

## INTRODUCTION

History is the study of the past—of how people lived, how they were grouped into tribes and communities, how settlements grew into civilizations, and what happened to them. We learn about the past from discoveries made by historians and archaeologists\* about remains\* that are thousands of years old or more such as cave paintings, pottery, utensils, tools, weapons, and jewellery.

Why do we need to know about the past? It is because one can then understand how humans developed over thousands of years, from living in basic conditions and using simple tools to modern lifestyles. Today, man has ventured into space! Equally important is the fact that knowing about the history of the people and place where one lives is a link to one's identity.

Modern Pakistan is located in a geographically and historically important region. To the west are present-day Iran and Afghanistan; to the north are the Hindu Kush mountains across which are Afghanistan and the Central Asian plains, and again to the north and north-east are the Karakoram and the Himalayas beyond which are China and India; to the south is the Arabian Sea. Pakistan has thus been at the crossroads of history and all those who came this way have left their mark on our language, lifestyle, and culture.

Apart from the history of the subcontinent, this series also gives glimpses of parallel history and contemporary civilizations in the world. This book explores the Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Roman, and Chinese civilizations in the period covered from 2500 BCE to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE.

## MEASURING TIME

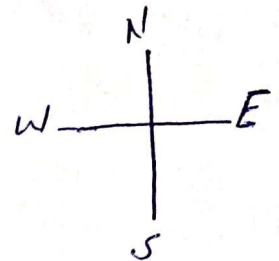
In order to find the time frame of the past we use important events as markers. The ancient Greeks used the first Olympic Games in the same way. Modern historians now use the year of the birth of the prophet Jesus (Hazrat Isa AS), Year 0, as the beginning of the Gregorian Calendar. The years before Year 0 are known as BCE (Before Common Era) and the years after Year 0 are known as CE (Common Era). For example, 250 BCE means 250 years before the birth of the prophet Jesus (AS), while 250 CE is 250 years after.

In Islam, the Holy Prophet's (PBUH) journey from Makkah to Madina is the date from which the Islamic era begins. This is referred to as AH which means Anno Hegirae, the year of Hijrat. For example, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) passed away in 11 AH, meaning the eleventh year of Hijrat. The Islamic calendar is known as the Hijri Calendar.

## GLOSSARY

archaeologist = one who studies evidence from the ancient past

remains = (noun) objects etc. left over from an earlier period



How can the age of an ancient object be confirmed?

One of the methods used by modern researchers is 'carbon dating' by which the age of an object is determined according to a scientific formula.



# CHAPTER I CIVILIZATIONS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD: MESOPOTAMIA

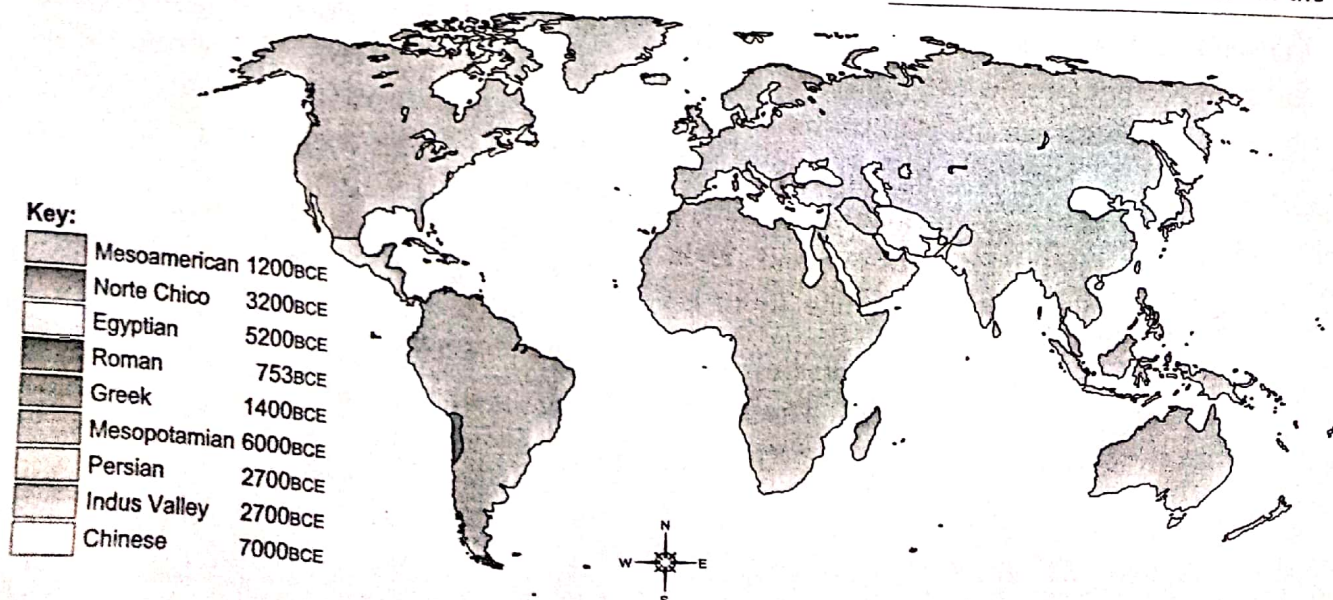
The study of ancient history shows that the world's major civilizations have developed near important rivers, such as the Indus in the Indian subcontinent, the Nile in Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq, and the Yellow River in China. Why do you think this happened?

