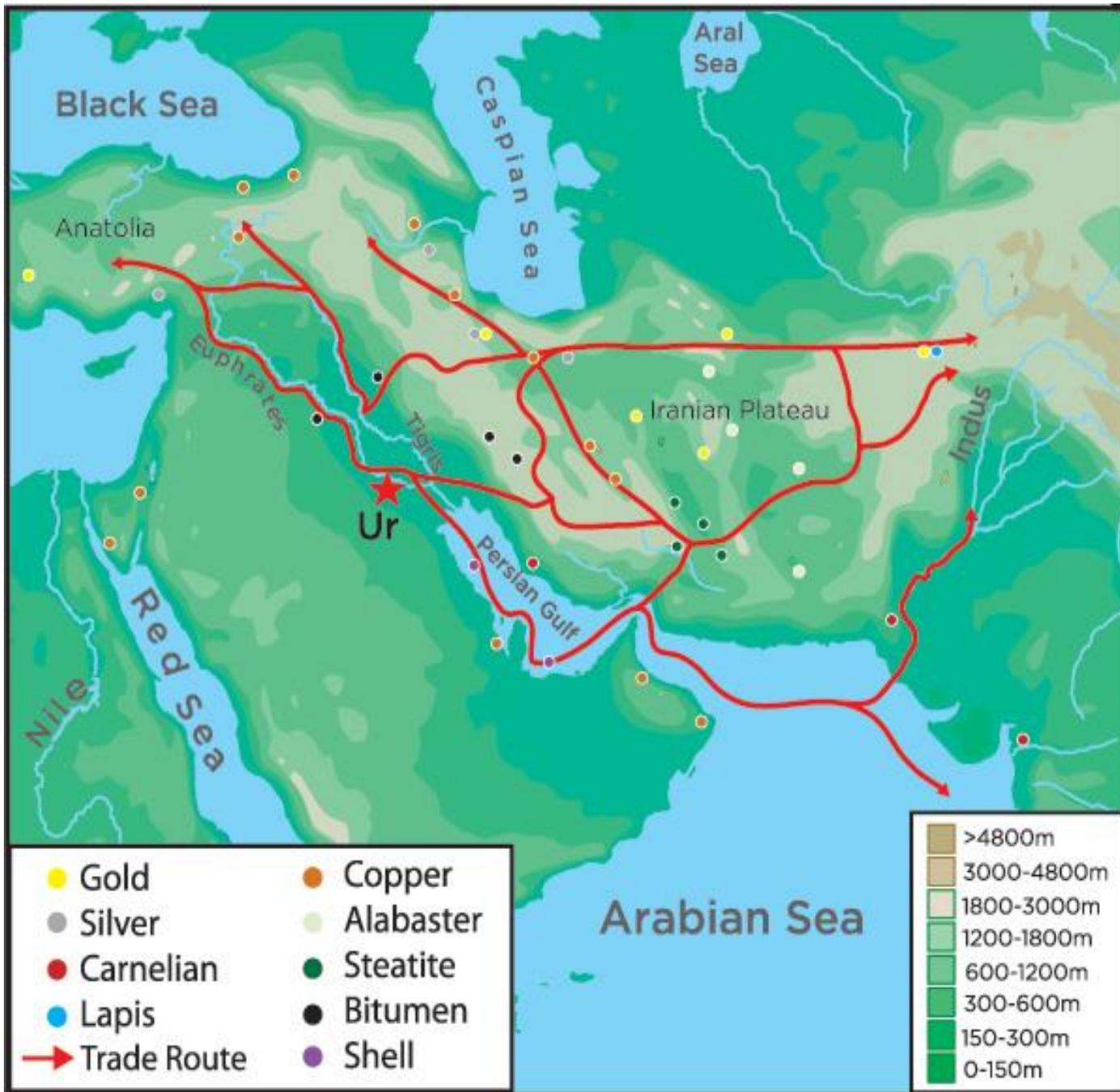


## Mesopotamian Trade



### Map Questions:

1. List three precious metals that were traded in Mesopotamia.

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2. Based on the map what waterways were used for trade?

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3. Which river appears to have been easier to travel along?

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4. Make one more observation about this map.

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With irrigation, the fertile land of southern Mesopotamia produced abundant wheat, barley, dates, flax, and other essential crops. Fish and fowl flourished in the marshes where stands of tall reeds were harvested for housing materials, mats, and even the styli used for writing. Fast growing trees offered wood for windows and roofing. And the most abundant material of all, mud and clay, was used to make bricks and pottery, both fundamental for ancient urban life. Even a poor quality limestone was available nearby.

As communities in southern Mesopotamia grew from small agricultural villages to larger urban centers and city-states, the demand for materials also grew. This led to expanded trade with neighboring regions for luxury items such as hardwood, exotic foods and animals, semi-precious stones, hard stones, and metals. By the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE, trade reached a high point, with goods coming from Anatolia, Syria, northern Mesopotamia, Iran, and the Persian Gulf.

Although details are lacking, we know that trade was organized in different ways: by private merchants, state organized trade expeditions, and local traders and merchants. We also know that royal gift exchange, booty from raiding expeditions, and immigrants bringing objects all contributed to the movement of goods onto the alluvial plain of southern Mesopotamia. Overland trade routes to the north and west followed the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, while to the east routes passed through the Zagros Mountains onto the resource rich Iranian plateau and beyond. The sea route via the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea and the Indus Valley was also very active.

The Royal Cemetery provides evidence for the long-distance trade networks that extended from western Anatolia to the Indus Valley in the east and from Oman at the mouth of the Persian Gulf to the Caucasus Mountains in the north. With the exception of the textiles and ceramics, virtually all the other objects found in the royal tombs were **imported**, either as finished goods or as raw materials that were then crafted in Mesopotamia.

Along with these goods and materials, ideas and imagery from other cultures also came into Mesopotamia. For example, the spiral pattern, repeated in several necklaces found in the Royal Cemetery is a rare stylistic design in Mesopotamia, but is common in the western highlands of Anatolia where examples have been found at Troy. Similarly, the “etched” carnelian and very long bi-conical carnelian beads in the burials were clearly imported as finished items from the Indus Valley. Excavations of tombs in the Royal Cemetery, which yielded the most spectacular finds of gold, silver, and semi-precious stones.

#### Article Questions:

1. What products were available within Mesopotamia?

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2. What caused the demand for luxury items in Mesopotamia?

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3. What luxury items were wanted?

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4. What locations were goods coming in from?

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5. What objects found in Royal Cemetery tombs were actually from Mesopotamia? \_\_\_\_\_
6. How did other products in the tombs get there? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What other amazing things were found in the Royal tomb? \_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture to help you remember trade in Mesopotamia.