

Four River Valley Civilizations

Sumerian Civilization: Tigris & Euphrates River (Mesopotamia)

Egyptian Civilization: Nile River

Harappan Civilization: Indus River

Ancient China: Huang He (Yellow) River



Mesopotamia



Geography

- ▶ Mostly dry desert climate in SW Asia
 - ▶ Except region between Tigris/Euphrates River
 - ▶ Mesopotamia lies between 2 rivers
 - ▶ “fertile crescent” - creates silt with thick bed of mud

Geography

▶ Three Disadvantages / Environmental Challenges

▶ Unpredictable flooding

▶ No natural barriers for protection

▶ Small villages lying in open plain were defenseless

▶ Limited natural resources

▶ Stone, wood, metal



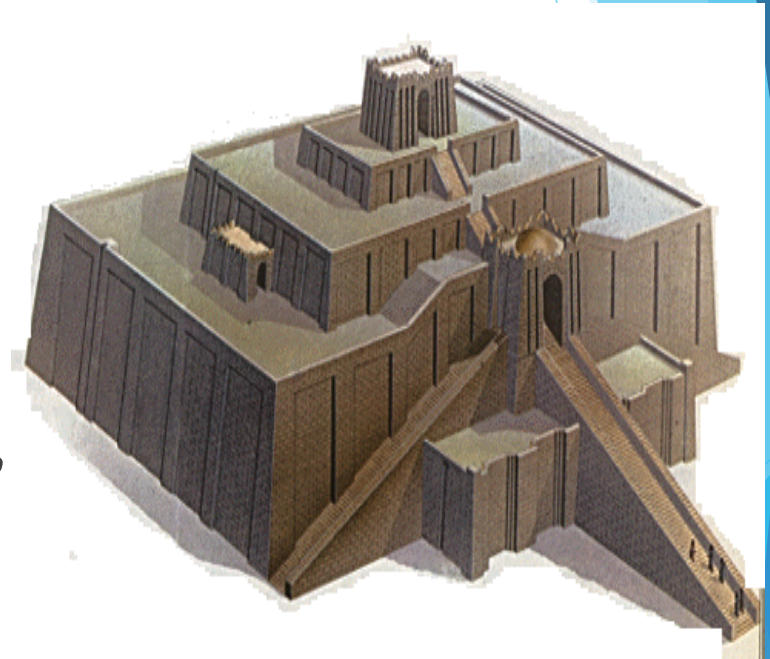
Geography



- ▶ Irrigation ditches
- ▶ Built city walls with mud bricks
- ▶ Traded with people around them for the products they lacked
- ▶ Initiated Bronze Age

