

Chapter 2 - Early Middle Eastern and Northeast African Civilizations Transcript

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Transcript

Speaker 1

Now we're entering Chapter 2's podcast. This chapter focuses on early civilizations in the Fertile Crescent and Northeast Africa. The civilizations in these regions left for records were also initially economies based on farming and developed alongside rivers, their locations alongside rivers allowed populations in the Fertile Crescent and northeast Africa to grow the surplus food if they use to support organization, social stratification, labor specialization, and trade so far. Let's start off with defining what is a civilization. The term civilization often elicits mostly idealized images of ancient empires. Monumental architecture and luxurious lives of the ruling classes. Civilization, however, is a tricky term. In the United States. Students of history have often studied Western civilization exclusively throughout the 1950s, and when their studies of civilizations they were often encountering advanced societies with urban centers rooted in European or Middle Eastern culture. America's origins in these Western civilizations were used to explain our own high level of development. However, more recent scholars have broadened the geographical focus by recognizing that worldwide from 3500 to 1000 BCE, at least seven independent civilizations emerged in different regions. And so in our chapter two we start off with what is called ancient Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia, which means land between the rivers and Greek, refers to the region situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. This fertile land, known as the Fertile Crescent, provided the ideal conditions for agricultural development. Although most of the regions see little or irregular rainfall, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers provided long. Very large amounts of fresh water facilitating agricultural production and development. Of early civilization. Those two rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, both originate in the Taurus Mountains of eastern Anatolia and flow southward to empty into the Persian Gulf. The rivers carry and deposits silt downstream, which enriches the soil. In general, the richer soils and availability of water in areas that in the north otherwise had little rain or else towards the South, had concentrated most of rainfall followed by long dry spells encouraged settlement near those rivers. Areas closer to the Persian Gulf, known as Lower Mesopotamia in particular, attractive to early settlers because they had extremely fertile soils. The geography of Mesopotamia facilitated the growth of city states and emergence of a complex civilizations. People built some of the earliest cities in Mesopotamia, including Uruk, Eridu and Umma. In lower Mesopotamia, near the Persian Gulf. While the Tigris and Euphrates rivers provided water to the region, their floods were unpredictable and could even be catastrophic when they washed away entire settlements. In response, the region residents created irrigation canals and drainage ditches to control the flow of water. The river offered another benefit to ancient Mesopotamians. This is the rivers were important to meet people's everyday needs for water and for agricultural product. So they also facilitated trading. Traders were able to use the rivers to bring in their resources from Syria, Anatolia, the Levant and areas adjacent to the Persian Gulf. And with that, we see really the creation as we said before of the first city states that civilization has ever seen. And so we often refer to those as the Sumerian city states. The Sumerian city states were autonomous political entities and ancient Mesopotamians. The Mesopotamians recognize any leader over multiple city states as a king or a ruler. These rulers passed down their kingship through a dynastic male line. The city states were often

in competition and engage in conflicts over resources. And territories, the Sumerian city states exhibited distinct social stratification with individuals occupying different positions within the social hierarchy. In this podcast, we will explore the various strata of Sumerian society. The factors that influence social status and the implications of this stratification on everyday life let us go a little bit deeper into the fascinating world as we now see these Sumerian cities, as they tend to grow and prosper. Social stratification refers to the division of society into distinct social classes or strata based on factors such as wealth, occupation, and birth. It creates a hierarchical structure in which individuals and groups occupy different positions, each with its own rights, privileges and responsibilities. In ancient Mesopotamia, in the Sumerian city states, we see the Sumerians developed one of the earliest known writing systems, called Cuneiform. Writing as a means of communication and record keeping originate from the need to represent and convey information. In its earliest form, writing utilized pictographs into uniform which were simple visual symbols representing objects or ideas. Uniform was one of the earliest, if not the very first written script in the world. Could have formed script involve the combination. Of these wedge. Shaped marks to form complex signs representing words, sounds, or ideas. The direction, angle and arrangement of the wedges within a sign conveyed a specific meaning. The script developed thousands of signs, each with its own distinctive combination of wedges, and with this written record. Keeping this written communication, we really see the increasing amount of urbanization in the. Marion City States an organization is one of the crucial characteristics of a civilization, and it is truly the establishment of cities or urban centers in that civilization. As hubs of economic, political and social activities, they are marked by high population densities, significant architectural developments in the presence of various public and private institutions, and so we all see these really play into the development of these civilization, especially in Mesopotamia. We also saw technological advancements, the specialization and division of Labor. Of course, as we said, social stratification, but then also the creation of political and legal systems, complex religious and belief systems. And as we see, this really helps these civilizations. To emerge and grow. So civilizations do not emerge spontaneously, but are shaped by various factors. Some significant influence on the development of civilizations, including graphic factors. Economic factors, intellectual and cultural factors, and, of course, historical events, wars, the conflicts, invasions are often ones that really affect the growth and also the stunning of growth of civilizations and what we see now is that as those civilizations tended to grow, we saw what becomes the creation of the Mesopotamian. In the podcast, we will explore the significant Mesopotamian empires, including the the Arcadian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, and the Syrian Empire journey as we go on a journey of these Mesopotamian empires through the rise power and enduring legacy of this influential civilizations, let's start off with the Akkadian Empire, which emerges. Around 2334 BCE, under the leadership of Sargon of Agade. The Sumerians and Ancient Semitic people conquered the Sumerian city States and established the first known empire in history under Sargon's rule with the Akkadian Empire expanded its territories and military conquest created a vast empire that extended from modern day Iraq to parts of Iran, Syria and Turkey. The Akkadian Empire, centralization of power. Use of a professional army and efficient administration were the key factors in its success. Sargon implemented a system of provincial governor. And established a common Akkadian language that facilitate communication and administration throughout the empire. Eventually the empires downfall came from internal conflicts and invasions, leading to his eventual collapse in 2154 BCE, and that leads us to the newest empire that comes after the Akkadian Empire, the Babylonian. Empire, following the decline of that Akkadian Empire, the city of Babylon rose to prominence under the rule of Hammurabi. And a lot of these code, a comprehensive, comprehensive legal code, is one of the most enduring legacies of the Babylonian Empire. Establishes a

