



## *Harappans and the Chinese*

Wow we spent a lot of time on Egypt, but we must move on because civilization arose in Mesopotamia, the Nile, and also in the Indus and Yellow river valleys. The Indus and Yellow river valleys are in the countries of India and China respectively and we now turn our attention to these early civilizations.

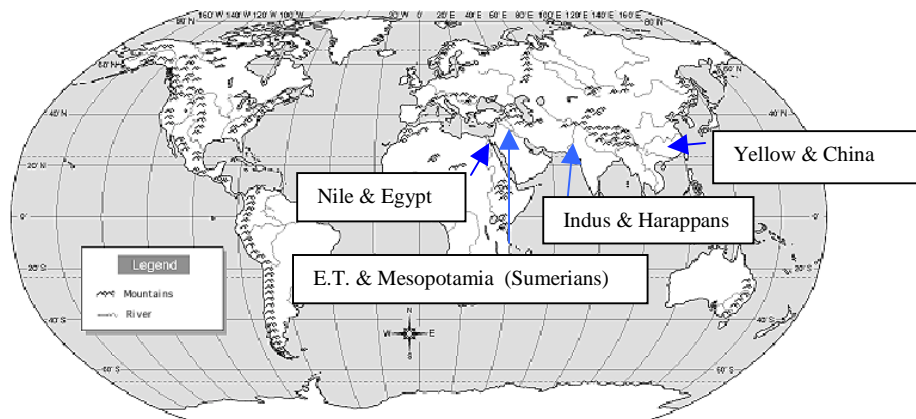
### *1. Harappans: There's not much to tell!*

Well first let's get the definition out of the way.

**Harappans:** early Indian civilization by the Indus River. Probably traded with the Sumerians, however, we can't read their writing, and they were destroyed around 1500 B.C.E., but we aren't sure how or by whom.

Well I believe I said it all. We have ruins of two great Harappans cities which we have named Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, and we have artifacts, and we have their writings over their walls and buildings, but we can't read it. Below is a quick example of their writing which I copied from the text.

What we need is a key, a Rosetta stone type object to help us figure out what the Harappan picture writing says. Perhaps one will be found, perhaps one never will. I can tell you that the Harappans built their cities in grid like patterns and had knowledge of plumbing, and that we believe their main gods were female, but other than that we know very little about them. Until a future discovery the Harappans are a mystery and thus we must move on to China. Don't worry we can read their writing!



## ***II. China: Land of the Dragon***

The Chinese are unique among the early civilizations in that they ruled by far the most territory, lasted longer than any of the others, and also knew nothing of the other early civilizations. The Chinese were so removed in the eastern corner of Asia that the Chinese believed they were the only civilized peoples in the world. All others that they encountered were barbaric and simple. The ancient Chinese thus called all outsiders “dog people” because they smelled like dogs. Like all other river valley civilizations they relied on the flooding of their great river, the Yellow, to provide silt and irrigation. However the **Yellow river was as much feared as revered**. For this reason the Yellow has two names. First the Yellow and also the “river of sorrow.”

- ⇒ **Loess**: extremely fertile, yellowish soil deposited by the river floods.
- ⇒ **“River of Sorrow”** – the Yellow River is one of the most violent and unpredictable rivers in the world. Its floods can be epoch and wash away towns and villages. In one more recent flood it killed over 300,000 people.

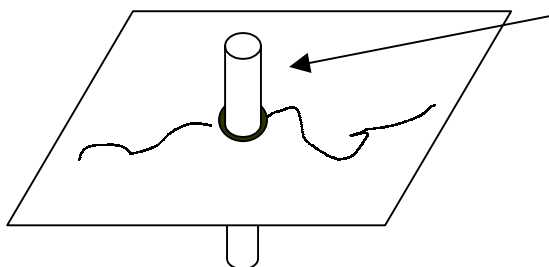
The Chinese prospered on the Yellow but the Yellow often exacted a massive price. Today the Chinese are building the most massive construction project the planet has ever seen. A project as big as a modern Great Pyramid called the Three Gorges Dam to prevent the river from its devastating floods. The dam should be complete by 2004, so keep watching the news on this incredible project. But let’s get back to the ancient Chinese.

## ***III. Ancient Chinese Spiritual Beliefs***

The Chinese then and now, hold a great reverence for their ancestors. Those relatives and family who came before them that are now deceased. The Chinese believed that the dead still maintained contact with the living world and especially on their living relatives. These ancestors can also influence the world of the living and will often aid their living family.

**Ancestors**: family members who came before you.

**Oracle bones**: using bones to communicate with your ancestors.



Drill a hole into a flat, polished bone. Heat a metal bar, red hot and insert it into the hole. The heated bar will cause the bone to crack giving you Yes or No answers to your questions. This was how your ancestors could communicate with you. Careful though, if you have not honored them properly, they could lie to you!

