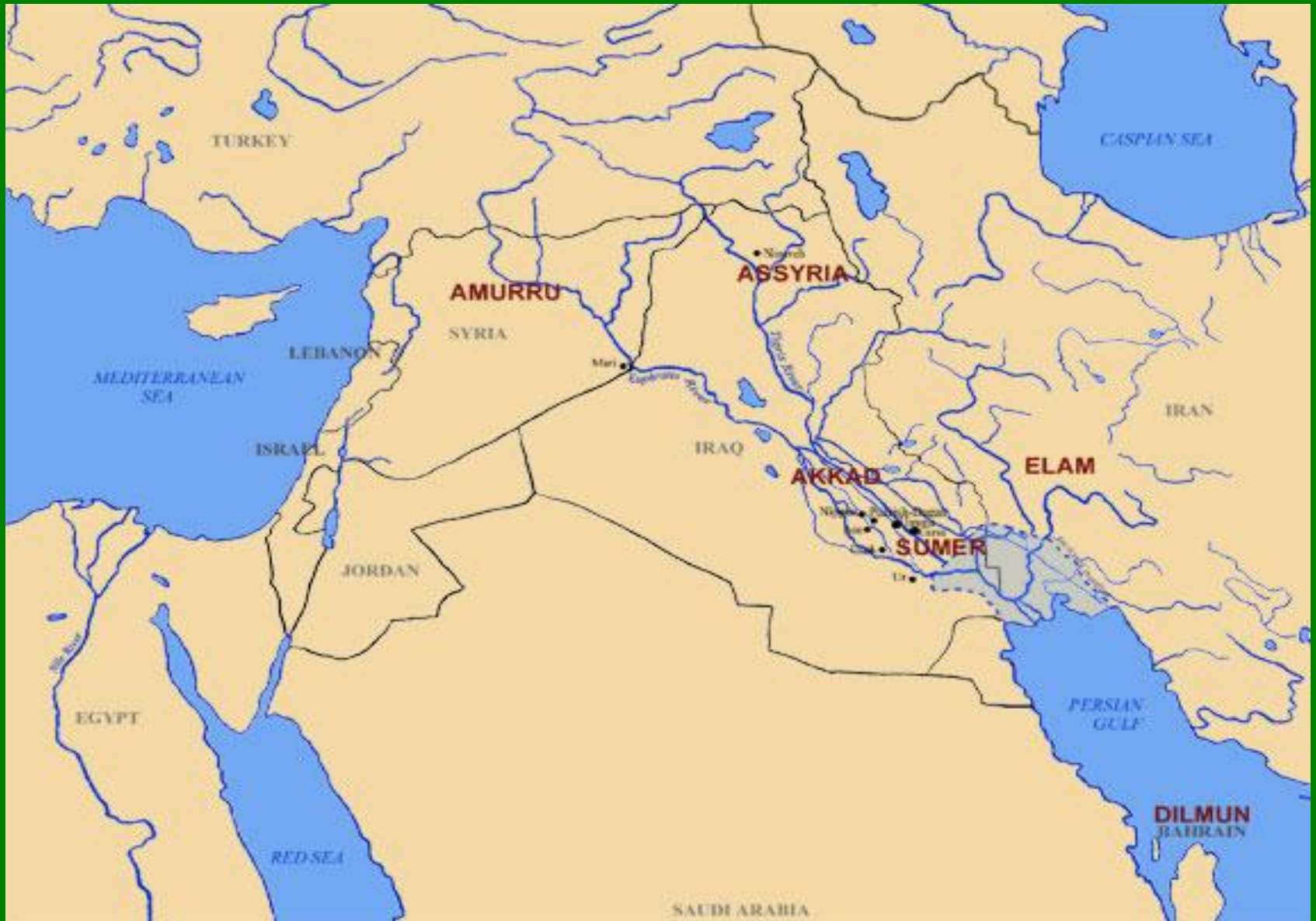


**RIVER VALLEY  
CIVILIZATIONS  
MESOPOTAMIA, EGYPT,  
INDUS AND CHINA**

# The Birth of Civilization

- 3000 – 5000 BCE “civilized” and settled agrarian settlements are found in Mesopotamia and the Nile River valley of Egypt.
- Which truly developed first is under debate.
- Mesopotamia is usually considered the oldest by historians
- 3000 BCE
  - First known written languages

