Theme 3. An Empire across Three Continents

It was the ancient Roman Empire which was spread across the three continents namely Europe, Asia and Africa.

Sources

Texts
Documents
Material remains

Histories written by Inscriptions
Contemporaries’ documents on papyrus scrolls.
(Annals)

Buildings, monuments, pottery, coins

The two most powerful empires

- The two empires that ruled between the birth of Christ and 630 CE were Rome and Iran.
- The Romans and Iranians were neighbours, separated by narrow strip of land that ran along the river Euphrates.
- They were rivals and fought against each other for much of their history.

Roman Empire

The Roman Empire stretched from Spain in Europe to Syria in the East along the Mediterranean Sea in to Africa's desert. In the north its boundaries were marked by the river Rhine and Danube. In the South by the Sahara desert.

Iranian Empire

Iran controlled the entire area south of Caspian Sea to eastern Arabia and at times large parts of Afghanistan.

The Phases of Roman Empire

- The Roman Empire can broadly divide into two phases—Early Roman Empire and Late Roman Empire.
- The whole period down to the main part of the 3rd century can be called the 'early empire'. The period after 3rd Century can be called the 'late empire'.
**Difference between the Roman Empire and Iranian Empire**

Major difference between the Roman and Iranian Empires were:

- Roman Empire had a diverse population as compared to that of Iran.
- The Parthians and Sasanians dynasties, that ruled Iran in this period, ruled largely over the Iranian population.
- Whereas the Roman Empire was a variety of territories and cultures bound by the common system of govt.
- Many languages were spoken in the Roman Empire, but for the administrative purposes only Greek and Latin were used. The upper class of east spoke Greek and those in the western part spoke Latin.
- All the people in the Roman Empire were subjects of single ruler, the emperor, irrespective of where they lived and what language they spoke.

**The three main players in the political history of the empire**

- **The Emperor**
  - Source of authority
- **The Senate**
  - Body of Wealthy families
- **The Army**
  - Paid & Professional

**Features of Roman Army**

The Army which was a paid and professional army where soldiers had to put up twenty five years of service. The existence of paid army was a distinctive feature of the Roman Empire. The army was the largest single organised body of the Roman Empire. It had the power to decide the fate of the emperors. The army was hated by the Senators. Thus, it can be said that the emperor, the aristocracy, and the army were the three players in the political history of the empire.

**Succession to the throne in the Roman Empire**

Family descent, either natural or adoptive, was the decisive factor in the succession to the throne in the Roman Empire. The army was also wedded to this concept. For e.g. Tiberius was not the natural but adopted son of Augustus.

**The Augustan age**

The Augustan age is remembered as the age of peace. It brought peace after decades of internal strife and centuries of military conquest. External warfare was also much less common in the first two centuries.
**Administration of the vast Roman Empire**

- The vast Roman Empire was controlled and administered with the help of urbanisation.
- All the territories of the empire were organised into provinces and were subject to taxation.
- Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch that lined the shores of Mediterranean were the foundations of the imperial system.
- It was through these cities that the government was able to collect tax from the provincial countryside which generated much of the wealth.
- This shows that the local upper class was actively involved with the Roman state in administering their own territories and collecting taxes from them.
- Throughout the second and third century the provincial upper classes provided experienced officers that administered the provinces and commanded the army.
- Thus, they became the new elite of the Roman Empire. They controlled the army and looked after the provincial administration. They became much more powerful than the senatorial class because they had the backing of the Emperors.
- Emperor Gallienus consolidated their rise to power by excluding senators from military command. He did this in order to prevent control of the empire from falling into their hands.

**Meaning of Roman city**

An Urban centre with its own magistrates, city council and a ‘territory’ containing villages under its jurisdiction. The villages could be upgraded to the status of city and vice-versa generally as a mark of favour from the emperor.

**Advantages of living in the city of Roman Empire**

The advantage of living in the city was that it might be better provided for during food shortages and famines in the country side. The cities had public baths and the urban population enjoyed a higher level of entertainment.

**The Third-Century Crisis**

- The first and second centuries were a period of peace, prosperity and economic expansion. But the third century was a period of crisis.
- In 225, new dynasty called Sasanians emerged in Iran. They were more aggressive and expanding rapidly in the direction of the Euphrates.
- The Germanic tribes (barbarians) began to move against the Rhine and Danube frontiers. From 233 to 280 saw repeated invasions. The Romans were forced to abandon much of the territory beyond the Danube.
- The quick succession of emperors (25 emperors in 47 years) is a sign of strain faced by the empire in the 3rd century.
Gender, Literacy, Culture

Structure of Family

There was widespread prevalence of nuclear family. Adult sons did not live with their parents and it was exceptional for adult brothers to share a common household. Slaves were however included in the family.

Status of women

• The women enjoyed considerable legal rights in owning and managing property.
• They were married off in the late teens or early thirties.
• Arrange marriage was the general norm
• women were often subject to domination by their husbands
• Wives were even beaten up by their husbands.
• The typical form of marriage was one where the wife did not transfer to her husband's authority but retained full rights in the property of her natal family.
• Women remained a primary heir to father's property after marriage. They could become independent property owners after their father's death.
• Divorce was easy for both men as well as women.

Literacy

• The rate of literacy varied greatly between different parts of the empire.
• Literacy was widespread in army officers, estate managers and soldiers
• Casual literacy existed and it varied from place to place.
There was a wall in pompeii which carried advertisements and graffiti, which indicates high level of casual literacy.

Cultural diversity

• The cultural diversity was reflected in many ways and at many levels.
• There was a vast diversity of religious cults and local deities, the plurality of languages that were spoken, the styles of dresses that were worn.
• The food the people ate their forms of social organisation and their types of settlement, all reflected cultural diversity.
• Different languages were spoken in different areas. Most of the linguistic cultures were purely oral, at least until a script was invented for them.
• As late as fifth century, Armenian began to be used as written form of language.
• In other areas the spread of Latin displaced the other widespread written form of languages.

