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## Cultures and the Development of Core Asian Civilizations

*...social development is the bundle of technological, subsistence, organizational, and cultural accomplishments through which people feed, clothe, house, and reproduce themselves, explain the world around them, resolve disputes within their communities, extend their power at the expense of other communities, and defend themselves against others' attempts to extend power.<sup>1</sup>*

### What Is Asia?

This book will explore Asia chiefly from historical, social, and economic angles. Historically it will attempt to put into context the long course of events generated by numerous social and economic entities, ranging organizationally from tribes to nation-states and chronologically from Paleolithic times to the early twenty-first century. This will involve a good deal of political history, the container within which domestic and international activities can most easily be examined. Because there is no physically discrete Asia but instead a Eurasian landmass, and since “the division between Europe and Asia is entirely arbitrary,” we will focus on terrain, including India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia eastward and Japan and New Guinea westward. The northern frontier will include Mongolia and the Russian Far East and extend southward to Indonesia. These territorial frontiers contain the civilizations that have most influenced what most scholars consider to be Asia.<sup>2</sup> Clearly the expansion of Islam and Western nations into Asia also greatly contributed to Asia’s development, but India’s and China’s thought and institutions still constitute the cultural foundations, albeit reinforced by non-Asian sources, upon which contemporary Asian nations build their societies.

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1 Ian Morris, *The Measure of Civilization: How Social Development Decides the Fate of Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 5.

2 Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 3. The Association for Asian Studies, for instance, generally follows this geographical range.



Asia in the early twenty-first century. *Source:* From [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/ref\\_maps/political/jpg/asia.jpg](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/ref_maps/political/jpg/asia.jpg). Central Intelligence Agency. Public Domain.

## What Is Culture?

The word culture suggests several possible subjects. It can refer to microorganisms in a Petri dish, to people with good “taste” who enjoy haute cuisine and classical music, to the literate elite (high culture) as opposed to the “great unwashed” (i.e., the masses), or to modern nations compared to the developing world. In this study of Asia through the centuries, culture indicates human culture, which includes the innumerable ideas and practices the people of the continent have created over the millennia to meet their needs, both real and apparent. Thus culture encompasses—but is not limited to—such things as religious rituals, political institutions, economic arrangements, marriage customs, artistic creations, linguistic conventions, eating habits, and so forth.

Cultures evolve, interact with other cultures or remain isolated, expand or disappear. Since culture includes all behavior, different societies emerged, reflecting diverse approaches to social relationships in communities of shared values. Societies have ranged in size from small bands of several dozen to tribes, clans, or lineages of several hundreds or thousands; to villages of quite a few hundred to many thousands; to cities of more than a few thousand to several million; to regions of tens of millions; to nations of scores to hundreds of millions; or to entities such as “the West,” “Confucian Civilization,” “the Islamic World,” and “Hindustan,” each with at least hundreds of millions of inhabitants. Of course, differences will exist even among members of any culture, but one culture’s common beliefs, behaviors, and organizational techniques typically distinguish it as a separate society and set it off from others.

Societies have also reflected, as they do at present, a range of geographical and climatological settings. Thus, landlocked communities of the past did not likely engage in seafaring activities, while today’s natural-resource-poor nations need to rely on other assets in order to survive or prosper. Consequently, peoples across Asia (and around the world) created somewhat varied or even radically heterodox measures to cope with different physical circumstances. The practices of some cultures produced successful material results, such as peace and prosperity, while the ways of life in other cultures brought about psychological and spiritual comfort, while at the same time still other cultures achieved both material and emotional success, even as others failed in both material and psychological respects.

## Cultural Categories

Social scientists have classified human social development into four broad groupings, or ways of life, based on the principal means by which people organized and exploited their surroundings: Paleolithic, Neolithic, Pastoral Nomadic, and Civilized, the last of which can be divided into numerous categories and subcategories. As these ways of life are not mutually exclusive, some or all of them have been practiced at the same time in Asia (and around the globe). However, such drastically different customs typically produced conflict among diverse lifestyles when in close proximity. Thus, as farmers occupied gatherers’ former hunting grounds after approximately 10,000 BCE, Neolithic and Paleolithic communities clashed; later, Neolithic farmers resisted but gradually came under the domination of Civilized urban elites beginning around 4000 BCE in Mesopotamia and Egypt, by roughly 3000 BCE in India, and just after 2000 BCE in China. And traditional civilizations based on agricultural productivity began colliding with civilizations based on industrial output after roughly 1800 CE. Although hunting communities, farming societies beyond the reach of civilization, and traditional agricultural civilizations declined in numbers, wealth, and/or power, they typically remained as vestigial ways of life transitioning to oblivion or “modernization.” But the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods account for the majority of time that human beings have existed; Pastoral Nomadic and Civilized ways represent relatively new human arrangements.

