We know about the pharaohs of ancient Egypt because of the written records that were left. These records were kept in hieroglyphics, a system of writing that was based on pictures. Unlike Sumerian cuneiform writing, hieroglyphics represented ideas or objects but could also stand for sounds. They could be carved into clay or stone but could also be written onto papyrus, the first paper which was developed by the Egyptians which made it easier to keep records.

Trade:
Many inventions were made during the Han dynasty of China which contributed to its culture and led to trade with other civilizations. China invented porcelain, paper, ink and gunpowder (which was used in fireworks). China traded these goods along a trade route they developed called the Silk Road which helped to create wealth and prosperity in China. Trade along the Silk Road led to the spread of culture, ideas and inventions amongst peoples.

Religion:
One of the world’s earliest civilizations arose from the Indus Valley about 3000 B.C. The Indus cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro were well planned and had a piped water supply and bathrooms. In 1500 B.C., the Aryans gained control of Harappan territory, and eventually most of India. The religions of Hinduism and Buddhism both started in India. Early Hindus believed there was a force in the universe called the Brahman. They believe people should strive to know the Brahman in their lifetime, and become united with the Brahman after death. By the sixth century B.C., the concepts of reincarnation and karma appeared in Hinduism. Buddhism was the product of Siddhartha Gautama. His message was to achieve wisdom.

The Legacy of the Ancient World
The Earliest Civilizations

Around 3500 B.C. in southwestern Asia the first of the River Valley Civilizations began. The first civilizations were born near rivers in four areas—Mesopotamia, Egypt, India and China. None of these are part of the Western World. The people in these areas were building cities, writing, and creating laws while people in the area now called Europe were still living in huts and caves. A civilization is a culture in which a large number of people share social structure, religion and art. The first civilizations were in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China. A civilization is affected by its geography and its age. Ancient civilizations made many contributions to the modern world, including the use of laws, writing, architecture, trade and the establishment of major religions.

Laws:
In 1754 B.C., Hammurabi conquered and united all the cities of Mesopotamia under his rule. Although he was a brutal warrior, his greatest achievement was his code of laws, which he had engraved on a towering stone monument. Hammurabi’s Code was not the first, but it was the most complete set of laws that has survived. It is important because it created a set of rules that helped to govern a civilization while trying to protect people even if they had little political power. It called for different punishments based on the class of the lawbreaker and the victim of the crime. In the Code, punishments often fit the crime by demanding “eye for an eye” or a “tooth for a tooth”.

Architecture:
Egyptian kings in the Old Kingdom are best known for the huge structures they built, pyramids. These large stone buildings served as houses or tombs for the dead kings. In order to build pyramids the Egyptians needed to learn the specialized skills of mathematics, geometry, engineering, and architecture.

Writing:
Sumerians created cuneiform script over 5000 years ago. It was the world’s first written language. Sumerians invented this writing system to keep track of business dealings because they traded with people who lived in lands that were hundreds and even thousands of miles away. Writing was a giant leap forward in the development of civilization. People kept records and new ideas were now able to be passed easily from generation to generation.