Economic activities of the Ancient Roman Empire

• The Roman Empire had substantial economic infrastructure of harbours, mines, quarries, brickyards, olive oil factories etc.
• Goods for trade consisted mainly wheat, wine and olive oil and they came from Spain, the Gallic provinces, north Africa, Egypt and Italy. These areas had conditions best suited for these crops.
• Spanish olive oil was a vast commercial enterprise that reached its peak in the years 140-160.

Hsslive 4 Sujith K HSST History,GVHSS Kayyoor,Kasargod
• The Roman Empire included regions that had a reputation for exceptional fertility. E.g. Compania Italy, Sicily, Fayum in Egypt, Galilee, Byzacium (Tunisia), southern Gaul, Baetica (southern Spain). These areas had best conditioned crops.
• The large expenses of Roman territory were in a much less advanced state.
• Transhumance was widespread in the country side of Numidia (Modern Algeria).
• As Roman estates expanded in North Africa, the pastures of those communities were drastically reduced and their movements more tightly regulated.
• Even in Spain the north was economically much less developed. In these areas peasantry who were Celtic-speaking lived in hilltop villages known as castella.
• In the Roman Empire water power was very efficiently used around Mediterranean and there were advances in the water powered milling technology, the use of hydraulic mining techniques in Spanish gold and silver mines.
• Well organised commercial and banking networks existed.
• Widespread use of money indicates that the Roman Empire had sophisticated economy.

**Controlling of Workers in the Roman Empire**

• **Slavery** was an institution deeply rooted in Ancient Roman world.
• Though slavery was institutionalized and was greatly used as labour but it was not always slaves that performed labour in the Roman economy.
• As peace was established in the first century, the supply of slaves declined and users of slave labour had to turn to slave breeding or cheaper substitutes such as wage labour which were easily dispensable.
• Most of the time free labour was used, as slaves had to be provided with food and maintained throughout the year which proved expensive. This is the reason that the slaves were not employed in the agriculture.
• On the other hand, slaves and freedmen were extensively used in jobs where labour was not required in large number that is as business managers.
• There was a presumption that without supervision no work would ever get done. So supervision was most important for both freed slaves and slaves.
• For a better supervision the slaves were grouped into gang of ten. So that it could be easy to see who is putting in effort and who is not.
• This method was criticised by Pliny the Elder. He was of the opinion that the slave gangs were the worst method of organizing production because slaves who worked in gangs were usually chained together by their feet.
• Although all this look harsh yet similar principles of labour control are being enforced in most of the factories in the world today.
• **Debt contracts** were a type of agreements between the private employees and their workers. In these debt contracts it was claimed that the employees were in debt to their employers and as a result were under tighter control. A large number of families went in to debt bondage in order to survive.
Tacitus, a Roman historian has described the social hierarchy of the early empire.

To him, in the early Roman Empire Senators were at the top.

Next were the leading members of equestrian classes.

Respectable section of the people who were attached to the great houses was next in the social order.

Then was the untidy lower classes and slaves came to the bottom.

In the fourth century by the time of Constantine I, the Senators and equites had merged in to an expanded aristocracy and at least half of the families were of Eastern or African origin.

Like Senators, most 'knights' were landowners, but unlike Senators many of them involved in business activities like shipping, trade and banking.

This late Roman aristocracy was very wealthy but was less powerful than purely military elites who came entirely from non-aristocratic background.

Next in the social hierarchy was the middle class. It consisted of persons working in bureaucracy and army, prosperous merchants and farmers.

According to Olympiodorus, a historian of the early 5th century, the aristocracy based in the city of Rome received annual incomes up to 4,000 pounds of gold from their estates.

They also consumed grain, wine and other produce which, if sold, would have amounted to 1/3 of the income in gold. The income of the households at Rome of the second class was one thousand or fifteen hundred pounds of gold.

Below the middle class were the vast class collectively known as humiliores. Literally it means 'lower'.

They consisted of rural labourers, workers in industrial and mining establishments; migrant workers who worked for the grain and olive harvests and building industry; self employed artisans, who were in better condition than the wage workers; a large number of casual labourers employed in big cities, and finally the slaves.

Monetary system of the late empire

The monetary system broke down in the late empire because Spanish silver mines were exhausted and the government ran out of stock of the metal to support a stable coinage in silver. This is also led to the introduction of a new denomination in gold, the solidus.
Roman bureaucracy of the late Roman Empire

• The bureaucracy of the late Roman Empire both at higher and middle level was affluent as it drew much of its salary in gold and invested in buying land.
• There was corruption in the administration of judiciary and military supplies.
• The extortion by higher bureaucracy and the provincial governors was common.
• But the government intervened repeatedly to stop these forms of corruption.
• Laws were made to put and end to them.
• Historians and other members of intelligentsia denounced such practices.
• The Roman emperors were not free to do anything as they liked.
• By the 4th century the tradition of Roman law acted as a brake and was actively used to protect civil rights.
• Because of these laws powerful bishops could deal with powerful emperors when they were extremely harsh on civilian population.

Late Antiquity

• Late antiquity is the term used to describe the final, fascinating period in the evolution and break-up of the Roman Empire and refers from the fourth to seventh centuries.
• The period saw considerable changes in cultural, economic, and administrative levels.

Changes effected by the Emperor Diocletian in administration

• The emperor Diocletian abandoned territories with little strategic and economic importance.
• He fortified frontiers, recognised provincial boundaries and separated civilian from the military functions.
• He granted greater autonomy to the military commanders who became powerful. Constantine consolidated some of these changes and added others of his own.