**Timeline: Cultures and the Development of Core Asian Civilizations**

4.5 billion years ago	Earth formed
64 million years ago	Dinosaurs become extinct
2.5 million–10,000 BCE	Paleolithic or Old Stone Age; hominid and human hunting and gathering develop
200,000 BCE	Human beings emerge in Africa
50,000 years ago	Humans arrive in South Asia
10,000 BCE	Neolithic or New Stone Age; agriculture begins
4000 BCE	Civilization begins in Mesopotamia and Egypt
3300 BCE	Indus Valley civilization begins
3000–2000 BCE	Bronze Age begins in various Eurasian locations
2000 BCE	Civilization begins in the North China Plain
1000 BCE	Iron Age commences in various Eurasian locations
Third century BCE	Chinese cultural and political influence evident in Vietnam
First century BCE	Indian cultural influence evident in most of Southeast Asia and much of Central Asia

**Paleolithic Culture**

Paleolithic or Old Stone Age culture employed two principal instruments that the earliest humans used to survive: crude stone tools and weapons, as well as hunting and food gathering. Paleolithic people foraged for wild plants that provided not only nutrition but also materials for clothing, tools, weapons, and artistic activities. Pottery shards have been unearthed throughout Asia, and in 2009 Chinese and Israeli archaeologists unearthed pieces of earthenware in southern China that were estimated to be 18,000 years old. At that point humans had begun the process of devising the ways and means of improving their standard of living. They learned by trial and error which products of the earth were edible or poisonous, possessed medical or manufacturing uses, or had recreational, religious, or other applications.

But such primitive people produced insufficient wealth to afford specialists who could focus on advancing secular and spiritual knowledge in any timely or reliable fashion. Nonetheless, part-time “experts” approximating artisans, shamans, and community leaders took up such roles on an ad hoc basis. Understanding of the natural and social worlds in which they operated remained primal, with most phenomena explained in supernatural terms and with little or no comprehension of why things happened. Such Paleolithic peoples inhabited most parts of today’s Asia, and they created countless numbers of different Paleolithic cultures.

**Neolithic Culture**

Neolithic or New Stone Age life appeared around 10,000 years ago and revolved around sedentary farming instead of wandering foraging. The appearance of advanced tools and weapons along with an agricultural economy marks this new stage of human development. Some argue that farming began once foragers became more familiar with plant life. Others claim that climate forced foragers to farm as either the Ice Age or droughts relocated humans to regions more favorable to agriculture. Still others claim that population pressure required foragers to turn to farming, which was known but not practiced until hunting and gathering failed to feed the growing size of drifting bands of gatherers. In any case, farming increasingly became seen as the chief means of feeding people. Humans began to control nature by domesticating crops and animals rather than purely collecting or killing what nature made available, and these innovative endeavors had likely evolved over the centuries, much as economic and military utensils had improved, by ongoing trial and

error. Very early in the Neolithic period, crops such as rice, millet, sugarcane, and hemp had become dependable sources of good nutrition and household materials.

Full-time farming resulted in positive and negative consequences. On the positive side, sedentary village life allowed cultivators to create permanent residences (most likely thatched huts), which gave meaningful protection against inclement weather and dangerous animals. During less hectic times of the agricultural season, villagers created and repaired tools and weapons and fabricated primitive textiles. They also frequently improved these products over time. Gourds, baskets, and eventually pottery allowed villagers to accumulate and stockpile crops and water as well as store tools, weapons, and clothing. More permanent residences permitted elderly villagers to survive longer, since they no longer needed to keep up with hunting bands or be left to the elements as in Paleolithic times. These survivors, no longer around-the-clock tillers, had time to pass on their experiences to younger villagers as well as to reflect on their surroundings. Thus apparently began the part-time shaman, offering advice and counsel to villagers, particularly instruction on fertility and how to achieve it for field and female. Other elders made recommendations concerning such issues as sanitation, childbirth, social relations, and so forth. Since little contact existed among distant villages, local knowledge tended to be viewed as universal knowledge.

