

Week 1, Tuesday

A1

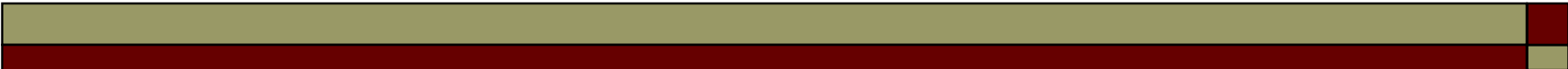
Definitions:

What are civilisation/culture/society?

HPAH5006

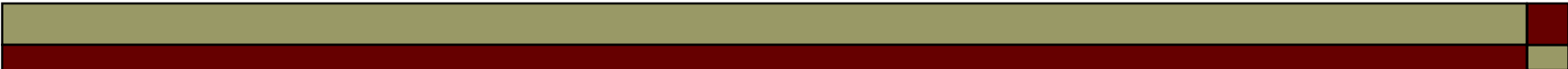
**Ancient Civilisations: Comparative
Analysis and Critical Perspectives**

Dr Katharina Zinn



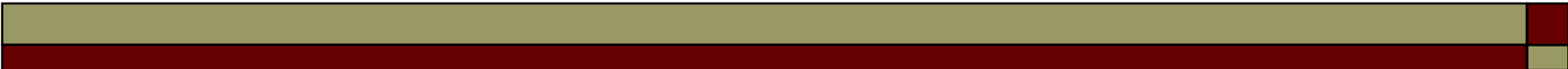
Comparative studies

- Of great value for understanding of
 - human behaviour
 - Cultural change
- BUT
 - Often lack of rigour → become
 - Uninformative
 - Sometimes even highly misleading



Comparative studies

- ❑ Never enough information to explain all aspects of civilisations
 - → led to comparison of presumably similar societies
- ❑ BEWARE:
 - Often these societies represent different levels of development
 - And even when on same level, there are specifics



Comparative studies

- ❑ Therefore:
- ❑ Detailed and independent understanding of each is necessary
- ❑ No uniformity amongst (early) civilisations!
- ❑ → cross-cultural research

MacMillan Dictionary

Culture, society and civilization - synonyms or related words



advanced ADJECTIVE

an advanced society uses the most recent technology or ideas

civilisation

a British spelling of civilization

civilise

a British spelling of civilize

civilization NOUN

a society that has developed its own culture and institutions

civilization NOUN

the state of having developed an advanced culture and institutions

civilization NOUN

the process by which a society develops its own culture and institutions

civilization NOUN

human society in general

civilize VERB

OLD-FASHIONED to help a society to develop its culture and institutions

civilized ADJECTIVE

a civilized country, society etc has developed an advanced culture and institutions

civil society NOUN

the part of society that consists of organizations and institutions that help and look after people, their health, and their rights. It does not include the government or the family.