Innovations of Emperor Constantine I

• The most important innovations of Constantine were in the monetary sphere. He introduced Solidus, a coin weighing 4 ½ gm of pure gold. These coins were minted in millions.
• The other innovation was the creation of a second capital at Constantinople.

Changes in the economic life.

• The late Antiquity period witnessed considerable change in economic life.
• Monetary stability and an expanding population stimulated economic growth.
• Archaeological record shows investments in rural establishments, including industrial installations like oil presses and glass factories, in newer technologies such as screw presses and multiple water-mills.
• The period also saw a revival of the long-distance trade. All this led to strong urban prosperity.

Changes in the religious life

• There were significant changes in the religious life.
• Emperor Constantine declared Christianity as official religion of the Roman empire.(4th century)
• Seventh century was associated with the rise of Islam The traditional religious culture of the classical world, both Greek and Roman, had been polytheist. The other religions in the empire were Judaism and Islam.
Decline of the Roman Empire

- The Roman Empire was divided into eastern and western halves in the fourth century C.E.
- During the late antiquity period, the general prosperity was especially marked in the East.
- In the Eastern Roman empire, population was still expanding till the 6th century.
- The East remained united under Emperor Justinian.
- There were wars between Rome and Iran during the 7th century.
- The East Roman Empire came to be known as Byzantium.
- The expansion of Islam has been called the greatest political revolution in the history of the ancient world.
- Large parts of the Roman and Iranian Empires had fallen into the hands of the Arabs.
- Nomadic tribes in frontier areas such as Goths, Visigoths, Vandals and others attacked the Roman Empire in the west by the 5th century C.E.
- The Germanic groups established their own kingdoms within the empire.
- With the prompting of the Christian Church, a Holy Roman Empire was formed from some of these kingdoms from the 9th century CE.

Key words

- Republic: The name for a regime in which the reality of power lay with the Senate.
- Senate: A body dominated by a small group of wealthy families.
- Civil war: Armed struggles for power within the same country.
- Transhumance: Herdsman's regular annual movement between the higher mountain regions and low lying ground in search of pasture.
- Draconian: Harsh so-called because of early 6th century BCE Greek law maker, Draco who prescribed death as the penalty for most crimes.

Dressel 20/Amphorae: oil containers especially olive oil.
Sources to understand the History of central Islamic land

1. Semi-historical works, such as biographies, records of the sayings and doings of the Prophet (hadith) and commentaries on the Quran (tafsir) are available.

2. Large collection of eyewitness reports (akhbar) transmitted over a period of time either orally or on paper. The authenticity of each report was tested by a critical method called isnad.

3. Christian chronicles, written in Syriac are fewer but they throw interesting light on the history of early Islam.

4. Besides chronicles, we have legal texts, geographies, travelogues and literary works, such as stories and poems.

The Rise of Islam in Arabia:
Arabs before Muhammad (Bedouins)
Before the Prophet Muhammad, the Arabs were divided into tribes (qabila).
A chief was chosen on the basis of his family as well as his personal courage, wisdom and generosity.
Many Arab tribes were nomadic (Bedouins), moving from dry to green areas (oases) of the desert in search of food.
Some settled in cities and practised trade or agriculture.

Importance of Mecca
• It was in this city that Muhammad lived and controlled the main shrine, a cube-like structure, known as Kaba in which idols were placed.
• Tribes outside Mecca also considered the Kaba holy, and placed their idols in it and annual pilgrimage there.
• Mecca was located on the crossroad of a trade route between Yemen and Syria which added to the importance of the city.

Principles and Messages of Prophet Muhammad
• Muhammad was an Arab by language and culture and a merchant by profession.
• He declared himself to be a messenger of God (rasul) and commanded to preach that Allah alone should be worshipped.
• He preached that worship should involve simple rituals such as daily prayers (salat).
• His followers should follow moral principles such as:
  a. abstain from theft,
  b. distribute alms, and
  c. be bound together through common religious beliefs.
• He preached to found a single community of believers (umma).
• His followers were called Muslims.
• They were promised salvation on the Day of Judgment (qiyama) and a share of the resources of the community while on earth.

Islamic Calendar
• The Muslims and their new religion had faced considerable opposition from the Meccans.
• In 622, Muhammad was forced to migrate with his followers to Medina.
• The year of his journey marked the beginning of the Muslim calendar (Hijri era).

The Caliphate and its Objectives
• After the death of Muhammad in 632 AD, no one remained there to succeed him as prophet.
So his authority was transferred to umma with no established rule of succession.

Then began the process of innovations which led to the formation of the institution of Caliphate in which the leader of the community (amir al-muminin) became the deputy (khalifa) of the prophet.

**There were two main objectives of Caliphatess**

- First was to retain the control over the tribes constituting umma and
- Secondly to raise resources for the state.

**The First Four Caliphs**

- The first caliph was **Abu Bakr**. He suppressed revolts by a series of campaigns.
- The second caliph was **Umar**. He shaped the umma's policy of expansion.
- The third caliph was **Uthman**. He packed his administration with his own men and this led to opposition in Iraq and Egypt.
- The fourth caliph was **Ali**. It was in his time that Muslims broke in to shias and Sunnis.

**The administration of the conquered territories by the Caliphs**

- The administration of conquered territories was headed by governors (amirs) and tribal chieftains (ashraf).
- The central treasury (bait-al-mal) obtained its revenue from taxes paid by Muslims as well as its share of booty from raids.
- The caliphs soldiers, mostly Bedouins, settled in camp cities at the edge of the desert, such as Kufa and Basra.
- So that they remained within their natural habitat and at caliph's command.
- The ruling class and soldiers received shares from booty and monthly payment (ata).
- The non-Muslim population retained their rights on property and religious practices on payment of taxes. Such as kharaj and jiziya.
- Jews and Christians were declared as protected subjects of the state (dammis) and were given a measure of autonomy in the conduct of their communal affairs.

