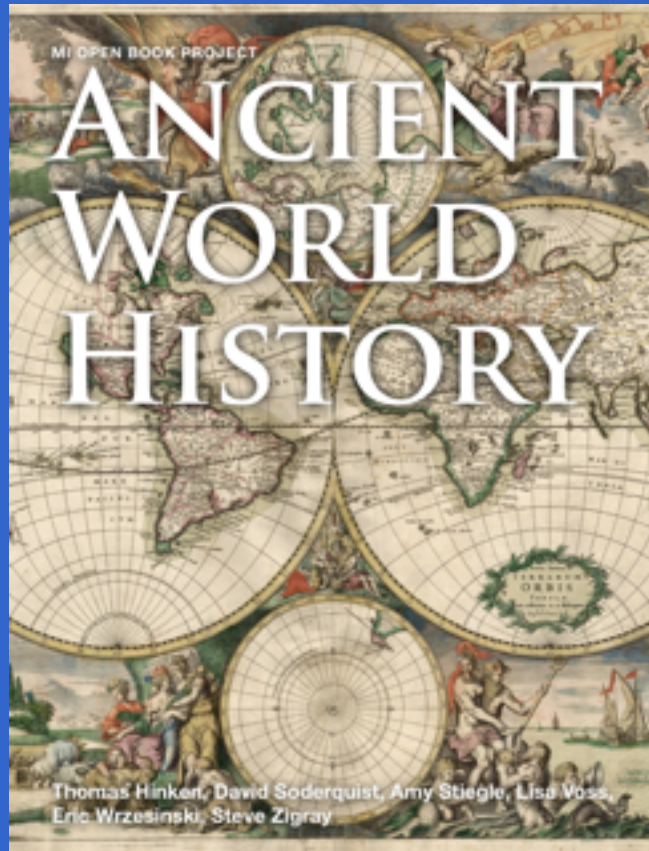


MI OPEN BOOK PROJECT

ANCIENT WORLD HISTORY

Thomas Hinken, David Soderquist, Amy Striegle, Lisa
Voss, Eric Wrzesinski, Steve Zigray



This is version 1.1.4 of this resource, released in August 2018.

Information on the latest version and updates are available on the project homepage: <http://textbooks.wmisd.org/dashboard.html>



MICHIGAN OPEN BOOK PROJECT

The text of this book is licensed under a Creative Commons NonCommercial-ShareAlike (CC-BY-NC-SA) license as part of Michigan's participation in the national #GoOpen movement.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:



Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.



NonCommercial — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.



Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike CC BY-NC-SA

The Michigan Open Book Project

Project Manager: Dave Johnson,
Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School
District

7th Grade Team Editor - David Klemm,
Muskegon Area Intermediate School Dis-
trict

Authors

Tom Hinken, Montague Area Public
Schools

David Soderquist, Three Rivers Public
Schools

Amy Striegle, Hamilton Community
Schools

Lisa Voss, Holland Public Schools

Eric Wrzesinski, Pewamo-Westphalia



**MICHIGAN
OPEN BOOK PROJECT**



David Soderquist

Three Rivers Public Schools

Three Rivers Middle School

For the Past 11 years David has taught 6-8 grade Social Studies for Three Rivers Middle School. He serves as Department Head, School Improvement Member and Social Studies Rep for his area. Over the past few years he has completed his Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and become a state recognized Instructional Coach.



Tom Hinken

Montague Area Public Schools

Nellie B Chisholm Middle School

Tom teaches world geography and history at NBC Middle School in Montague. A graduate of the Defense Language Institute, Tom served as an Arabic Linguist in the U.S Air Force before receiving both bachelors and masters degrees from Grand Valley State University. He is currently pursuing Masters in Education Technology from MSU. Along with teaching Tom is also the advisor for the NBC Robotic club and the student leadership organization. When away from school Tom and his wife Kristin love to travel and spend time outdoors; biking, hik-



Amy Striegle

Hamilton Community Schools

Hamilton Middle School

Amy has been teaching 7th grade Social Studies and Economics at Hamilton Middle School for 17 years. She has a BA in Geography/ Social Studies and a Masters Degree in Middle School Education both from Western Michigan University. She is also a PASST assessment participant and the Social Studies Department Chair. When not in the classroom she enjoys traveling with her husband Dan.



Lisa Voss

Holland Public Schools

East K-7

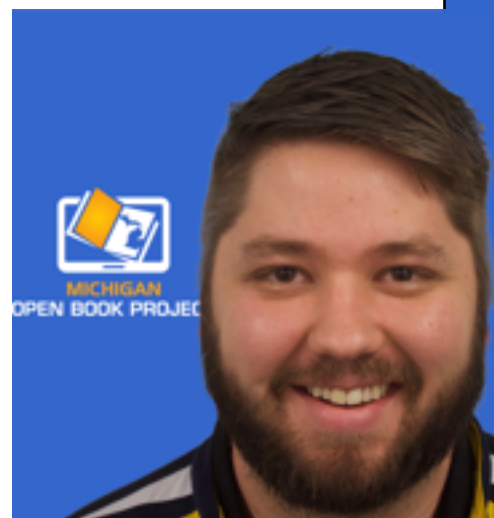
Lisa Voss has been teaching at Holland's East K-7 since 1993 working with students in grades 5-8. She enjoys teaching adolescents to be global thinkers in her geography and world studies classes. Teaching in Holland has been fulfilling and challenging in so many ways for Mrs. Voss. She studied education and trained at Michigan State University and then earned her masters degree at Grand Valley State University. She starting teaching elementary social studies content and methods to aspiring teachers for Hope College's Education Department in 2010. Lisa and her husband Jon have four sons and they live in Zeeland.

Eric Wrzesinski

Pewamo-Westphalia Community Schools

Pewamo-Westphalia Middle/High School

Eric is a social studies teacher at Pewamo-Westphalia Middle/High School where he teaches 7th grade world history, 8th grade U.S. history, and AP U.S. History. He also serves as social studies department head, was a TRIG coach, worked on the schools strategic plan, and is a member of the school improvement team. He graduated with an undergraduate degree from Central Michigan University and grew up near Lansing, MI. He currently resides in Portland, MI with his beautiful wife who he enjoys travelling and spending time with.



Steve Zigray

Concord Community Schools

Concord Middle School

Steve Zigray is a 6th grade teacher. He holds a Bachelor's Degree from Central Michigan University and a Masters Degree in K-12 Administration from Eastern Michigan University. Honors Steve has been awarded are the 2001 Junior Achievement Educator of the Year and he was nominated for Jackson Magazine's, Educator of the year in 2014. He has also coached high school and middle school sports, worked on various school improvement committees, wrote the 6th grade Common Assessment tests for Jackson County ISD and is an active member in the community as well as the PTO. He lives in southeast Jackson County with his

The Michigan Open Book Project Team would like to thank the following individuals for their help in reviewing some content in the book and guiding the development process.

Eric Hemenway - Director of Repatriation, Archives and Records, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

Jim Cameron, Michigan Department of Education

Phil Gersmehl - Michigan Geographic Alliance

Christine Schneider - Michigan eLibrary





David Klemm

Editor

Muskegon Area Intermediate School District

David Klemm is the Social Studies and Special Projects Consultant for the Muskegon Area Intermediate School District (MAISD), serving 12 local school districts and numerous charters and private schools. While spending most of his time with the Social Sciences, he also works with Art, Music, World Language and Physical Education teachers. He has successfully directed two Teaching American History grants, coordinated We the People and Project Citizen programs, developed companion materials for the award-winning film documenting African-American migration to the Muskegon area, "Up from the Bottoms: The Search for the American Dream," worked with community development partners including the Michigan Humanities Council's Prime Time Family Reading Program, made numerous state and national presentations and worked with individual schools and teachers on curriculum, instruction and assessment. Mr. Klemm is a charter member of the Board of Directors of the Muskegon Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and currently serves on the National Council for the Social Studies Board of Directors. Prior to his current position at the Muskegon Area ISD, Mr. Klemm taught high school U. S. History for 15 years and served 3 years as