the community NOUN

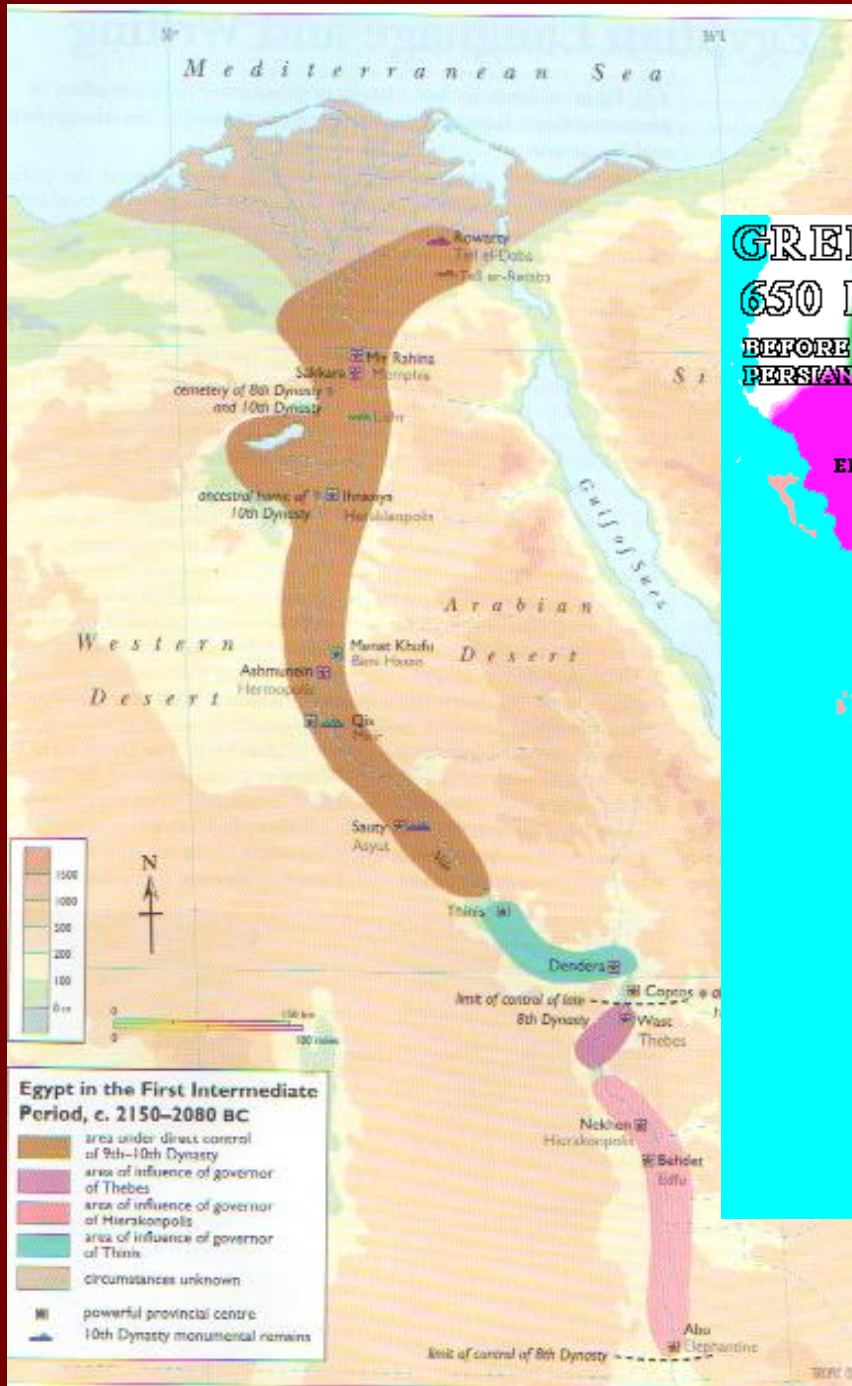
society in general

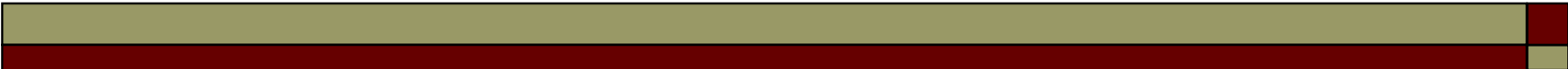


Colloquially:

- Civilisations as entities of vast scale

vast scale





Colloquially:

- Civilisations as entities of vast scale
- Civilisations as entities of long duration

long duration

Egypt

Periods

- Pre- and Early Dynastic Period
- Old Kingdom
- First Intermediate Period
- Middle Kingdom
- Second Intermediate Period
- New Kingdom
- Third Intermediate Period
- Late Period
- Ptolemaic and Roman Period

Dynasties

- Predyn. (5300-3000BC), 0-2
- 3-6
- 8-11
- 11-12
- 13-17
- 18-20
- 21-24
- 25-"31"
- No dynastic time anymore (332BC -331AD)

Maya

- Maya civilization: AD 300-900
- was one of the most sophisticated in the pre-Columbian Americas

long duration

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	Mesopotamia	Egypt	North China	Maya Lowlands	Basin of Mexico	Peru		Southwestern Nigeria	
						Coast	Highlands		
1500 —				Late Postclassic	Late Aztec		Inka	Yoruba Civilization	— 1500
1000 —				Early Postclassic	Early Aztec	Chimu	(chiefdoms and small states)		— 1000
500 —				Terminal Classic	Toltec		Huari Tia-huanaco		— 500
A.D. B.C.				Late Classic	Teotihuacan				
				Early Classic		Moche			
				Late Preclassic					
500 —	Achaemenid Neo-Babylonian	Late Period	Eastern Chou				Chavin de Huantar		— 500
1000 —	Middle Babylonian	New Kingdom	Western Chou						— 1000
1500 —	Kassite		Late Shang						— 1500
2000 —	Old Babylonian Isin-Larsa Ur III Akkadian	Middle Kingdom	Early Shang Erh-li-t'ou			Sechin Alto			— 2000
2500 —	Early Dynastic III	Old Kingdom							— 2500
3000 —	Early Dynastic I/II Jemdat Nasr	Early Dynastic Period							— 3000
3500 —	Late Uruk								— 3500