**The Umayyads and the changes introduced by Umayyads in Politics or administration**

- Muawiya was the first Umayyad caliph. He had made himself the caliph after the death of Ali, in 661 C.E.
- Umayyads were a prosperous clan of Qurayshi tribe.
- The Umayyads implemented a series of political measures which first consolidated their leadership within umma.
- Muawiya was the first Umayyad caliph moved his capital to Damascus and adopted the court ceremonies and administrative institutions of Byzantine Empire.
- He also introduced hereditary succession and persuaded the leading Muslims to accept his son as his heir.
- Although there were Christian advisers in administration and Zoroastrian bureaucrats and scribes, it was Islam that provided legitimacy to their rule.
- In the Umayyad state the imperial power was not based directly on Islam but on statecraft. They appealed for unity and suppressed rebellions in the name of Islam.

**The contribution of Abd al Malik (685-705)**

- It was in his time that Arab and Islamic identity was emphasized.
- Arabic was adapted as language and administration and Islamic coinage was introduced.
- He built the **Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem** which is an Arab-Islamic identity.

**Difference between the Islamic and other coins that were circulating in the caliphate.**

- Before the introduction of Islamic coins the gold Dinar and silver Dirham were in circulation in the Caliphate which were the copies of Byzantine and Iranian coins (denarius and drachm). They had symbols of crosses and fire altars and Greek and Pahlavi (the language of Iran) inscription on them. Abd-al-Malik and his successors removed these symbols and introduced coins with Arabic inscriptions.

**The Abbasid Revolution**

- The Umayyads were replaced by a movement called dawa, led by Abbasids, another family of Mecca origin in 750. The Umayyad regime was portrayed as evil by the Abbasids. They promised to restore the original Islam of prophet.
- Their army was led by an Iranian slave, Abu Muslim, who defeated the last Umayyad caliph, Marwan, in a
battle at the river Zab.

- **The Abbasid Rule**
  - Under the Abbasid’s rule the influence of Arabs declined and the importance of Iranian culture increased.
  - The Abbasids established their capital at Baghdad.
  - The army and bureaucracy were reorganized on a non-tribal basis to ensure greater participation by Iraq and Khurasan.
  - The religious status and the functions of the caliphate were strengthened under their rule.
  - They patronised Islamic institutions and scholars.
  - They retained the centralized nature of state.
  - They maintained the splendid imperial architecture and elaborate court ceremonials of the Umayyads.

**Causes for the Break-up of the Caliphate**

- A number of causes were responsible for the decline of the Abbasid state.
  - 1. The Abbasid state became weaker because the control from Baghdad to distant places of the empire declined.
  - 2. A conflict between pro-Arab and pro-Iranian factions of the army and bureaucracy also led to the decline.
  - 3. In 810, a civil war broke out between the supporters of Amin and Mamun, the sons of Harun-al-Rashid which led to the creation of a new power block of Turkish slave officers.
  - All these developments led to creation of number of dynasties and Abbasid power limited to central Iraq and western Iran
  - In 945 the **Buyids**, a Shiite clan from the Caspian region of Iran captured Baghdad. They kept the Abbasid caliph as the symbolic head of their Sunni subjects.
  - **Fatimids** were of Shiite origin and had ambition to rule the Islamic world. They claimed descendants of Fatima the daughter of Prophet Muhammad and hence rightful rulers of Islam. They had their base in North Africa and conquered Egypt and established new capital at Qahirah (Cairo).
  - **The Turks** were nomadic tribes from the Central Asian steppes who gradually converted to Islam. They were skilled riders and warriors and entered the Abbasid, Samanid and Buyid administrations as slaves and soldiers, rising to high positions on account of their loyalty and military abilities.

**The Rise of Sultanates**

- The Ghaznavid sultanate was established by Alptegin (961). It was consolidated by Mahmud of Ghazni.
  - Ghaznavids were a military dynasty with a professional army of Turks and Indians.
  - The Abbasid caliphs were not rivals but a source of legitimacy for Ghaznavids.
  - Mahmud was eager to receive the title of Sultan from the caliph.
  - The caliph was willing to support the Sunni Ghaznavid as a counterweight to Shiite power.
  - The Saljuq Turks entered Turan as soldiers. They later established themselves as a powerful group under the leadership of two brothers, **Tughhril and Chaghri Beg**.
  - After the death of Mahmud, they conquered Khurasan and made **Nishapur** their capital.
  - Then they moved to western Persia and Iraq and restored Baghdad to Sunni rule (1055).
  - The caliph, al-Qaim, conferred on Tughril Beg the title of Sultan. The two Saljuq brothers ruled together.

**The Crusades**

- Crusades were the wars fought by Christians against Muslims to free the Holy Land of Palestine.
  - On the death of Malik Shah, Saljuq sultan of Baghdad his empire started disintegrating.
  - This gave a chance to Byzantine Emperor Alexius I to retain Asia Minor and Northern Syria.
  - So the Pope Urban II joined hands with the Byzantine emperor for a war, in the name of God to liberate the Holy Land.
  - Several wars were fought between western Christians and Muslim cities (between 1095 and 1291) on the coastal plains of the eastern Mediterranean. These wars were later known as Crusades.
I. II and III Crusade wars

- **In the first crusade (1098-99)**, soldiers from France and Italy captured Antioch in Syria, and claimed Jerusalem. Their victory was accompanied by the slaughter of Muslims and Jews in the city.
- The Franks quickly established four crusader states in the region of Syria-Palestine. Collectively, these territories were known as Outremer (crusader states).
- When the Turks captured Edessa in 1144, an appeal was made by the Pope for a second crusade (1145-49).
- A combined German and French army made an attempt to capture Damascus but they were defeated.
- After this, there was a gradual erosion of the strength of crusader states.
- Salah al-Din (Saladin) created an Egypto-Syrian empire and gave the call for jihad or holy war against the Christians and defeated them in 1187. He regained Jerusalem, nearly a century after the first crusade.
- The loss of the city Jerusalem prompted a third crusade in 1189. But the crusaders gained little victory in Palestine and got free access to Jerusalem for Christian pilgrims.
- The Mamluks, the rulers of Egypt, finally expelled the crusading Christians from all of Palestine in 1291.