## IV. China's Emperors

The Sumerians had kings, Egypt had pharaohs, who knows what the Harappans had, and China has

**Emperors:** rulers of China who ruled with the permission of the spirits and the stars. This permission was known as the "Mandate of Heaven" which means the permission of heaven.

The spirits lived in the stars and if the emperor was unjust or cruel, the heavens could show their disfavor. Comets, eclipses, famines and floods could be evidence that the emperor was out of favor with the spirits and could be replaced. If he was a strong emperor he could survive such catastrophes.

China had many great emperors and dynasties. The Xia, the Shang, the Ming, however, there was one emperor whose **infamy** will never be forgotten

Means famous for a bad reason!

**Emperor Shih Hwang Ti or Chang:** first emperor of a unified China. Built roads, canals and made the Chinese adopt a common writing system. However, he was hated, then and now, for his construction projects.

⇒ **Great Wall of China:** 214 B.C.E. 1,500 mile long wall to protect China from barbarian invasion.

- Depending on where you are at on the Wall, it is 12 to 25 feet high, and 30 feet thick.
- It took 1 million people, 30 years to build it
- 300,000 people died building it. People who opposed or were suspected of opposing Shih Hwang Ti were forced to work on the Wall. Their families were enslaved also. Men, women and children died on the wall. Where they died the Wall was built over top of them so their spirits would protect China. The Wall is the world's longest graveyard and it is also known as the "Wall of Tears."



- ⇒ If the Great Wall wasn't enough Shih Hwang Ti also wanted to assure that no one would ever rebel against him. He wanted to control how people thought. Knowledge is power and if you control a person's mind then you have ultimate power over them. He therefore burned all books he didn't like and people who disagreed with him were buried alive. Later in your schooling you will learn about another infamous book burner named Adolph Hitler. But there's still more.
- ⇒ **Spectral Army:** 10,000 life-size clay, terra-cotta warriors modeled after once real soldiers, with real weapons, to protect Shih Hwang in the afterlife. Shih Hwang felt he would need protection from the spirits of all the people he had murdered.
- Thousands of artisans were enslaved to create this work.
  - Every soldier and horse is unique, modeled after a once living being.
  - Excavation of the work is only partially complete and will continue for possibly decades.

Shih Hwang Ti of course eventually died and many Chinese held wild celebrations. I told you Shih Hwang Ti was a book burner. Well whose books was he burning? Stay tuned grasshopper.

## V. *Great Chinese thinkers*

**Confucius:** 500 B.C.E. Chinese philosopher and teacher of moral values and virtue. Confucius believed people should live good, moral lives and avoid wrongdoing. He has many famous sayings and he is quoted often even today. Below are some of my favorite Confucian sayings.



*“To know what is right and not to do it, that is cowardice”*

*“Human nature is good, and evil is essentially unnatural”*

*“The superior man thinks of his character, the inferior man thinks of his position.”*

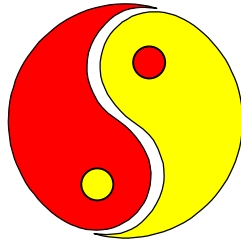
*“To prize the effort above the prize, that is virtue.”*

*“A tiger’s or a leopard’s skin might be a dog’s or a sheep’s when stripped of its hair”*

*“Not to retract after committing an error, is in itself an error”*

Although Confucius lived long before Shih Hwang Ti, his ideas were well loved and followed and since they had to do with moral and right behavior, they inspired people to speak out and rebel against Shih Hwang. Thus Shih Hwang attempted to destroy his ideas and his works but was unsuccessful in this. Along with Confucius another philosopher named Lao Tzu also had a philosophy for how to live a good, moral life.

**Taoism**: “The Way” one should live life with a balance and harmony in all things. You may have heard of this before but you know the symbol of the Tao.



**Yin Yang**: a balance of opposites. The light, good, pure, male force in harmony with the dark, corrupt, female force. As in the symbol, in your life, you want balance. Too much of any one thing, even though good, causes imbalance and causes you misfortune.

⇒ Fascinatingly the philosophy of Taoism was applied to Chinese medical practice. If you were ill, it was possibly because you had too much Yin or Yang in you body. In order to release it the Chinese practiced

**Acupuncture**: relieving excess Yin or Yang from the body using needles and pins. Like letting the air out of a ballon.

Only recently doctors in this country are discovering that acupuncture possibly has its merits. The pins, often heated, stimulate blood flow, deliver heat directly to sore muscles and release endorphins – the body’s own natural painkillers.

The Chinese were the most inventive and ingenious of the early civilizations. Inventing for the first time paper, the bicycle, the umbrella, the abacus, the compass and gunpowder in the 800’s C.E. For the most part it was simply used for fireworks. Gunpowder will not be used effectively in war however until the mid 1300’s C.E. in Europe. The ancients thus had to be content to bloody themselves with sword and spear. Well on with B.C.E. and the happening Hebrews☺