Comparative Chronological Chart of Early Civilizations



Colloquially:

- ❑ Civilisations as entities of vast scale
- ❑ Civilisations as entities of long duration
- ❑ Above individual nation-states
 - **nation state** - geographical area with political legitimacy as sovereign nation
 - NATION: from Latin: natio, "people, tribe, kin, genus, class, flock" → social concept
 - synonym to:
 - ❑ State (polity) with control of a specific territory, maybe associated with a particular ethnic group
 - ❑ Country as geographic territory, maybe in affiliation with a government or ethnic group

Definitions? Definitions! – Oxford dictionary

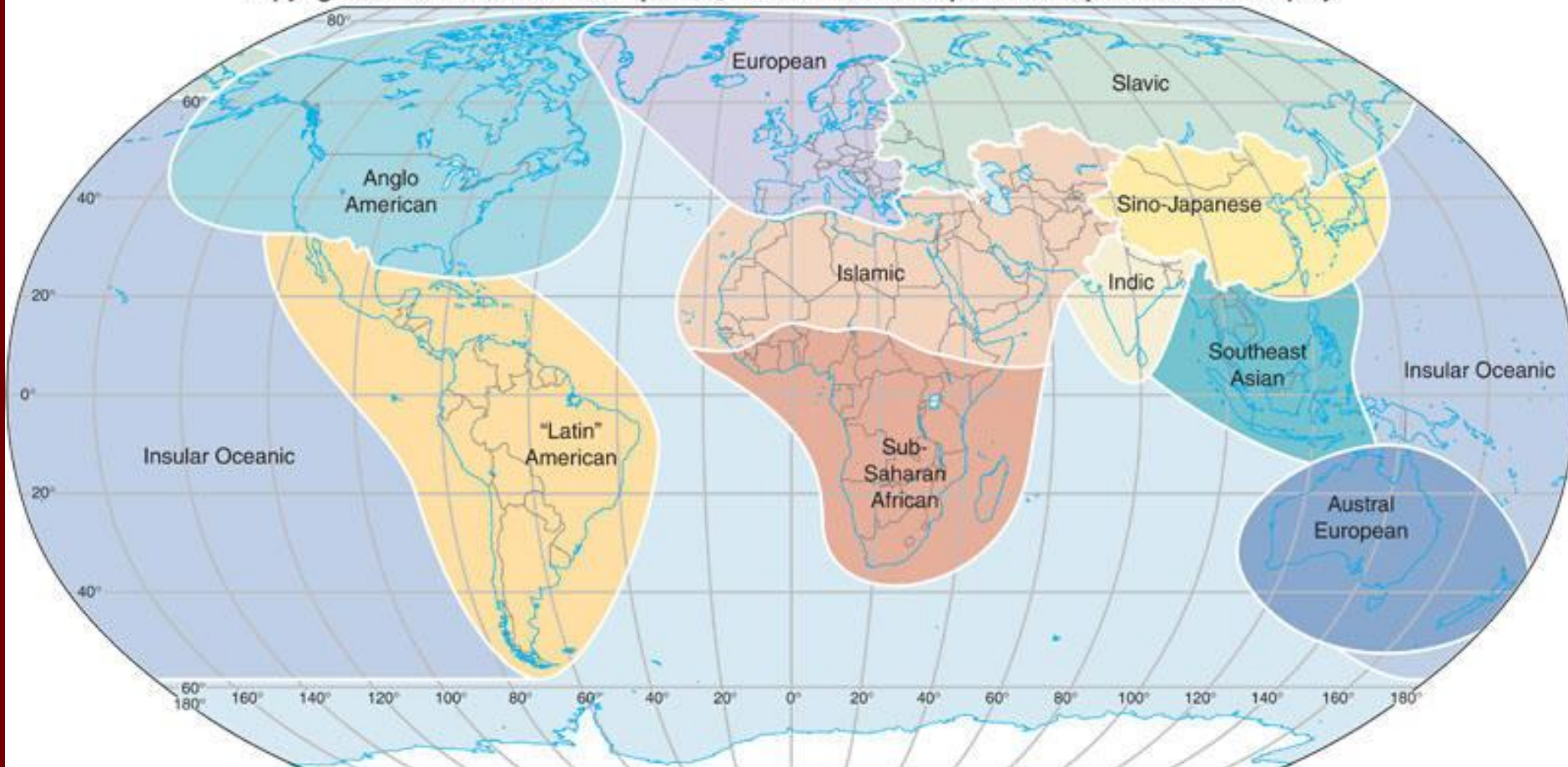
- ❑ **Civilisation:**
- ❑ the stage of human social development and organization which is considered most advanced
- ❑ the process by which a society or place reaches an advanced stage of social development and organization