**The Consequences of the Crusades**

- The crusades left Muslims bitter and this in turn made the Muslim state hostile towards its Christian subjects where there were mixed populations.
- Increased influence of Italian mercantile communities in the trade between the East and the West even after the restoration of Muslim power.

**Economy**

a. **Agriculture**
- Agriculture was the main occupation of the settled population in the newly acquired territories.
- The state had complete control of agricultural land.
- Land revenue was the main source of income.
- In the land conquered by the Arabs that remained in the hands of the owners were subjected to tax (kharaj) which varied from half to fifth of produce.
- The Muslims paid one tenth (ushr) of produce as tax.
- Since the Muslims had to pay less tax, the non-Muslims started converting to Islam, which resulted in short fall.
- In order to overcome this problem a uniform policy of taxation was adopted.

**Measures adopted by the state to Improve agricultural production**
- To increase agricultural production, the state supported irrigation systems such as construction of dams, canals and wells.
- Islamic law gave tax concessions to people who brought land under cultivation.
- Even in the absence of major technological changes, the cultivable land expanded and productivity rose because of peasant initiative and state support.
- Crops like cotton, oranges, bananas, spinach and brinjals were grown and exported to Europe.

b. **Urbanisation (city in the Islamic world)**
- Islamic civilisation flourished along with the growth of a number of cities.
- Many new cities were founded to settle the Arab soldiers. Some of these garrisons cities were Kufa and Basra in Iraq and Fustat and Cairo in Egypt.
- At the heart of the city were two building: the congregational mosque which could be seen from a distance and central market place with shops in a row, merchants' lodging and office of the money changers.
- The administrators, scholars and merchants lived close to the centre.
- Ordinary citizens and soldiers lived in the outer circle each with its own mosque, church or a synagogue, subsidiary market and public bath.
- At the outskirts were houses for urban poor, a market for vegetables and fruits, caravan stations, and unclean shops that is those dealing with tanning and butchering.
- Beyond the city walls were inns for people to rest.
c. Commerce

- **Geography favoured the Islamic empire in trade.** The Muslim world was spread between the trading zones of Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. The Arabs and Iranians monopolised the maritime trade between China, India and Europe for five centuries.

- **The two major trading routes** were the Red sea and the Persian Gulf.

- High value goods suitable for long distance trade like spices, textile, porcelain and gun powder were supplied to the port of Aden and Aydhab in Red sea and Siraf and Basra in the Persian Gulf.

- From here the goods were taken by land routes for local consumption and to the Mediterranean end of these trade routes for onwards export to Europe.

- The export to Europe was handled by Jewish merchants, some of whom were in direct touch with their Indian counterparts.

- With the rise of Cairo as centre of power and commerce in the 10th century, Red sea route became important.

- In the eastern end the Iranian merchants set out from Baghdad along the Silk route to China via Bukhara and Samarkand to bring Central Asian and Chinese goods which included paper from China.

- **Samarqand (Transoxiana) was an important link in the trade,** which extended north to Russia and Scandinavia, for exchange of European goods, mainly fur and Slavic captives.

- Islamic coins were used in this trade.

- Male and female slaves were also purchased here for the courts of caliphs and sultans.

- The fiscal system and market exchange increased the importance of money in the Central Islamic lands.

- Coins of gold, silver and copper were minted and circulated to pay for the goods and services.

**Methods of Payment and Business organisation**

- Muslims developed a sophisticated methods of payment and business organisation by introducing **Letter of credit and bill of exchange** (like present days cheque or draft). It is regarded as one of the greatest contribution of the Muslim world to the methods of payment and business organisation.

- The traders and bankers used these modes of payment to transfer money from one place to another or from one individual to another.

- The widespread use of commercial paper freed the merchants from the need to carry cash everywhere and made their journey safer.

- Even the caliph used these letters of credit to pay the salaries or reward to poets and musicians.

- Islam did not stop people from making money provided certain prohibition were imposed. They were,
  1. Interest bearing transactions were unlawful.
  2. Money obtained by illegal means should not be kept; it is harm for a Muslim.

**Learning and Culture**

- For religious scholars of Islam knowledge is derived from the Quran and the model behaviour of the Prophet. They devoted themselves to writing tafsir and documentary Muhammad's authentic hadith.

- **Sharia** is a law which governs the relationship of Muslims with God through rituals and with rest of the humanity through social affairs.

- The **sharia** provided guidance on all possible legal issues within Sunni society, though it was more precise on questions of personal status such as marriage, divorce and inheritance than on commercial matters or penal and constitutional issues.

- Before it took final forms, the Sharia was adjusted to take in to account the customary laws of the state on political and social order.

- When life had become increasingly complex with urbanisation which led to the formation of four schools of law in the eighth and ninth centuries. These were the Maliki, Hanafi, Shafii and Hanbali schools, each named after a leading jurist.

- **Sufis** were a group of religious minded people in medieval Islam. They sought a deeper and more personal knowledge of God through asceticism and mysticism.

- The more society gave itself up to material pursuits and pleasure, the more the sufis sought to renounce the world and religion God alone (tawakkul).

- Sufis used musical concerts (sama) to induce ecstasy and stimulate emotions of love and passion.

- Bayazid Bistami an Iranian Sufi was the first to teach the importance of fana (submerging the self) in God.