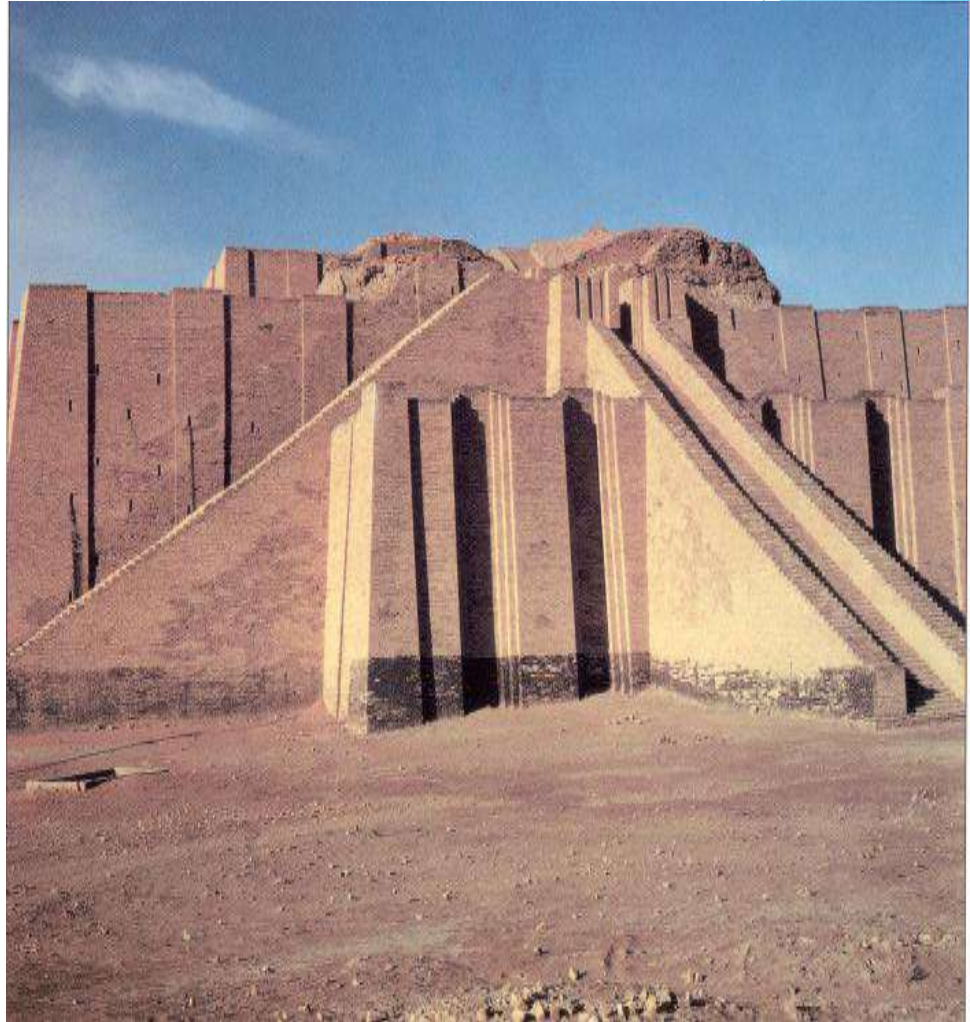
City-States in Mesopotamia

- ▶ Same culture
- ▶ Different government/rulers, warriors, patron god and functioned like an independent country
- ▶ Examples: Ur, Uruk, Kish, Lagesh
- ▶ Temple - ziggurat: massive, tiered, pyramid-shaped structure
 - ▶ Priests held much political power in the beginning