David A. Johnson

Project Manager

Michigan Open Book Project

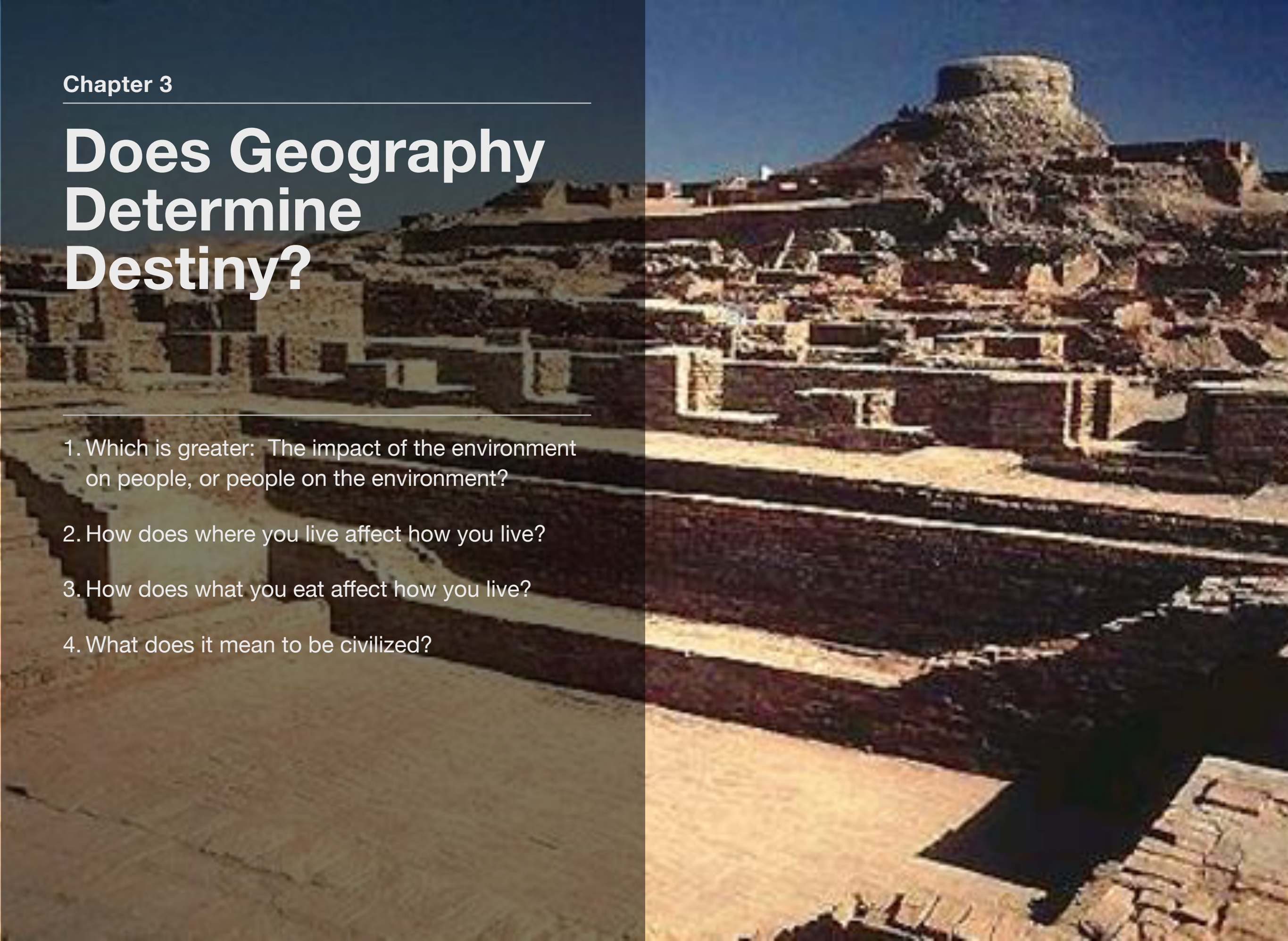
Dave began his career teaching 8th grade United States History in Mesick, Michigan. After almost a decade in the classroom, he took a job at Wexford-Missaukee Intermediate School District (WMISD) as an Instructional Consultant for Social Studies. He is shared across 11 ISDs in Northern Michigan that form the Northern Michigan Learning Consortium. He completed his Masters in Educational Leadership through Central Michigan University in 2011 and is Co-Project Director of the Performance Assessments of Social Studies Thinking (PASST) Project in addition to his duties as the Project Manager for MI Open Book.



Chapter 3

Does Geography Determine Destiny?

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people, or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?



Section 1

Introduction

Numbered Countries:

- Oriel
- Ulaia
- Gwynedd
- Ceredigion
- Dyfed
- Gbweysing
- Venicones
- Strathelyde
- Creonides
- Caeren
- Caledonii
- Crimcan Goths

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?

- social system
- complex technologies
- culture
- specialization

With the civilizations you are about to study, location might be the most important thing that determined the success of those civilizations. The big question you should consider is this:

Let's break that down a little bit by looking at some smaller questions:

- Did the geography of the areas that civilizations chose to live in make them either more or less successful?
- Did the environment of the areas have a huge impact on the way those people lived?

As you read on, try to think about these questions with the various civilizations you will study. One thing you will notice is that huge civilizations nearly always started near water. Think about all the good things water does for you: it can irrigate your crops, provide clean drinking water, and be used for trade.

Another thing to look for is whether the civilizations were located in areas that were accessible. For instance, Egypt and China were pretty isolated. This protected them from wars but also made trade more difficult. Groups in Mesopotamia were much more likely to trade, but they were also sometimes attacked.

What Makes a Civilization a Civilization?

In this chapter you will explore the rise of civilizations, which is a much more advanced type of society than we have studied so far.

Early civilizations began in Mesopotamia around 3,500 B.C.E.

Before civilizations could really begin they needed a stable food supply. One of the highest priorities for people was feeding themselves. Once groups of people were assured that they could regularly produce enough food to feed themselves, it allowed people to do other things, like create art and build cities. As you will see in this chapter, there are seven characteristics of civilizations and all of them are very interconnected.

The development of cities is one of the characteristics of all civilizations. Before people had a stable food supply, large groups of people could not live together in one place because they did not have enough food. Once farming and irrigation were advanced enough to provide a stable food supply, large groups of people began to live together in settled areas. This was a positive advancement because it allowed people to **specialize** in areas other than producing food. People became priests, soldiers,

artists, and blacksmiths. They were able to create great advancements in the areas they specialized in.

Cities were a positive advancement, but so many people in one place led to new problems. How do that many people live together without fighting? How can that many people be fed?

What do we do with all of the human waste and garbage? To solve these and other questions, civilizations gradually developed a set of laws and government, which were meant to help people behave in a manner that benefited the society as a whole.

Written language is another characteristic of civilizations that helped people live together. Writing was probably first developed to keep records of items bought and sold. It also allowed people to write down the laws of the society. Each of the civilizations you will study in this chapter also had what we call a **social system** or structure. This means that there were different classes of people: some wealthy, some poor; some leaders, some followers.

As these civilizations developed they encountered many problems. This led to the introduction of complex technologies, or, new ways to do things. Today's complex technologies are things like computers and 3D printers. They allow us to solve problems in new ways. In ancient civilizations, their complex technologies might have been things like wells, plows, and a new method for building arches. As you read about these civilizations

look for what complex technologies they invented or used to make life better.

Each civilization also had its own distinct **culture**, or way of life, which included organized religion. Each group developed art and language and their own stories. These things are what tied these groups of people together and helped to create their identity.

As you learn about the different cultures in this chapter, try to identify these seven characteristics of civilizations.

The Characteristics of Civilization

- Cities
- Government and Law
- System of Writing
- Specialization
- Social System
- Complex Technology
- Organized Religion

Section 2

Mesopotamia

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

Mesopotamia

Ziggurat

city-states

Theocracy

aqueduct

As cities developed, what had a greater impact: the environment on the people or the people on the environment? How did the region impact the way people lived? In this section we will discover how civilization developed in Mesopotamia, what effect that development had on the people, and how the geography of the region impacted the people living there.

As early people began farming the Fertile Crescent, small villages began to form. With the further development of farming, many of these small communities began to grow into large, complex cities.

Located in present day Iraq, the Fertile Crescent is a “half moon” shaped area that lies between two rivers. Also called **Mesopotamia**, a Greek word meaning the “land between two rivers,” the Fertile Crescent surrounds the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Cities first began appearing in the southern part of this land, eventually developing in areas all around Mesopotamia.

Settlements began developing in the Fertile Crescent around 3500 BCE. These were smaller cities and, for the sake of comparison, would be much more like

Interactive 3.1 Ancient Mesopotamia Song Overview

**Break Hammurabi's
code
And you'll be saying
“Oh no”**



Image source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_\(Mesopotamia\)#/media/File:Karte_Mesopotamien.png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Dynastic_Period_(Mesopotamia)#/media/File:Karte_Mesopotamien.png)

independent countries today. Each had a ruler to lead and farmland to provide food. Taking a tour of the area, you would see a walled inner city surrounded by vast farmland. The city walls would be built from bricks that were baked in the sun. People living in these early villages lived very different lives from the hunter-gatherers that came before them.

Because they had a stable food supply and permanent shelters, they were able to form larger communities. This led to the development of better tools, clothing, farming methods, and systems of government. Living in a community allowed for goods and ideas to be bartered or traded back and forth and people could get the items they lacked.

Cradle of Civilization

Ancient Mesopotamia is considered by many to be the cradle of civilization. This is due to the development of many things that still impact our lives today. Agriculture, cities, religion, government, and written language are just a few of the things that were first developed in Mesopotamia. Unlike the many civilizations that would follow, Mesopotamia was unique in that the people who were in these various cities were bound together through culture. The social laws, written language, and religion are what historians use to classify the people of Mesopotamia. As a result, Mesopotamia is more of a region occupied by various civilizations rather than a single civilization. However, the people of the region are grouped together due to two developments: (1) the rise of cities and (2) the invention of written language.

City-States

When studying the ancient world, a city refers to an area of large population. These cities are also the center of commerce and government. In Ancient Mesopotamia, the cities were not only large urban centers but also had a very distinct pattern to their setup. Each was usually surrounded by a massive wall. In the center of the city would be a large temple or ziggurat. Due to their size and the way they were governed, many are often referred to as city-states. A **city-state** is a city that is like a small independent country, due to having its own laws and government.



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ziggurat#/media/File:Ancient_ziggurat_at_Ali_Air_Base_Iraq_2005.jpg

The Sumerian people were the first to begin building cities along the rivers of lower Mesopotamia. They specialized, cooperated, and made many advancements in technology, all prompted by the needs that were presented by living together. The wheel, plow, and system of writing are some examples of their achievements. Among the many Sumerian cities were Ur, Uruk, Nippur, and Kish. These cities established economic and political control over the surrounding countryside. These became the foundation for the development of civilization.