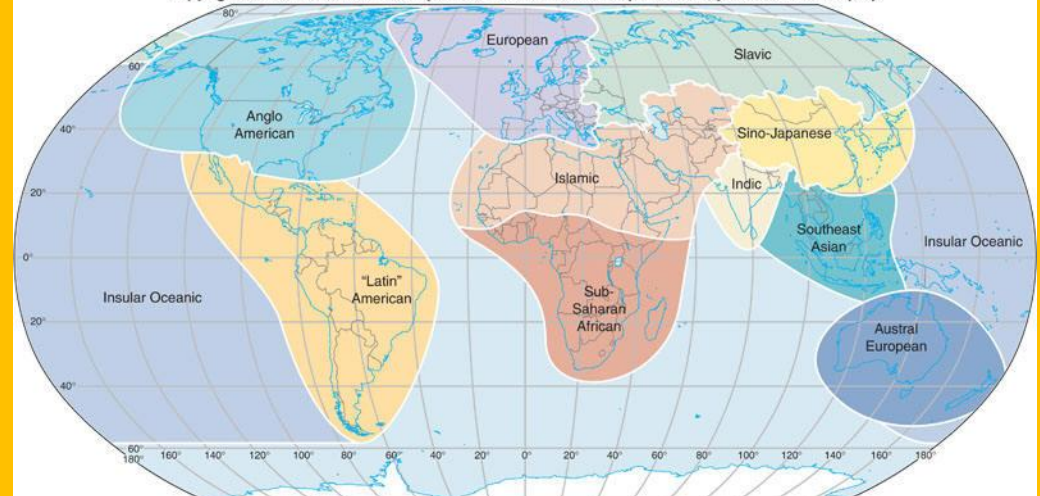
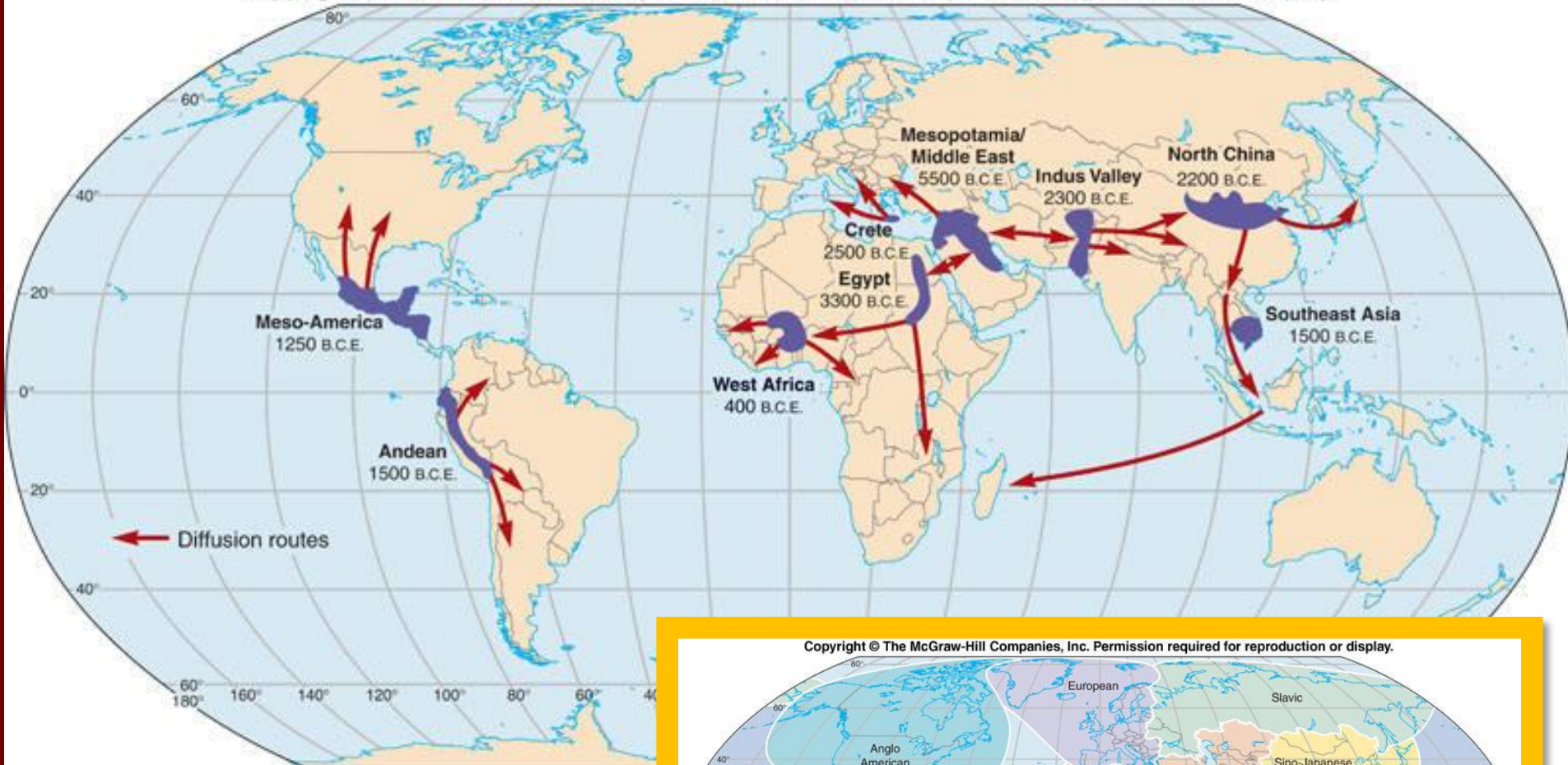
Definitions? Definitions! – Oxford dictionary