Ziggurat at Ur

Excavated by
British
archaeologist
Woolley in 1923



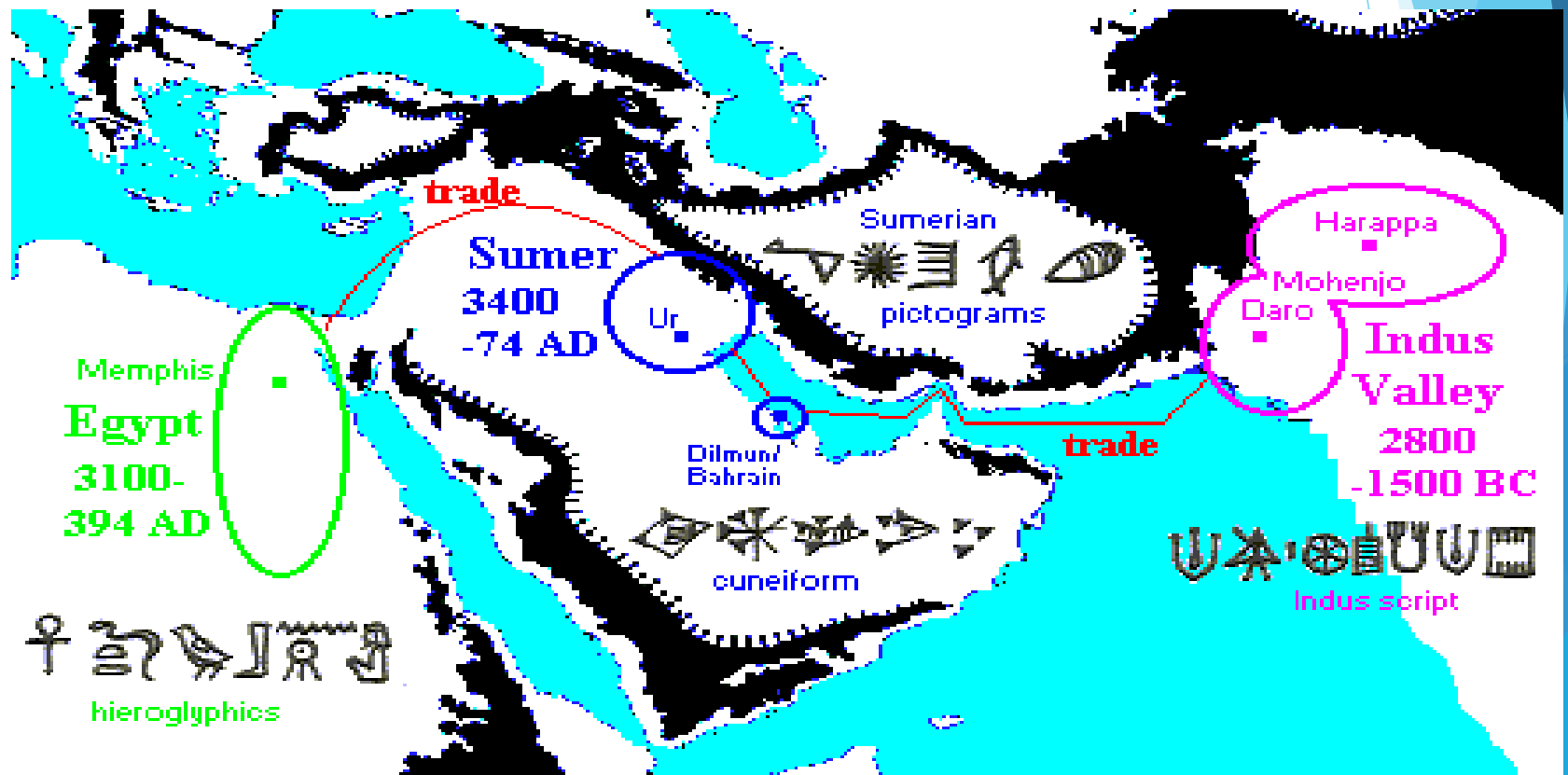
City-States in Mesopotamia



- ▶ Military commanders eventually became rulers / monarch
 - ▶ Pass rule to their own heirs, created new structure called a dynasty

Cultural Diffusion

spread of elements of one culture to another people group generally through trade



Sumerian Culture

▶ Religion

- ▶ Polytheistic
- ▶ 3,000 + gods
- ▶ Viewed gods as hostile and unpredictable
- ▶ *Epic of Gilgamesh*: earliest works of literature

▶ Society

- ▶ Three Social Classes
 - ▶ Priests and royalty
 - ▶ Wealthy merchants
 - ▶ Ordinary workers
- ▶ Slaves - were not free citizens
- ▶ Women: had rights but could not attend school

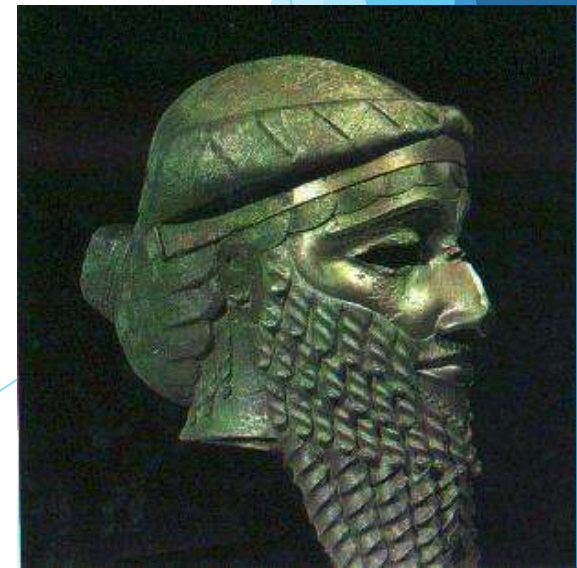


Sumerian Culture

- ▶ Science and Technology
 - ▶ First writing system: cuneiform
 - ▶ Invented wheel, the sail, the plow
 - ▶ First to use bronze
 - ▶ Astronomy
 - ▶ Earliest sketched map

