PART ONE

First Things First

Beginnings in History

TO 500 B.C.E.



Contents

THE BIG PICTURE

Turning Points in Early World History

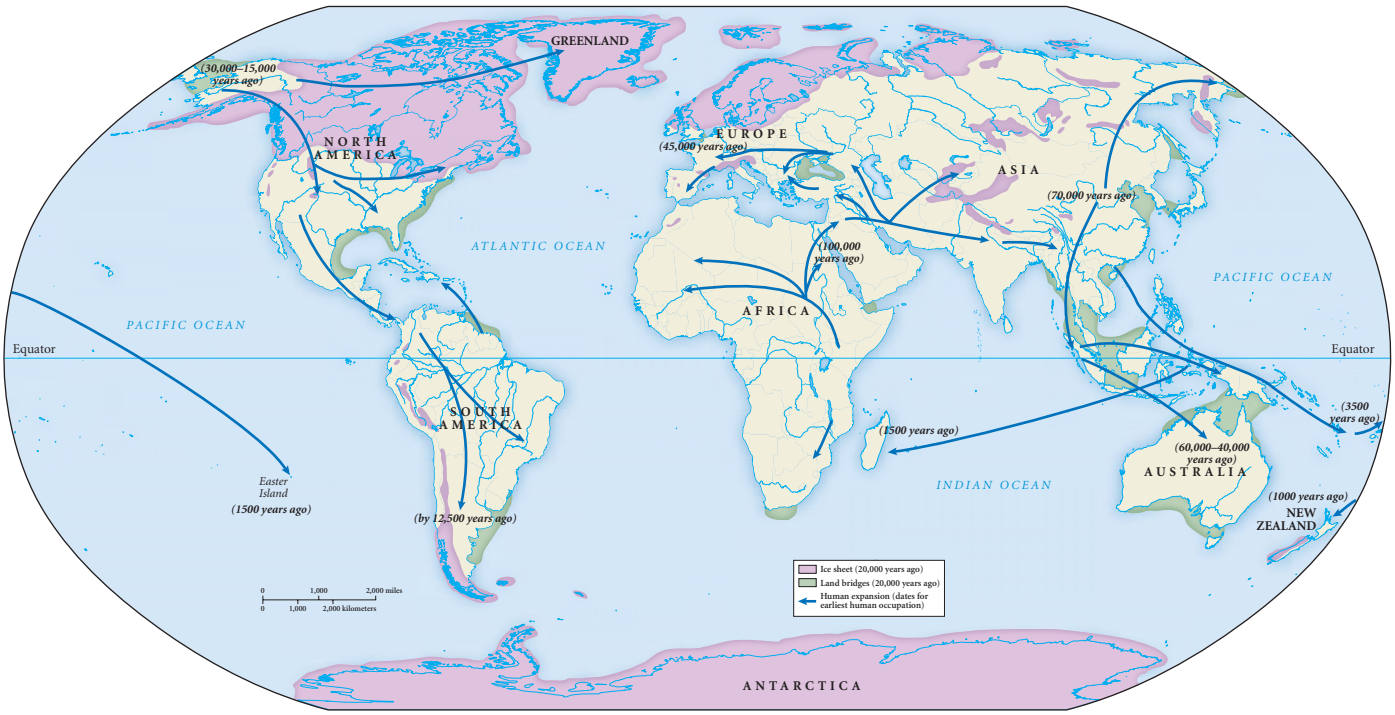
Both the ancient sages who developed their societies' creation myths and the grandparents who still relate the histories of their families have had to decide at what point to begin their stories and what major turning points in those stories to highlight. So too must historians, whether they narrate the tale of a village, a city, a nation, a civilization, or the entire human community. For world historians, concerned with humankind as a whole, four major "beginnings," each of them an extended historical process, have charted the initial stages of the human journey.

The Emergence of Humankind

Ever since Charles Darwin, most scholars have come to view human beginnings in the context of biological change on the planet. In considering this enormous process, we operate on a timescale quite different from the billions of years that mark the history of the universe and of the earth. According to archeologists and anthropologists, the evolutionary line of descent leading to *Homo sapiens* diverged from that leading to chimpanzees, our closest primate relatives, some 5 million to 6 million years ago, and it happened in eastern and southern Africa. There, perhaps twenty or thirty different species emerged, all of them members of the Homininae (or hominid) family of humanlike creatures. What they all shared was bipedalism, the ability to walk upright on two legs. In 1976, the archeologist Mary Leakey uncovered in what is now Tanzania a series of footprints of three such hominid individuals, preserved in cooling volcanic ash about 3.5 million years ago. Two of them walked side by side, perhaps holding hands.

Over time, these hominid species changed. Their brains grew larger, as evidenced by the size of their skulls. About 2.3 million years ago, a hominid creature known as *Homo habilis* began to make and use simple stone tools. Others started to eat meat, at least occasionally. By 1 million years ago, some hominid species, especially *Homo erectus*, began to migrate out of Africa, and their remains have been found in various parts of Eurasia. This species is also associated with the first controlled use of fire.

Eventually all of these earlier hominid species died out, except one: *Homo sapiens*, ourselves. We too emerged first in Africa and quite recently, probably no more than 250,000 years ago, although there is constant debate among specialists about these matters. For a long time, all of the small number of *Homo sapiens* lived in Africa, but sometime after 100,000 years ago, they too began to migrate out of Africa onto the Eurasian landmass, then to Australia, and ultimately into the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific islands. The great experiment of human history had begun.



The Global Dispersion of Humankind (p. 14)

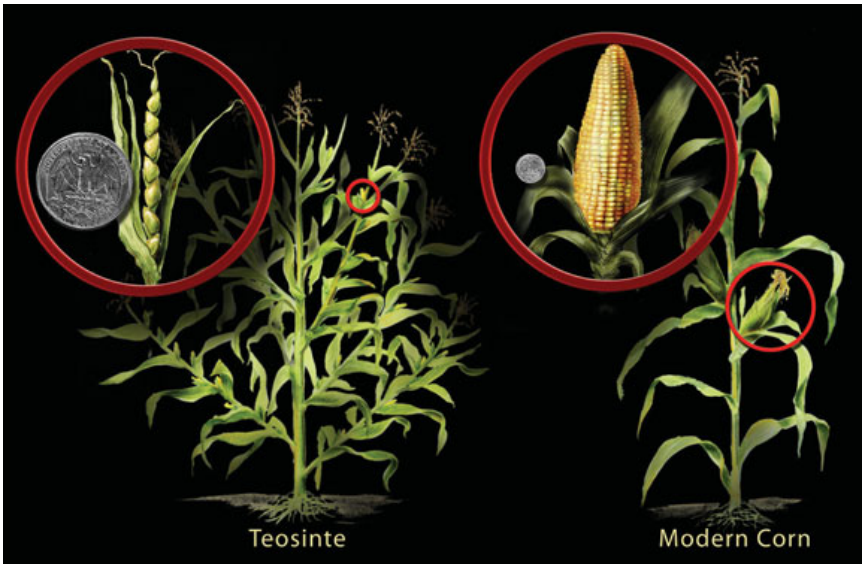
The Globalization of Humankind

Today, every significant landmass on earth is occupied by human beings, but it was not always so. A mere half million years ago our species did not exist, and only 100,000 years ago that species was limited to Africa and numbered, some scholars believe, fewer than 10,000 individuals. These ancient ancestors of ours, rather small in stature and not fast on foot, were armed with a very limited technology of stone tools with which to confront the multiple dangers of the natural world. But then, in perhaps the most amazing tale in all of human history, they moved from this very modest and geographically limited role in the scheme of things to a worldwide and increasingly dominant presence. What kinds of societies, technologies, and understandings of the world accompanied, and perhaps facilitated, this globalization of humankind?