Challenge: Build a Ziggurat

The land of Mesopotamia was fertile near the two rivers. Outside of that, however, the land was much too dry to grow many crops. As a result this area became home to many herders. Since agriculture is only possible near the rivers, due to the dry climate of Mesopotamia, people had to develop a system of irrigation to keep their farmland productive. This need had a major impact on the locations of the city-states of Ancient Mesopotamia.

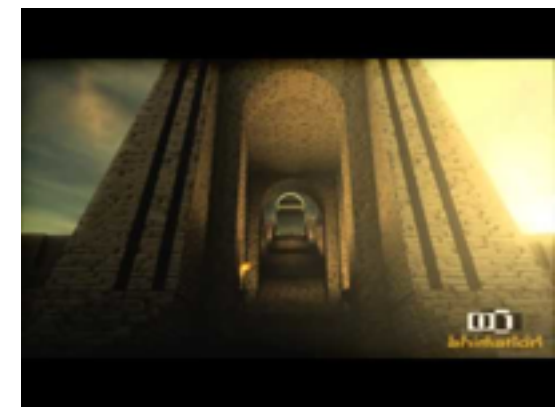
Another result of the dry climate was the region had very few trees. As a result, wood couldn't be used as a building material.

There was, however, plenty of mud.

The Sumerians used this for building purposes including the building of

ziggurats. Bricks made out of mud were easy to shape and could be left out in the sun to bake or become hard. Nearly every building and the walls that protected the city was made from these bricks.

Interactive 3.2 The Wonders of Ancient Mesopotamia



This animation, created for the Melbourne Museum captures the look and feel of the ancient city of Ur. Many weeks of research with expert archaeologists meant that the accuracy of this video is based on the available knowledge of the area at the time.

Government and Law

The Sumerian people believed that their cities were the possessions of the gods and goddesses. This belief had a large impact on the setup of the city-states and on the governments that ruled over them. Politically, each city was independent from one another. Warfare between them was frequent. The ziggurat, found at the center of every city, was a symbol of how important the patron god or goddess was. The god or goddess of the city was thought to be present in all stages of life, from the planning and building of the city to the functioning of the government.

This belief that the gods ruled the cities brought about the concept of **theocracy**, a government by divine authority. In the early history of the city-states, the temple was the center of life, both political and religious. Priests were in charge of the matters for both the belief system and the government. As part of the system, people brought what they grew to the temple and these resources would be redistributed by the priests. The government and religious systems operated hand in hand.



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumer#/media/File:Ur_mosaic.jpg

As cities grew and developed, this system changed and often become more complex. There was too much work for a single person as priest and king. The work might be divided between religious and political responsibilities. Priests-rulers gave way to kings. The change established a slight division between the two systems. How this change came about is unknown, but one can hypothesize that the constant war that was gripping the city-states during this time might have forced the change. In any event, the need for someone to handle the political needs of a city-state separate from the religious needs took control. The belief system was still deeply rooted in the political system; the Sumerians believed that the king was chosen by the gods. The king was seen as the earthly representative of the god of the city-



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Code_of_Hammurabi#/media/File:Code-de-Hammurabi-1.jpg

empires to follow the Sumerians. Hammurabi used his code of laws to unify his empire and to preserve order. The laws were based on both his authority as king and the word of the gods. The code was written on clay tablets so they could be displayed in public.

state. He was seen as a sacred being. To go against the king was to go against god. The king was responsible for leading the military, providing justice and order, making laws, and guiding the people.

Of all the advancements made by the people of Mesopotamia, one of the most important is the development of a written code of laws. The most famous of these is the Code of Hammurabi. Hammurabi was a ruler of Babylon, one of the

The code was detailed, covering many situations like trade, money exchange, marriage, and divorce. The code spelled out both laws and punishments, many of which may seem harsh to us today. For example, if a person were to build a home and that house were to collapse, killing a family member, then the builders own family member would be put to death. The laws did not treat people of all social levels equally, but it was the first to be written down and apply to everyone.

System of Writing

Of course, laws or anything else could not be written down until the system of spoken language developed into a written one.

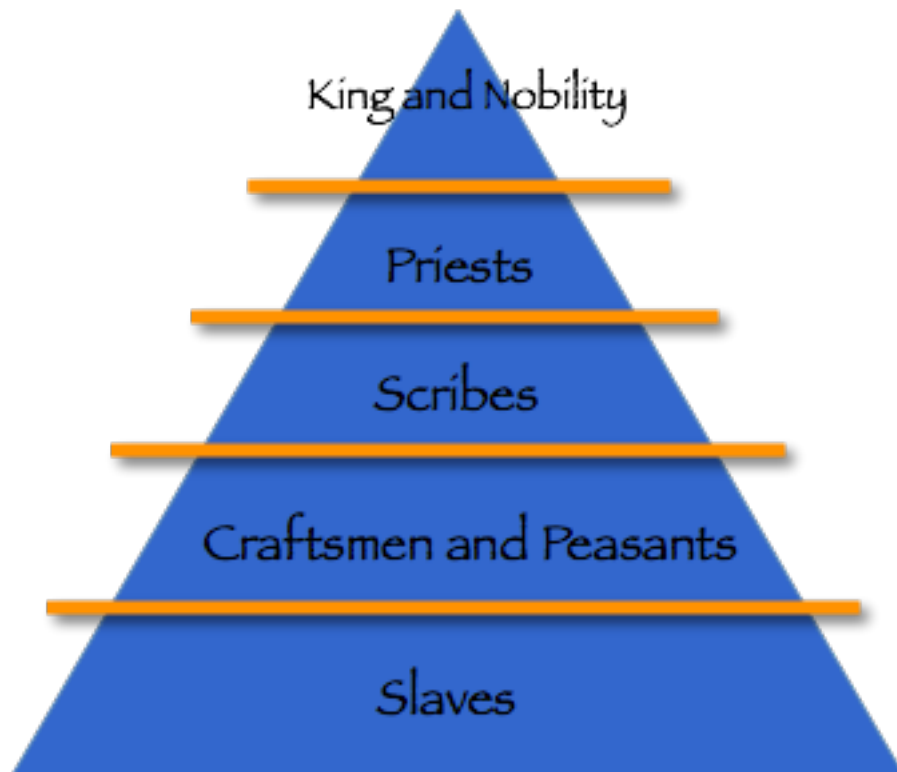
Around 2500 BCE, early forms of script began to take shape and develop into a written language. Sumerian cuneiform, or wedge shaped writing, was a major change in the technology of the time. The Sumerians used a wedge shaped stylus (sharp, pointed tool) to etch the writing into soft clay tablets. It was used to record information about trade, create administrative documents, literature, letters, prayers and other religious works, as well as all forms of economic transactions.

Interactive 3.3 Writing in Ancient Mesopotamia



Learn more about the systems of writing that developed in the ancient world.

Cuneiform was based on an early form of writing known as pictograph. This simpler form of writing used symbols to stand for real objects, such as a house or water. As the language developed, these pictures became less detailed and eventually a series of lines and wedges remained. At the beginning, there may have been upwards of 2,000 symbols.



Social Systems

All civilizations have a complex organization known as a social structure (system). The social structure is made up of the different jobs and social levels found in a given civilization. Higher levels enjoy a greater status than those in the lower levels.

Several classes have made up the various structures found in different Mesopotamian city-states. Even with the differences between them, there were some common levels to all the structures. At the top level were the priests, kings, landowners, and government officials. They would own the largest homes and live near the center of the city. The middle level consisted of the merchants and artisans, farmers and fishers. Artisans were skilled craftsman who made swords and arrows for the army as well as tools like plows for farmers. Many would craft jewelry and other luxury items for the upper class. Merchants bought and sold goods or offered services. In times of war, many people living in the middle levels were forced to serve in the army. The bottom level were slaves; they lived in the smallest homes and owned very little property.

Organized Religion

Religion is one of the defining factors of being a civilization. The religious system found in Mesopotamia had a very deep influence on everyday life. The people of Mesopotamia tried to please their

gods, from tilling fields to serving in government. Religion bound the people together in a way that nothing else would.



Image Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Khashkhamer_seal_moon_worship.jpg

The center for all religious expressions was temples and religious towers, ziggurats, that were built in the center of all city-states. Ziggurats were the largest building; some could be seen for many miles away. The people believed that the god of their city-state lived in the ziggurat.

The Mesopotamian culture believed in over 1,000 gods and goddesses in their faith. They believed that the beginning of the world was a victory of the gods over evil spirits. Through daily rituals, funeral practices, civic duty, and many other aspects of everyday life, people felt that they could help control the balance of good over evil. In conjunction with daily rituals, the people held

great honor for elders and were to treat people with respect. Doing this and honoring the gods was the primary way to show and keep their faith.

Early Mesopotamian Empires: Unifying the Region with Force

The Sumerians flourished between 3500 and 2300 BCE, but the city-states were never able to unify under a single empire. They often fought for land and water rights. This lack of unity would ultimately lead to their downfall, as their lack of unity left them open to attacks.

Akkadians

Around 2300 BCE a group of people, the Akkadians, came from northern Mesopotamia into the land of the Sumerian city-states. The Akkadians found the city-states lacking unity and were able to conquer the land. They were led by an ambitious king named Sargon. Sargon would become the first ruler of the Akkadian Empire. Sargon was a strong king and a skilled military leader. His army used effective military strategies such as tight formations, using shields and spears.