The modern world is influenced by some great civilizations which existed thousands of years ago and are said to be the foundations of human culture. Civilization began when humans started to build cities, used agriculture to feed the population, domesticated\* animals, created a writing system, learnt how to make pottery and to use metals to make utensils, tools, and weapons. These civilizations began mostly around river valleys and were agriculture-based; their buildings, pottery, ideas, and cultural influences are part of people's lives today.

In the subcontinent of India, the Indus Valley Civilization matched other civilizations such as that of Egypt on the River Nile, Rome along the River Tiber, Persia in the Iranian plateau, and China along the Yellow River or Huang He area. The ancient Greek civilization, which grew around the Aegean Sea, is considered by historians as the foundation of western civilization by influencing its language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, art, and architecture. The earliest civilization in South America is Norte Chico in the northern coastal region of Peru, at the foot of the Andes Mountains. It existed from 9000 to 1800BCE and was mainly an agricultural society. The Olmecs (c.1600 to 400BCE) and Mayas (2600BCE to 400CE) were both part of the Mesoamerican civilization and inhabited the area of Mexico and the strip of land that joins North and South America. Their artifacts reveal sculptures carved in stone and jade, and structures such as temples and pyramids.

All civilizations depended on agriculture for survival. Use of irrigation and crop rotation yielded\* surplus food which could be stored. Thus, in early civilizations people not only farmed but could work as artisans, priests and priestesses, soldiers, and government officials.

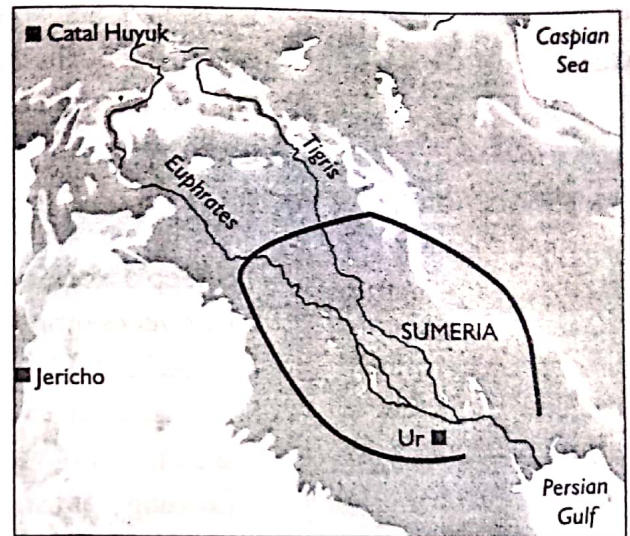
*The sites of ancient civilizations in the world*





## **MESOPOTAMIA: 'THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION'**

Mesopotamia, which means 'between two rivers', is the area between the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers in today's Iraq and was also called Sumeria. It is known as the 'Fertile Crescent' and 'the cradle of civilization'. The two rivers produced fertile soil and a stable supply of water for irrigation which enabled the people living there to make farming their livelihood. The Mesopotamian civilization covered a large span of time as well as area. Early evidence dates back to 5300 BCE when this civilization developed into city states, till the conquest of this region by the Persians and then Greeks around the sixth to third centuries BCE. The Mesopotamian Civilization covered the entire area of modern Iraq.)