City-States in Mesopotamia

- ▶ First EMPIRE Builders
 - ▶ 3000 - 2000 BCE City-States began to war with each other
 - ▶ **Sargon of Akkad:** created 1st empire
 - ▶ Lasted about 200 years
 - ▶ Spoke a Semitic language (related to Arabic and Hebrew)
 - ▶ Causes of Decline: invasion, internal fighting, severe famine
 - ▶ Babylonian Empire
 - ▶ Overtook Sumerians around 2,000 BC
 - ▶ Built capital, Babylon, on Euphrates river
 - ▶ Reign of Hammurabi



Code of Hammurabi



- ▶ A total of 282 laws are etched on this 7 ft. 5 in. tall black basalt pillar (stele). The top portion, shown here, depicts Hammurabi with Shamash, the sun god. Shamash is presenting to Hammurabi a staff and ring, which symbolize the power to administer the law. Although Hammurabi's Code is not the first code of laws (the first records date four centuries earlier), it is the best preserved legal document reflecting the social structure of Babylon during Hammurabi's rule.
- ▶ This amazing find was discovered in 1901 and today is in the famous Louvre Museum in Paris, France.

Egypt on the Nile

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue, ranging from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These shapes are primarily located on the right side of the page, creating a modern, layered effect. The rest of the page is a plain, light blue color.

Geography

▶ The Nile

▶ Yearly flooding

▶ Regular cycle: food, plant, harvest, food, plant, harvest...

▶ Intricate networks of irrigation ditches

▶ Worshiped as a god - giver of life and benevolent



Geography



- ▶ Deserts on both sides of Nile
 - ▶ Provided natural protection against invaders
 - ▶ Reduced interaction with other people
 - ▶ Culture was unique

Egypt's Government

- ▶ United, not independent city-states
- ▶ **Menes**, the king of Upper Egypt
 - ▶ United two regions, created dynasty
- ▶ Pharaoh - ruler in Egypt
 - ▶ Were considered gods
 - ▶ Served both political and religious roles - theocracy
 - ▶ Believed each pharaoh ruled after death because possessed same eternal spirit = *ka*
 - ▶ Tomb - pyramids

Kingdoms of Egypt

- ▶ Old Kingdom (2660 - 2180 BCE)
 - ▶ Great Pyramids of Khufu
- ▶ Middle Kingdom (2180 - 1550 BCE)
 - ▶ Fragmentation of centralized power
 - ▶ Chaos leads central administration to disappear following infiltration by Hyksos people
- ▶ New Kingdom (1550 - 1070 BCE)
 - ▶ Ramses II divides power in Middle East with Hittites
 - ▶ Invasion of mysterious sea peoples wreck havoc
- ▶ Future History...
 - ▶ Alexander the Great conquers
 - ▶ Cleopatra loses reign to Roman emperors