Sargon was also a brilliant political leader. Once he established himself as king, he



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_Empire#/media/File:Empire_akkad.svg



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akkadian_Empire#/media/File:Empire_akkad.svg

replaced the governors of the city-states with his own officials. He also made the Akkadian language the official language of business. He tore down the walls of many cities to make it harder for those city-states to rebel. After his death, many fought for control of the empire.

The Akkadian empire still had many Sumerian cultural influences. Farmers used the Sumerian irrigation techniques. They adopted the system of cuneiform for writing and even began worshipping

their gods. Over time, the Akkadian and Sumerian cultures blended.

After 200 years, the empire began to lose strength. Naram-Sin, Sargon's grandson, would be the last great king. Soon invaders from northern Mesopotamia invaded and brought the first real empire in history to an end.

Babylonian

With the fall of the Akkadian Empire, Sumer once again was a collection of independent city-states. The next empire to come to power would be the Babylonians around 1750 BCE. King Hammurabi, famous for his written code of laws, would unite all of Mesopotamia under the Babylonian Empire.

Babylonia thrived under Hammurabi's leadership. Trade and agriculture boomed unlike ever before. The empire set up a regular way to carefully maintain the irrigation systems so that land remained fertile and would grow plenty of food. Trading in grain and other products grown in the land, the empire took advantage of the two rivers for more than just the fertile farm land.

What stands out above the economic advancements is that Babylonian society was oddly fair for this time period. Laws treated the classes differently, but even the lowest level, slaves, had rights. They were able to work outside of their owners' home



Image source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Babylonia#/media/File:Hammurabi%27s_Babylonia_1.svg

and could keep their wages. They were able to own property and could even save money to eventually purchase their freedom.

Following Hammurabi's death, mass revolts created unrest in the empire. Over time, portions of the vast empire began to break off, either gaining independence or being conquered. Around 1595 BCE, the empire finally fell to the Hittites when they sacked Babylon and removed the standing king.

Assyrian

The next major empire to take control of Mesopotamia was the warlike people known as the Assyrians. The Assyrians had lived in Mesopotamia for centuries when Hammurabi conquered the people, making them part of the Babylonian Empire. Around 900 BCE a line of rulers began training up an army with the goal of preparing for war. Soon the army began to expand the Assyrian territory.

The Assyrians were feared for their cruelty and military might. They used strong iron weapons and became skilled horseman. They also became highly effective at siege warfare. This technique had soldiers camp outside the city for many days repeatedly attacking until the defenses fell. They used battering rams to destroy walls and tall movable towers that could be rolled up to the walls and gates allowing soldiers to climb over the walls.

The empire was ruled by a series of powerful kings. The Assyrians used many of the same techniques of irrigation and farming to keep the region fertile and producing food. They also were the first in the region to begin using aqueducts. An aqueduct is a system of pipes or channels used to carry water into cities. The aqueduct system brought drinking water into the city of Nineveh from over 30 miles away.

The Assyrian empire lasted for almost 300 years. At its height, the empire extended from Mesopotamia to the area surrounding the Nile River in Egypt and to the Taurus Mountains in the north. Controlling such a large region became its weakness, stretching its army too thin. This issue left the Assyrians exposed and they found it difficult to fight off invading neighbors. In the early 600s BCE, Nineveh was plundered and the Assyrian empire was over.

Further Study: Visit the following sites for more information and activities on Ancient Mesopotamia

[History of Mesopotamia- University of Chicago](#)

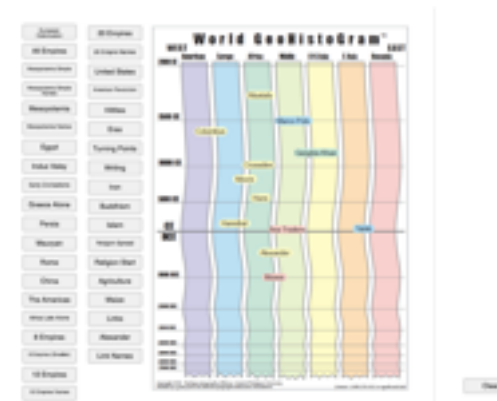
[Mesopotamia- The British Museum](#)

Interactive 3.4 Palace without Rival



Task: Follow the link to complete the online scavenger hunt or test your knowledge.

Interactive 3.5 World GeoHistoGram



Fire up the World GeoHistoGram and click on the button "Mesopotamia" - What do you notice about the length of this empire?

Interactive 3.6 Crash Course - Ancient Mesopotamia



Interested in learning even more? Watch this video from John Green's "Crash Course"

Reflection: Looking back on all the information in this previous section, which is greater: the impact of the environment on people or the people on the environment?



Egypt

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

fertile

pharaoh

Geography is rarely described as glamorous, yet, without geography of the area where Egyptian civilization developed, Egypt may not have become what it did. The **fertile** river valley along the Nile River allowed the Egyptian farmers to avoid famine. They could produce a surplus of food with a modest number of workers. They could use the remaining workforce to craft amazing feats of architecture. The Nile was also a provider of fish. There were many plants that grew in the riverbeds. These marshy lands were home to lots of mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds. The water for irrigating the fields carried mineral-rich silt that was scattered by the annual floods. This made the Nile the lifeline of the pharaoh's people.

Interactive 3.7 What did Ancient Egyptians Eat?



What did Ancient Egyptians eat and how do we know? Click here for more!

The Nile River with its predictable floods and the surrounding desert: these were the geographic features which dominated Ancient Egypt. As you read about their historical development, always consider how the geography of the region might have impacted that development.

Early Technology: Harnessing the Nile River

Long before the rise of great civilizations in the Nile Valley, about 6000 BCE, irrigation began in Ancient Egypt. Irrigation gave life to the Egyptian Empire. Annually, as the flood season began every summer, ancient Egyptians sang a hymn to honor the river that gave them fertile land and nourishing food. They looked forward to these floods which they managed with great technology. Teamwork had to be in place for the Egyptians to control the flow of the water. They worked together to construct dikes which held back the water. The irrigation ditches that they dug diverted, or channeled, the rising waters. Collaboration was also the key as they created basins, also known as reservoirs, to hold great amounts of water to be used later during the dry season. The land left behind by the flood waters was fertile - good for producing crops. The river's current had picked up bits of black soil, clay particles, and the flood's fertilizer called silt.

Interactive 3.8 Ancient Egypt



Why do we know so much about Ancient Egypt? [Click here for more!](#)

Thanks to advancements in irrigation, the Egyptians were able to lessen their hunts for elephants, hippopotamus, and wild fowl. Their choice of foods started to vary. They continued to fish in the Nile River and later started to rely on meat from animals they raised like long-horned cattle, geese, sheep, and goats. Vegetables they grew were onions, leeks, garlic, beans, lettuce, lentils, cabbages, radishes, and turnips. They ate fruit mainly as a dessert. Their fruits were melons, plums, figs, grapes, and dates. They also grew grains like wheat, barley, and flax. They made bread and brewed beer from the grain. They spun the flax into linen, which they sewed into garments to wear, and other helpful cloth.

Government and Law

Before 3100 BCE, Egypt was two separate kingdoms with a huge desert between them. Deserts can be like a fence or wall protecting people from invasion. Joining forces with your neighbor builds an even bigger advantage: larger population, more land, additional resources, and the sharing of traditions and talents. Upper Egypt, in the south, had a ruler who wore a white crown while the ruler of the northern kingdom called Lower Egypt wore a red crown. A double crown was created with the combination of these two kingdoms.



Image source: shutterstock

King Menes united the two main regions of Egypt and founded its first capital, a headquarters for government, at Memphis in about 3100 BCE.

”He became the first **pharaoh**, the Egyptian name for the ultimate ruler, and he wore the pschent, a crown that symbolized the union of the two regions of Egypt,” According to authors Sara

Upper and Lower Egypt:

Are you confused about Upper and Lower Egypt? Then, think like an Egyptian. We usually print our maps with north at the top and, because of that, tend to think "up" when we think north. We even say, "up North" in Michigan. But for ancient Egyptians, the Nile River defined how they saw the world. There was upstream, or towards the source of the river, and downstream, or towards the mouth of the river. For the Nile, the mouth was in the North at the Mediterranean Sea. The source was in the South. For Egyptians, Upper Egypt was upstream in the South. Lower Egypt was downstream in the North.

Pendergast, Tom Pendergast, Drew D. Johnson, and Julie L. Carnagie.

Menes ruled Upper Egypt in the south, yet he saw the great trade potential in Lower Egypt, which was located to the north at the fertile delta region. The highway of the Nile connected not only the trade routes, but it allowed transport for their military and travel for all. The Nile's waters allowed much of Egypt to venture down their treasured river to the Mediterranean Sea.

Historians divide the years of Egyptian rule into three periods: the Old Kingdom from about 2700-2000 BCE, the Middle Kingdom which lasted from about 2000-1500 BCE, and the New Kingdom from 1500-750 BCE.

The Old Kingdom came first and formed the strong central government. The leaders of this period organized resources to allow for irrigation, extensive food storage, and great growth of the empire. They supervised the construction of the first great monuments of Egyptian architecture, the Great Pyramids. These marvels are located at Giza, which is on the west bank of the Nile near Egypt's current capital of Cairo. During the Old Kingdom Egyptians had followed the Sun King, Ra, and invented an accurate solar calendar. It is similar to the Gregorian calendar that we use today.