- ❑ **Civilisation:**
- ❑ the stage of human social development and organization which is considered most advanced
- ❑ the process by which a society or place reaches an advanced stage of social development and organization
- ❑ the society, culture, and way of life of a particular area
- ❑ the comfort and convenience of modern life, regarded as available only in towns and cities

culture realms of the modern world

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Gordon Childe aspects of complex civilisations → Urban Revolution

1. 'In point of size the first cities must have been more extensive and more densely populated than any previous settlements.' (p. 9)
2. 'In composition and function the urban population already differed from that of any village ... full-time specialist craftsmen, transport workers, merchants, officials and priests.' (p. 11)
3. 'Each primary producer paid over the tiny surplus he could wring from the soil with his still very limited technical equipment as tithe or tax to an imaginary deity or a divine king who thus concentrated the surplus.' (p. 11)
4. 'Truly monumental public buildings not only distinguish each known city from any village but also symbolise the concentration of the social surplus.' (p. 12)

Gordon Childe aspects of complex civilisations → Urban Revolution

5. 'But naturally priests, civil and military leaders and officials absorbed a major share of the concentrated surplus and thus formed a "ruling class".' (pp. 12–13)
6. 'Writing.' (p. 14)
7. 'The elaboration of exact and predictive sciences – arithmetic, geometry and astronomy.' (p. 14)
8. 'Conceptualised and sophisticated styles [of art].' (p. 15)
9. 'Regular "foreign" trade over quite long distances.' (p. 15)
10. 'A State organisation based now on residence rather than kinship.' (p. 16)