# The Birth of Civilization



# Mesopotamian Civilization

- 3000 BCE
  - Settlement within the fertile crescent increases
  - Contact with other cultures in the area
- Sumerian cities develop
  - Concentrating in the southern regions of the alluvial plains of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers
- Why?
  - Most fertile soil





# Middle East

**Geographical Labels:**

- Countries:** Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Yemen, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Cyprus, Turkey, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia.
- Cities:** Ankara, Yerevan, Baku, Ashgabat, Nicosia, Beirut, Damascus, Amman, Baghdad, Tehran, Kuwait, Manama, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Muscat, Riyadh, Sanaa, Djibouti, Addis Ababa, Khartoum, Asmara.
- Bodies of Water:** Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman.
- Other Labels:** Tropic of Cancer, Boundary Undefined, Socotra (Yemen).

0 400 km  
0 400 mi



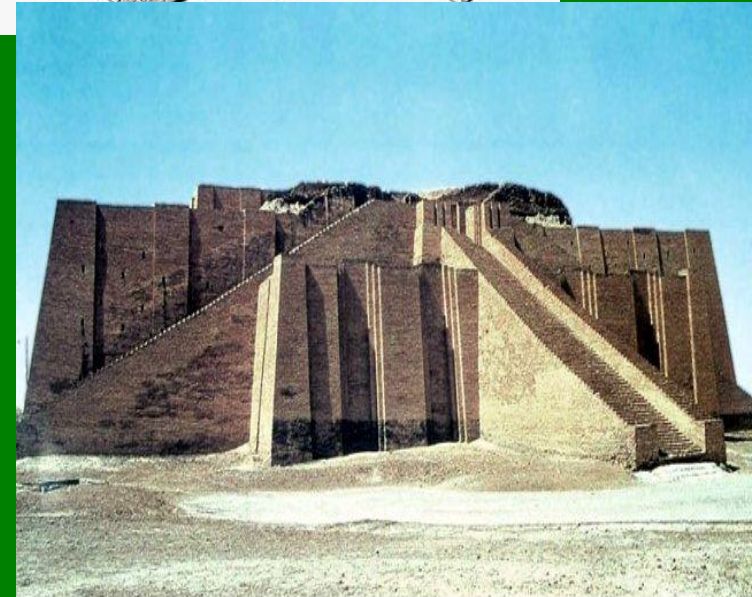
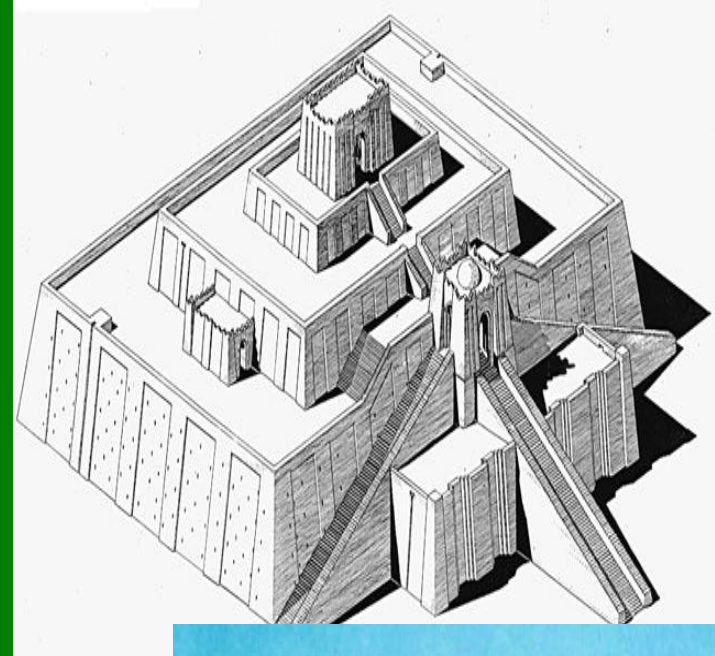
# Mesopotamian Civilization

- 2800 – 2370 BCE – Sumerian kingdom building
  - Dominant force in Mesopotamia
  - Created *cuneiform*
  - Started as pictograms
  - Used to record daily life
- Creation of City-states
- Establishment of set codes of laws



