MHI-101: ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL SOCIETIES
TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Course Code: MHI-101
Assignment Code: MHI-101/AST/ TMA/2026-27
Total Marks: 100

Note: Attempt any five questions. The assignment is divided into two Sections 'A' and 'B'. You have to attempt at least two questions from each section in about 500 words each. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION A

1. Discuss the importance of the Shang Civilization. 20

2. Discuss the expansion of the Roman Empire. 20

3. Discuss the Maya Civilization giving reference to its polity and society. 20

4. Discuss the Economy of the region of South Africa. 20

5. Write short notes on any **two** of the following. Answer in about **250** words each. 10+10

   i) Nomadic Migrations
   ii) The Inkas
   iii) Umayyad Caliphate
   iv) Taoism

SECTION B

6. Discuss the pattern of trade in medieval Europe. 20

7. Hour did the British and Dutch companies influence trading activities in Indian Ocean? 20

8. Give an account of the use of various metals in the middle-ages. 20

9. Compare the land transport and sea-transport during 16^{th} and 17^{th} centuries. 20

10. Give a bring account of Urbanization in Ancient World. 20

1. Discuss the importance of the Shang Civilization. 20

Answer

The Shang civilisation was one of the most significant Bronze Age societies in early Chinese history. It developed in the Yellow River region during roughly the second millennium BCE and is commonly dated to about 1600–1046 BCE. Earlier communities had already practised agriculture and made impressive objects, but the Shang left unusually rich evidence for political authority, organised production, religious practices and a recognisable system of writing. Its importance therefore lies not only in its achievements but also in the evidence it provides for the formation of an early Chinese state.

Archaeology and the rise of political centres

Archaeological discoveries at Zhengzhou and especially Yinxu, near present-day Anyang, reveal substantial settlements with palatial buildings, workshops, defensive works and burials of very unequal wealth. Anyang was a major political and ritual centre in the later Shang period. The sites show that rulers could mobilise labour to build large structures, produce bronze objects and stage ceremonies. They also demonstrate the difference between the lives of the ruling households and ordinary cultivators. Because written records are concentrated in the later period, the history of earlier Shang centres must be reconstructed more cautiously from material remains.

Kingship, kinship and military power

The Shang king was both a political leader and a central figure in religious communication. Royal power depended on a network of relatives, allied lineages, officials and military supporters rather than on a modern uniform bureaucracy. Local communities and subordinate chiefs supplied tribute, soldiers and labour, while some peripheral groups resisted Shang authority. Chariot burials, weapons and inscriptions referring to campaigns indicate organised warfare. Expansion and control over routes and resources helped the court maintain its position. Yet Shang rule should not be imagined as complete control over all later Chinese territory: its effective power was strongest around its main centres and varied across regions.

Royal tombs demonstrate the concentration of prestige and resources. The tomb of Fu Hao, an important woman associated with the Shang royal house, contained bronze vessels, weapons, jade objects and other goods. Oracle-bone inscriptions also associate her with military and ritual activities. Such evidence complicates the assumption that influential political and religious roles were performed only by men. At the same time, spectacular elite burials must be distinguished from the experiences of the majority of the population.