On the negative side, village life immediately presented serious challenges. What crops were safe and could be produced in sufficient amounts to feed the village? Only trial and error, which is to say malnutrition or starvation if miscalculations were made, ultimately permitted farmers to select the most nontoxic and bountiful crops. How to deal with sanitation? Instead of a Paleolithic band of several dozen people constantly on the move and rarely concerned about human or other waste, villagers usually numbered in the hundreds, lived in close proximity to one another, and generated volumes of garbage. The rubbish in turn produced flies, rats, and other vermin capable of quickly spreading disease. Farming also meant dealing with nature in its many manifestations, especially drought, flood, locusts, frost, and heat, any one of which might spell crop failure and consequently famine. Thus, although lack of sanitation and episodic low food production resulted in early death, generally a high birth rate (once farmers worked out safe crops to plant) meant a larger village population. The slash-and-burn type of farming commonly practiced—whereby farmers cleared the land of trees and other vegetation, burned it, and then planted crops in the ash—eventually exhausted the soil and required farmers to search for more fertile land.

Evidence for Neolithic life in Asia indicates farming communities existed across the continent. In the Indian world, confirmation of village life can be found in nearly every region of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Kashmir, and elsewhere between 8000 and 2000 BCE. The most notable sites are Mehrgarh in today's western Pakistan and Shorapur Doab in southern India, both of which indicate plant and animal domestication. Chinese Neolithic locations date from about 7500 BCE, Hemudu along the lower Yangze River and Yangshao and Longshan near the Yellow River being the most prominent. The Ban Chiang site in northern Thailand, one of several Neolithic locations in that country, dates back to roughly 4500 BCE. Evidence from stone tools suggests that Neolithic culture came to the Philippines from Indonesia sometime after 3000 BCE. Phung Nguyen culture along the lower reaches of the Red River in northern Vietnam dates from 2000 BCE. Across much of Japan, Jomon or cord pottery culture began as early as 7500 years ago, while more recent and more sophisticated Yayoi culture materialized about 250 BCE and lasted nearly a half millennium. Farming did not arrive in Siberia until around 3000 BCE.

The larger Asian farming population and decreasing crop production due to soil exhaustion forced villagers to seek new lands. As more and more villages with greater and greater numbers of people moved across arable lands in Asia, those most productive lands became scarcer and scarcer. Since only 3 percent of the earth's land is arable and the remaining 97% is composed of forest, desert, or tundra, farmers eventually created an unsustainable standard of living. As Asia's arable land became insufficient to continue farming life as it had been traditionally lived, Neolithic ways began to be eclipsed by two new ways of life: Pastoral Nomadic and Civilized.

### **Pastoral Nomadic Culture**

Nomadic herding of animals as a livelihood for a small part of humanity likely began not long after the advent of farming. However, the mature pastoral nomadic existence that developed to the north of civilization in Asia—across the Eurasian steppe—resulted from two basic causes: (1) the vanishing of hunting territory, which occurred because growers in Neolithic and Civilized settings consumed lands favorable to foraging; and (2) the domestication of the horse and camel about 2000 BCE, which made possible mobility across the steppe grasslands. Not only did hunters and gatherers get pushed off their lands by farmers, thus requiring these foragers to find another occupation; but planters also forced many of their fellow planters to the margins of agricultural subsistence, compelling many of them to take up a fresh line of work. In both cases, that new livelihood often involved herding on lands with only minimal access to water.

In Asia, pastoral nomadism is associated with the Eurasian steppe, grassy grazing land north of China and India that stretches east from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. This includes most of today's Central Asia, southern Siberia, and Mongolia, where bands of a hundred or so kinfolk migrated via horse, camel, or wagon, leading the herd to the most likely locations offering water and fodder. Typically they herded sheep, goats, yaks, and cattle for the products they turned out, such as milk and its products, as well as meat for food, hides for clothing and yurts, and animal waste for fuel. These nomads characteristically came from Turkish, Mongolian, Manchu, Uighur, Hun, or Xiongnu backgrounds by the beginning of the Common Era. By that time, the Indo-Europeans from the steppe had migrated into India, Iran, or Europe. These nomads remained significant political and economic influences in Asia into the twentieth century.