# Mesopotamian Civilization

- Religion takes important role in life
- Deities are in human forms and represent some natural phenomenon
- No separation of Church and state
- Ziggurats – religious centers
- Humans were subservient to the Gods
- Gods are hard to predict
- Art of Divination



Ziggurat Nanna w Ur - zbudowany przez Ur-Nammu; III dynastia z Ur (2113-2094 p.n.e)

# Epic of Gilgamesh

- *The Epic of Gilgamesh* recounts the adventures of Gilgamesh, king of the ancient Mesopotamian city of Uruk, in his quest for immortality.
- Composed about 2000 bce on clay tablets. One of the oldest literary works.
- The poem is probably Sumerian in origin but was absorbed and adapted by succeeding eastern Mediterranean civilizations.
- In the first prose passage, the goddess Ishtar tries to entice Gilgamesh to marry her; Gilgamesh's rejection enrages Ishtar and she seeks revenge.
- In the second passage, the sage Utnapishtim reveals that the gods once attempted to exterminate humankind with a great flood.



# Gilgamesh



Encarta Encyclopedia, Art Resource, NY/Erich Lessing

# Mesopotamian Civilization

- Akkadians rise to dominance
- Semitic speaking people from “upstream”
- Kingdom centered at Akkad
  - Near the site of the later city of Babylon
- 2,300 BCE – Sargon conquers the Sumerians
- Establishes a 200 year empire
- External attack and internal weakness end the dynasty

# Mesopotamian Civilization

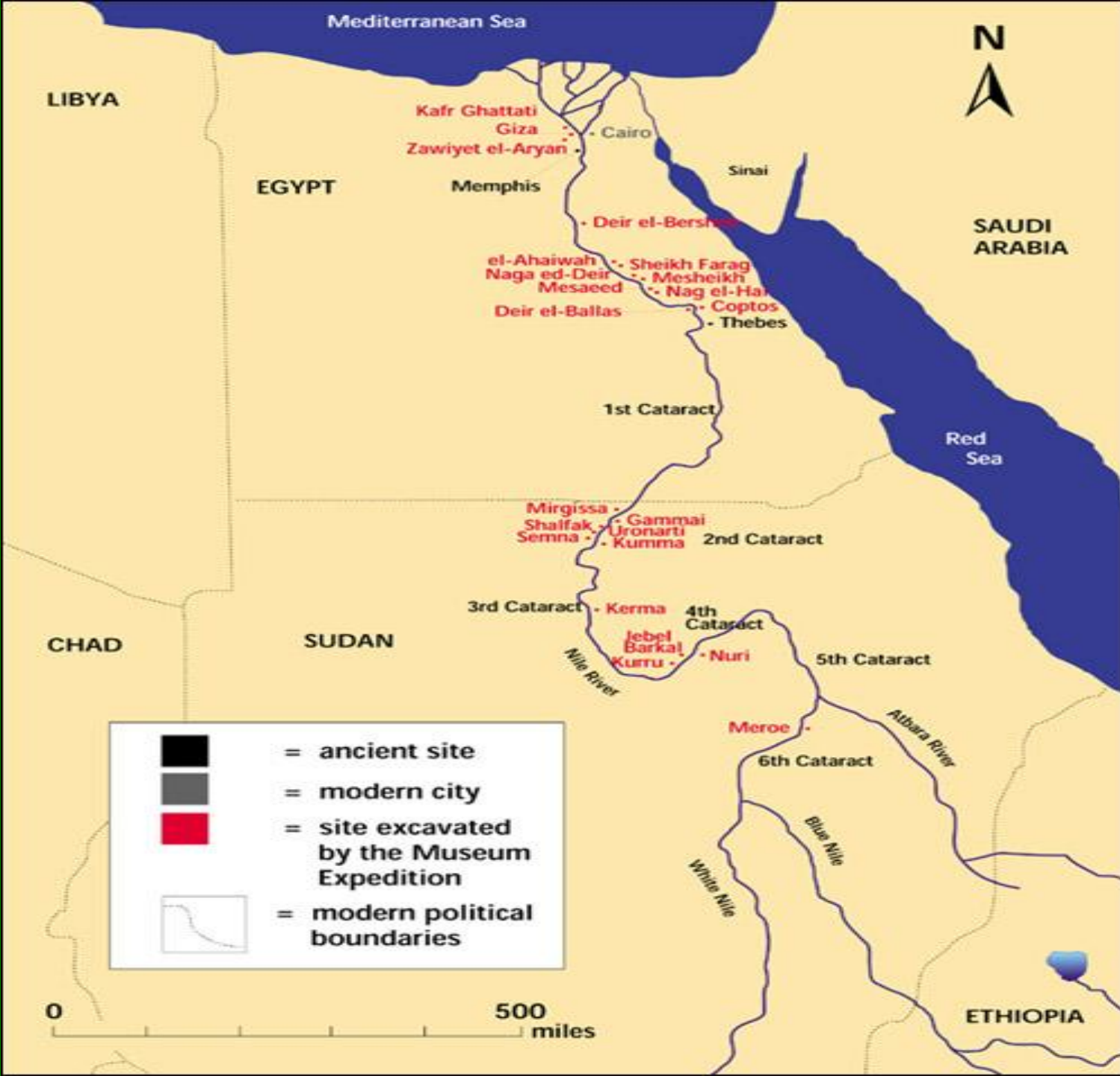
- Enter the Amorites – 1900 BCE
- Established capital at Babylon
- Dynasty lasted for appx. 300 yrs.
- Slavery was common
- Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE)
  - Created most comprehensive and best preserved code of laws
  - Possibly the first written fully codified laws