Religion



- ▶ Polytheistic

- ▶ Over 2,000

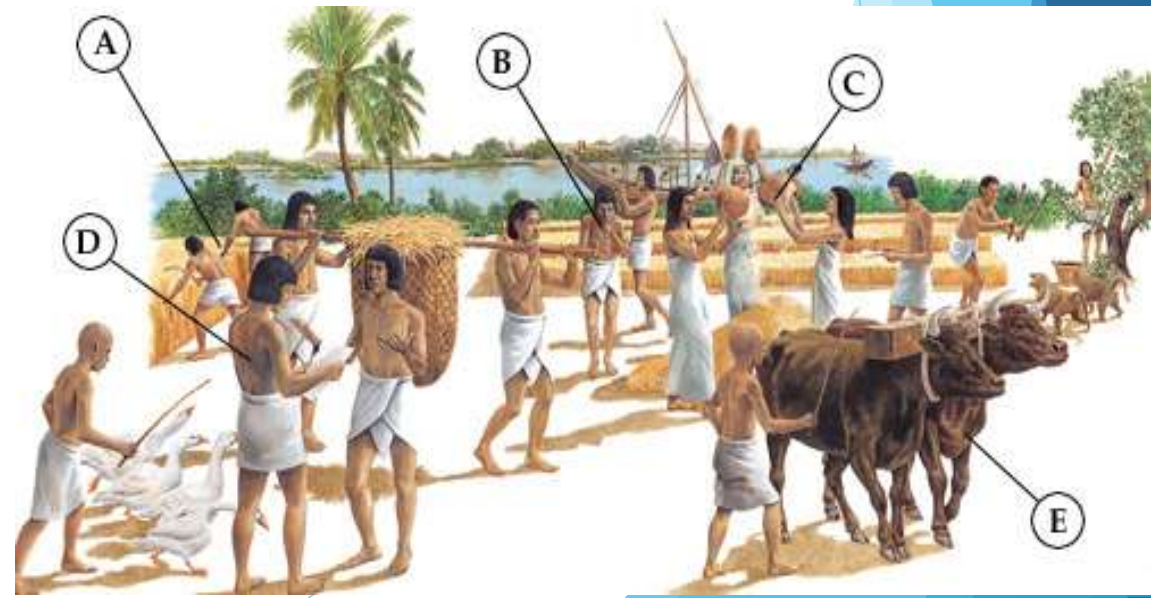
- ▶ Ra, the sun god; Horus, sky god; Isis, mother goddess “giver of life” associated with Nile

- ▶ Belief in afterlife - mummification



Social Structure

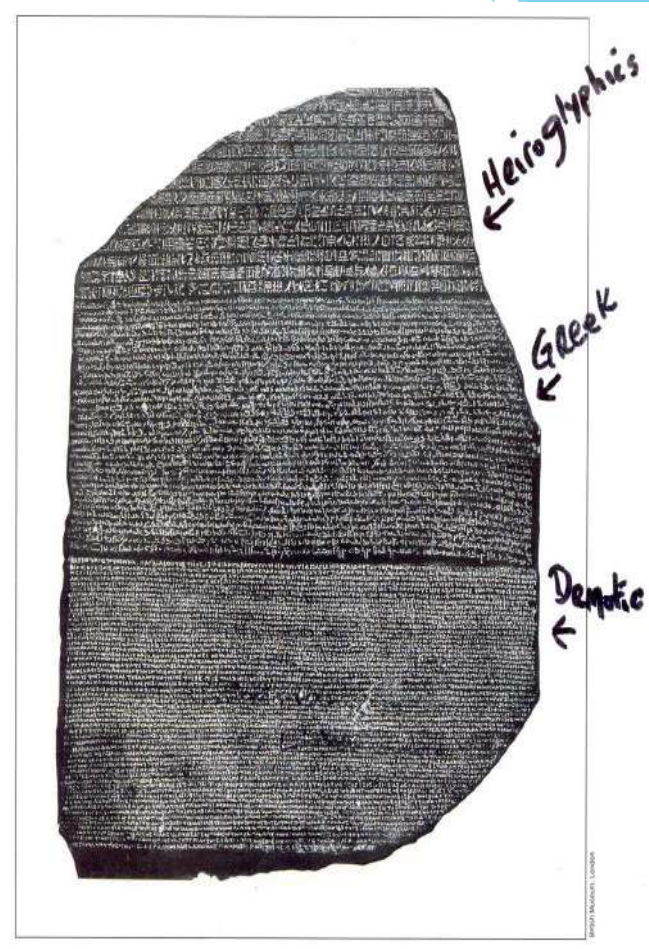
- ▶ Royal Family
- ▶ Upper Class: Landowners, priests, army commanders, government officials
- ▶ Middle Class: merchants, artisans
- ▶ Lower Class: peasant farmers, unskilled laborers