The phase of human history during which these initial migrations took place is known to scholars as the Paleolithic era. The word "Paleolithic" literally means the "old stone age," but it refers more generally to a food-collecting or gathering and hunting way of life, before agriculture allowed people to grow food or raise animals deliberately. Lasting until roughly 11,000 years ago, the Paleolithic era represents over 95 percent of the time that human beings have inhabited the earth, although it accounts for only about 12 percent of the total number of people who have lived on the planet.

It was during this time that *Homo sapiens* colonized the world, making themselves at home in every environmental niche, from the frigid Arctic to the rain forests of Central Africa and Brazil, in mountains, deserts, and plains. It was an amazing achievement, accomplished by no other large species. Accompanying this global

migration were slow changes in the technological tool kits of early humankind as well as early attempts to impose meaning on the world through art, ritual, and religion. Although often neglected by historians and history textbooks, this long period of the human experience merits greater attention and is the focus of Chapter 1.



Teosinte and Maize/Corn (p. 56)

The Revolution of Farming and Herding

In late 2009, almost all of the world's 6.8 billion people lived from the food grown on farms and gardens and from domesticated animals raised for their meat, milk, or eggs, but this was not always so. In fact, before 11,000 years ago, no one survived in this fashion. Then, repeatedly and fairly rapidly, at least in world history terms, human communities in parts of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and the Americas began the laborious process of domesticating animals and selecting seeds to be planted. This momentous accomplishment represents another "first" in the human story. After countless millennia of relying on the gathering of wild foods and the hunting of wild animals, why and how did human societies begin to practice agriculture and herding? What changes to human life did this new technology bring with it?

This food-producing revolution, considered in Chapter 2, surely marks the single most significant and enduring transformation of the human condition, providing the foundation for virtually everything that followed. The entire period from the beginning of agriculture to the Industrial Revolution around 1750 might be considered a single phase of the human story—the age of agriculture—calculated now on a timescale of millennia or centuries rather than the more extended periods of earlier eras. Although the age of agriculture was far shorter than the immense Paleolithic era that preceded it, farming and herding allowed for a substantial increase in human numbers.

In the various beginnings of food production lay the foundations for some of the most enduring divisions within the larger human community. Much depended on the luck of the draw—on the climate and soils, on the various wild plants and animals that were available for domestication. Many agricultural peoples lived in small settled villages, independent of larger political structures, while drawing their food supply from their own gardens and farms. Some depended on root crops, such as potatoes in the Andes; others relied on tree crops, such as the banana; the most favored areas were those where highly nutritious wild grains such as rice, wheat, or corn could be domesticated. In more arid regions where farming was difficult, some peoples, known as pastoralists, came to depend heavily on their

herds of domesticated animals. Because they moved frequently and in regular patterns, in search of pasturelands, they are often referred to as nomads. With regard to animal husbandry, the Americas were at a distinct disadvantage, for there were few large animals that could be tamed—no goats, sheep, pigs, horses, camels, or cattle. In the Afro-Eurasian world, conflicts between settled agricultural peoples and more mobile pastoral peoples represented an enduring pattern of interaction across the region.

The Turning Point of Civilization

The most prominent and powerful human communities to emerge from the Agricultural Revolution were those we often designate as "civilizations," societies that were based in bustling cities and governed by powerful states. Virtually all of the world's people now live in a state with a formal political authority that controls a particular territory, whether it is a single city such as Singapore, a tiny country such as The Gambia, or a huge territory such as Russia. The political, economic, and cultural life of state-based societies everywhere gives prominence to cities. By the early twenty-first century, about half of the world's population lived in urban centers. States and cities have become so common as to seem almost natural.

In world history terms, however, the appearance of states and cities is a rather recent phenomenon. Not until several thousand years *after* the beginning of agriculture did the first cities and states emerge, around 3500 B.C.E. Well after 1000 C.E., substantial numbers of people still lived in communities without any state or urban structures. Nonetheless, people living in state- and city-based societies or civilizations have long constituted the most powerful and innovative human communities on the planet. They gave rise to empires of increasing size, to enduring cultural and religious traditions, to new technologies, to sharp class inequalities, to male domination (patriarchy), and to large-scale warfare.