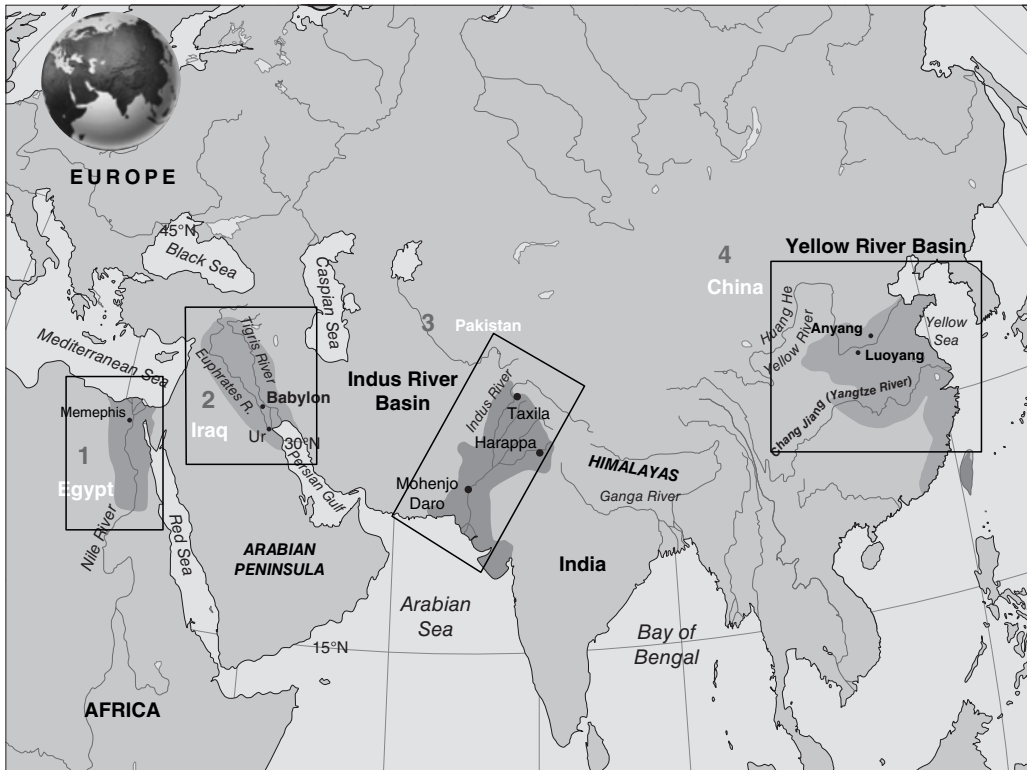
Life on the steppe consisted of constant battles. The most common clash pitted nomad against nature. The sky provided the most essential product, rainwater, without which animals and humans perished. The rain also made possible the feed that sustained animals and herders. This meant migration as either water or fodder became insufficient in a particular area. Heat, cold, and wind also habitually challenged human and animal existence. As bands moved around the steppe in search of shelter or provisions necessary for survival, they encountered other bands in search of the same, often resulting in violent clashes. Quite often as well, fighting among band members added to the list of brutality that bands characteristically suffered. And eventually, pastoral nomads and civilized cultures collided. Although the two different ways of life regularly interacted to their mutual benefit, usually involving trade, they also often clashed.

These struggles had many causes, including famine on the steppe or instability in civilized settings. Most civilizations employed terms of scorn to characterize their nomadic neighbors, the most common one being “barbarian.” Typically civilizations kept the nomads at bay, but occasionally nomads conquered and sometimes ruled their civilized neighbors. Life of the pastoral nomad changed very little from the introduction of the horse down to the twentieth century. The last emperor of the last dynasty in China was a Manchu, originally a pastoral nomadic/semi-agrarian people from Manchuria, and their Manchu Qing Dynasty survived until 1912.

### **Civilized Culture**

No one knows for sure where or when civilization began, but most historians would today agree that it did not originate in Asia east of Afghanistan. As it stands at present, city life probably began in either Mesopotamia or Egypt sometime just after 4000 BCE. Perhaps further archaeological research will one day unearth evidence of earlier urban life elsewhere, conceivably in India, China, or another Asian location. Based on current scholarship, evidence of civilization in India can be traced back to roughly 3000 BCE and in China to about 2000 BCE, and there are other possible but as yet unverifiable sites that may have developed civilized ways even earlier. But it is fairly clear that it began as a result of farmers being pushed to the margins of land where rainfall became

unreliable. A lack of water produced a search for it, and all four early civilizations—Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China—emerged along rivers flowing through terrain with minimal annual rainfall. Irrigation solved the water problem, at least temporarily.