Egyptians of the Old Kingdom also made great advancements in art and culture.

Achievements were made in literature and culture during the Middle Kingdom, yet this was a time of political unrest for Egypt. There were many contacts made between the Egyptians and the surrounding cultures in greater Arabia, Africa, and the Middle East. Egyptians borrowed customs from these other cultures and added them into their lives. Evidence of this cultural mosaic can be found in the artwork and writings from the time period. The Nubians from the south ruled for a short time. Next, the Semitic people from Levant, which is modern-day Syria and Lebanon, took control with their bronze weapons and compound bows until another shift of power came with the Hyksos. Egyptian culture remained prevalent until the Egyptians finally prevailed at the end of the Middle Kingdom.

During the New Kingdom, Egypt truly became an empire. After conquering neighbors to the south, Egypt expanded to other parts of Africa. Egypt gained great wealth during the New Kingdom, and wealthy Egyptians showed off their riches with lavish temples and they wore more highly decorated clothes.

Egyptian society began to weaken as the Kushites from the south gained prominence and then Egypt started to break down further after about 1000 BCE. Eventually Egypt was conquered by Macedonian leader Alexander the Great, whom you will read more about in the next chapter, in 332 BCE. The culture of Ancient Egypt slowly disappeared after Alexander's influence.



Image source: Egyptian limestone statue, about 1485 BCE

The New Kingdom saw the emergence of something somewhat unusual in Ancient Egypt or anywhere in the ancient world: female rulers. 1504-1482 BCE were the reigning years of Queen Hatshepsut, sometimes considered the world's first female leader. Pharaoh was a male term (like the word king) but Hatshepsut was referred to as pharaoh. She ruled as a regent for her young husband who was also her half-brother. A regent is appointed to rule because the monarch is a minor, or too young. Marriages were often political arrangements when they involved members of a ruling family and were often more about consolidating power by being associated with the right people than they were about marriage or love. The politics were complicated, but Hatshepsut, by all accounts, was an effective leader whom we know about in

part, because of the record of her accomplishments preserved with her tomb; the same way we know about the accomplishments of other pharaohs.

Another strong female leader that ruled ancient Egypt as co-regent and as the pharaoh was Nefertiti. Historians have described her as one of the most significant of all Egyptian women. She and her husband, the pharaoh Akhenaton, started a new form of religion in their kingdom. It was a sort of revolution of faith changing the whole structure of their ancient culture. They moved the capital to from the original capital at Thebes to Amarna. The high priests had much less power under this new religious structure, and the main god was shifted to Aten, the sun god. Using evidence like hieroglyphics and wall paintings, it is clear that she played a large role in court. She carried out duties of the pharaoh, and she drove her own chariot. The artwork proves that she was powerful and independent. Women were not on the forefront of politics at this time. It is possible that her strong role during the reign of her husband upset the social hierarchy and caused conflict among government officials and high priests.

Writings about Nefertiti seem to just stop, yet the imagined details used to complete the mysterious missing information are quite intriguing. We do know that she was married to the pharaoh Akhenaten who reigned from 1353-1356 BCE. Some Egyptians



Image source: Shutterstock

believed that she had great divine power and was a daughter of the gods.

Nefertiti's story is being told with new uncovered evidence described in a powerful historical documentary. In the Valley of Kings, which is 400 miles south of Cairo, her mummy may have finally been identified. In the first few hundred years after her funeral, the royal tomb was found by grave robbers and her remains were mutilated. All the proof of rank had been torn away from her wrapped and preserved remains. The linen shroud and sacred wrappings were missing until recently. Two other mummies were in the same tomb and they were not harmed by

the ancient criminals. Jewels and amulets have been found separate from the body and these trinkets have been confirmed as Nefertiti's. Researchers could not positively confirm the identity of the mummy until an English Egyptologist named Joann Fletcher, (who specializes in ancient hair, its styling, and the wigs worn by people of ancient times) helped to make the connection between a wig that was likely Nefertiti's and the mummy's identity. Dr. Fletcher can confirm with forensic evidence that the wig is from 1400-1300 BCE and that it was created in Nubia for person of royalty.

The damage to the mummy thought to be Nefertiti's was likely inflicted by grave robbers because it is similar to how all the carved and painted images of her were damaged after her death. This vandalism is connected to the damage found in her royal tomb. As a woman that had gained a high level of authority, she may have offended certain people so much that they wanted to hurt her in the afterlife. Her mouth had the most damage, and that is important because the damage would not allow her to speak her name to the gods and enter into the afterlife.

Interactive 3.9 Female Rulers in the Ancient World



Female rulers were unusual in the ancient world, but have things changed that much? Think about these questions.

The Development of Cities

As you have already learned, King Menes founded the first capital of Egypt in Memphis, and, like so many other locations in ancient Egypt, being surrounded by so many deserts protected them from invasion and takeover. Water is the most basic of human needs, no matter what year you live in. Let's think about water and the quality of that water in today's world. We have more pollutants in our water, but, for Americans living in Michigan, access to the water of the Great Lakes is such a huge advantage. Access to water has to be reliable for the growth of a civilization. A huge group like the Ancient Egyptians could not build a capital without water. Without the Nile River, there would not have been the Egyptian Empire.

In ancient times, designing a good way to transport enough fresh water was a difficult challenge. For example, to keep an army hydrated during battles, leaders had many difficulties. The cities of Egypt were strategic in their design; these cities were rarely invaded due to their location. Power and protection go together! The cities were situated to support the travel, trade, transportation, and safety. These four factors were paramount in the location of their busy centers of Egyptian life.

Another major city of Egyptian civilization was Thebes. Thebes was the capital for hundreds of years during the reign of several pharaohs. The location was both strategic and hospitable to life in the Nile River Valley. It is over 400 miles south of Egypt's modern

capital, Cairo. On the east side of the river was the city for the living and on the west bank of the river was home to all the tombs and those involved in burial like the priests, embalmers, and workers. During the Middle Kingdom, a time period from about 2000 BCE to 1700 BCE, Thebes was where you'd find the Sphinxes and great temples. Thebes was ruled by Egyptians, but it was also taken over for time spans by the Hyksos, invaders from Asia, by the Assyrians, the Persians, and finally the Greeks. The Greeks had such a strong influence that the name Thebes is Greek. Today, Thebes is a small village in Egypt visited by tourists that come to visit the ruins. King Tutankhamen's tomb was discovered here in Thebes in 1922, less than 100 years ago. King Tut had quite a complicated family tree and the city of Thebes has a notable history, too.

Sometimes periods of change and unrest in a civilization can lead to the development of new cities. As you have already learned, the pharaoh Amenhotep IV and his queen Nefertiti created a new set of traditions based on the worship of the one god whom they called Aten. No one knows for certain why or to what extent this religious change from polytheism to monotheism, the worship of only one god, took place. But it was sincere enough, or an attempt to consolidate his power enough to cause Amenhotep IV to change his name to Akhenaten in honor of the one god of his monotheism efforts. He also began the building of the city of Amarna to honor the god Aten, not Amon-Re. This city was also called Tell el-Amarna and is believed to have been one of the first

planned settlements in all of human history; a fitting tribute to what is considered to be the earliest documentation of monotheistic religious beliefs in human history.

Akhenaten and Nefertiti paid for the new city's construction with the riches from the temples of Karnak. Karnak was the home to temples dedicated to other gods, but they were closed for 17 years during the rule of Akhenaten. The change to a new religious system had an economic impact, too.

Change often produces unrest and that was certainly the case here. This team of rulers, Akhenaten and Nefertiti, brought about a time of crisis and social disorder. With all this change the rulers