- Rabia of Basra, a woman saint preached that unity with God can be achieved through an intense love for God.
Sufism is open to all irrespective of religion, status and gender and posed a challenge to orthodox Islam. **The influence of Greek philosophy and Science in the field of education**

- In the schools of Alexandria, Syria and Mesopotamia Greek philosophy, mathematics and medicine were taught along with other subjects.
- Translation of Greek and Syriac books into Arabic by Christian scholars began under the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. Translation became a well-organised activity.
- A huge library cum Institute of science (Bayt-al-Hikma) was set up in Baghdad where the scholars worked.
- The works of Aristotle, the Elements of Euclid and Ptolemy's Almagest were brought to the attention of the Arabic reading scholars.
- During the same period, the Indian works on medicine, astronomy and mathematics were also translated. When they reached Europe they aroused the interests in philosophy and science.
- The study of new subjects promoted critical inquiry and had a profound influence on Islamic intellectual life. Scholars and Philosophers posed wider questions on Islam and provided fresh answers.

**Al-Qanun fil Tibb (Canon of Medicine)**
- Ibn Sina was a Philosopher a doctor by profession. Ibn Sina’s medical writings were widely read.
- The book Al-Qanun fil Tibb (Canon of Medicine) is written by Ibn Sina. It is a million word manuscripts which include a list of 760 drugs sold by the pharmacists of his times and note of his own experiments which were conducted in the hospitals. This book points to the importance of healing through dietary regulation and influence of climate and environment on health and the contagious nature of some diseases. This book was used as a textbook in Europe where the author was known as Avicenna. It is believed that Umar Khayyam, a well-known poet and scientist, had read this book just before his death.
- In medieval Islamic societies, fine language and a creative imagination were among the most appreciated qualities in a person. *Adab* forms of expressions included poetry and prose which were meant to be memorised and used when the occasion arose.
- **Abu Nuwas**, who was of Persian origin, broke new ground by composing classical poetry on new themes such as wine and male love with the intention of celebrating pleasures forbidden by Islam.
- By the time the Arabs conquered Iran, Pahlavi, was in decay. A version of Pahlavi, known as New Persian, with a huge Arabic vocabulary, soon developed.
- **Rudaki** was considered the father of New Persian poetry, which included new forms such as the short, lyrical poem (*ghazal*) and the quatrain (*rubai*).
- The rubai is a four-line stanza in which the first two lines set the stage, the third is finely poised, and the fourth delivers the point. The subject matter of the rubai is unrestricted.
- The rubai reached its zenith in the hands of Umar Khayyam,
- During 11th century, Ghazni became the centre of Persian literary life.
- Mahmud of Ghazni gathered around him a group of poets who composed anthologies and epic poetry. The most outstanding was Firdausi's, *Shahnama (Book of Kings)*

**Shahnama**
- *Shahnama* is an epic of 50,000 couplets. He took 30 years to complete this work. It is a collection of traditions and legends which poetically depicts Iran from Creation to the Arab conquest. It has become a masterpiece of Islamic literature.

**The catalogue (Kitab al-Fihrist)**
- The catalogue of *Ibn Nadim* describes a large number of works written in prose for the moral education and amusement of readers. The oldest of these is a collection of animal fables called *Kallila wa Dimna* which is the Arabic translation of the *Panchatantra*. The most widespread and lasting literary works are the stories of hero-adventurers such as *Alexander and Sindbad*, or those of unhappy lovers known as Majnun or the Madman.
- The *Thousand and One Nights* is another collection of stories told by a single narrator, *Shahrzad*, to her husband night after night. The collection was originally in Ind-Persian and was translated into Arabic in Baghdad in the eighth century.
- From the ninth century onwards, the scope of writing books was expanded to include biographies, manuals of ethics, history and geography. For rulers and officials, history provided a good record of the glories and achievements of a dynasty as well as examples of the techniques of administration.
Alberuni’s famous *Tahqiq ma lil-Hind (History of India)* was the greatest attempt by an eleventh-century Muslim writer to look beyond the world of Islam.

**Architecture of the Islamic world of the 10th century**
- Religious buildings were the greatest external symbols of Islamic world.
- Mosques, shrines and tombs from Spain to Central Asia showed the same basic design – arches, domes, minarets and open courtyards.

**Design of a Mosque**
- In the first Islamic century the mosques acquired a distinctive architecture from roof supported by pillars which transcended regional variations.
- The mosque had an open courtyard with a fountain or pond.
- The courtyard led to a vaulted hall which could accommodate long lines or worshippers an Imam, the prayer leader.
- Two special features were located inside the hall - a 'mihrab' in the wall which indicated the direction of mecca and a pulpit from where sermons were delivered during noon prayers on Friday.
- A minaret was attached to the building, it was a tower used to call to the faithful to prayer at the appointed time and to symbolize the presences of the new faiths.
- The time was marked in the cities and villages by the five daily calls for prayers and weekly sermons.
- The same pattern of construction was also appeared in caravanserais, hospitals and palaces.
- The Umayyads built ‘desert palaces’ in oases and decorated with sculptures, mosaics and paintings.

**Other Art forms**
- The rejection of representing living beings in the religious art of Islam promoted two art forms:
  1. calligraphy (the art of beautiful writing) and
  2. arabesque (geometric and vegetal designs)
- Small and big inscriptions, usually of religious quotations, were used to decorate architecture.
- Calligraphic art has been best preserved in manuscripts of the Quran dating from the eighth and ninth centuries. Literary works were illustrated with miniature paintings.
- Plant and floral designs, based on the idea of the garden, were used in buildings and book illustrations.

**Key Words**
- 1. Aramaic: A language related to Hebrew and Arabic
- 2. Tribes: Societies organised on the basis of blood relationships.
- 3. Crusades: According to some sources Pope Urban II gifted cross to all the Christian soldiers to fight in the war that is why the war was named so.
- Mutazila: Scholars with a theological bend of mind.
- Adab: A term which implied literary and cultural refinement.