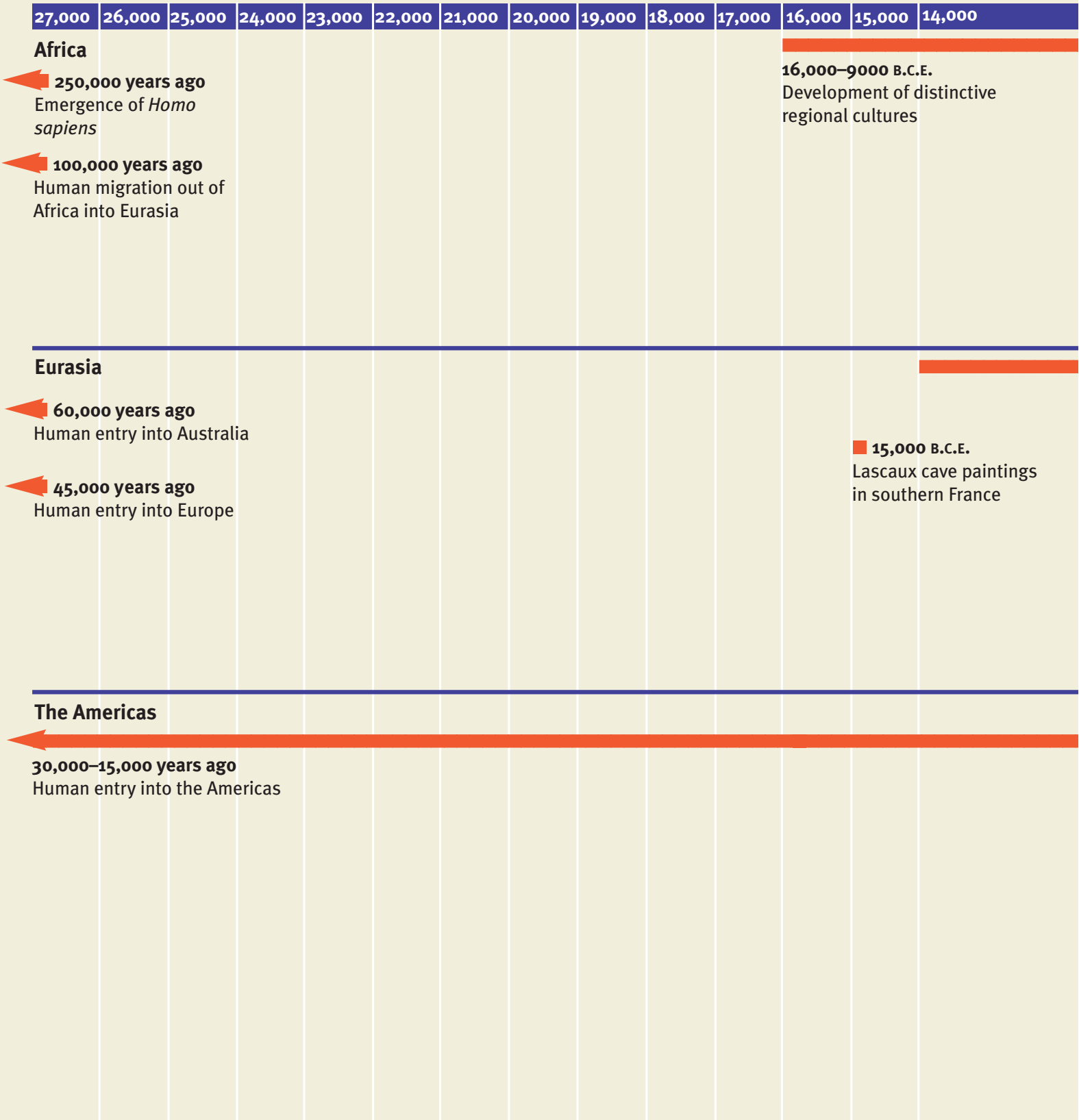
For all of these reasons, civilizations have featured prominently in accounts of world history, sometimes crowding out the stories of other kinds of human communities. The earliest civilizations, which emerged between 3500 and 500 B.C.E., have long fascinated professional historians and lovers of history everywhere. In at least six separate places—Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), Egypt, Pakistan and northern India, China, Peru, and Mexico—such state- and city-based societies emerged. What was their relationship to the Agricultural Revolution? What new ways of life did they bring to the experience of humankind? These are the questions that are examined in Chapter 3.

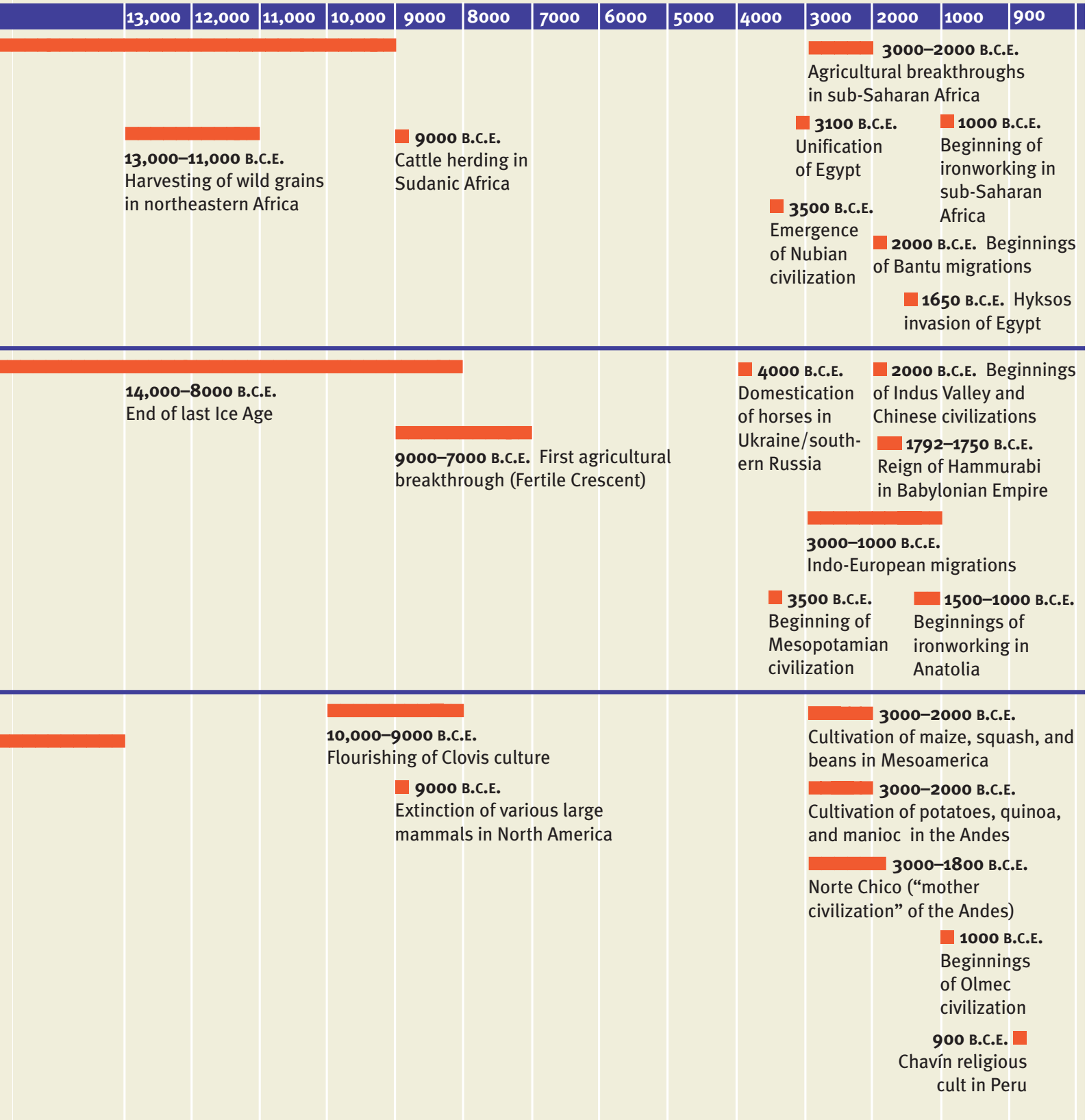
A Note on Dates

Recently it has become standard in the Western world to refer to dates prior to the birth of Christ as B.C.E. (before the Common Era), replacing the earlier B.C. (before Christ) usage. This convention is an effort to become less Christian-centered and

Eurocentric in our use of language, although the chronology remains linked to the birth of Jesus. Similarly, the time following the birth of Christ is referred to as C.E. (the Common Era) rather than A.D. (*Anno Domini*, Latin for "year of the Lord"). Dates in the more distant past are designated in this book simply as so many "years ago." Of course, these conventions are only some of the many ways that human societies have reckoned time. The Chinese frequently dated important events in terms of the reign of particular emperors, while Muslims created a new calendar beginning with Year 1, marking Muhammad's emigration to Medina in 622 C.E. As with so much else, the ways that we measure time reflect the cultures in which we have been born and the historical experience of our societies.