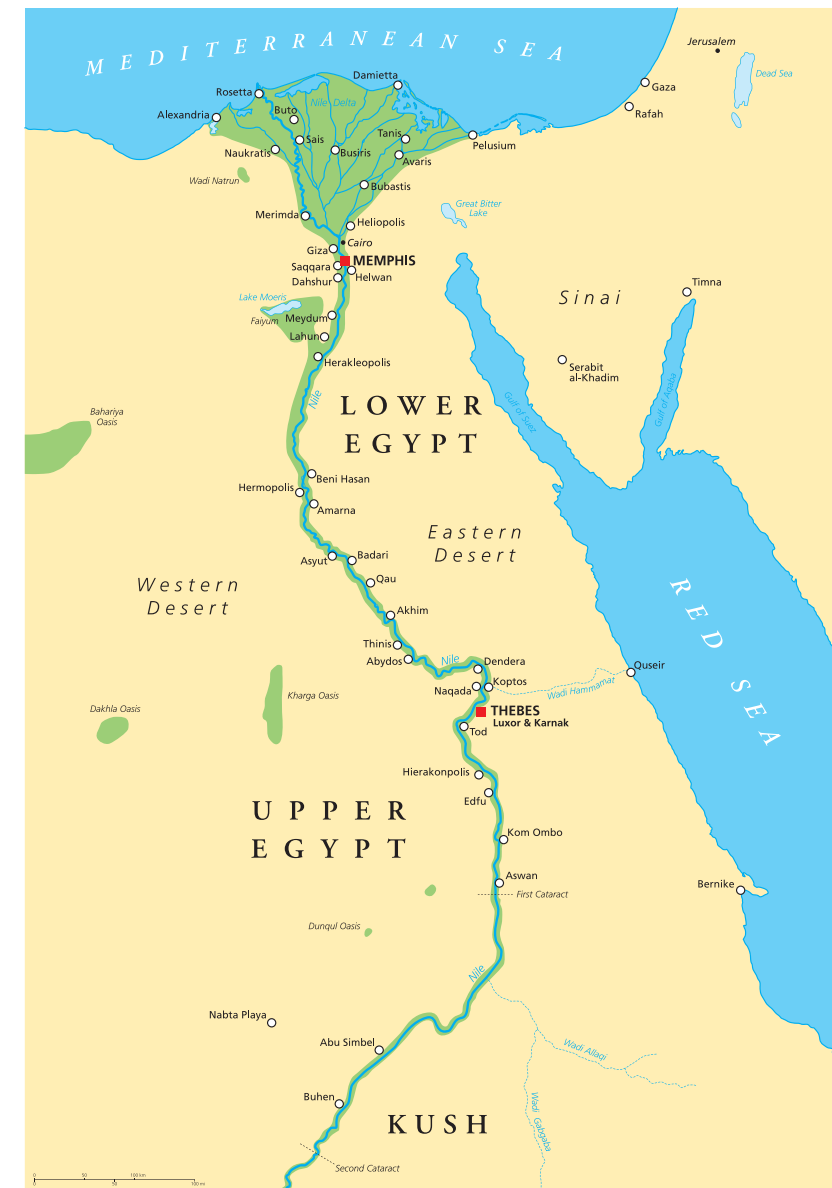


image source: Shutterstock

were forced to seek out protection from those who did not like their ideas. Armana was surrounded by cliffs on three sides and the Nile on the fourth. The city was a fortress, or citadel.

Upon Ahkenaten's death, Nefertiti returned to the previous capital of Thebes and ruled there for a year. Priests to the previous gods were still in Thebes when Nefertiti returned with the body of her husband, and her return may have signaled a return to previous religious practice. Akhenaton's son Tutankhamen, whom we would come to know as King Tut, would eventually consolidate his own power and rule from Thebes.

Hieroglyphics - Ancient Egypt's System of Writing

Texting, emails, tweets, and even handwritten notes share the thoughts of today, yet hieroglyphics told the tales of the Egyptians long ago. Hieroglyphics date back to the the time of Upper Egypt during the reign of King Menes. Their writing system was a combination of symbols and pictures like animals, plants, and people. These detailed pictures were a way of describing their lives for more than thirty centuries. These hieroglyphs were found on tomb walls, in temples, on papyrus - a type of paper made from the reed, and most importantly in ornate burial chambers of the pharaohs. Can you imagine what the Egyptians would have done with emojis?

For centuries, the Egyptians also had a written language that was a mysterious series of pictures and symbols. The clues to their

meaning did not come until the discovery of a stone near Rosetta helped to "crack the code" and translate the ancient language. The social scientists that pieced together the meanings of hieroglyphics must have been thrilled, and today we know so much more now that we can read the writings on papyrus scrolls, tomb walls, and any other artwork that contains Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Papyrus may have been the world's first paper. Papyrus was a woven pattern of reeds that grew along the Nile's riverbanks. These peelings of the plant's layers were then dried in the sun to allow for a crisp surface with which to write. Papyrus was also used to make rope, mat rugs, and sandals. Papyrus and wheat were the best exports for Egypt.

Specialization and Social Systems

Ancient Egyptian civilization developed with many areas of specialization much like other civilizations. When you have specialization of labor, or a variety jobs that are critical to the function of the civilization, different societies treat these talented artisans in their own ways. The rank or level of these specialists led to social hierarchies throughout the ancient world. A social hierarchy is sometimes referred to as a social pyramid. This is because it has just a few people on the top but many people at its foundation.

The social pyramid was a complex way of keeping order in Ancient Egypt. These classes of people were integral in both the government and faith of the civilization. The place of each person in the pyramid was largely determined by birth. Very few Egyptians moved up to a higher level in the social pyramid; a unique specialization, or skill was needed to be elevated from the level of their family. The viziers assisted the pharaohs and coordinated the collection of taxes and managed the work crews. The high priests had an amazing amount of power because the Egyptian people lived by just one faith. Officials, merchants, and scribes had unique talents that provided many of the needs and wants of their culture. The craftsmen created the products which were bought and sold and lent their skills to the massive decorative crafts like jewelry making and architectural design. Of course, the bottom of the pyramid had the greatest number of people, and these Egyptians worked hard throughout their lives with little freedoms and privileges. This lowest level workers farmed the fields and completed all the building projects for the pharaohs.

Architectural Achievements - The Pyramids

Pyramids held the most sacred treasures and were the most complex buildings of their times. Pyramids were the tombs, or burial spaces, for the body of their king, and these tombs served as a storage vault for the possessions they wished to have with them in the next world. These royal tombs had to be a fortress of

protection from grave robbers. There were mazes and false entry points, traps, and dangers set to snag a thief if they were brave enough to disrupt the eternal resting place of the godlike rulers. Originally just a pit in the dry sandy soil, later the Egyptians made buildings of brick and stone in which they buried their sacred rulers.



The Pyramids at Giza in Egypt are one of the Seven Wonders of the World. © SCULPIES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM.

the camels give great perspective and scale, although camels are not native to Egypt.

Pyramid building was an amazing feat of ancient architecture and remains mysterious in many ways. The complex rank of the Egyptian culture created a workforce that was loyal to the leaders. These massive building projects were completed by thousands of lower ranking Egyptians and any outsiders that

were taken as prisoners. These buildings had religious significance as they served as burial chambers for their rulers as they ascended into the next world, or the afterlife. Ramps, both internal and external, may have helped with the building of the pyramids. There are many different theories as to the exact technology used.

Another amazing achievement of Ancient Egypt is the Great Sphinx. The Great Sphinx was carved in the an area of the pyramids known as the Valley of Kings. No one knows the exact reasons for this statue, and there is even some debate about when it was created. Nothing has been found in any of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphic writings about its creation, but many believe it was carved by ancient Egyptians to be a guardian of the tombs there.

Giza became a small town when it became the desert home to the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx, but it wasn't like the cities of our times. It was more of a construction site with mini-camps for the different levels of slaves, workers, artisans, and managers of the projects.

Organized Religion

Much of the pyramid building was tied to ancient Egyptian beliefs about religion and the afterlife. Egyptians believed that their rulers were also gods. This belief in many gods is known as polytheism. The Egyptians believed that they needed to please the gods.

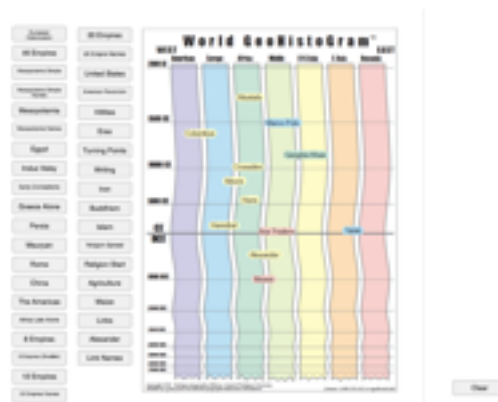
Many ceremonies and tributes were made to honor these gods. Many details about their beliefs are seen on sacred scrolls, artwork, and sculpture. As you have read, Egyptians believed that after they died a new life for them began, and this gave them a way to live forever. They traveled to another world in the afterlife and lived with the gods and goddesses of the dead. The mummification process is cleverly drawn and explained together with many facts about the Egyptian belief system and its pantheon of gods led by Ra, the sun god and the god of creation. He was called AmenRa during the Middle Kingdom. Osiris, Isis, Horus, Thoth, and Anubis are lesser gods, yet they all are involved in the lives of the Egyptians.

Mummification & preservation

Humans have many beliefs about life and what happens after death. To live forever in the afterlife, or next world, Egyptians believed that their soul had a number of parts. The ba and ka are two parts of the soul, and they had to be able to recognize their body; so they preserved, or mummified their bodies. The body of a pharaoh was treated with extra care as they thought that the ruler was a god. After a pharaoh died, organs were removed and stored in special containers called canopic jars. Then the body was dried out, rubbed with oils, and wrapped with long, narrow pieces of linen cloth. Mixed in the wrappings were jewels and special gifts. The name of the person was written on the cloth in hieroglyphics and a mask with a likeness was used to cover the

head. While the embalmers worked for seventy days to preserve the body, there were priests that held rituals throughout the process. There were also skilled craftsmen like carpenters, sculptors, and painters that created a series of coffins for the body. The outermost coffin is called a sarcophagus. An elaborate funeral was held and the body was placed in a tomb with all the furniture, belongings, and food that might be needed in the afterlife. Pets and servants remains have been found alongside the rulers. The entrance to the tombs were concealed for protection, and the tombs needed an air shaft for the daily visits of the spiritual ba and ka. The religious beliefs of the Egyptians certainly made death an important part of life.

Interactive 3.10 World GeoHistoGram



Fire up the GeoHistoGram again and this time click on both the Mesopotamia and Egypt buttons. What do you notice?

Section 4

India

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

The Indus River Valley was home to one of the four river valley civilizations. Of all of these civilizations we know the least about the people who lived in the Indus River Valley. While there is much archeological evidence at this point in history, we have been unable to decipher any of their written language.

Therefore, we are forced to gather as much information as we can from the archeological evidence that exists.