**Passage Based References**
- **Islamic Calendar**
  The Hijri era was established during the caliphate of Umar in 622 CE. The Hijri year is a lunar year of 354 days, 12 months (Muharram to Dhul Hijja) of 29 or 30 days. Each day begins at sunset and each month with the sighting of the crescent moon. The Hijri year is about 11 days shorter than the solar year. Therefore, none of the Islamic religious festivals, including the Ramazan fast, Id and hajj, corresponds in any way to seasons.

  - **The Great Mosque of al-Mutawwakil in Samarra.** The mosque was built in 850 It is 50 metres high, and is made of brick. It was the largest mosque in the world for centuries.
  - **The Quran:** A book in Arabic divided into 114 chapters. It is a collection of messages which God sent to the Prophet. It is a scripture, a text vested with religious authority. It speaks in metaphors and does not narrate events. Many hadith were written to help the reading of the Quarn.
  - **Abd al-Latif** was a 12th century legal and medical scholar of Baghdad.
Theme 5. Nomadic Empires
(Imperial formations constructed by nomadic groups)

The Mongols under the leadership of Genghis Khan built a transcontinental empire spanning Europe and Asia during the 13th and 14th centuries.

Sources
The Mongols produced little literature on their own. So we have to rely on chronicles, travelogues and documents produced by city-based litterateurs. These authors often produced extremely ignorant and biased reports of nomadic life. The imperial success of the Mongols attracted many travellers. They came from a variety of backgrounds—Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Turkish and Muslim. Many of them produced sympathetic accounts and others hostile. The earliest narrative on Genghis Khan was The Secret History of the Mongols.

Mongols—Background
The mongols were a diverse body of people and spoke similar languages. Some of the Mongols were pastoralists while others were hunter-gatherers. They nomadised in the steppes of Central Asia. The Mongols were divided into patrilineal lineage. The richer families owned more animals and pasture lands. Hence, they had large followers and were influential in local politics. When ever there were harsh winter or drought conditions then there were conflicts among the families over pasture lands. Predatory raids were occurred in search of livestock. Groups of families form alliance in defence or offence during these occasions. But these alliances were for a short period.

Genghis Khan’s Political System (Comparison with Attila’s)
The size of Genghis Khan’s confederation of Mongol and Turkish tribes perhaps matched in size to that of the confederation in the fifth century by Attila. Genghis Khan’s political system was different from Attila’s. It was more durable as it survived its founder. It was stable enough to counter large and better equipped armies of China, Iran and Eastern Europe. They also administered complex agrarian economies and urban settlements far from their home.

The Great Wall of China
The Great Wall of China was a visual testament to the disturbance and fear that brought by the nomadic raids on the agrarian societies of north China and Central Asia.

Genghis Khan
Early Career
Genghis Khan was born in 1162 near the Onon river in the north of present day Mongolia. Originally named Temujin (‘blacksmith’), Genghis was the third son of the minor chieftain Yesugei (kiyat). He was 9 when his father was assassinated by the neighbouring Tatars. He along with his brothers and step-brothers, was brought up by his mother. The next ten years were full of hardships. He was captured and enslaved at one occasion. Soon after his marriage he had to fight to recover his wife (Borte) who was kidnapped. He also formed alliances with Boghurchu, a friend; Jamuqa, his brother, and his old uncle Ong Khan. Between 1180 and 1190, he used his alliance with Ong Khan against Jamuqa. After this he gained confidence and moved against other tribes. He defeated the Tatars, the Naimans, the Kerais etc. Finally he defeated the powerful Jamuqa in 1206. Then the assembly of Mongol chieftains (quriltai), declared Genghis Khan the Great Khan of the Mongols. He took the title Genghis Khan: ‘Oceanic ruler’ or Universal Ruler.

Campaigns of Genghis Khan
Genghis Khan united the Mongol people in to a more effective, disciplined military force. The first of his concern was to conquer China. At this time, China was divided into three kingdoms. Chin the north, the His Hsia in the north west and the Sung in the south. By 1209, the His Hsia was defeated. The Great Wall of China was breached until 1213 and Peking sacked in 1215. Long-drawn out battles against the Chin continued until 1234. But Genghis Khan was satisfied enough with the progress of his campaigns to return to his Mongolian homeland in 1216 and leave the military affairs of the reign to his subordinates.

Defeated Qara Khita who controlled the the Tien Shah mountains Northwest of China in 1218, Mongol dominions reached the Amu Darya and the states of Transoxiana and Khwarazm. Muhammad, Shah of Khwarazm in central Asia executed Mongol ambassadors. Genghis had to respond to their execution. The Mongols destroyed cities such as Samarqand, Nishapur, Bokhara, and Herat.
Genghis Khan and India

Mongol forces in pursuit of Khwarazm Shah pushed into Azerbaijan and defeated Russian forces. Another wing followed the Shah's son, Jalaluddin, into Afghanistan and Sindh province. At the banks of the Indus, Genghis Khan considered returning to Mongolia through North India and Assam. But because of heat, natural habitat and ill omens that were reported to him by his soothsayer which made him change of his mind. Thus India escaped from the visit of Genghis Khan. He died in 1227.

Causes for the Success of Ghengis Khan

The military achievements of Genghis Khan were astounding. He had achieved all the military victory by his ability to innovate and transform various aspects of steppe combat into effective military strategies. The horseriding and hunting skills of Mongols and Turks provided speed and mobility to the army. Their abilities as rapid shooting archers from horse back were further perfected during regular hunting expeditions which doubled the chance of victory over the enemies. They carried out campaigns in the depths of winter by using frozen river as highway to enemies' cities and camps. They brought their knowledge of moving light in terrain as an effective military strategy. He learnt the importance of siege engines and naphtha bombardment quickly. His engineers built light portable equipments which he used against his opponents.