# Ancient Egypt

- Centered along the Nile River and its tributaries
- Nile River is 4,000 miles long flowing from Khartoum to the Mediterranean
- Flood cycle of the Nile helped shape ancient Egyptian life
- Protected by location
- Originally divided into two kingdoms
  - Upper Egypt – river valley
  - Lower Egypt – river delta





# Ancient Egypt

- Menes unified Upper and Lower Egypt in appx. 3000 BCE, establishing the first Egyptian Dynasty
- Capital located at Memphis
- King or *Pharaoh* was considered divine
- Entire society was organized under the Pharaoh – trade, labor, religion...

# Ancient Egypt

- Old Kingdom (2700-2200 BCE)
- Adopted the pictograph form from the Mesopotamians
  - Hieroglyphics
- Had intricate religious and afterlife detail
- Instituted magnificent burial practices to evidence the power of the Pharaoh









# Indus Valley civilization





# Indus Valley Civilization

## Dravidians (native people)

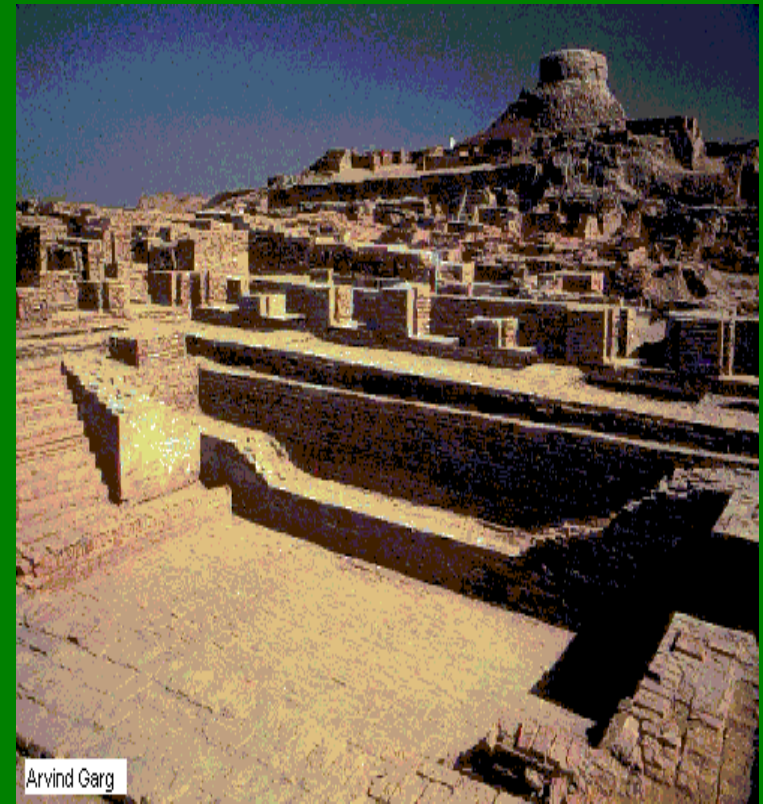
- 2500-1500 BCE
- Settled Indus River valley
  - Pakistan/Western India
- 3-season climate gave plentiful food
- Archeological digging complicated by ground water
- Language can not be deciphered
- Most writing on small "seals" (not animals)