Landmarks of Early World History, to 500 B.C.E.




13,000
12,000
11,000
10,000
9000
8000
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3000
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3000–2000 B.C.E. Agricultural breakthroughs in sub-Saharan Africa
3100 B.C.E. Unification of Egypt
1000 B.C.E. Beginning of ironworking in sub-Saharan Africa
13,000–11,000 B.C.E. Harvesting of wild grains in northeastern Africa
9000 B.C.E. Cattle herding in Sudanic Africa
3500 B.C.E. Emergence of Nubian civilization
2000 B.C.E. Beginnings of Bantu migrations
1650 B.C.E. Hyksos invasion of Egypt
14,000–8000 B.C.E. End of last Ice Age
4000 B.C.E. Domestication of horses in Ukraine/southern Russia
2000 B.C.E. Beginnings of Indus Valley and Chinese civilizations
9000–7000 B.C.E. First agricultural breakthrough (Fertile Crescent)
1792–1750 B.C.E. Reign of Hammurabi in Babylonian Empire
3000–1000 B.C.E. Indo-European migrations
3500 B.C.E. Beginning of Mesopotamian civilization
1500–1000 B.C.E. Beginnings of ironworking in Anatolia
10,000–9000 B.C.E. Flourishing of Clovis culture
3000–2000 B.C.E. Cultivation of maize, squash, and beans in Mesoamerica
9000 B.C.E. Extinction of various large mammals in North America
3000–2000 B.C.E. Cultivation of potatoes, quinoa, and manioc in the Andes
3000–1800 B.C.E. Norte Chico ("mother civilization" of the Andes)
1000 B.C.E. Beginnings of Olmec civilization
900 B.C.E. Chavín religious cult in Peru

CHAPTER ONE

First Peoples

Populating the Planet

TO 10,000 B.C.E.

"We do not want cattle, just wild animals to hunt and water that we can drink."[1] That was the view of Gudo Mahiya, a prominent member of the Hadza people of northern Tanzania, when he was questioned in 1997 about his interest in a settled life of farming and cattle raising. With only about 1,000 total members, the Hadza represent one of the very last peoples on earth to continue a way of life that was universal among humankind until 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, several hundred Hadza still made a living by hunting game, collecting honey, digging up roots, and gathering berries and fruit. They lived in quickly assembled grass huts located in small mobile camps averaging eighteen people and moved frequently around their remote region. Almost certainly their way of life is doomed, as farmers, governments, missionaries, and now tourists descend on them. The likely disappearance of their culture parallels the experience of many other such societies, which have been on the defensive against more numerous and powerful neighbors for 10,000 years.

NONETHELESS, THAT WAY OF LIFE SUSTAINED HUMANKIND for more than 95 percent of the time that our species has inhabited the earth. During countless centuries, human beings successfully adapted to a wide variety of environments without benefit of deliberate farming or animal husbandry. Instead, our early ancestors wrested a livelihood by gathering wild foods such as berries, nuts, roots, and grain; by scavenging dead animals; by hunting live animals; and

Paleolithic Art: The rock art of gathering and hunting peoples has been found in Africa, Europe, Australia, and elsewhere. This image from the San people of southern Africa represents aspects of their outer life in the form of wild animals and hunters with bows as well as the inner life of their shamans during a trance, reflected in the elongated figures with both human and animal features. (Image courtesy of S.A. Tourism)

by fishing. Known to scholars as "gathering and hunting" peoples, they were foragers or food collectors rather than food producers. Instead of requiring the earth to produce what they wanted, they took—or perhaps borrowed—what nature had to offer. Because they used stone rather than metal tools, they also have been labeled "Paleolithic," or "old stone age," peoples.

History courses and history books often neglect this long phase of the human journey and instead choose to begin the story with the coming of agriculture about 12,000 years ago or with the advent of civilizations about 5,000 years ago. Some historians identify "real history" with writing and so dismiss the Paleolithic era as largely unknowable because its people did not write. Others, impressed with the rapid pace of change in human affairs since the coming of agriculture, assume that nothing much of real significance happened in the Paleolithic era—and no change meant no history.

But does it make sense to ignore the first 200,000 years or more of human experience? Although written records are absent, scholars have learned a great deal about Paleolithic peoples through their material remains: stones and bones, fossilized seeds, rock paintings and engravings, and much more. Archeologists, biologists, botanists, demographers, linguists, and anthropologists have contributed much to our growing understanding of gathering and hunting peoples. Furthermore, the achievements of Paleolithic peoples—the initial settlement of the planet, the creation of the earliest human societies, the beginning of reflection on the great questions of life and death—deserve our attention. The changes they wrought, though far slower than those of more recent times, were extraordinarily rapid in comparison to the transformation experienced by any other species. Those changes were almost entirely cultural or learned, rather than the product of biological evolution, and they provided the foundation on which all subsequent human history was constructed. Our grasp of the human past is incomplete—massively so—if we choose to disregard the Paleolithic era.

Out of Africa to the Ends of the Earth: First Migrations

The first 150,000 years or more of human experience was an exclusively African story. Around 250,000 years ago, in the grasslands of eastern and southern Africa, *Homo sapiens* first emerged, following in the footsteps of many other hominid species before it. Time and climate have erased much of the record of these early people, and Africa has witnessed much less archeological research than have other parts of the world, especially Europe. Nonetheless, scholars have turned up evidence of distinctly human behavior in Africa long before its appearance elsewhere. Africa, almost certainly, was the place where the "human revolution" occurred, where "culture," defined as learned or invented ways of living, became more important than biology in shaping behavior.

What kinds of uniquely human activity show up in the early African record?[2] In the first place, human beings began to inhabit new environments within Africa—forests and deserts—where no hominids had lived before. Accompanying these movements of people were technological innovations of various kinds: stone blades

