Chapter Four:
Early Societies in South Asia
• Background

- Neolithic villages in Indus River valley by 3000 B.C.E.
- Earliest remains inaccessible because of silt deposits and rising water table
- Also little known because writing not yet translated
Harappan Society and its neighbors, ca. 2000 B.C.E.
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Harappan Society
  - Foundations of Harappan Society
- The Indus River-
  - Runs through north India, with sources at Hindu Kush and the Himalayas
  - Rich deposits but less predictable than the Nile
  - Wheat and barley were cultivated in Indus valley
  - Cultivated cotton before 5000 B.C.E.
  - Complex society of Dravidians, 3000 B.C.E.
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Harappan Society
  - Foundations of Harappan Society
    - The Indus River
    - Political Organization No evidence
Harappan Society

- Foundations of Harappan Society
  - The Indus River
  - Political Organization

Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro - two main cities

- Each city had a fortified citadel and a large granary
- Broad streets, marketplaces, temples, public buildings
- Standardized weights, measures, architectural styles, and brick sizes
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Harappan Society
  - Specialized Labor and Trade-
  - Social distinctions, as seen from living styles
  - Religious beliefs strongly emphasized fertility
CHAPTER FOUR:
EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Harappan Society

- Harappan society declined from 1900 B.C.E. onward
  - Ecological degradation led to a subsistence crisis
  - Another possibility: natural catastrophes such as floods or earthquakes
  - Population began to abandon their cities by about 1700 B.C.E.
  - Almost entirely collapsed by about 1500 B.C.E.
  - Some Harappan cultural traditions maintained
The Indo-European Migrations and Early Aryan India

- The Aryans and India
  - The Early Aryans
    - Depended heavily on a pastoral economy
    - No writing system, but had orally transmitted works called the **Vedas**
    - Sacred language (Sanskrit) and daily-use language (Prakrit)
The Vedic Age 1500-500 B.C.E.
A boisterous period; conflicts with indigenous peoples
Called indigenous people dasas--"enemies" or "subject people"
Indra, the Aryans' war god and military hero
Aryan chiefdoms fought ferociously among themselves
Most chiefdoms had leader raja, king
Aryan migrations in India: first Punjab and by 500 B.C.E. in northern Deccan
- Used iron tools and developed agriculture
- Lost tribal organizations but established regional kingdoms
Aryan Evolution

1. Storal
2. Got tools
3. Agricultural
4. More food
5. Bigger population
6. Migration to new areas
Origins of the Caste System

Caste and Varna-

The meaning of caste: hereditary, unchangeable social classes

The Sanskrit word varna, "color," refers to social classes
Social Distinctions in the Late Vedic Age:

Four main varnas, recognized after 1000 B.C.E.: brahmins (priests), kshatriyas (warriors and aristocrats), vaishyas (cultivators, artisans, and merchants), shudras (landless peasants and serfs)

Later the category of the untouchables was added
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Subcastes and *Jati*

- Represented more elaborate scheme of social classification; developed after the sixth century B.C.E.
- *Jati*, or subcastes, were determined by occupations
- Elaborate rules of *jati* life: eating, communication, behavior
In caste system, social mobility difficult but still possible

- Usually a result of group, not individual, effort
- Foreign peoples could find a place in society of the castes
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- The Development of Patriarchal Society
  - The Lawbook of Manu
    - Prepared by an anonymous sage, first century B.C.E.
    - Dealt with moral behavior and social relationships
    - Advised men to treat women with honor and respect
    - SubJECTED women to the control and guidance of men
    - Women's duties: to bear children and maintain the household
CHAPTER FOUR:
EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- The Indo-European Migrations and Early Aryan India
  - The Development of Patriarchal Society
    - *The Lawbook of Manu*
    - *Sati*-social custom in which widow throws self on funeral pyre
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Religion in the Vedic Age
  - Aryan Religion
    - Aryan Gods
      - War god, Indra
      - Gods of the sun, the sky, the moon, fire, health, disease
      - God Varuna: ethical concern, cosmic order
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Religion in the Vedic Age

- Aryan Religion
  - Ritual Sacrifices
    - Priests were specialists of the ritual sacrifices
    - Ritual sacrifices for rewards from the divine power
    - Sacrifices, chants, *soma*
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

- Religion in the Vedic Age
  - Aryan Religion
    - Aryan Gods
    - Ritual Sacrifices
    - Spirituality
      - Thoughtful individuals retreated to forests as hermits
      - Dravidian notions of transmigration and reincarnation were adapted
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

The Blending of Aryan and Dravidian Values

- The Upanishads: works of religious teachings (800-400 B.C.E.)
  - The religious forums: dialogues between disciples and sages
    - Brahman: the universal soul
    - Highest goal: to escape reincarnation and join with Brahman
    - Samsara: an individual soul was born many times
    - Karma: specific incarnations that a soul experienced
    - Moksha: permanent liberation from physical incarnation
transmigration

Death

reincarnation

new physical form (reincarnation)

Human
Chapter Four: Early Societies in South Asia

Religion in the Vedic Age

- The Blending of Aryan and Dravidian Values
  - Samsara and karma reinforced caste and social hierarchy
  - Upanishads were also spiritual and intellectual contemplations
  - Taught to observe high ethical standards: discourage greed, envy, vice
  - Respect for all living things, a vegetarian diet
Good deeds

Honesty, self control, charity, mercy
Self control
Charity
Mercy, greed
Gluttony, vice

Floor #3

1st floor
2nd floor
3rd floor
4th floor
5th floor

Castile class
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Sources From The Past
The Rig Veda on the Origin of the Castes

“The brahmin was his mouth, of both his arms the kshatriya made. His thighs became vaishya, from his feet the shudra was produced.”
- The Hymns of the Rigveda
CHAPTER FOUR: EARLY SOCIETIES IN SOUTH ASIA

Sources From The Past
The Chandogya Upanishad on the Nature of Reality

“That which is the subtle essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and you, Svetaketu, are it.”

- The Upanishads