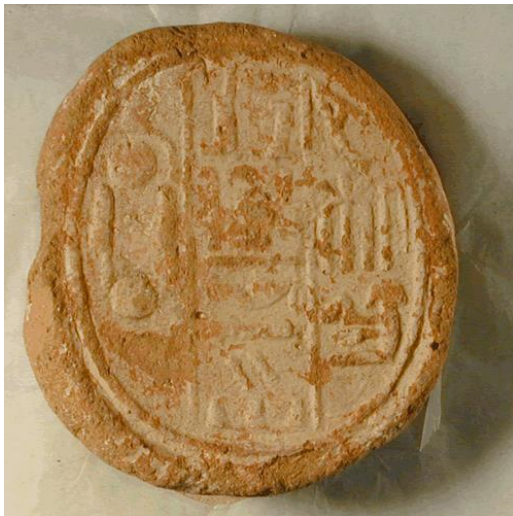
Exercise

- ❑ Your Childe?
- ❑ Pin down how Childe's characteristics apply to “your” culture.
- ❑ Let's discuss this comparatively across cultures.



Early civilisations – thought evolutionary ...

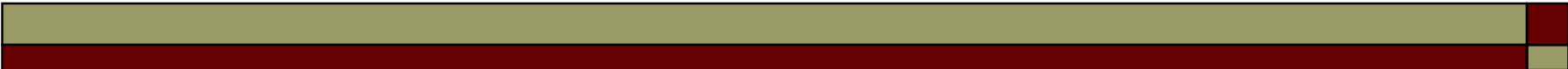
- ❑ Brought into discussion by unilinear evolutionists (19th cent.), reiterated by neo-evolutionists
- ❑ Societies are at a particular stage on the basis of distinctive criteria
- ❑ Often equates with presence of writing



Why writing as characteristic?

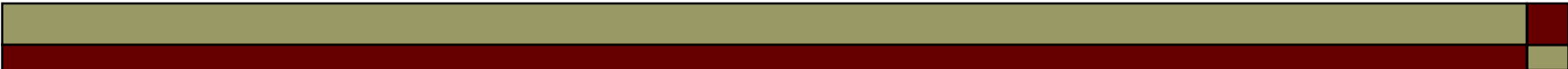
- Ability to record speech and take the word / communication out of the face-to-face situation
- Enabled new forms of
 - innovation,
 - commerce / trade,
 - understanding





BUT

- This approach **excludes** important civilisations in
 - Highland Mexico
 - Peru
 - West Africa
- These civilisations show no perceptible difference in overall degree of social, economic, and political complexity



More characteristics

- Longer trait lists needed!
- Childe (1950) in attempt to define early cities → characterised early civilisations

Childe (1950)

- Large urban centres
- Craft workers, merchants, officials, priests (supported by surplus of farmers)
- Primary producer paying surplus to deity / divine ruler
- Monumental architecture



Childe (1950)

- Ruling class exempt from manual labour
- Recording information
- Exact practical science
- Monumental art



Childe (1950)