# Indus Valley Civilization

## Dravidians

- **Cities were well planned**
  - **City laid out in grid**
  - **City probably housed over 100,000 people**
  - **Many smaller towns also in the area**
  - **Oven-baked bricks (versus sun-dried of Mesopotamia)**
  - **Sewer systems**
  - **Great baths**
  - **Unfortified**
- Religion was polytheistic
- Civilization declined over many years
  - **Isolation problem**



Arvind Garg

The Great Bath of  
Mohenjo-Daro

# Mohenjo-Daro Structures



← Street in Mohenjo-Daro



Well →

The Great Bath →



# ANCIENT CHINA

- Great Wall
- Began 2000 B.C.E.
- Mandate of Heaven
- Dynasties
- Silk
- astronomy







As in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and along the Indus River, Chinese civilization began within a major river valley. Modern China itself is a huge geographical expanse. Around 4000 BCE, this huge area contained an almost infinite number of ethnic groups and languages. This history, in which a vast area populated by diverse ethnic groups became, over time, a more or less single culture, began in the **Yellow River Valley**.

# Yellow River Civilization

- Ancient China was formed around the Yellow River.
- The color yellow symbolized “centrality”, as in China is the center of the world.



# Chinese accomplishments

- During the Zhou and Shang periods, the Chinese made remarkable achievements in astronomy and bronzework, learned to make silk and create books, and developed a complex system of writing



# Chinese invented silk



- Silk was exotic and expensive, so it was good for trading with the rest of the world.
- It is made from silk worms.
- Silk also makes “paper”



# Silk worm



# Chinese astronomy

- **2137 BCE** - Chinese book 书经 records the earliest known solar eclipse on October 22.
- ca. 2000 BCE - Chinese determine that Jupiter needs 12 years to complete one revolution of its orbit.
- ca. 1400 BCE - Chinese record the regularity of solar and lunar eclipses and the earliest known solar variation 日珥.
- ca. 1200 BCE - Chinese divide the sky into twenty eight regions 二十八宿 for recognitions of the stars.
- ca. 1100 BCE - Chinese first determine the spring equinox 黄赤交角.
- 776 BCE - Chinese make the earliest reliably record of solar eclipse.

In the Middle Ages the Arabs made known throughout Muslim Spain a material which was to replace all its predecessors. This was paper, whose manufacture they imported from far distant and mysterious realm of China.

The first paper appeared in China about 200 BC. Its name is derived from papyrus. Silk was transformed into paper by a process of pasting, but because silk was expensive, wool and cotton came to be used instead. This invention was attributed to Ts'ai Lun.

In the picture above, the manufacturing process used by the Chinese. They steeped mulberry or bamboo bark in water, then kneaded it to produce a paste from which they obtained smooth thin sheets of paper.



According to Chinese political theory, every dynasty goes through the so-called **dynastic cycle**:

1. A new ruler unites China and founds a new dynasty.
2. China, under the new dynasty, achieves prosperity and a new golden age.
3. The royal family of the dynasty begins to decay, corruption becomes rampant in the imperial court, and the empire begins to enter decline and instability.
4. The dynasty loses the Mandate of Heaven, their legitimacy to rule, and is overthrown by a rebellion. The Mandate of Heaven is then passed to the next dynasty



# Ancient China

## Prehistory and Early Dynasties



# Geography of East Asia



# Neolithic “China”



- “Chinese” civilization developed around two main rivers: the Yellow (Huang He) and Yangtze.
- Around 7000 B.C.E.
- Cultivation of agriculture led to the development of urban areas.
- Yangshao and Longshan cultures.
- Development of dynasties.





# Early Dynasties

- Xia Dynasty (c. 2070 – c. 1600 B.C.E.)
  - Not much known, mostly legend verified by some archaeological findings.
  - *Records of the Grand Historian* (109 – 91 B.C.E.) by Sima Qian.
  - Early writing found on bones and shells.
- Shang Dynasty (1600 – 1046 B.C.E.)
  - Chinese culture as we discussed earlier begins to develop during this period.
  - History pieced together from oracle bones.
  - What is an oracle bone?