Snapshot The Long Road to the Global Presence of Humankind

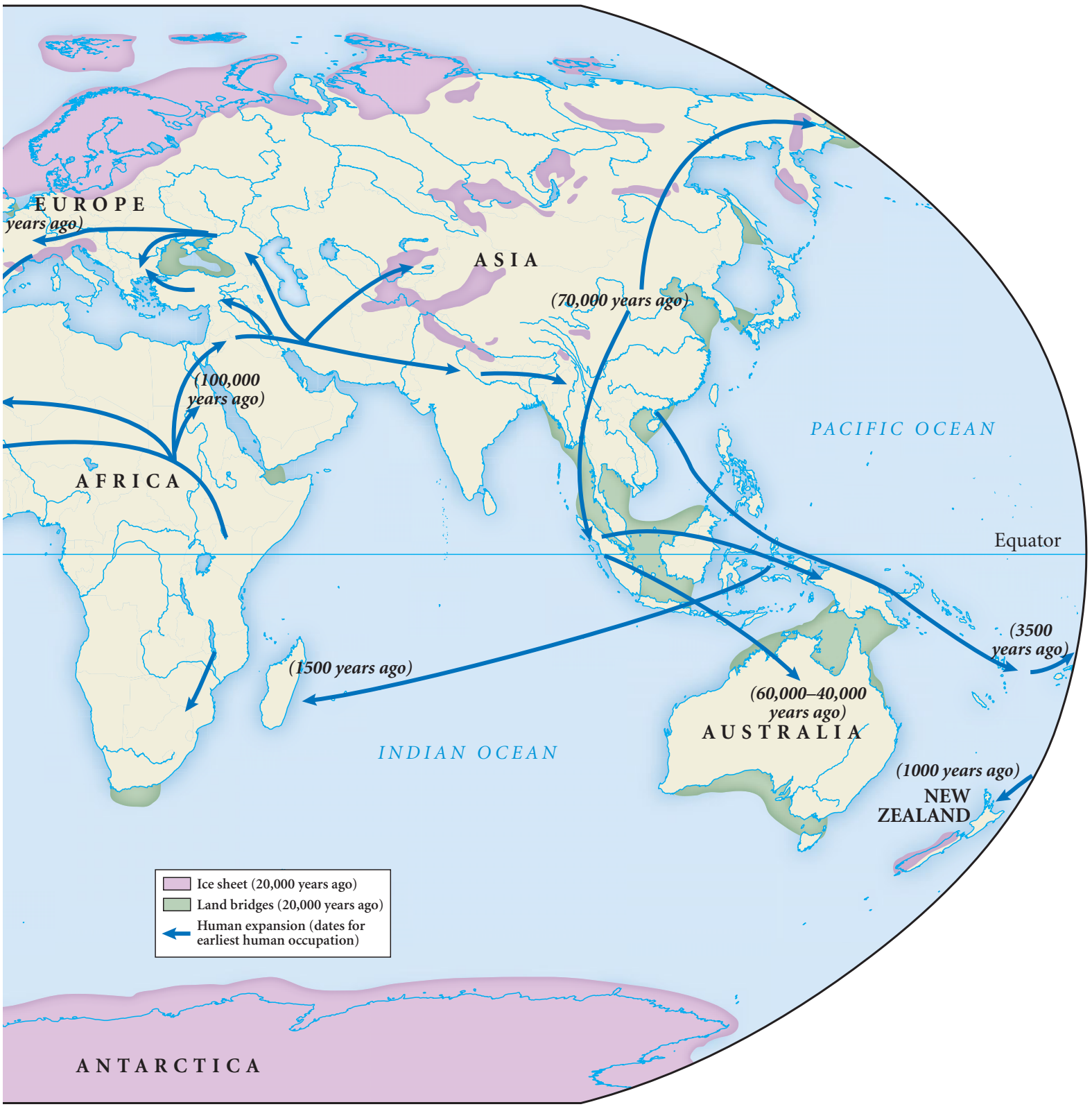
(all dates approximate)	Years Ago
Earliest bipedal hominids (walking upright on two legs)	7 million to 6 million
Homo habilis (earliest use of stone tools)	2.5 million
Homo erectus (first controlled use of fire and first hominid migrations out of Africa)	1.9 million to 200,000
Earliest *Homo sapiens* in Africa	250,000
Beginnings of human migration out of Africa	100,000–60,000
Human entry into eastern Asia	70,000
Human entry into Australia (first use of boats)	60,000–40,000
Human entry into Europe	45,000
Extinction of large mammals in Australia	30,000
Human entry into the Americas	30,000–15,000
Cave art in Europe	25,000
Extinction of Neanderthals	25,000
End of last Ice Age (global warming)	16,000–10,000
Earliest agricultural revolutions	12,000–10,000
Extinction of large mammals in North America	11,000
Austronesian migration to Pacific islands and Madagascar	3,500–1,000
Human entry into New Zealand (last major region to receive human settlers)	1,000

and points fastened to shafts replaced the earlier hand axes; tools made from bones appeared, and so did grindstones. Evidence of hunting and fishing, not just the scavenging of dead animals, marks a new phase in human food collection. Settlements were planned around the seasonal movement of game and fish. Patterns of exchange over a distance of almost 200 miles indicate larger networks of human communication. The use of body ornaments, beads, and pigments such as ocher as well as possible planned burials suggest the kind of social and symbolic behavior that has characterized human activity ever since. All of this occurred before 100,000 years ago and, based on current evidence, long before such activity surfaced elsewhere in the world.

Then, sometime between 100,000 and 60,000 years ago, human beings began their long trek out of Africa and into Eurasia, Australia, the Americas, and, much later,

Map 1.1 The Global Dispersion of Humankind

With origins in Africa perhaps 250,000 years ago, members of our species (*Homo sapiens*) have migrated to every environmental niche on the planet over the past 100,000 years.


EUROPE
years ago)
ASIA
(70,000 years ago)
(100,000
years ago)
AFRICA
PACIFIC OCEAN
Equator
(3500
years ago)
(1500 years ago)
(60,000–40,000
years ago)
AUSTRALIA
INDIAN OCEAN
(1000 years ago)
NEW
ZEALAND
ANTARCTICA
Ice sheet (20,000 years ago)
Land bridges (20,000 years ago)
Human expansion (dates for earliest human occupation)

the islands of the Pacific (see Map 1.1). In occupying the planet, members of our species accomplished the remarkable feat of learning to live in virtually every environmental niche on earth, something that no other large animal had done; and they did it with only stone tools and a gathering and hunting technology to aid them. Furthermore, much of this long journey occurred during the difficult climatic conditions of the last Ice Age (at its peak around 20,000 years ago), when thick ice sheets covered much of northern Eurasia and North America. The Ice Age did give these outward-bound human beings one advantage, however: the amount of water frozen in northern glaciers lowered sea levels around the planet, creating land bridges among various regions that were separated after the glaciers melted. Britain was then joined to Europe; eastern Siberia was connected to Alaska; and New Guinea, Australia, and Tasmania were all part of a huge supercontinent known as Sahul.

Into Eurasia

Change
What was the sequence of human migration across the planet?

Human migration out of Africa led first to the Middle East and from there westward into Europe about 45,000 years ago and eastward into Asia. Among the most carefully researched areas of early human settlement in Eurasia are those in southern France and northern Spain. Colder Ice Age climates around 20,000 years ago apparently pushed more northerly European peoples southward into warmer regions. There they altered their hunting habits, focusing on reindeer and horses, and developed new technologies such as spear throwers and perhaps the bow and arrow as well as many different kinds of stone tools.[3] Most remarkably, they also left a record of their world in hundreds of cave paintings, depicting reindeer, bulls, horses, and other animals, brilliantly portrayed in colors of red, yellow, brown, and black. Images of human beings, impressions of human hands, and various abstract designs, perhaps an early form of writing, often accompanied the cave paintings.

