indicating if the gods approved or disapproved of state decisions

authentication to prove that something is real, true, or what people say it is

auxiliaries regiments of non-citizen soldiers, usually allies, who fought alongside and supported the citizen legions

ba the soul of a person or god in the form of a human-headed bird, which survived after death

bias the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing in an unfair way, by allowing personal opinions to influence judgements

bogs wet, spongy ground, or an area of this

booty goods seized in war, such as weapons, gold and even slaves

caravan a group of traders, pilgrims, or others, engaged in long-distance travel

carnyx a Celtic bronze wind instrument

cartouche an oval with a symbolic rope at one end, indicating 'that which the sun disc encircles' alluding to the king's authority over the world

castra a building, or plot of land, used as a fortified military camp

clientele refers to the relationship between a patron and a client in which both have responsibilities to the other

client-kingships native British tribes who chose to align themselves with the Roman Empire

coloniae a Roman outpost established in a conquered territory to secure it, manned predominantly by veterans

comitia a legal assembly of the Roman people

consuls two highest Roman magistrates who commanded the army and presided over the Senate

contemporary refers, in history, to any source of information created at the time of a particular period of study

context the situation within which something exists or happens, and that can help explain it

contubernium a form of civil union between a slave man and woman, though not equivalent to marriage

CT/CAT scanning computerised axial tomography scan: a medical test that involves using X-rays to create a three-dimensional image of the inside of the body

cuneiform denoting a form of writing made up of wedge-shaped characters and usually surviving on clay tablets or stone stelae, commonly used in Mesopotamia

cynic a member of a school of philosophical thought that had an ostentatious contempt for ease and pleasure

deben an ancient Egyptian weight unit

decimation an ancient punishment in the Roman army, where one in 10 legionaries were killed by their fellows in full view of the whole army

democracy rule by the people (*demos*), which in the ancient world meant only male citizens

DNA deoxyribonucleic acid, present at the centre of the cells of living things, which controls the structure and purpose of each cell and carries genetic information during reproduction

ducenarius an official with a variety of civil and military functions

ecofacts any flora or fauna material found at an archaeological site; non-artefactual evidence that has not been technologically altered but that has cultural relevance, such as a shell carried from the ocean to an inland settlement

Egyptmania the renewed interest of Europeans in ancient Egypt during the 19th century

elegies poems of a serious reflective nature written in couplets

Emporium a large centre of commerce

endoscopes a long, thin medical device with camera attached to a TV screen that is used to examine the hollow organs of the body such as the lungs

entrepôt a port or trading post where goods may be imported and stored usually to be exported again

epigraphic referring to epigraphy, the study of inscriptions

epigraphy study of inscriptions engraved on clay, stone and metal

epitaphs short inscriptions written about an individual on a headstone or stela

ethnarch the ruler or leader of a particular ethnic group of people

ethnographic relating to the scientific description of peoples' customs, habits and cultures, including their mutual differences

ethnohistory a branch of anthropology concerned with the history of peoples and cultures, particularly non-Western

extant used to refer to something very old that still exists

forensic science the application of scientific methods and techniques to matters under investigation

forum an open public space in the centre of a Roman city, a place of assembly and of judicial and business affairs

gender bias unfair difference in the way women and men are treated

geophysics the study of the rocks and other substances that make up the earth and the physical processes happening on, in and above the earth

gladius the Latin word for sword

glyphic 'writing' inscribed or painted symbols intended to represent a readable character for the purposes of writing

glyphs signs or symbols

Gymnasium an area for both physical and intellectual exercise

gynaeceum the women's quarters of a Greek house

hedonist a person belonging to a school of thought known as hedonism, which argued that the pursuit of pleasure and happiness are the proper aim of human life

Hellenistic relating to Greek/Macedonian history and culture in the Mediterranean and Near East from the death of Alexander to the death of Cleopatra in 30 BCE

heresies any beliefs or theories that are strongly at variance with established beliefs or customs

hetaerae pl. of *hetaera* a high-class and well-educated courtesan or 'companion'

hierarchical arranged in an order from the most to the least important

hieratic form of writing that replaced hieroglyphic images with strokes

historiography the study of history and how it is written

hoplite a heavily armed Greek infantryman

House of Life little-known ancient centres of knowledge, some of them belonging to temples

huaca a sacred pyramid-shaped shrine in Peruvian Moche culture

hypogea (sing. hypogeum) underground chambers usually referring to tombs

hypotheses ideas or explanations for something that is based on known facts but have not yet been proved

iconography the use of images and symbols to represent ideas, or the particular images and symbols used in this way by a religious or political group

imperium supreme authority that involved command in war and interpretation and execution of the law, including the infliction of the death penalty

ka spiritual part of an individual human being or god, which survived after death and could reside in a statue of the person

Khepresh ancient Egyptian royal headdress. It is also known as the blue crown or war crown

lamassu an Assyrian protective deity, often depicted as having a human's head, the body of a bull or a lion, and the wings of an eagle

latifundia extensive rural estates

legions the largest units in the Roman army, each comprised of approximately 5500 heavily armed citizen soldiers

libation a drink poured out as an offering to a god

liberti freedmen and women

LIDAR a detection system which works on the principle of radar, but uses light from a laser

lingua franca a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different

loculi an architectural compartment that houses a body, as in a catacomb, hypogeum, or mausoleum

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

manumission the process of freeing a slave

mastaba tombs flat-roofed, rectangular structures with inward sloping sides, constructed out of mud-bricks, from the Arabic for 'bench'