*'The land of two rivers'*

### **INVENTION OF WRITING**

An important feature of this civilization is that it was one of the four places where writing was invented. The Mesopotamian language was known as Sumerian and the script was called cuneiform. When the cuneiform script was developed, people were able to learn more about this civilization and its progress over the centuries. This civilization was advanced for its time in literature, language, mathematics, astronomy, and science.



*A clay tablet showing  
cuneiform writing*

### **CODE OF HAMMURABI**

With the passage of time, city states developed in the Mesopotamian region and had their own laws. The most famous of these is the Code of Hammurabi, a Babylonian ruler who ruled around 1700 BCE. He made laws for his kingdom and had them inscribed in cuneiform script on a huge stone tablet. These laws were very strict, but unfortunately, they did not apply fairly to everyone—the rich and powerful people got a lighter punishment than the poor ones.

Mesopotamia was ruled by different kings from its cities, unlike the Pharaohs of Egypt whose generations ruled through the centuries. Among the famous Mesopotamian rulers are Sargon, Hammurabi, Ashurbanipal, and Nebuchadnezzar.)

*The stone pillar—stele—  
showing Hammurabi and his  
Code of Laws inscribed below*





**CIVILIZATIONS OF  
THE ANCIENT WORLD:  
MESOPOTAMIA**

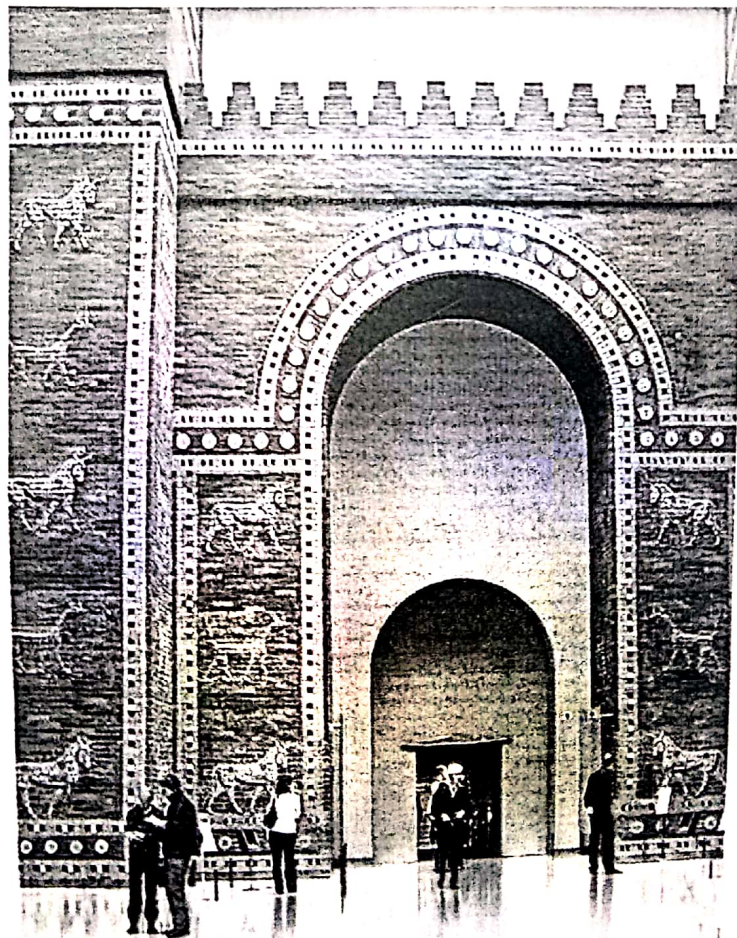
**Do you know?**

Mesopotamian mathematics and science, based on a 60 numeral system, are believed to be the source of the 60-minute hour, the 24-hour day, and the 360-degree circle. The Sumerian calendar was based on the seven-day week. This form of mathematics was also instrumental in early map-making.

The Mesopotamian civilization is also known for its art and architecture. Their temples had beautiful and amazingly realistic relief\* carving on the walls and doors. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian ruler in the sixth century BCE was famous for the construction of the 'Hanging Gardens of Babylon', one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

**INVENTION OF THE CALENDAR**

To keep a track of time, the Sumerians invented calendars, which they divided into twelve months based on the cycle of the moon. Since a year consisting of twelve lunar months is shorter by eleven days than a solar year, the Sumerians added a 'leap month' every three years in order to catch up with the Sun. This interest in measuring long periods of time led them to develop knowledge of astronomy.