Scholars have debated endlessly what insights these remarkable images might provide into the mental world of Paleolithic Europeans.[4] Were they examples of "totemic" thinking—the belief that particular groups of people were associated with, or descended from, particular animals? Did they represent a form of "hunting magic" intended to enhance the success of these early hunters? Because many of the paintings were located deep within caves, were they perhaps part of religious or ritual practices or rites of passage? Were they designed to pass on information to future generations? Or did they symbolize, as some recent scholars contend, a coded representation of a Paleolithic worldview divided into male and female

The Lascaux Caves
Discovered by four teenage boys in 1940, the Lascaux caves in southern France contain some 2,000 images, dating to perhaps 17,000 years ago. Many of them depict in quite realistic form the wild animals of the region—oxen, bulls, horses, ibex, and birds. (JM Labat/ Photo Researchers, Inc.)

realms, both opposed to and balancing each other? We simply do not know. Nonetheless, these images excite our imagination still, 20,000 years or more after they were created. In them we sense a kinship with the humanity of our distant ancestors.

Farther east, archeologists have uncovered still other remarkable Paleolithic adaptations to Ice Age conditions. Across the vast plains of Central Europe, Ukraine, and Russia, new technologies emerged, including bone needles, multilayered clothing, weaving, nets, storage pits, baskets, and pottery. Partially underground dwellings constructed from the bones and tusks of mammoths compensated for the absence of caves and rock shelters. All of this suggests that some of these people had lived in more permanent settlements, at least temporarily abandoning their nomadic journeys. Associated with these Eastern European peoples were numerous female figurines, the earliest of which was uncovered in 2008 in Germany and dated to at least 35,000 years ago. Carved from stone, antlers, mammoth tusks, or, occasionally, baked clay, these so-called Venus figurines depict the female form, often with exaggerated breasts, buttocks, hips, and stomachs (see image, p. 22). They were not limited to a single region but have been found all across Europe, from Spain to Russia, suggesting a network of human communication and cultural diffusion over a wide area.

Into Australia

Early human migration to Australia, currently dated to around 60,000 years ago, came from Indonesia and involved another first in human affairs—the use of boats. Over time, people settled in most regions of this huge continent, though quite sparsely. Scholars estimate the population of Australia at about 300,000 people in 1788, when the first Europeans arrived. Over tens of thousands of years, these people had developed perhaps 250 languages; collected a wide variety of bulbs, tubers, roots, seeds, and cereal grasses; and hunted large and small animals, as well as birds, fish, and other marine life. A relatively simple technology, appropriate to a gathering and hunting economy, sustained Australia's Aboriginal people into modern times. When outsiders arrived in the late eighteenth century, all of the continent's people still practiced that ancient way of life, despite the presence of agriculture in nearby New Guinea.

Accompanying their technological simplicity and traditionalism was the development of an elaborate and complex outlook on the world, known as the Dreamtime. Expressed in endless stories, in extended ceremonies, and in the evocative rock art of the continent's peoples, the Dreamtime recounted the beginning of things: how ancestral beings crisscrossed the land, creating its rivers, hills, rocks, and waterholes; how various peoples came to inhabit the land; and how they related to animals and to one another. In this view of the world, everything in the natural order was a vibration, an echo, a footprint of these ancient happenings, which link the current inhabitants intimately to particular places and to timeless events in the past. (See Document 1.2, pp. 39–41, and Visual Sources: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia, pp. 42–47.)

The journeys of the Dreamtime's ancestral beings reflect in a general way the networks of migration, communication, and exchange that linked the continent's

many Paleolithic peoples. Far from isolated groups, they had long exchanged particular stones, pigments, materials for ropes and baskets, wood for spears, feathers and shells for ornaments, and an addictive psychoactive drug known as *pituri* over distances of hundreds of miles.[5] Songs, dances, stories, and rituals likewise circulated. Precisely how far back in time these networks extend is difficult to pinpoint, but it seems clear that Paleolithic Australia, like ancient Europe, was both many separate worlds and, at the same time, one loosely connected world.

Into the Americas

The earliest settlement of the Western Hemisphere occurred much later than that of Australia, for it took some time for human beings to penetrate the frigid lands of eastern Siberia, which was the jumping-off point for the move into the Americas. Experts continue to argue about precisely when the first migrations occurred (somewhere between 30,000 and 15,000 years ago), about the route of migration (by land across the Bering Strait or by sea down the west coast of North America), about how many separate migrations took place, and about how long it took for people to penetrate to the tip of South America.[6] There is, however, good evidence of human activity in southern Chile by 12,500 years ago.

The first clearly defined and widespread cultural tradition in the Americas is associated with people who made a distinctive projectile point, known to archeologists as a Clovis point. Scattered all over North America, Clovis culture flourished around 12,000 to 11,000 years ago. Scattered bands of Clovis people ranged over huge areas, camping along rivers, springs, and waterholes, where large animals congregated. Although they certainly hunted smaller animals and gathered many wild plants, Clovis people show up in the archeological record most dramatically as hunters of very large mammals, such as mammoths and bison. Killing a single mammoth could provide food for many weeks or, in cold weather, for much of the winter. The wide distribution of Clovis point technology suggests yet again a regional pattern of cultural diffusion and at least indirect communication over a large area.