set of laws and regulations that govern various aspects of Babylonian society, emphasizing principles of justice, fairness, and social order. But of course, all these empires. Tended to always have a decline and with the decline of the Babylonian Empire, we see the true creation of a new empire, the Assyrian Empire, and that Assyrian empire becomes another influential Mesopotamian empire which emerges around the 10th century BC. He the Assyrians, known for their military powers and organizational skills, created a formidable empire that spanned vast territories including modern day Iraq, Syria and parts of Iran and Turkey. The Syrians developed advanced military tactics and weaponry, including the use of Chariots, siege warfare and a well-organized standing army. Their military campaigns were marked by ruthless conquest and establishment of a network of provincial administrations. The Syrian empire eventually faced internal strife and external pressures, leading to its decline in ventral collapse in the 7th century BC. The empire was conquered eventually by the Neo Babylonians. In the developed Neo Babylonian Empire and later the Persian Empire. However, the legacy of the Syrians endured and their military strategy and the administrative systems influenced future empires such as the Persians and the Romans. And so that Neo Babylonian Empire or New Babylonian Empire is one that really reaches its limit under the Neo Babylonian Empire, King of Nebuchadnezzar, the 2nd Nebuchadnezzar's reign witnessed a significant achievement in architecture, including the construction called the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient. World the Babylonian Empire, known for its astronomical and mathematical knowledge, also contributed to advancements in astronomy and development. Of the 60 based numeral system. But of course that empire also faced decline and was eventually conquered by the Persian Empire. Under Cyrus the Great in 539 BCE. However, one of the things that we can always emphasize is that the cultural and legal contributors of the Babylon and stuff. And doable mark. On Mesopotamian history, and so with that, we can really kind of sum up the Mesopotamian and the Mesopotamians and their significance is that Mesopotamians really witnessed. The birth of. Urbanization and the establishment of the first cities in human history, the development of agriculture and irrigation systems in this fertile region. Allowed for surplus food production. Leading to the growth of permanent settlements, the Samaritans cities emerged as centers of political, economic and cultural activity. The city states of massive attainment developed a complex social structure, legal systems and administrative organizations, becoming a model for future urban civilizations. And So what we also have seen in our Chapter 2 is a newer group that really emerges in that region or very different from the Mesopotamians. Lights are a very distinctive story that's somewhat different from what we've just been discussing. Therefore, the story of the Israelites and the formation of ancient Israel is of immense historical and cultural significance. The story of the Israelites begins in ancient times, tracing back to the Semitic speaking people who settled in. The region known as Canaan. According to biblical traditions, the Israelites are believed to. Be descendants of. Abraham, who made a covenant with God, they faced periods of slavery in Egypt, but eventually escaped under the leadership of Moses during the Exodus. The confirmation of Jews as the chosen people and the significance of the 10 Commandments within Jewish tradition holds deep meaning and moments. The concept of being chosen reinforces the special relationship between God and the Jewish people. While the 10 Commandments provides a moral framework for personal and communal conduct. Understanding these aspects of Jewish of the Jewish faith and heritage offers valuable insights into the Jewish identity and enduring impact of Jewish teachings in the world. The Israelites then wandered in the desert for 40 years before reaching the land of Canaan. Central to the identity of the Israelites was the religious belief in Yahweh, whom they regarded as their one God. These lights were one of the earliest civilizations to embrace monotheism. The belief in a single deity, the covenant between God and the Israelites, established a unique

