



Unifying belief systems, social inequality, and how states used belief systems to enforce their authority & legitimacy

The development of **civilization** through sedentary agriculture had major impacts on human societies

1. **Social inequality** - One of the impacts of civilization was an increase of inequality in society, as a limited amount of material wealth and education lead to the stratification of society, with a small amount of people in the elite classes, and a large amount of people in the lower, or peasant classes.
2. **Unifying belief systems** - As civilizations grew larger, complex unifying belief systems (religions) evolved that not only strived to explain the nature of the world, but also helped create shared values/beliefs, traditions, customs and ways of life that allowed people to live in some type of ordered society. In addition to creating shared ways of life, each of these unifying systems had characteristics that helped **explain/justify** the **social inequality** of civilization. This was to unify / pacify people that did not share equal amounts of wealth or power in a given civilization, in order to avoid rebellions, etc.
3. **State authority** – The complexity of administering a relatively dense settlement of humans lead to sophisticated state (government and land that the state controls) structures called *bureaucracies*. These complex states became increasingly responsible for a large variety of tasks, including but not limited to:
 - military control of territory - borders/defense/expansion
 - security of a territory (creation and administration of civil and criminal laws),
 - tax systems (creating a taxation system / collection / administration / distribution
 - infrastructure programs (defensive walls, dams, irrigation projects, storage facilities, canals, roads, buildings)
 - monetary control – control of pricing, currency, and the selling of goods & services

Bringing it all together –

In order to reinforce the authority and legitimacy of the state (a state is the government & territory under the control of that state), many states incorporated the unifying belief system into the state structure itself. For example, state leaders (kings/emperors, etc) would also be the leader of the religion, and may even promote themselves as a deity/god of the religion. The state would also promote art and/or infrastructure (buildings/temples) and programs that reinforces their connection/control of supernatural forces of their particular belief system. For example, Egyptian Pharaohs promoted themselves as gods & had massive pyramids and statues built in order to impress their connection/divinity/importance/power upon the people.

Your job is to understand and explain the following characteristics regarding belief systems, social inequality & states from 1200C.E. onward

- **Unifying Belief Systems**
 - What was the belief system and what characteristics of the belief system unified people?
 - What type of “rules” existed that helped order society? Moral, ethical codes for example
 - What were the core ideas that could unify a large variety of people?
 - What customs united believers of the system?
- **Social Inequality - how the particular belief system justified social inequality**
 - only a small portion of people had wealth and power, while the majority of people had little to no power and very small amount of material wealth. What beliefs were found within the belief system that explained or justified this reality? Without some reasoning, the thinking is that the vast majority of lower classes would revolt or rebel against the inherent inequities.
- **State control –**
 - **how states used the majority belief system to reinforce their authority/legitimacy.**
 - What link was there between “church” (unifying belief system/religion) and the state itself?
 - Did the state/ruler control the belief system or even promote themselves as a deity?
 - Did the state build or promote art that reinforced their connection/control of the religion?
- **Government size and ability to build infrastructure**
 - How large/sophisticated was the state (government)? Was it large/sophisticated or small and rudimentary? Provide examples of the power (or lack thereof) of the state. Examples – numbers of people in government/departments/taxation/ability to control economy
 - Provide examples of any major infrastructure programs directed by the state – examples include road construction, water management (dams, canals, irrigation), wall construction, monument building, etc
- **Diversity within the state –**
 - How thorough was the belief system within the territory of the state? did all people, most people, or simply a majority practice the belief system?
 - Were there minorities within the respective territories that practiced other beliefs? If so, why? (migration? Earlier history? Conquest of new lands?) What were the minority belief systems? Was the dominant belief system/state tolerant of these minority belief systems? If so, why? If not, why not? Did this have any effects of the stability or unity of the territory?

Post Classical Era - 600 – 1450C.E.

<p>1. East Asia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – China ○ The state - Song China ○ The belief system - Confucianism <p>2. South Asia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – India ○ The state(s) – Delhi Sultanate, Yadavas ○ The belief system - Hinduism <p>3. Middle East</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – Middle East ○ The state – the Abbasid Caliphate ○ The belief system – Islam <p>4. Eastern Europe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – Balkans/Asia Minor/North Africa ○ The state – Byzantine Empire ○ The belief system – Orthodox Christianity 	<p>5. W. Europe –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – Western Europe ○ The state(s) – France / England / Holy Roman Empire ○ Belief system – Roman Catholicism ○ Germanic animism / feudalism / Catholic Christianity <p>6. Sub – Saharan Africa –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – Southwest of Sahara ○ The state - Sudanic states – Mali/Ghana/Songhai ○ Belief system – animism mixed with Islam <p>7. Mesoamerica – Aztec religion – pg. 238-39</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area current day Mexico ○ The state – Aztec empire ○ Belief system – Aztec religion <p>8. South America – Incan religion – pg. 246</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area – western coast of South America ○ The state – Incan Empire ○ Belief system – Incan religion
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