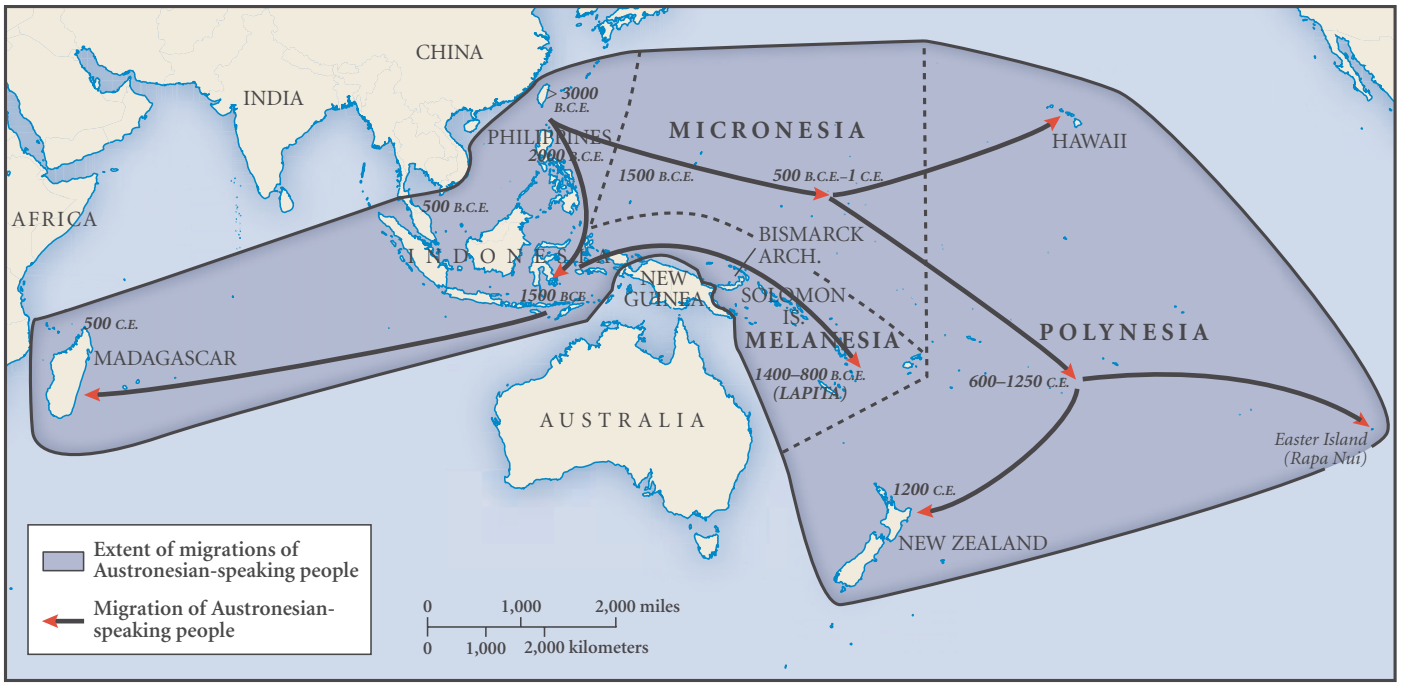
Then, about 10,900 years ago, all trace of the Clovis people disappears from the archeological record at the same time that many species of large animals, including the mammoth and several species of horses and camels, also became extinct. Did the Clovis people hunt these animals to extinction and then vanish themselves as their source of food disappeared? Or did the drier climate that came with the end of the Ice Age cause this megafaunal extinction? Experts disagree, but what happened next was the creation of a much greater diversity of cultures as people adapted to this new situation in various ways. Hunters on the Great Plains continued to pursue bison, which largely avoided the fate of the mammoths. Others learned to live in the desert, taking advantage of seasonal plants and smaller animals, while those who lived near the sea, lakes, or streams drew on local fish and birds. Many peoples retained their gathering and hunting way of life into modern times, while others became farmers and, in a few favored regions, later developed cities and large-scale states.[7]

Into the Pacific

The last phase of the great human migration to the ends of the earth took place in the Pacific Ocean and was distinctive in many ways. In the first place, it occurred quite recently, jumping off only about 3,500 years ago from the Bismarck and Solomon islands near New Guinea as well as from the islands of the Philippines. It was everywhere a waterborne migration, making use of oceangoing canoes and remarkable navigational skills, and it happened very quickly and over a huge area of the planet. Speaking Austronesian languages that trace back to southern China, these oceanic voyagers had settled every habitable piece of land in the Pacific basin within about 2,500 years. Other Austronesians had sailed west from Indonesia across the Indian Ocean to settle the island of Madagascar off the coast of eastern Africa. This extraordinary process of expansion—both rapid and extensive—made the Austronesian family of languages the most widespread in the world. With the occupation of Aotearoa (New Zealand) about 1300 C.E., the initial human settlement of the planet was finally complete (see Map 1.2).

Comparison
How did Austronesian migrations differ from other early patterns of human movement?

In contrast with all of the other migrations, these Pacific voyages were undertaken by people with an agricultural technology, who carried both domesticated plants and animals in their canoes. Both men and women made these journeys, suggesting a deliberate intention to colonize new lands. Virtually everywhere they went, two developments followed. One was the creation of highly stratified societies or chiefdoms, of which ancient Hawaiian society is a prime example. In Hawaii, an elite class of chiefs with political and military power ruled over a mass of commoners. The other development was the dramatic impact that these migrations had on the environment of previously uninhabited islands. Many species of



Map 1.2 Migration of Austronesian-Speaking People
People speaking Austronesian languages completed the human settlement of the earth quite recently as they settled the islands of the vast Pacific and penetrated the Indian Ocean to Madagascar, off the coast of southeast Africa.

animals quickly became extinct, especially large flightless birds. The destruction of the forests of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries C.E. brought famine, violent conflict, and a sharp population decline to this small island society, while the absence of large trees ensured that no one could leave the island, for they could no longer build the canoes that had brought them there.[8]

The Ways We Were

During their long journeys across the earth, Paleolithic people created a multitude of separate and distinct societies, each with its own history, culture, language, identity, stories, and rituals, but the limitations of a gathering and hunting technology using stone tools imposed some commonalities on these ancient people. Based on the archeological record and on the example of gathering and hunting societies that still existed in modern times, scholars have sketched out some of the common features of these early societies.

The First Human Societies

■ Change
In what ways did a gathering and hunting economy shape other aspects of Paleolithic societies?

Above all else, these Paleolithic societies were small, consisting of bands of twenty-five to fifty people, in which all relationships were intensely personal and normally understood in terms of kinship. No anonymity or hiding in the crowd was possible in a society of relatives. The available technology permitted only a very low population density and ensured an extremely slow rate of population growth. Scholars estimate that world population may have been as low as 10,000 people around 100,000 years ago and grew slowly to 500,000 by 30,000 years ago and then to 6 million by 10,000 years ago.[9] Paleolithic bands were seasonally mobile or nomadic, moving frequently and in regular patterns to exploit the resources of wild plants and animals on which they depended. The low productivity of a gathering and hunting economy normally did not allow the production of much surplus, and because people were on the move so often, transporting an accumulation of goods was out of the question.

All of this resulted in highly egalitarian societies, lacking the many inequalities of wealth and power that came with later agricultural and urban life. With no formal chiefs, kings, bureaucrats, soldiers, nobles, or priests, Paleolithic people were perhaps freer of tyranny and oppression than any subsequent kind of human society, even if they were more constrained by the forces of nature. Without specialists, most people possessed the same set of skills, although male and female tasks often differed sharply. Relationships between women and men usually were far more equal than in later societies. As the primary food gatherers, women provided the bulk of the family income. One study of a modern gathering and hunting society in southern Africa found that plants, normally gathered by women, provided 70 percent of the diet, while meat, hunted by men, accounted for just 30 percent.[10]

When the British navigator and explorer Captain James Cook first encountered the gathering and hunting peoples of Australia in 1770, he described them, perhaps a little enviously, in this way:

> They live in a Tranquillity which is not disturb'd by the Inequality of Conditions: The Earth and sea of their own accord furnishes them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnificient houses, Household-stuff. . . . In short they seem'd to set no value upon any thing we gave them. . . . They think themselves provided with all the necessarys of Life.[11]

Native Australians
A number of Aboriginal Australians maintained their gathering and hunting way of life well into the twentieth century. Here an older woman shows two young boys how to dig for honey ants, a popular food. (Bill Bachman/Alamy)

The Europeans who settled permanently among such people some twenty years later, however, found a society in which physical competition among men was expressed in frequent one-on-one combat and in formalized but bloody battles. It also meant recurrent, public, and quite brutal beatings of wives by their husbands.[12] Although sometimes romanticized by Europeans, the relative social equality of Paleolithic peoples did not always ensure a utopia of social harmony.