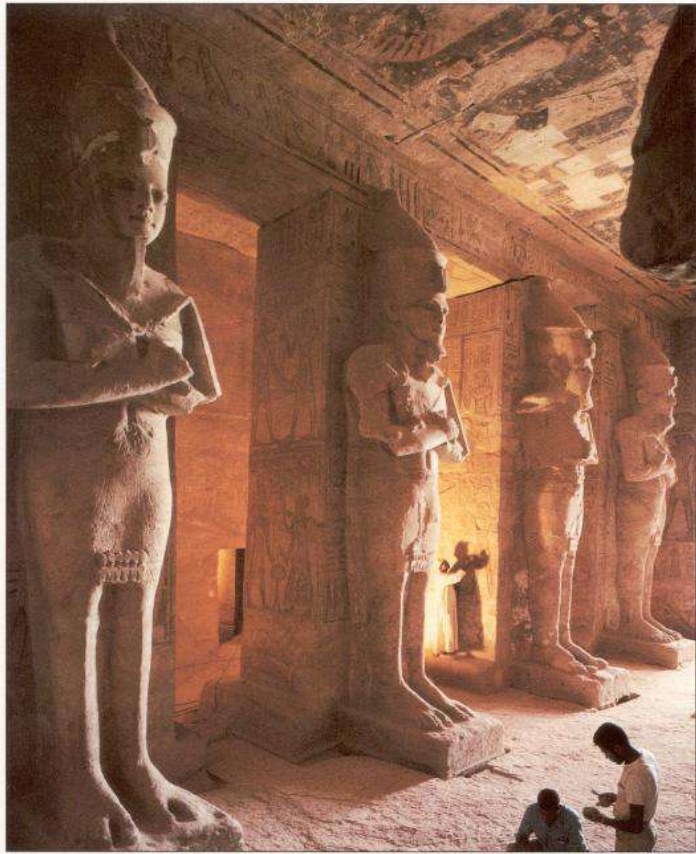
A. Harvesting grain; B. Musicians play for the workers in the fields; C. Women winnowing the grain; D. Scribes tally the farmer's taxes; E. The farmer's son tending the livestock / cattle.

Egyptian Writing

- ▶ Pictographs developed in hieroglyphics
- ▶ Written on papyrus, unfurled reed from the Nile, dried into strips
- ▶ Deciphering hieroglyphics
 - ▶ Rosetta Stone, discovered in 1799 AD