Mausolea buildings housing a tomb or group of tombs

megaron the central hall of a large Mycenaean house

metics resident foreigners working in Athens

midden a rubbish heap

mortuary temple temple erected – separate from the royal tombs – for the celebration of the cult of the deceased king

Mouseion a place where scholars studied, wrote and carried out their experiments

mummies bodies preserved either naturally – in desert sands, ice, or peat bogs – or artificially by embalming

murals large pictures that have been painted on the wall of a room or building

murmillo a class of gladiator who wore a distinctive bronze helmet with plume crest and an elaborate face visor

muse one of the Nine Muses, inspirational goddesses of literature, science and the arts in Greek mythology

natron a mineral salt found in dried lake beds

necropolis an ancient cemetery; in Greek a 'city of the dead'

nemes the striped headcloth worn by pharaohs in ancient Egypt

nomarchs governors of ancient Egyptian *nomes* (provinces)

numismatic the study of coins, paper money and medals

obelisks tapered pillars of stone surmounted with a pyramidion, which was usually gilded so that it shone in the sun

obsidian a type of almost black volcanic rock that is like glass

oligarchy a government or a small group of powerful people

oracle can refer to a medium through whom advice or a prophecy was sought from the gods in ancient times, or to the response given by an oracle

ostraca small pieces of stone (or pottery) that have writing and images etched into them

pantheon an overview of a given culture's gods and goddesses

papyrus paper made from the tall papyrus plant that grows along the Nile

partage a system put in place to divide up ownership of excavated artefacts

patriarchal ruled or controlled by men

pax Romana 'Roman peace', the long period of peacefulness inaugurated by Augustus

peculium the rights of slaves to hold money to purchase a slave of their own, but more commonly the *peculium* was used to purchase his or her freedom

peristyle inner courtyard surrounded by colonnades

perspectives particular ways of considering something

pila a javelin commonly used by the Roman army

poleis pl. of *polis*, a Greek city-state

polytheistic the belief in many different gods

Pontifex Maximus the High Priest of the College of Pontiffs

praetors ancient Roman magistrates, ranking below consuls

princeps 'first citizen' in the Roman Empire, a title adopted by Augustus

principate a form of government ruled by a *princeps* ('first citizen') adopted by Augustus at the end of the Roman republic

propaganda information, ideas, opinions, or images, often only giving one part of an argument, that are broadcast, published, or in some other way spread with the intention of influencing people's opinions

propitiate win or regain the favour of a god by doing something that pleases them

proto-writing a formative form of writing based on earlier traditions of symbol systems

provenance the chronology of the ownership, custody, or location of a historical object

pugio a Roman dagger

putrefaction the state of decaying

pylons monumental gateways of temples

pyramidion the uppermost piece or capstone of an Egyptian pyramid or obelisk

Pythia a prophetess of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi

relative dating type of dating based mainly on the principles of stratigraphy and typology to establish approximate dates for archaeological sites and artefacts

repatriation return of antiquities to their country of origin

Romanisation the adoption of Roman culture by people conquered by the Romans

scorpio a catapult-type weapon, used as a Roman artillery piece

sectarian denoting or concerning a sect or sects

Serapeum a large temple dedicated to the god Serapis

serekh a rectangular form representing the façade of a palace and surmounted by a falcon, indicating an Egyptian king's official name

seriation a relative dating method in which assemblages or artefacts from numerous sites, in the same culture, are placed in chronological order

servi slaves in the Roman republic and empire

sound scrolls devices depicted in murals indicating speech, song and other types of sounds

sphagnum a type of peat moss and a sugar released when it decays

stadia plural of stadion, an ancient Greek measure of approximately 180 metres

stelae upright stone slabs, often with rounded tops, bearing inscriptions commonly serving religious purposes

stereotypes a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person

stratigraphy in reference to archaeology, it is the analysis and position of layers of archaeological remains

symbology the study or use of symbols

symposia pl. of *symposium*, a drinking party and discussion often held after a banquet in ancient Greece

symposiarch a grand priest

syncretistic referring to the fusion or amalgamation of different religions, cultures, or schools of thought

synodiarch a caravan leader

tablinum a room where business affairs were conducted

titulary list of names and titles (e.g. of an Egyptian king)

torques neck ornaments consisting of a band of metal, often twisted gold

tribute payment made periodically by one state or ruler to another, especially as a sign of dependence

uraeus a representation of the sacred cobra as an emblem of supreme power, worn on the headdresses of ancient Egyptian deities and sovereigns

ushabtis funerary figurines that were buried with a person in order to act as a worker in the afterworld in place of the deceased

vassal a state in a subordinate position to a dominant one and commonly required to contribute military assistance when requested

vernae slaves born within the Roman *familia*

vitrified refers to something changed into glass, or into a substance that is like glass, usually with the use of heat

vizier a high official, second in importance to the king

wadi a dried river valley common in desert areas, but which can fill quickly after rains

End notes

Chapter 1

1   Grahame Johnston, *The History of Archaeology*, 31/3/2016

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3   Ibid., p. 339

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6   Manfred Korfmann, 'Was there a Trojan War?', *Archaeology*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (May/June 2004)

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8   D. F. Easton, 'Heinrich Schliemann: Hero or Fraud?' *The Classical World*, Vol. 91, No. 5, 'The World of Troy' (May – Jun., 1998), p. 337

9   Ibid., pp. 342–3

10 Kent R. Weeks, cited in *Future's Past*, 12/11/2014.

11 Matthew Nicolls, 'Digital Archaeology and Reconstruction', *History Today*, 21/11/2015.

12 Alexander Stille, *The Future of the Past*, p. 300

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