*The Ishtar Gate was the main entrance into Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. It is covered with wonderful ceramic figures of animals and humans. This structure is now in the Berlin State Museum in Germany.*

The Sumerians believed in and worshipped many gods who, they believed, were very powerful, but were like humans. Many of these gods controlled natural forces and were also associated with astronomical bodies, such as the Sun, moon, and stars. When they were displeased with humans, they sent natural disasters, like floods, storms and earthquakes to punish them.

Like many civilizations and kingdoms, this civilization also came to an end when other new and powerful empires like Persia took over in the second century BCE.

## QUESTIONS

1. Why did ancient civilizations grow near rivers? Name some of the ancient civilizations and the regions where they flourished.
2. What are some of the features of ancient civilizations?
3. What is meant by 'cradle of civilization' and which region does this term refer to?
4. Why did ancient Mesopotamia come to be known as the 'fertile crescent'?
5. What factors made the Mesopotamian civilization stand out from other civilizations?
6. What was the Code of Hammurabi? Explain its importance.
7. Name the language of the Mesopotamians and explain its importance in history.
8. Who was Nebuchadnezzar and why is he famous?

## Activity

On a blank map of modern Iraq, draw the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the main cities of the Mesopotamian civilization. Find (or draw) a picture of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon and paste it on the map.

## GLOSSARY

*domesticated* =  
tamed

*yielded* = gave,  
brought forth (in  
terms of farming)

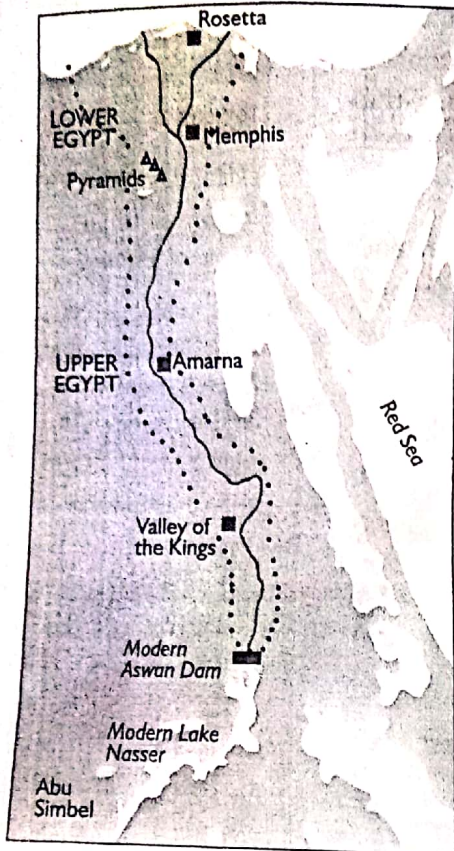
*deciphered* = decoded

*relief* = carving wood  
or stone surface to  
show raised features



## CHAPTER 2

# ANCIENT EGYPT OF THE PHARAOHS



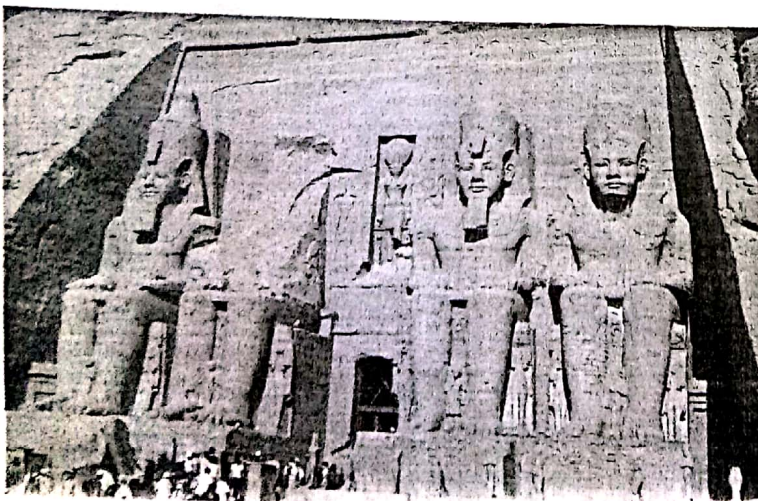
The Nile Valley: the fertile irrigated area on either side of the River Nile is shown within the dotted line.