relationship with Yahweh, providing guidance, laws, and protection in exchange for devotion and obedience. Following their arrivals in Canaan, the Israelites established a series of tribal confederations and have issued transitions into a monarchy. And the leadership of King Saul, King David and King Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel reached its pinnacle of power and influence. King David in particular, is revealed for salvaging Jerusalem as the capital and for expanding the territory of Israel. However, as we see after the death of King Solomon, the Kingdom of Israel divided into two separate entities held in Kingdom of Israel, consisting of 10 tribes and the southern Kingdom of Judah. Consisting of two tribes, this division weakened Israelites and made them vulnerable to external pressures and invasion. Both the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah faced periods of Toombul and foreign invasions, and 722 BCE the Syrians talk with the northern Kingdom of Israel, leading to the exile of many Israelites and the assimilation of others into the Syrian empire. The southern Kingdom of Judah fared. Better initially, but eventually fell to Babylonians in 586 BC, resulted in instruction of the temple in Jerusalem and the sale of many Judahites to Babylon. Despite the challenges by the Israelites, their legacy endured and left a profound impact on history, beliefs and more teachers of Israelites recording the Hebrew Bible became the foundation of Judaism, one of the world's major religions. The Israelites, religious and ethical principles such as the 10 Commandments influenced not only Judaism but also Christianity and Islam, and moreover, the Israelites cultural contributions, including their literature, poetry, and wisdom literature, such as the Book of Psalms and the Book of Proverbs, continue to be reviewed and studied. To this day. Let's venture into ancient Egypt, so we will journey through the sands of times as we travel the mysteries of this remarkable civilization. Ancient Egypt flourished along the banks of the Nile River in northeast Africa. Now, with its annual flooding and fertile soil provided the foundation for Egyptian civilization, the countries divided into two regions, Lower Egypt and the North, and Upper Egypt and the South. And now not only sustained agriculture, but also served as a vital transportation. About facilitate trade and cultural exchange. Ancient Egypt society was structured hierarchically, with a powerful ruling class and a laboring population at the top of the social hierarchy stood the pharaoh, believed to be a defined ruler, and the political and religious authority. The Pharaohs rule was central to maintaining cosmic order and ensuring the well-being of the Kingdom. Below the pharaoh were nobles, priests and government officials, who administer the vast bureaucracy. Most of the population, clusters of farmers, artisans, laborers who work the land and contribute to the prosperity of the Kingdom. Slavery was present but limited in ancient Egypt. One of the things that we often see that is a contributing factor in the development of the civilization in ancient Egypt is the justification of ancient Egypt. It had profound consequences for agriculture and the overall society. The ancient Egyptians relied heavily on annual flooding of the Nile River, which deposit nutrient rich settlement, and facilitated agricultural productivity. However, as the region became drier, the frequency and intensity of these floods decrease, leading to reduced agricultural output and food scarcity. With this occasion of ancient Egypt also had profound and significant impact on the economy and trade. The reliance on agriculture meant that fluctuations in food production. Directly affected the wealth and stability of the Kingdom as agriculture productivity decline, the economy suffered and the government had to find alternate sources of revenue. This led to an increased emphasis on trade, particularly in regions that are more favorable. Climatic conditions and abundant resources. The Nile River, the longest river in Africa and one of the longest in the world, played a central role in development of ancient Egypt. What makes the now unique is its peculiar flow from South to north. Contrary to the typical north to South direction of most major rivers. But now originates from the Highlands of East Africa, is finds its way N before emptying into the Mediterranean Sea. Agricultural significance of the Nile River cannot be overstated.