Oracle bones from the Shang period.



# Politics and Society of Shang

- Primarily agricultural society ruled by a king and aristocratic class.
- King (王; *wang*) was an intermediary between “heaven” and earth.
  - Religious system revolved around gods in early Shang period.
  - Human sacrifice evolves into ancestor veneration by end of Shang Dynasty.
  - Emergence of idea of Mandate of Heaven (天命)
- Differentiation of classes: aristocrats, peasants, and slaves.
- Writing system disseminates throughout East Asia.



# Last Shang King

- King Di Xin (aka Zhou Wang; 紂王).
- Added territory to Shang empire.
- According to Sima Qian, he was given to drinking, women, and “songs with crude lyrics.”
- Ignored affairs of state.
- Fall of Shang Dynasty, 1046 B.C.E.



# Zhou Dynasty

- Zhou Dynasty (1045 – 256 B.C.E.), named after the Zhou province, emerged in western Yellow River as a principality of the Shang Dynasty.
- Founded by Ji Chang, son Ji Fa (aka King Wu) first Zhou emperor; claimed Mandate of Heaven.
- Battle of Muye (1046 B.C.E.), Zhou army attacks Shang capital; Di Xin sets his own palace on fire and is burned alive.
- Dynasty divided into Western Zhou and Eastern Zhou dynasties.







# Zhou Politics

- Zhou Dynasty becomes “feudal”: *Fengjian* system.
  - Decentralized rule, emperor appoints lords and vassals as territorial governors.
  - Eventually results in instability.
- Mandate of Heaven elaborated on.
  - Not only justifies rule, but also overthrow.
  - “He who wins is the king; he who loses is the rebel.”
  - Permanent rule of statecraft.

# DYNASTIC CYCLE

New leader  
gains  
Mandate of  
Heaven



Dynasty is founded by  
a powerful leader



Period of great  
power and  
prosperity

- restores peace
- restores glory to country
- builds roads, irrigation systems, improves everyday life of people in dynasty



Period of Decline

- higher taxes
- social services decline
- natural disasters

Leader loses  
Mandate of  
Heaven



Period of Rebellion,  
dynasty overthrown



# Zhou Economy

- Feudal economy and land divisions: “well field system” from Chinese character for well, *jing* (井); slavery decreased.
- Development of an artisanal and merchant class in the walled towns and villages.
- Improvements in agriculture = improved crop yields = rise in population.
- Silk trade begins with ancient Mediterranean and Middle East cultures.
- Barter system transitions into money system.

# Cosmological Beliefs

- Anthropomorphic god Shang Di evolves into Heaven (*tian*, 天).
- *Yang* and *Yin*; harmony/balance.
- The *Dao* (道, Way): ethical way of living, similar to *Dharma*.
- Competing schools of philosophy:
  - *Confucianism*: more philosophy than religion.
  - *Daoism*: more religion than philosophy.



# Confucianism



- How did Confucius (Kung Fuci) explain *Dao*?
- First, duty to family and community.
- Second, “human-heartedness” compassion or empathy for others.
- Third, deemphasize gods, death, and the afterlife.

# Daoism

- Founded by Laozi (4<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.E.), contemporary of Confucius.
- Similar to Confucianism, except:
  - Inaction over action.
  - Let nature take its course.
  - Stress on deities and spirits.