- Import of raw luxury materials AND industrial materials

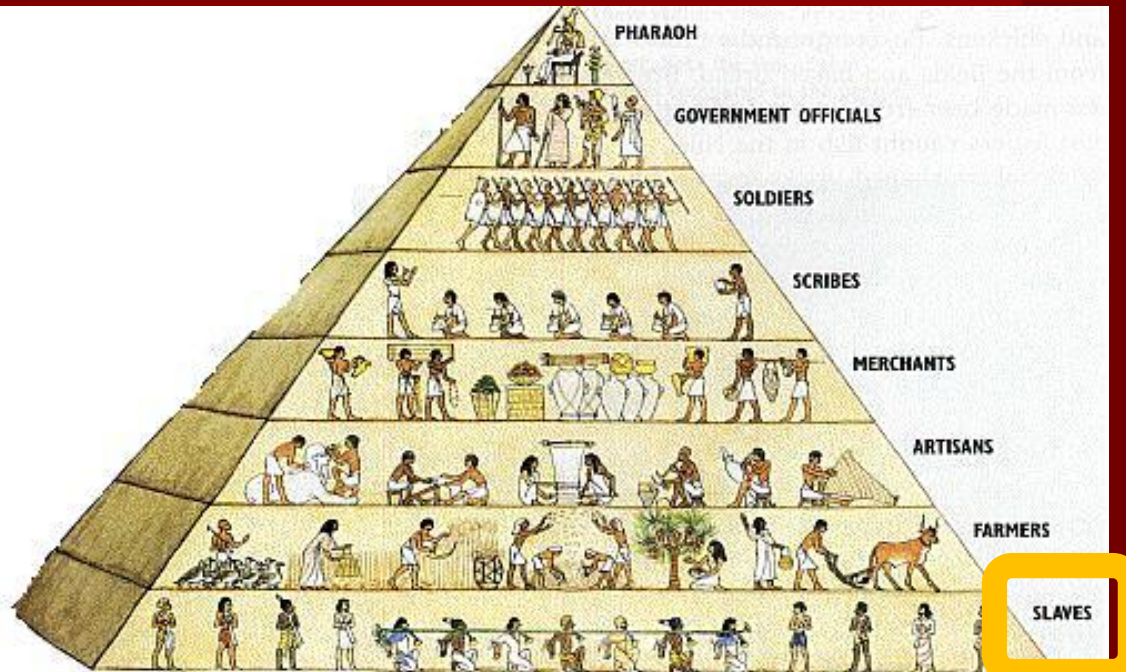
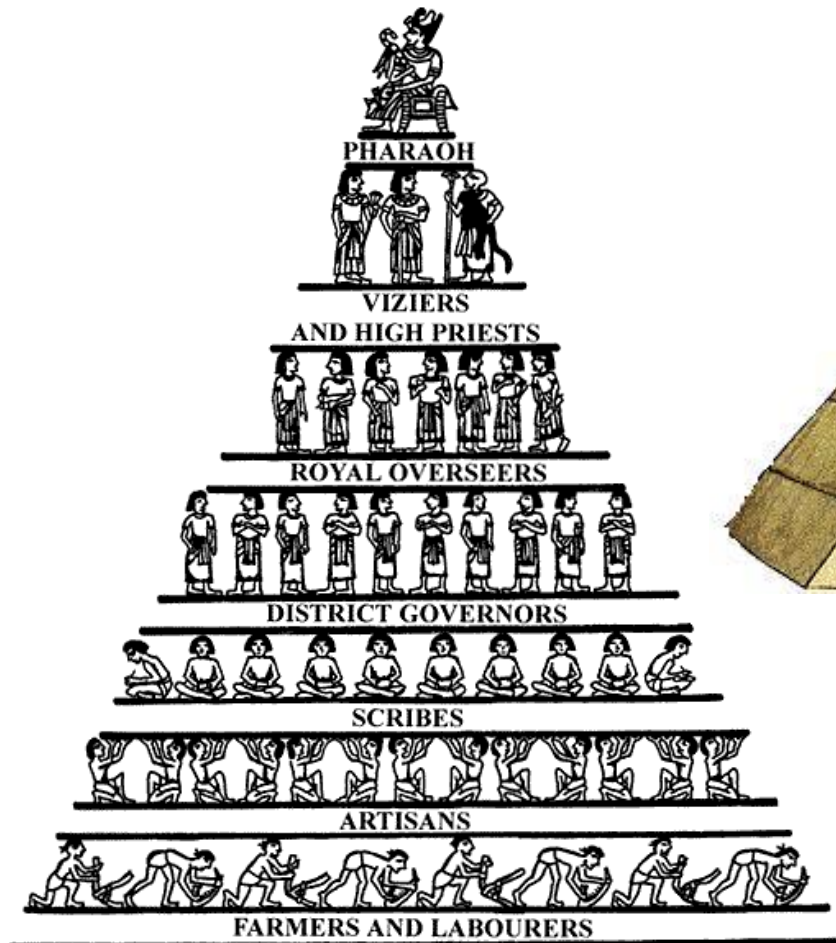