The annual flooding of the Nile brought nutrient rich sediment to the river's banks, creating fertile soil. This natural phenomenon facilitated abundant agricultural productions. The prosperity brought about by the Nile River had far reaching socioeconomic applications. Per plus, food production allowed the ancient Egyptians to support a growing population, develop a complex society, and engage in other pursuits beyond subsistence farming. Moreover, the abundance of food resources enabled the ancient Egyptians to pursue specialized occupations, such as craftsmen, artists, scribes, and priests. Development of a hierarchical society and the construction of monumental structures such as the temples and pyramids were made possible by the agricultural surplus supported by the Nile River. And now we're also provided access to resources beyond Egypt's borders. Ancient Egyptians use the river as a gateway to stop its trade routes, linking them to neighboring regions such as Nubia, the South and the Mediterranean. To the north, the trade network, the ancient Egyptians acquired precious metals, exotic goods, valuable resources, enhancing their economic and social rule well. One of the things that we don't want to not include in our reading of ancient Egypt is religion. Religion played a central role in ancient Egyptian society. Egyptians were polytheistic, believing in the pantheon of gods and goddesses. The Pharaoh was seen as a divine intermediary, responsible maintaining harmony between the gods and the people. Egyptians engaged in elaborate religious rituals, temple construction, and of course, the modification of the deceased. Paying them for the afterlife. Belief in the afterlife was a fundamental aspect of Egyptian religion. They believed in the intricate journey after death, for their soul would face judgment and continued existence in a new afterlife if found worthy. The temple, such as Temple of Karnak, the Temple of Luxor, or Temples of Religious and cultural activity. These all inspiring structures were done with intricate carvings, horrific inscriptions depicting religious ceremonies, historic events, and the grandeur of the Pharaohs, along with the Great Pyramids of Giza, a built by Pharaoh Khufu, these. All stand out as a testament of the agricultural and engineering powers of the ancient Egyptians. The legacy of the ancient Egyptians, of course, is far reaching and has left an indelible mark on human history. Egyptian system writing hieroglyphs was one of the earliest forms of recorded language. Their advancements in mathematics, astronomy and medicine were remarkable for their time. Egyptians developed this sophisticated calendar, made significant contributions to architecture. Next, we would like to venture into Nubia, the kingdoms of Kerma and Kush. In it, we will explore the rich history of Nubia, tracing the rise and follow the kingdoms of Kerma and Kush. Their interactions with Egypt and their unique cultural achievements join me on a journey through time as we uncover the fascinating story of Nubia. Nubia, of course, refers to the region located in present day Sudan and southern Egypt, bordered by the Nile River to the east and the Sahara Desert to the West, Nubia occupied in strategic location along ancient trade routes connecting sub-Saharan Africa with the Mediterranean world. Rich in natural resources including gold, ivory, Ebony and exotic animal products which made attractive destination for trade and cultural exchange. The Kingdom of Kerma was the first major civilization to emerge in Nubia. It flourished between 2500 BC and 1500 BC, predating the glory of Egypt. Kerma Development is a complex society with advanced agricultural systems, skilled artisans structure Kerma's capital, known as Kerma, also known as Kerma, was a bustling urban center with impressive fortifications and monumental architecture. Firm as wealth and influence was fueled by trade. Circularly with Egypt, Kerma exported valuable resources such as gold, Ebony and ivory, while importing luxury goods and cultural influences from. And despite occasional conflicts, Kerma maintained a mutually beneficial relationship with Egypt, serving as an important unit. Area between the Mediterranean and sub-Saharan Africa. Following the decline of Kerma, the Kingdom of Kush emerged as a powerful successor located to the South of Egypt. From between 1000 BCE and 350 BCE the new Nubian

adopted many aspects of Egyptian culture, including religion, hieroglyphic writing and architecture. Cushite rulers even adopted Egyptian royal titles and built pyramids as monumental tombs to their kings. Push reaches its zenith during the 8th century BC when its rule is known as the Black Pharaohs conquered Egypt and established the 25th dynasty. This marked a significant period of cultural fusion with Nubian Egyptian traditions blending together. The Kushite Pharaohs reigned over both Egypt and Nubia, leaving their mark on the regions history. There are all these time the Kingdom of Karna and Kush in ancient Nubia left a lasting impact on history and culture of northeastern Africa. These civilizations thrive through trade, cultural exchange and political powers, leaving behind magnificent architectural wonders and artistic masterpieces. The story of Nubia serves as a testament of the richness and diversity of the ancient world, reminding us that great civilizations emerged in various corners of globe, each with this unique contributions to human history. As we now. See as we conclude Chapter 2, the civilizations that emerge in Mesopotamia in Northeast Africa left a profound legacy on world history. The advancements in writing, governance and architectural achievements laid the foundation for future civilizations. The concept of written laws qualified by civilizations like the Babylonians. To the code of Hammurabi influenced legal systems throughout history, architectural innovations as the Ark and Dome continue to shape architectural practices to this day. Furthermore, the cultural and intellectual achievements of ancient Egypt, including their belief in the afterlife and their contributions to medicine and mathematics, have led an lasting impact on human civilization. Between 4000 and 3000 BCE, civilizations merged in the fertile river valleys of West Botania and Northeast Africa, laying the groundwork for the development of complex societies. By setting these ancient civilizations, we gain a deeper appreciation for the foundations of our own societies and great understanding of the remarkable achievements of our ancestors.

Speaker 2

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