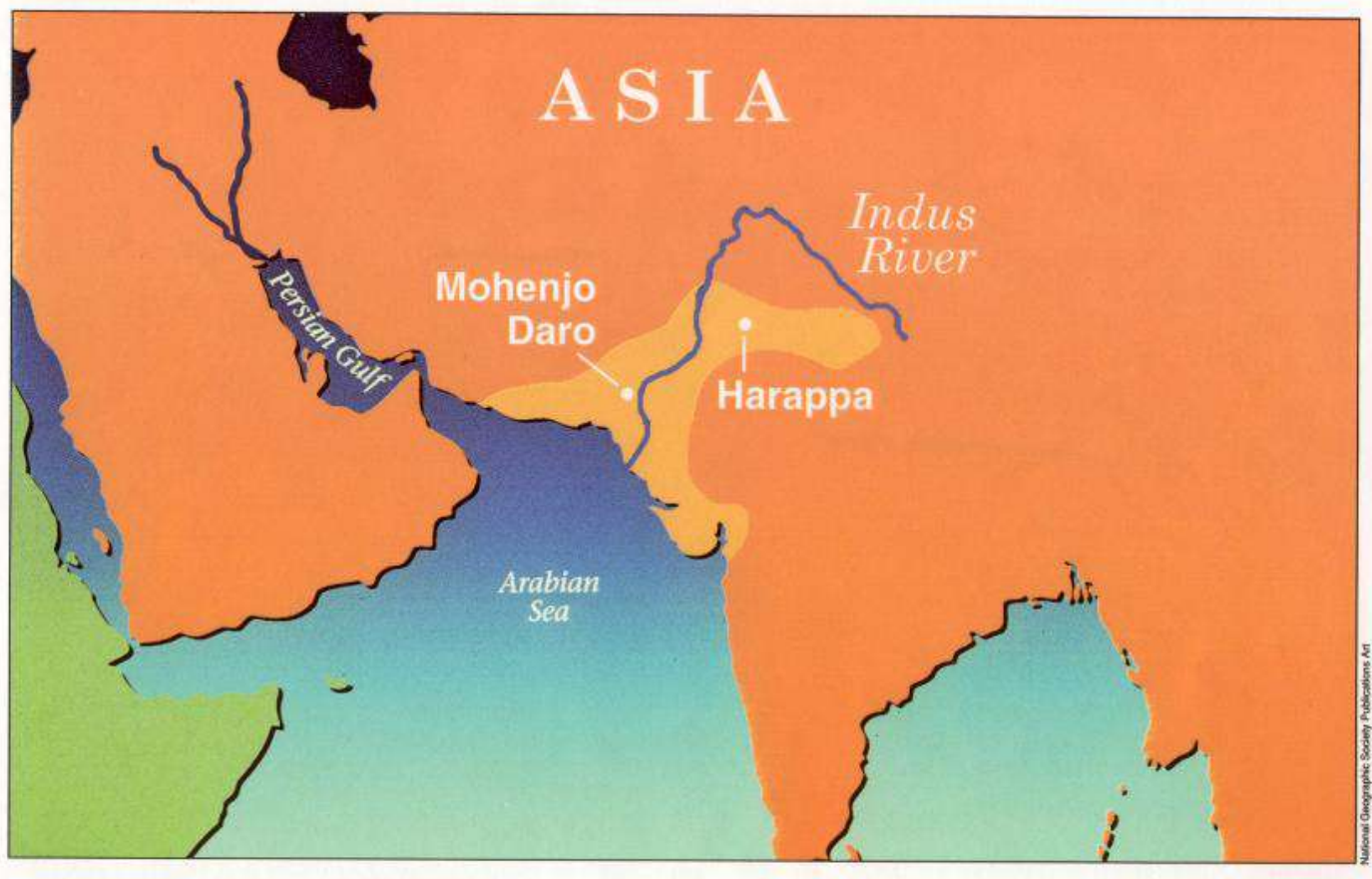
Egyptian Science and Technology



- ▶ Geometry
- ▶ Numeric system based on 10
- ▶ Engineers and architects
- ▶ Calendar
- ▶ Advancements in medicine