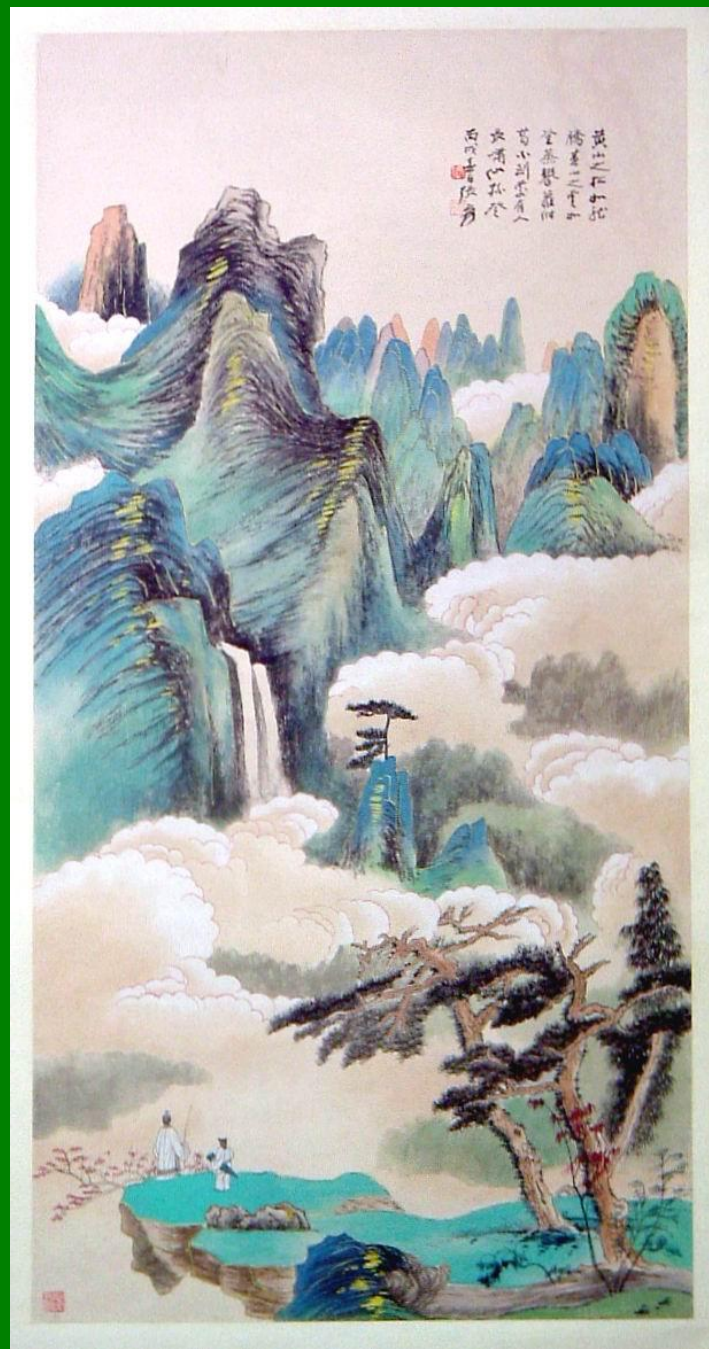
# Philosophical developments

	Concept of human nature	Concept of government	Tolerance for other ideas
Confucianism			
Daoism (Taoism)			
Legalism			

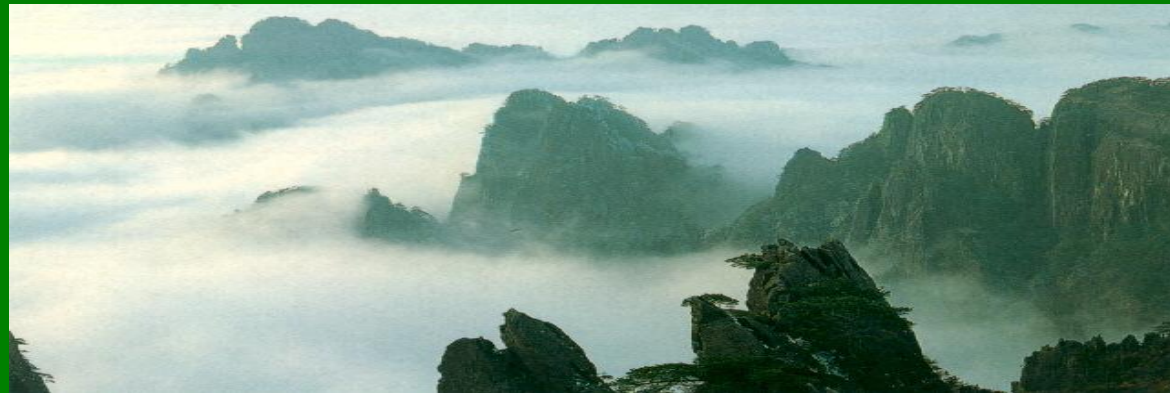


**Daoist landscape painting. What do you notice about this artwork?**





# Ancient China





# Chinese pyramids!!!!