There is evidence of farming and people settling in the Indus River Valley as far back as 4000 BCE. There is



Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Civilt%C3%A0VallIndoMappa.png>

also evidence that these people may have developed trade with the neighboring Mesopotamian civilization around this time. There is further evidence that the people in this region then developed into a civilization around the year 2500 BCE which lasted until around 1700 BCE. Very little evidence was uncovered about these ancient people until the 1920s when two cities were discovered in modern day Pakistan. Who built these cities and what were they all about? We will seek to answer these questions in this section.

The city of Harappa was uncovered in 1921 and the city of Mohenjo-Daro was discovered a year later in 1922. These are believed to have been two major cities in this early civilization. It is unclear what the status of the cities were. Were they individual city-states or part of a larger kingdom? Each city was approximately one square mile in size and showed a very high level of planning and organization. The cities had well-organized perpendicular streets and buildings constructed out of uniform-sized bricks. They also consisted of drainage and sewage systems that would carry dirty water away from the city.

It is clear that there had to be some sort of government and law that organized and ran the cities, though again, there is no specific or clear written evidence to support this. So how do we know? It seems incredibly unlikely that cities as highly organized as Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro would have been able to be



Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Civilt%C3%A0ValleIndoMappa.png>

constructed without some sort of governing organization to plan and then construct them. Without knowing their language, however, we are stuck at merely guessing what the government and law may have been like.

The evidence of written language is found across the Indus Valley. Stone seals and tablets, pottery, jewelry, and even copper weights all bear the same language. The problem is that no one has been able to crack the code and solve the mystery of this ancient language. It is clear that there was a uniform writing

system across the Indus Valley, but until it is deciphered, it remains a constant mystery for historians studying the Indus River Valley. We have evidence of extensive trade with Mesopotamia which can help us to make sense of this civilization.

Stone seals from the Indus Valley were found across Mesopotamia and Mesopotamian reports indicate that they traded with “people to the east.” There is also evidence of copper and other metals appearing in the Indus Valley. All of this can lead us to believe that the people of the Indus Valley were trading with the people of Mesopotamia and perhaps even beyond. This means that not only must the people of the Indus River Valley have had enough surplus goods to trade, but, they must also have had specialization which allowed them to trade.

The fact that there is a writing system, pottery, and the elaborate urban layout also lends support to the argument that they must have had specialization of labor.

It is impossible to know what life was like for people of the ancient Indus civilization but the archeological clues may reveal some interesting things. Nearly all homes, despite differing in size, had access to wells and drainage systems. We can imply from this that, despite status in society, access to water and cleanliness was important to these people. This is further reinforced by the fact that the largest public building in the city of

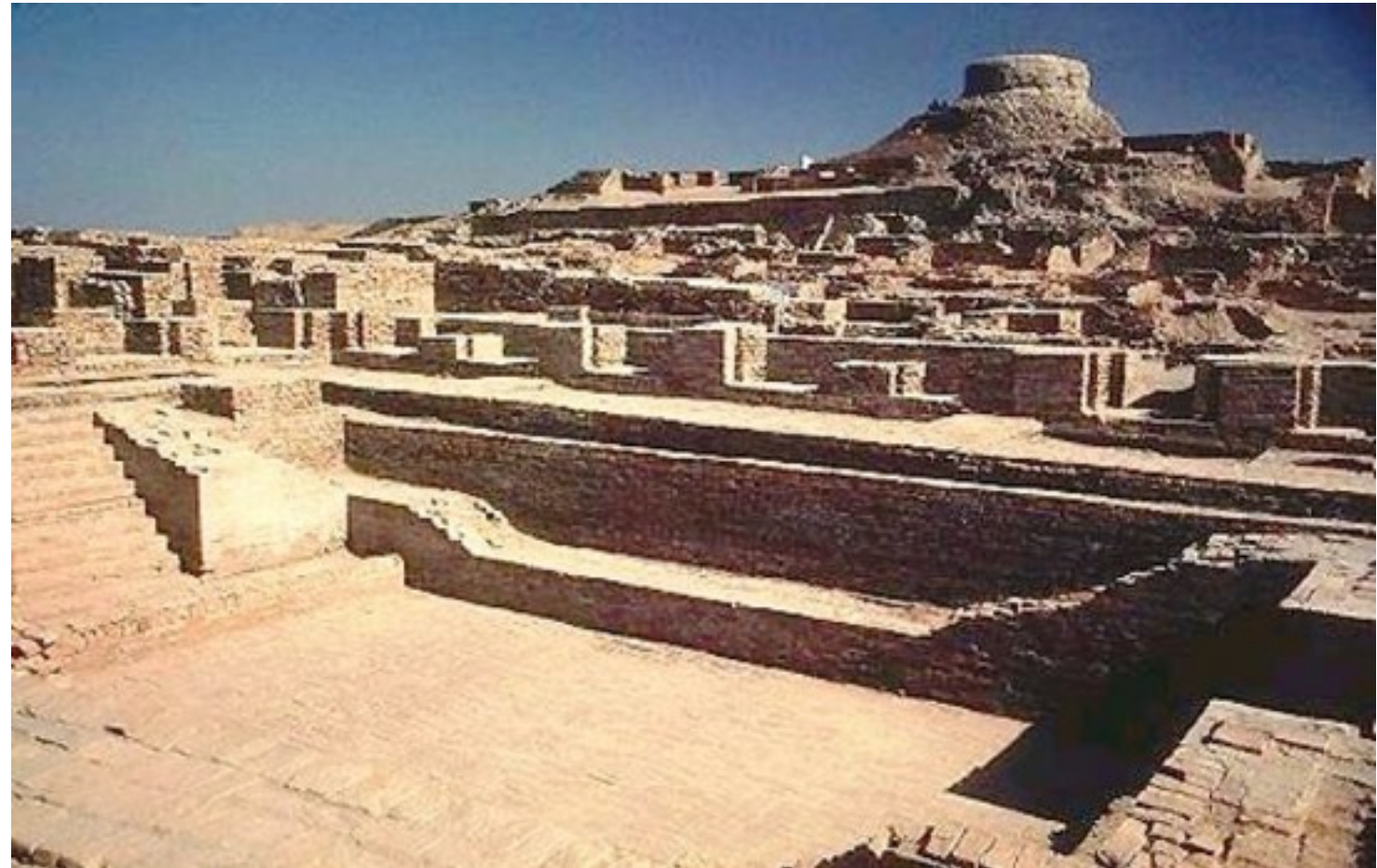


Image source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=2560364>

Mohenjo-Daro was a public bath. There is also significant evidence that the people of this time lived in relative peace with each other. There have been very few weapons found in all of the excavations, human skeletons do not show signs of violence, and the buildings themselves do not appear as though they were involved in any great battles or sieges. This leads us to believe that the people living in the Indus Valley lived a relatively peaceful life.

Whether or not the Indus people practiced any sort of an organized religion is a question that is as mysterious as the civilization itself. It is likely that they practiced some form of organized religion, but it may have been very different from the evidence found in the other River Valley civilizations. While the Egyptians built grand pyramids to their god-kings and the Mesopotamians constructed statues of their leaders and Ziggurats to serve as the houses of their gods, there is none of that in the Indus civilization. There are no statutes or depictions of any rulers or any types of gods. Some of the most interesting pieces come from the small stone seals found throughout the Indus Valley and even in Mesopotamia. Some feature depictions of typical animals while others portray imaginary animal mashups. Is it possible that these have something to do with a religion or belief? We may speculate about this more in a later chapter when we examine one of the world's major religions that eventually developed in this region.

So what happened to the people of the Indus River Valley? Historians have come with several possible answers to explain the disappearance of these people. It is possible that one, or all, of these was responsible for the decline. Many historians believe that there was some sort of natural disaster that drove the people from this land. Some believe it was a great flood or possibly even an earthquake as both happen regularly in this region. Other historians believe that they were invaded, conquered, or driven out by a group from the north known as the

Aryans. Later Hindu texts, written in a language we can decipher, describe how indigenous people were driven out of the land; it is possible that they mean the people of the Indus River Valley. The last possible reason is a collapse in their agricultural system.

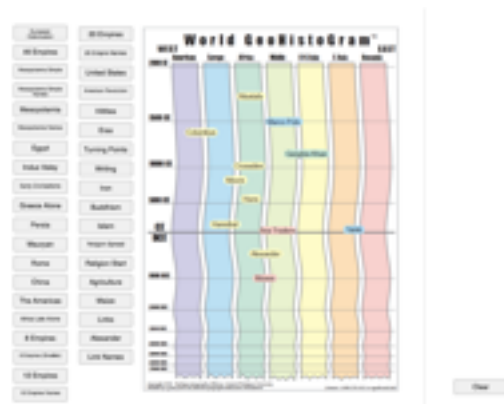
Whether they over-farmed the land or suffered from natural disasters, it is possible that their food supply collapsed thus bringing about their end.

The Indus River Valley civilization is one of the most interesting and curious of all of the early River Valley civilizations. While archaeological evidence points to the fact that they were highly sophisticated and organized, our lack of understanding of their written language prevents us from gaining a full understanding of this



civilization. Hopefully, in time, historians can uncover more evidence and attempt to answer the questions surrounding this great civilization

Interactive 3.11 World GeoHistoGram



Once again, fire up the World GeoHistoGram and click on the buttons for Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley. What do you notice now about the three different civilizations?

QUESTIONS TO GUIDE INQUIRY

1. Which is greater: The impact of the environment on people or people on the environment?
2. How does where you live affect how you live?
3. How does what you eat affect how you live?
4. What does it mean to be civilized?