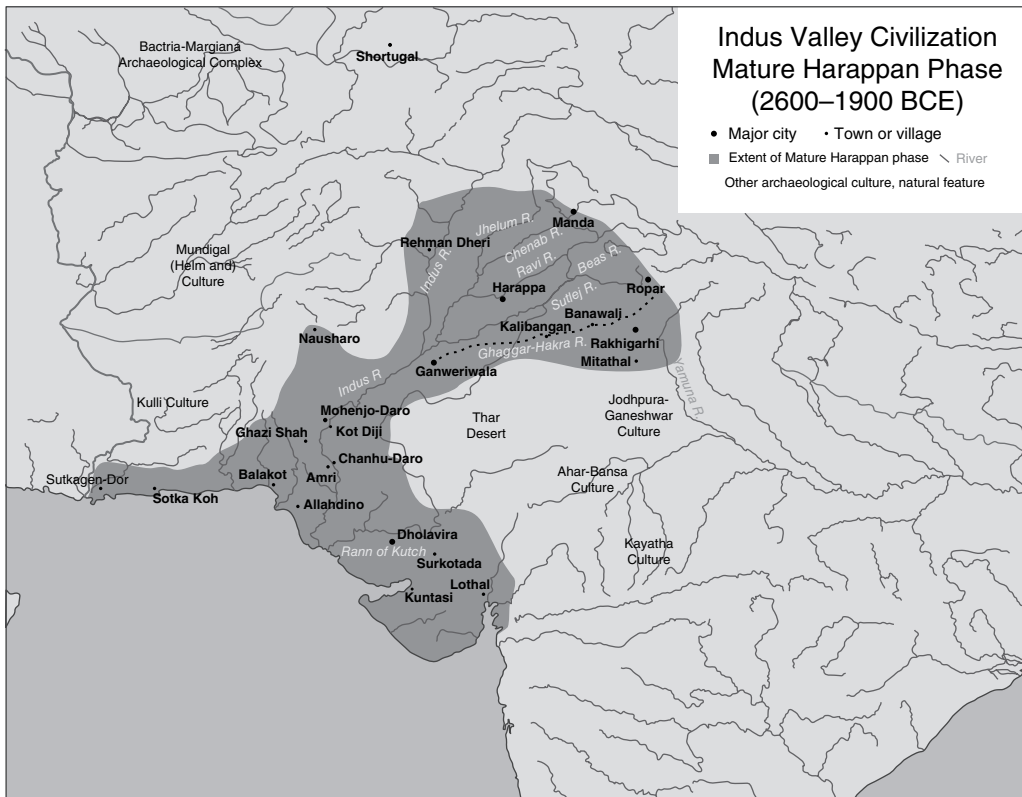
Four river valley civilizations.

What is civilization? Typically civilization includes a cluster of characteristics. It is urban; has rudimentary bureaucratic government that operates with the aid of writing; and can impose and collect taxes, provide for the community's defense, and dictate the community's common agenda. Whatever the program, it would be carried out by a society divided by specialization, the most significant cause of inequality. At the top of the hierarchy would be the political leader, usually a monarch of some kind, who would be assisted by bureaucratic advisors and be given leadership legitimacy by a priesthood. Below these elites, urbanites of every description provided all sorts of goods and services. Merchants, artisans, engineers, police, clerks, laborers, shamans, and other occupations emerged to meet the demands principally of their urban neighbors. Urbanites also serviced the needs and wants of the rural population, whose surplus agricultural output supported the city dwellers.

The farmers produced enough food surpluses to support the urban population chiefly because engineers made available an abundance of water via irrigation works. Not only did rivers provide water, enabling farming to occur in an arid or semi-arid environment, but also these natural waterways regularly flooded, depositing fresh topsoil on farmland, thereby swelling the agricultural output. Moreover, the constant reinvigoration of the fields by routine flooding eliminated the farmer's need to find new fertile fields. In the beginning, at least, civilized life seemed to generate win-win situations. True, not everyone was relatively equal as in Paleolithic, Neolithic, or Pastoral Nomadic

times, but during early Civilized times everyone's standard of living had vastly increased. And as established civilizations developed and new civilizations emerged, ways of life within an urban culture produced a diversity of occupations and outlooks. The differences between civilizations also substantially diverged, producing distinctively remarkable uniqueness that resulted in some civilizations being more complex, prosperous, inventive, and enduring, while others either did less well or came to emulate many of the ways of their more successful neighbors. By the advent of Chinese civilization, some 25 to 35 million human beings inhabited the earth, most living in Asia. Only a small percentage of the world's population lived in civilized cultures at that time. Gradually, however, most people would come to reside within the compass of Civilized societies, while Paleolithic, Neolithic, and Pastoral Nomadic peoples steadily became part of marginal ways of life.