Harappan Civilization

Indus River





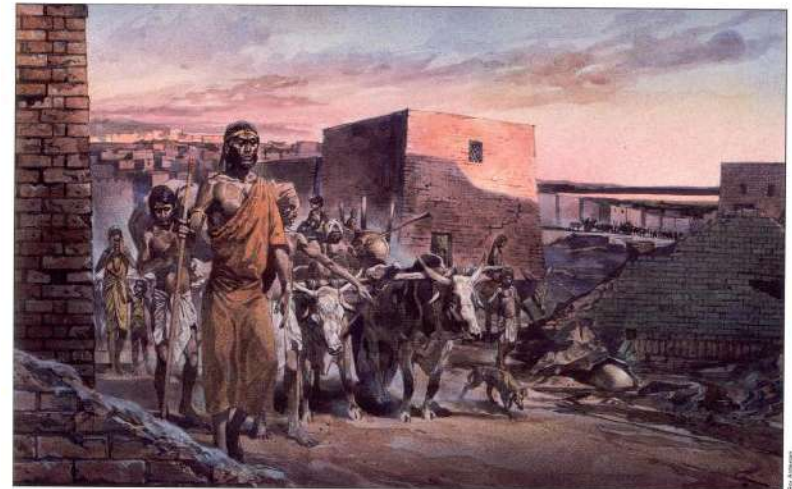
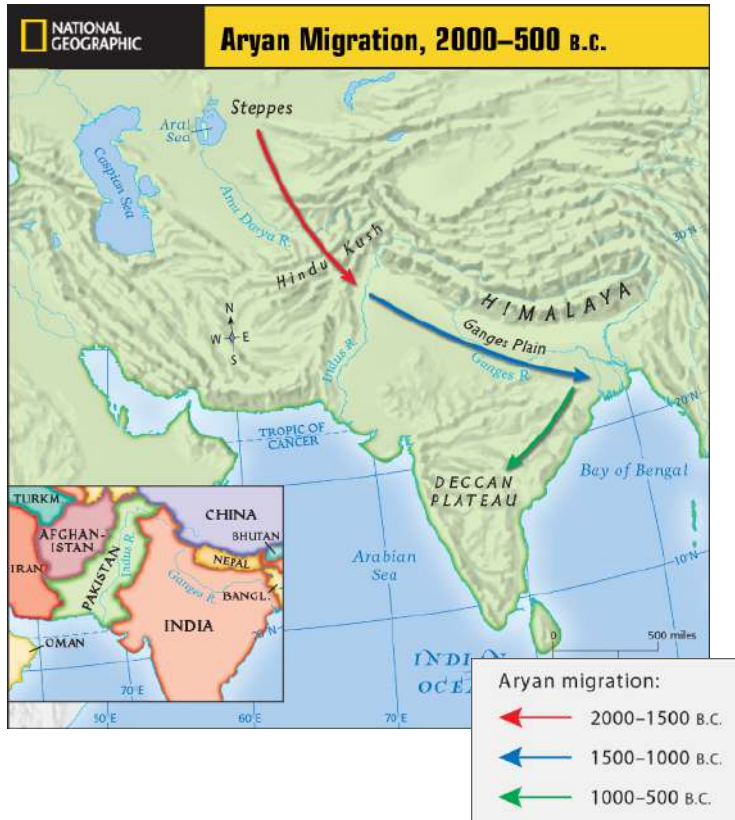
- ▶ Largest of the four ancient urban civilizations
- ▶ Not discovered until 1920s
- ▶ Unpredictable rivers (similar to Mesopotamia)
- ▶ Strong winds/monsoons

Early Civilization

- ▶ Farming began around 3,200 BCE
- ▶ Careful city planners - grid like defensible citadel
- ▶ Sophisticated plumbing and sewage system
- ▶ Peaceful people - few weapons found
- ▶ Little difference between social classes



Aryan Invasion



Ancient China

Huang He River

Geography - China

- ▶ Isolated China
 - ▶ Ocean
 - ▶ Desert
 - ▶ High mountains
- ▶ Cut off from outside world - most unique of world's early civilization



Chinese Dynasties

▶ Shang

- ▶ First written records
- ▶ Division between king's nobles and peasants
- ▶ Wood used as building materials
- ▶ Peasants used wooden tools
- ▶ Bronze weapons
- ▶ Emphasis on family, respect of parents
- ▶ Ancestor worship and oracle bones



Chinese Dynasties

- ▶ Zhou
 - ▶ Mandate of Heaven: authority comes from heaven
 - ▶ Disasters because rulers
 - ▶ Lead to pattern of rise and fall of dynasties in Chin
 - ▶ Large regions of land/privileges to select nobles who owed loyalty to the kings in return
 - ▶ Introduced first coined money; improved transportation with roads/canals; civil servants; iron-making