Nearly 5000 years ago an ancient civilization existed along the River Nile in Egypt just as the Indus Valley Civilization existed around the River Indus. The River Nile is nearly 4000 miles long and is the longest river in the world. The White Nile rises from Lake Tanganyika in South-east Africa and runs south to north through Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan where it is joined by the Blue Nile which rises from Lake Tana in Ethiopia. The delta of the Nile is on the Mediterranean Sea. The Nile is flanked\* by deserts on both east and west, and there are forests, grasslands, and highlands in the south.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIVER NILE

Ancient Egyptians found many uses for the River Nile. When spring came around, the water ran down the mountains and flooded the Nile and surrounding areas, and when it receded\* it left fertile soil on the banks where the ancient Egyptians grew crops. The river also provided them with fresh water for drinking and bathing, and it was also used for transportation of goods, making trade flourish\*. Along the shores of the Nile grew a reed-like plant called papyrus which was used for making paper. The river banks provided materials for building; cotton and flax\* were grown for cotton fabric and linen. The people enjoyed a prosperous life style because of the Nile. Egyptians were mostly priests, scribes, craftsmen, and farmers.)

### ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE PHARAOH



The statues of Ramesses II and other pharaohs at the temple at Abu Simbel

The ruler of Egypt was called the Pharaoh and he owned everything in the land. He was helped by an organized army, a police force, and a huge number of ministers and government officials to run the country. The Pharaoh had a Wazir or Prime Minister who reported to him daily on what was happening all over Egypt. The Wazir was also the Chief Justice and people came to him if the lower courts could not handle their problems fairly. This system of government carried on successfully for hundreds of years, but we also hear of cruel and harsh rulers among them.



The ancient Egyptians were polytheists (worshipping many gods: poly=many; theists= believers in gods). They had nearly 2000 gods and goddesses, who usually had animal heads. Temples were built to worship them and the space was used for other purposes too such as a school for children and for gatherings and festivals by the people.

## HIEROGLYPHS

The Egyptians called hieroglyphs 'the words of God' as these were used primarily by the priests. These painstakingly drawn symbols were suitable for decorating the walls of temples too.

Hieroglyphs are written in rows or columns and can be read from left to right or from right to left. The direction in which the text is to be read is defined by the direction of the human or animal figures that always face the beginning of the line. The upper symbols are read before the lower ones.

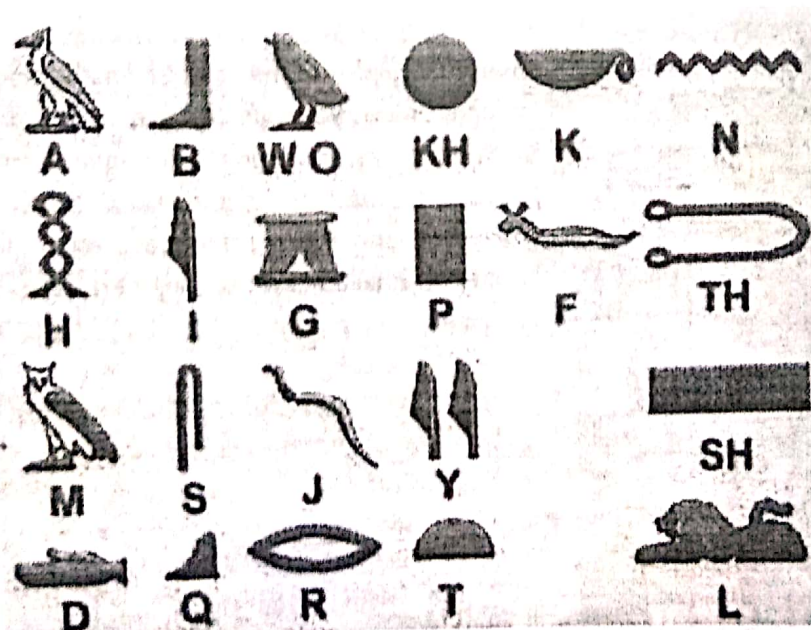
Egyptian civilization came to be known for its writing as they wrote everything down and kept records. They used papyrus as well as the temple and pyramid walls for writing. At first they used pictures known as hieroglyphics but it took too long to write like that. So they created a new form of writing called Demotic, i.e. coming from the spoken language. Archaeologists discovered how to read demotic writing but could not read the hieroglyphics till the Rosetta Stone was discovered 200 years ago. It had the same story written on it in Greek, Demotic, and Hieroglyphic. Scholars and experts thus managed to read the picture writing form and to decipher the hieroglyphics.