**Ancient Indian Civilization** Academics still do not agree on which civilization in Asia possesses the longest continuous history. Certainly civilization in India began long before China's, but did it continue unbroken down to the present? Indus Valley civilization, sometimes referred to as Harappan civilization and at times as Indus-Saraswati civilization, originated about 3000 BCE along the Indus River and its tributaries in what is now Pakistan and northwestern India. It collapsed approximately 1500 BCE. Did the essence of that collapsed civilization continue to animate the subsequent Aryan culture of uncivilized, tribally organized people who entered India about that time from Central Asia and came to dominate India thereafter? Or did the Aryans basically create a civilization of their own with little or no input from the Harappan past? If the Harappan past fundamentally guides the Aryan future, then Indian civilization is continuous and thus longest. If not, China warrants the longevity distinction.



Indus Valley civilization, 2600–1900 BCE. Source: McIntosh, Jane. (2008). *The Ancient Indus Valley: New Perspectives*.

Evidence for civilization in ancient India, first hit upon in the mid-nineteenth century, comes chiefly from archaeological excavations conducted in 1921 and 1922. These digs revealed two major cities whose origins date back to the third millennium BCE. Harappa, apparently the model for most other Indus Valley cities, was unearthed along the Ravi River, a tributary of the Indus in northern Pakistan. Mohenjo Daro, the second major site uncovered, was found along the Indus in southern Pakistan. Subsequent excavations have brought to light another 1500 sites, two-thirds of which are along the now-desiccated Saraswati River, and the oldest of which is Kalibangan, located in northwestern India. Given Indus Valley civilization's proximity to the older Mesopotamian culture, the question of originality arises, since contact between the two existed. Here, too, whether Indus Valley civilization emerged on its own or owed its creation to outside influence will not likely be settled until the Harappan script is deciphered.

What do we know about India's earliest city life? The Indus River, which originates in the Himalayan Mountains, provided reliable access to water for both animal (humans, dogs, cats, cattle, and eventually horses and camels) and plant life (wheat, melons, peas, barley, rice, and other fruits and vegetables). The Indus and its tributaries also supplied dependable flooding that deposited fertile topsoil on nearby cropland. Consequently a plentiful quantity of food made it possible for the rural majority of farmers to support an urban minority of non-farming occupations. This symbiotic relationship resulted in a community of differing occupations bound together by an attitude of shared interests and values.

The cities, which appear to have been well planned, were divided into two distinct parts: an elevated citadel for the city's defense and refuge, and the lower city itself, which was organized along a grid pattern. Spacious homes made of brick contained drainage systems, verandas, living/bedrooms, and work areas, thus providing a fair amount of domestic comfort for many inhabitants. High-quality roads within each city made transportation and travel in the roughly five- to six-square-mile city relatively easy, while the Indus facilitated contact among the various city-states (which stretched more than a thousand miles along the river) as well as with the wider world, the gateway to which was the Arabian Sea, into which the Indus flows.

Unearthed artifacts such as pottery, seals, and tools (as well as the absence of some remains) offer clues to some of the thinking and behavior of these early Indians. The lack of remains signifying the presence of palaces strongly argues against the existence of a strong, awe-inspiring ruler, either in any particular city or among clusters of city-states that emerged in the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China.

According to one scholar of India, "Trade seals with signs from the Harappan writing system have been found not only in the major cities of the Indus-Saraswati civilization but also overseas or overland at Ur in Babylon (South Iraq), at Ebla in North Syria and at numerous ports in the ancient Persian Gulf."<sup>3</sup> Apparently merchants and mercantile activities constituted important parts of the social order in these cities. Moreover, the Indus Valley writing system, seals, and pottery make a strong statement of orthographic and religious continuity. By 2000 BCE along the river corridor, it appears that Indus Valley civilization had reached its point of greatest development.