Military Organisation under the Mongols

Among the Mongols all the able-bodied, adult males of the tribe bore arms. They constituted the armed forces when the occasion demanded. The army of Genghis Khan was composed of different people which complicated the relatively small undifferentiated army into a mixed mass of people. He altered the old steppe system of decimal units system, i.e., divisions of 10, 100s, 1,000s and 10,000 soldiers. He divided the old tribal groupings and distributed their members into new military units. No individual could move from his allotted group without permission. If they did so they were punished severely. Thus, the largest unit of soldiers (10,000 soldiers (tumen) now included different tribes and clans. The military units were to serve under his four sons and specially chosen captains of his army units called noyan. A band of followers who had served Genghis Khan loyally through grave adversity for many years also became important within the new realm.

Conferring titles

Genghis Khan conferred title of 'blood brothers' publicly to military persons. He also honoured humbler persons as bondsmen a title that indicated their close relationship with Genghis Khan. It did not preserve the rights of old clan chieftains and new aristocracy derived its status from its closeness to Genghis Khan.

Political Organisation under Genghis Khan

- Genghis Khan assigned the responsibility of governing the newly-conquered people to his four sons. These comprised the four ulus, a term that did not originally mean fixed territories.
- Genghis Khan envisaged that his sons would rule the empire collectively.
- Military contingents of the individual princes were placed in each ulus.
- The sense of a dominion shared by the members of the family was underlined at the assembly of chieftains, quriltais.
- Quriltais, where all decisions relating to the family or the state for the forthcoming season campaigns, distribution of plunder, pasture lands and succession were collectively taken.
- A rapid courier system connected distant areas.
- For the maintenance of this communication system the Mongol nomads contributed a tenth of their herd.
- This was called the qubcur tax, a levy that the nomads paid willingly for the multiple benefits that it brought.

Communication and Trade Under the Mongols

Courier System

Genghis Khan had formed a rapid courier system that connected the distant areas of his regime. Fresh mounts and despatch riders were placed in outposts at regularly spaced distances. The Mongol nomads contributed a tenth of their hard- either horsed or livestock as provisions for the maintenance of this communication system. This was called the qubcur tax, a levy that the nomads paid willingly for the multiple benefits that it brought. The courier system (yam) was further refined after Genghis Khan's death and its speed and reliability surprised travellers. It enabled the Great Khan to keep a check on developments at the farthest end of their regime across the continental land army.

Trade

When peace was established after Mongol conquest (Pax Mongolica), trade connections matured. Travel and trade along silk route increased under the authority of Mongols. It continued north of Mongolia and to Kara korum. Communication and ease of travel was essential to maintain the authority of the Mongol regime. Travellers were given a pass (paiza in Persian; gerege in Mongolian) for safe conduct. Traders paid by tax for the same purpose, there by acknowledging the Mongol authority.
**Administrative features of Genghis Khan's Rule**

During the reign of Genghis Khan, civil administrators were recruited from the conquered lands. But they were deployed in distant areas. Chinese Secretaries were posted in Iran, and Persians in China. These administrators retained the confidence of their masters till the time they continued to increase the revenues for them. These administrators could sometimes command considerable influence.

**Yasa (Legal code of Genghis Khan)**

It is believed that Yasa was officially proclaimed by Genghis Khan at the Quariltai of 1206. In its earliest formulation, the term was written as ‘yasaq’ which meant ‘law’, ‘decree’ or ‘order’. By the middle of the thirteenth century, Mongols started using the term yasa in a more general sense to mean the ‘legal code of Genghis Khan’. The yasa was most probably a compilation of the customary traditions of the Mongol tribes. The yasa served to join together the Mongol people around a body of shared beliefs. It recognised the affinity to Genghis Khan and descendants and, even as they absorbed different aspects of sedentary life style, it gave them the confidence to retain their ethnic identity and impose their ‘law’ upon their defeated subjects. It was an extremely empowering ideology inspired by Genghis Khan's vision and was vital in the construction of a Mongol universal dominion.

**Situating Genghis Khan and the Mongols in World History**

Genghis Khan is remembered in the history as a conqueror, destroyer of cities and a person responsible for the death of thousands of people. But for the Mongols, Genghis Khan was the greatest leader of all time. He united the Mongol people, freed them from wars, brought them prosperity and restored trade routes and markets.

Mongols were a diverse body of people. Despite their own faith in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam etc. the Mongol rulers never allowed their personal beliefs to dictate the public policy. They recruited administrators and armed contingents from various conquered lands. All this was unusual for the time when they were ruling. Mongols provided ideological models for the Mughals of India. Timur, another monarch who aspired to universal dominion, hesitated to declare himself monarch because of Genghis Khan.

After decades of Soviet control, the country of Mongolia is recreating its identity as an independent nation. Genghis Khan has appeared as an iconic figure for the Mongol people, mobilising memories of a great past in the foraging of national identity that can carry the nation into future.

**Key Words**

- **Barbarians**: The term barbarian is derived from the Greek barbaros which meant a non-Greek, someone whose language sounded like a random noise: ‘barbar’. Cruel, greedy and politically unable to govern.
- **Yasa**: Genghis Khan's code of law
- **Tama**: The military contingents of the individual princes
- **Quriltais**: The assembly of chieftains where all decisions relating to the family or the state, campaigns, distribution of plunder, pasture lands and succession - were collectively taken.
- **Anda**: Blood brothers of Genghis Khan.
- **Naukar**: Special ranking as his bondsmen, a title that marked their close relationship with their masters.
- **Qanats**: Underground canals
- **Yam**: A courier system introduced by Genghis Khan
- **Qubcur Tax**: A levy that few the nomads paid willingly for the multiple benefits that it brought.

Prepared by Sujith, HSST History GVHSS Kayyoor, Kasargod