Horus was the god of the river, the land, and power.

### Do you know?

The Rosetta Stone was found in the Egyptian village of Rasheeda, near the Nile Delta, in 1799, by French soldiers fighting there. It is now kept in the British Museum in London. It helped in deciphering the written language called Hieroglyphic.



A sample of hieroglyphics with matching alphabet to show sounds



## ANCIENT EGYPT OF THE PHARAOHS

### Do you know?

The word 'mummy' comes from the Arabic word 'mumiya' for corpse.

Papyrus is a thin paper-like material produced from the pith (inner part) of the papyrus plant which grew in abundance in the Nile Delta of Egypt. Papyrus is first known to have been used in ancient Egypt but it was also used throughout the Mediterranean region. Ancient Egyptians used this plant as a writing material, and also for boats, mattresses, mats, rope, sandals, and baskets.

Papyrus was first manufactured in Egypt as far back as 3000 BCE. It is made from the stem of the papyrus plant by cutting out the sticky, fibrous pith in long strips, soaking it, and then pressing it down and gluing it in two layers to make a thick paper. Its use in Egypt continued until it was replaced by more inexpensive paper introduced by Arabs.

### THE PYRAMIDS

People today are fascinated by the temples and pyramids of ancient Egypt: the sheer size and the precision of their construction is amazing especially because they were built at a time when people did not have the machines, as we have now, to help in completing the buildings.
















The Egyptians believed in a life after death, and prepared for it physically as well as spiritually. Pyramids, which are counted as one of the Seven Wonders of the World, are the huge tombs built by Pharaohs for themselves. The

Egyptians used the art of mummification to bury their dead. The bodies were carefully embalmed\* and wrapped up in cloth bandages to preserve them. The huge tombs also contained goods, including grains and honey, which they might need in the afterlife. They also made models of objects of everyday life to be buried with them such as toys, clothing, and jewellery. The pharaohs and their relatives were the best preserved and the most famous mummies are those of Pharaohs Tutankhamen, Seti I, and Rameses II.



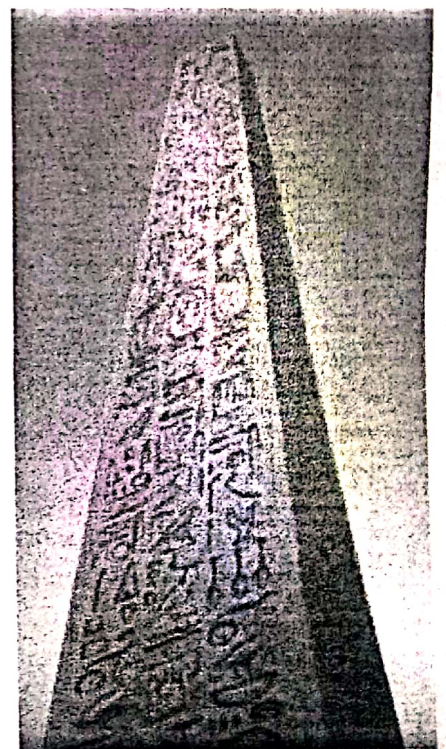
The Khafre pyramid is guarded by the Sphinx, a mythical creature with a lion's body and a large human head, carved from a mound of natural rock at Giza.



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
									
100	1000	10,000	100,000	1,000,000					
									

## The Egyptian system of counting

- The Egyptians invented the decimal system of counting. They used seven different symbols.
- 1 was represented by a single stroke.
- 10 was shown by drawing one hobble i.e. a strap used to tie an animal's feet.
- 100 was shown by drawing one coil of rope.
- 1,000 was represented by a drawing of one lotus plant.
- 10,000 was shown as one finger.
- 100,000 was represented by a drawing of one frog. (A hieroglyphic image of six frogs in a row would mean 600,000.)
- 1,000,000 was represented by the figure of a god with raised arms.



The obelisk\* at Luxor, Egypt, with hieroglyphic writing on it