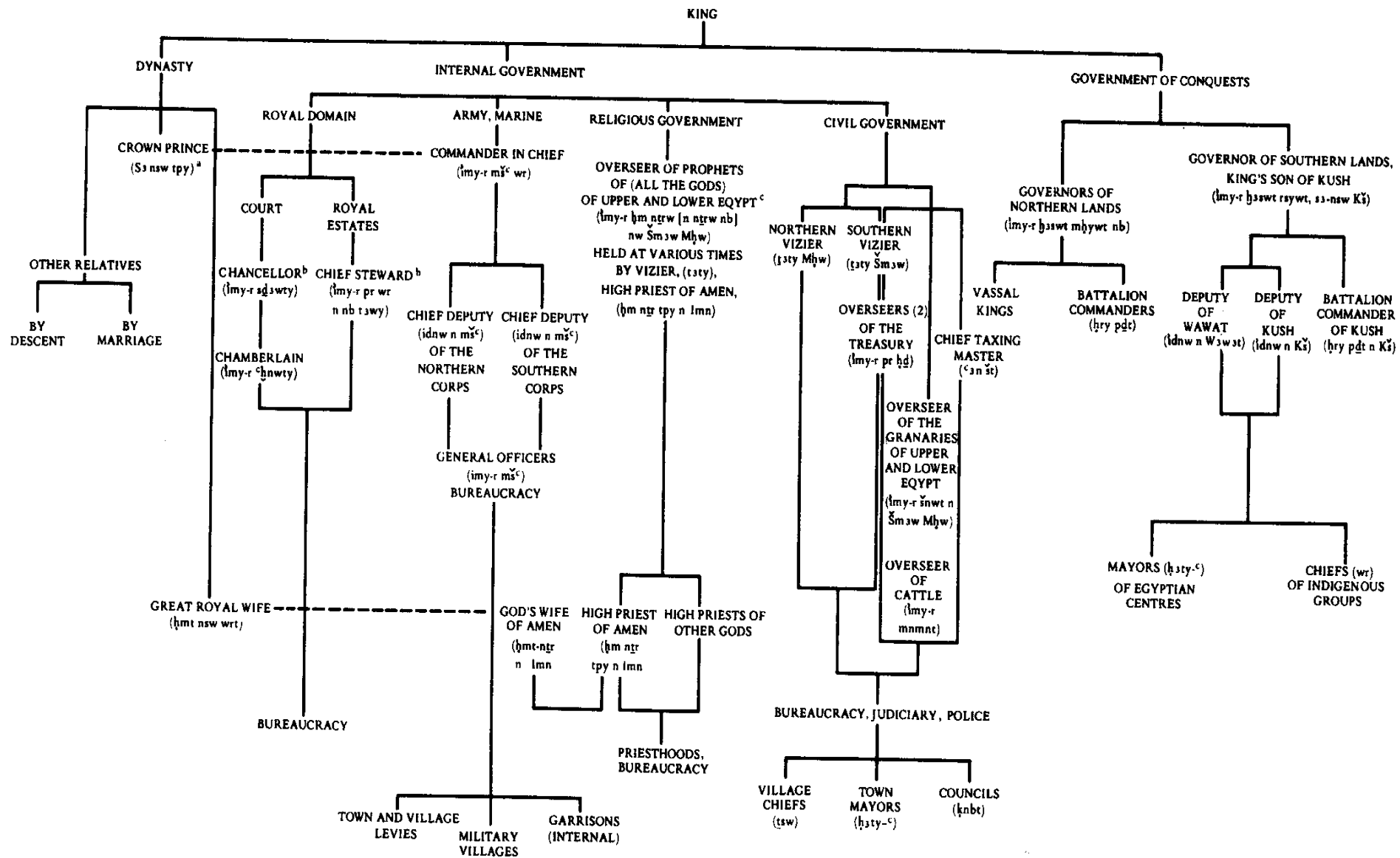
- Resident specialist craft workers (under control of ruling class)
- Social solidarity under pre-eminence of temples / funerary cults
- Dominant and permanent state organisation

Definitions? Definitions! – Oxford dictionary

- ❑ **Society:**
- ❑ the community of people living in a particular country or region and having shared customs, laws, and organizations
- ❑ Origin: mid 16th century (in the sense 'companionship, friendly association with others'): from French *société*, from Latin *societas*, from *socius* 'companion'

The society of Egypt





Definitions? Definitions! – Oxford dictionary

- ❑ **Culture: applicable for Humanities**
- ❑ the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively
- ❑ the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society
- ❑ the attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group

Definitions? Definitions! – Oxford dictionary

□ Origin of “culture”:

- Middle English (denoting a cultivated piece of land)
- noun from French *culture* or directly from Latin *cultura* 'growing, cultivation'
- verb from obsolete French *culturer* or medieval Latin *culturare*
- both based on Latin *colere* 'tend, cultivate'
- late Middle English = 'cultivation of the soil' and from this (early 16th century), arose 'cultivation (of the mind, faculties, or manners)'