TERMS, PLACES, PEOPLE

dynasty

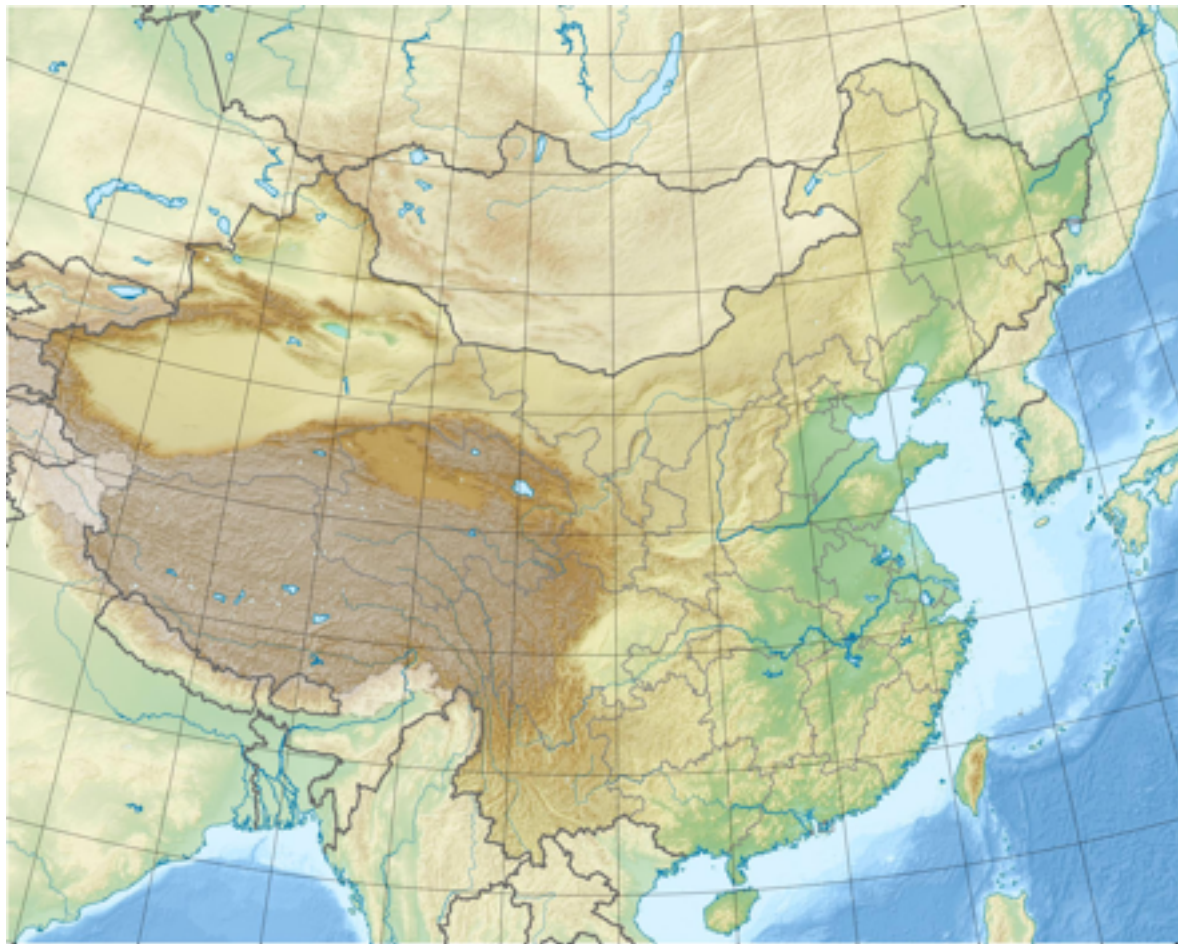
ancestor

feudalism

The region that came to be known as China is filled with geographic extremes. In the south of the country, along the coast, a great deal of rain comes from monsoon season. This allows crops to thrive in the warmer months. The eastern side the country is surrounded by water - the Yellow Sea and the Pacific Ocean to be exact. Two major river systems run through China. In the North you'll find the Yellow River, and in the south, the Yangtze. In the western portion of the country are mountain ranges separating it from countries like India. In the north, the Gobi Desert stretches across much of the territory. The geographic features of this area allowed China to remain relatively isolated from the other ancient civilizations that sprang up during this era of world history. It also provided many challenges for the people who would eventually come to settle areas of the country. You'll learn about some of those challenges in this section.



Stop and Think: How might isolation help a civilization develop? How might it hurt a civilization from developing?



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/41/China_edcp_relief_location_map.jpg



Stop and Think: Having read a description of the geographic features of China and using the map above, where might the earliest civilizations in China have appeared?

While little is known about ancient Chinese history, it is believed that people began to settle and build villages in the Huang He River Valley around 5000 BCE. By 2000 BCE some of the settlements there grew into the first cities in China.

These cities needed formal leadership to keep them together, and as such, the first **dynasty** is said to have begun, known as the Xia.

Much of what is known about this early dynasty is passed down in stories and legends, and there is less evidence in the form of archaeological records to point us toward what really happened during this time. Still, stories passed down from generation to generation can contain valuable information to help us answer the question “what happened?”

Much of what we think happened to found the Xia dynasty comes from the Legend of Yu. Settlements sprang up around the Yellow River, and it often flooded. This wasn't a problem native to China, as you've learned in other sections of this book. Still, one of the early leaders, King Yao, gave a man named Gun the task of finding a way to control the flood waters. Gun failed many times at this task, seeking to build dams to trap the water. This did not stop the flooding from happening, and it wasn't Gun who ended up solving the problem. It was his son, Yu. Yu was able to carefully study the river systems and learn from his father's mistakes. Yu is credited as having created a system of irrigation canals which brought the flood waters into fields over the period of approximately thirteen years. Yu would eventually become

ruler and the Xia dynasty continued for several hundred years.

Interactive 3.12 Yu the Great



Learn more about Yu the Great at this website:

It is with the start of the Shang dynasty that we have a lot of historical evidence that helps us figure out what happened in this area during this time. The Shang rose to power in Northern China and are said to have eventually conquered the Xia. During the Shang dynasty, China was ruled by a monarch who would appoint governors to rule small sections of the kingdom overall. It is also during the Shang dynasty that the Chinese began working with the metal bronze.



[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit - bronze battle axe.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/04/CMOC_Treasures_of_Ancient_China_exhibit_-_bronze_battle_axe.jpg)

The people of the Shang dynasty continued to live off the land settled earlier and continued to guard against flooding by further developing complex irrigation and flood control methods. Social classes rose to prominence during this era - with the king at the top and warrior nobles near the top with him. At the bottom of this social pyramid were the peasants and farmers who lived in the many villages around the territory.

Family was central in early Chinese society. You'll learn more about religions and philosophies in the fifth chapter of this book. Eventually Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism would take hold in the country, but during this era **ancestor** worship was important to the people of the dynasty. The Shang Chinese believed that the spirits of their ancestors were always watching them and would favor them with rewards or bring disaster depending on whether they were happy with them or not.

Written language is thought to have begun prior to the Shang Dynasty (and wouldn't become standardized until the Qin Dynasty) but development of it continued during this era. You're reading this book in English, where we have an alphabet containing 26 letters, all of which can be put together to make words, phrases, and sentences. The Chinese, however, have a pictographic language which has thousands of characters to be learned. This written language has developed over time, but in the beginning it was made up of symbols that had looked

somewhat like the thing being described. Take for example this picture of a tree:



Now consider the Chinese character that represents the word “tree.”



Can you see the similarities between the two? Many of the Chinese characters in their language were created based on the object it was trying to describe. Unfortunately, however, this is relatively easy to do for something like a tree but much more difficult for many other words. How would you represent the word “yellow”?

Interactive 3.13 Ancient Scripts - Chinese



You can learn more about the Chinese writing system here: <http://www.ancientscripts.com/chinese.html>

The Shang dynasty, like the one rumored to have come before it and the ones that would come after eventually declined.

Eventually it was replaced by the Zhou dynasty which was the first to introduce the idea that those in charge ruled by a mandate of heaven. This practice would be followed in all successive dynasties, with the main belief being that the ruler ruled with the blessing of heaven. If a ruler lost the blessing, natural disasters would occur, the royal family would be overthrown, and a new house would rule. This dynasty was never able to fully unify the entire territory and this gave rise to city-states.

Territories were governed by members of the royal family and a system very similar to one that developed much later in Europe developed here. This system is called **feudalism**. Under feudalism, nobles are granted use of lands that belong to the king

in return for service to the empire. The nobles then divided the land further into farms for extended families. Feudalism here and in Europe both share some of these characteristics.

There were some very important developments technologically during this time period, however. Roads and canals were built to help with trade and farming. This also helped with the growth of cities. Money in the form of coins were created out of bronze.

This also helped with the development of trade. The Zhou also learned how to work with iron. Population grew and farming techniques improved.

This dynasty came to an end during a period known as the Period of Warring States, when the armies of the Qin captured the heart of the empire. You'll learn more about China later in this resource as well as in high school World History.

Interactive 3.14 World GeoHistoGram



Fire up the GeoHistoGram again and add Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, and China layers. What do you notice about all four of these empires? What do you notice about the Chinese Empire specifically?



You have now read about four different ancient civilizations. Take a stab at answering the chapter inquiry question “Is Geography Destiny?”