How did Harappan civilization collapse? Several theories, none of which are mutually exclusive, attempt to explain the disappearance of the numerous city-states for nearly 3500 years. One speculation asserts that prolonged drought, evidenced by the drying up of the Saraswati River, compelled Indus Valley residents to migrate east in search of a more farmer-friendly environment. Another theory stresses the likelihood of massive flooding either caused by unusually large amounts of Himalayan snowmelt or due to a tsunami from the sea. Given the nearness of the city-states to the Indus or its tributaries, such scenarios could have spelled doom for urban occupants. As well, a massive earthquake in this earthquake-prone area could have destroyed the region.

3 D. R. SarDesai, *India: The Definitive History* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2008), p. 23.

Furthermore, the Aryan invaders from Central Asia had the potential of overrunning these hundreds of city-states. And finally, any combination of these catastrophes, not all simultaneously but over time, could have eroded and then destroyed the framework of Indus Valley civilization.

**Ancient Chinese Civilization** As in the other ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley, the initial stages of civilization in China originated in a dry region with easily worked soil near a large river. The Yellow River and its tributaries supplied both sufficient water for irrigation and regular annual flooding that deposited new topsoil on existing fields, an agricultural combination that generated the abundant harvests capable of supporting a large non-farming population. Exactly how and where Chinese civilization began is unclear, but social scientists generally agree that just after 2000 BCE a complex culture capable of constructing public buildings, crafting writing, using bronze, mobilizing manpower, and domesticating horses for chariot warfare and other tasks appeared in the vicinity of the Yellow River. As in the case of India, questions arise about whether Chinese civilization started on its own or if it owed its creation or at least much of its development to outside influences. Thus, the chariot and its similarity to those in other parts of Eurasia seem to indicate external contact. There is also dispute as to whether China's first historical dynasty, the Shang (ca. 1650–1050 BCE), in fact was preceded by an earlier dynasty. Growing evidence indicates the likelihood of an earlier dynasty the Chinese call the Xia.

Whatever future research authenticates, current evidence reveals the existence of a Shang Dynasty by at least the seventeenth century BCE, probably headquartered in today's Henan Province but extending across a good part of the North China Plain. An emperor or king, whose functions appear to have been both political and religious, presided over a central government. This ruler likely had to share power with a rural landowning elite but nevertheless could mobilize manpower and materials for numerous projects. Some of the larger undertakings included the building of palaces, city walls, and burial facilities for rulers, as well as the deployment of a host of talent that would organize laborers and artisans to construct the facilities. Priestly advisors or diviners or shamans provided the ruler with insight about the supernatural, chiefly by interpreting cracks on oracle bones. Since the ruler was linked to the supreme deity, he needed to know what to do or refrain from doing. Upsetting god might well result in one's government itself being upset.

The Shang Dynasty established the initial foundation for the ideal of central government in China that survives in amended form down to the twenty-first century. This central government model did not always operate successfully, failing to some extent between dynasties for greater or lesser periods of time. Unsuccessful central government rule occurred during times when dynasties were headed by weak rulers or when China's neighbors, usually nomadic ones to the north, invaded and temporarily took control. The principle of central direction orchestrated by rulers connected to divinity typically remained a Chinese political and intellectual ideal. By contrast, India seldom experienced central government rule by Indians. With the exception of two dynasties, the Mauryan (321–185 BCE) and the Gupta (320–540 CE), India either remained fragmented, governed by regional monarchs and lesser rulers—think of splintered Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire—or was ruled by foreigners until independence from Britain in 1947.

## The Ongoing Influence of India and China in Asia

Yet whether Chinese central government or Indian regional rule, both centers of culture eventually provided guidance for those territories surrounding them. Indian culture remained the chief influence in Central Asia until the arrival of Islam in the eighth century CE and in most of

Southeast Asia at least until the arrival of the Europeans. Chinese ideas and institutions served as both a broad outline and frequently a detailed agenda for civilization in Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. From the concept of monarchy to writing systems and educational arrangements, religious attitudes and philosophical outlook, and secular observances and popular culture, India and China served as repositories of culture that adjacent peoples drew upon and modified to suit their particular needs. And by the eighteenth century, China began to influence those territories in Southeast Asia that initially embraced Indian practices. Chinese migrants made their way there in search of employment as least as far back as the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and carried with them cultural baggage from the homeland. They brought with them a distinctly Chinese way of looking at the world that competes with Indian practices even today.

## Suggested Readings and Viewings

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- Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1953), especially chap. 1.
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