Like all other human cultures, Paleolithic societies had rules and structures. A gender-based division of labor usually cast men as hunters and women as gatherers. Values emphasizing reciprocal sharing of goods resulted in clearly defined rules about distributing the meat from an animal kill. Rules about incest and adultery governed sexual behavior, while understandings about who could hunt or gather in particular territories regulated economic activity. Leaders arose as needed to organize a task such as a hunt, but without conferring permanent power on individuals.

Economy and the Environment

For a long time, gathering and hunting peoples were viewed as primitive, impoverished, barely eking out a living from the land. In more recent decades, anthropologists studying contemporary Paleolithic societies—those that survived into the twentieth century—began to paint a different picture. They noted that gathering and hunting people frequently worked fewer hours to meet their material needs than did people in agricultural or industrial societies and so had more leisure time. One scholar referred to them as "the original affluent society," not because they had so much, but because they wanted or needed so little.[13] Nonetheless, life expectancy was low, probably little more than thirty-five years on average. Life in the wild was surely dangerous, and dependency on the vagaries of nature rendered it insecure as well.

But Paleolithic people also acted to alter the natural environment substantially. The use of deliberately set fires to encourage the growth of particular plants certainly changed the landscape and in Australia led to the proliferation of fire-resistant eucalyptus trees at the expense of other plant species. In many parts of the world—Australia, North America, Siberia, Madagascar, Pacific islands—the extinction of various large animals followed fairly quickly after the arrival of human beings, leading scholars to suggest that Paleolithic humankind played a major role, coupled perhaps with changing climates, in the disappearance of these animals. Other hominid, or humanlike, species, such as the Neanderthals in Europe or the recently discovered Flores man in Indonesia, also perished after living side by side with *Homo sapiens* for millennia. Whether their disappearance occurred through massacre, interbreeding, or peaceful competition, they were among the casualties of the rise of humankind. Thus the biological environment inhabited by gathering and hunting peoples was not wholly natural but was shaped in part by their own hands.

The Realm of the Spirit

The religious or spiritual dimension of Paleolithic culture has been hard to pin down because bones and stones tell us little about what people thought, art is subject to many interpretations, and the experience of contemporary gathering and hunting peoples may not reflect the distant past. There is, however, clear evidence for a rich ceremonial life. The presence of rock art deep inside caves and far from living spaces suggests a "ceremonial space" separate from ordinary life. (See Visual Sources: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia, pp. 42–47.) The extended rituals of contemporary Australian Aboriginal people, which sometimes last for weeks, confirm this impression, as do numerous and elaborate burial sites found throughout the world. No full-time religious specialists or priests led these ceremonies, but part-time shamans (people believed to be especially skilled at dealing with the spirit world) emerged as the need arose. Such people often entered an altered state of consciousness or a trance while performing the ceremonies, often with the aid of psychoactive drugs.

The Willendorf Venus
Less than four and a half inches in height and dating to about 25,000 years ago, this female figure, which was found near the town of Willendorf in Austria, has become the most famous of the many Venus figurines. Certain features—the absence of both face and feet, the coils of hair around her head, the prominence of her breasts and sexual organs—have prompted much speculation among scholars about the significance of these intriguing carvings. (Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria/The Bridgeman Art Library)

Precisely how Paleolithic people understood the nonmaterial world is hard to reconstruct, and speculation abounds. Linguistic evidence from ancient Africa suggests a variety of understandings: some Paleolithic societies were apparently monotheistic; others saw several levels of supernatural beings, including a Creator Deity, various territorial spirits, and the spirits of dead ancestors; still others believed in an impersonal force suffused throughout the natural order that could be accessed by shamans during a trance dance.[14] The prevalence of Venus figurines and other symbols all across Europe has convinced some scholars, but not all, that Paleolithic religious thought had a strongly feminine dimension, embodied in a Great Goddess and concerned with the regeneration and renewal of life.[15] Many gathering and hunting peoples likely developed a cyclical view of time that drew on the changing phases of the moon and on the cycles of female fertility—birth, menstruation,

Snapshot **The Paleolithic Era in Perspective**[16]

	Paleolithic Era (from 250,000 to 10,000 years ago)	Agricultural Era (from 10,000 to 200 years ago)	Modern Industrial Era (since 1800)
Duration of each era, as a percentage of 250,000 years	96%	4%	0.08%
Percent of people who lived, out of 80 billion total	12%	68%	20%
Percent of years lived in each era (reflects changing life expectancies)	9%	62%	29%

pregnancy, new birth, and death. Such understandings of the cosmos, which saw endlessly repeated patterns of regeneration and disintegration, differed from later Western views, which saw time moving in a straight line toward some predetermined goal.[17]

Settling Down: The Great Transition

■ Change
Why did some Paleolithic peoples abandon earlier, more nomadic ways and begin to live a more settled life?

Though glacially slow by contemporary standards, changes in Paleolithic cultures occurred over time as people moved into new environments, as populations grew, as climates altered, and as different human groups interacted with one another. For example, all over the Afro-Eurasian world after 25,000 years ago, a tendency toward the miniaturization of stone tools is evident. Known as micro-blades, these smaller and more refined spear points, arrowheads, knives, and scrapers were carefully struck from larger cores and often mounted in antler, bone, or wooden handles.[18] This ancient and global technological change was similar perhaps to the miniaturization of electronic components in the twentieth century. Another important change in the strategies of Paleolithic people was the collection of wild grains, which represented a major addition to the food supply beyond the use of roots, berries, and nuts. This innovation originated in northeastern Africa around 16,000 years ago.

But the most striking and significant change in the lives of Paleolithic peoples occurred as the last Ice Age came to an end between 16,000 and 10,000 years ago. What followed was a general global warming, though one with periodic fluctuations and cold snaps. Unlike the contemporary global warming, generated by human activity and especially the burning of fossil fuels, this ancient warming phase was a wholly natural phenomenon, part of a long cycle of repeated heating and

cooling characteristic of the earth's climatic history. Plants and animals unable to survive in the Ice Age climate now flourished and increased their range, providing a much richer and more diverse environment for many human societies. Under these improved conditions, human populations grew, and some previously nomadic gathering and hunting communities, but not all of them, found it possible to settle down and live in more permanent settlements or villages. These societies were becoming both larger and more complex, and it was less possible to simply move away if trouble struck. Settlement also meant that households could store and accumulate goods to a greater degree than previously. Because some people were more energetic, more talented, or luckier than others, the thin edge of inequality gradually began to wear away the egalitarianism of Paleolithic communities.

Changes along these lines emerged in many places. Paleolithic societies in Japan, known as Jomon, settled down in villages by the sea, where they greatly expanded the number of animals, both land and marine, that they consumed. They also created some of the world's first pottery, along with dugout canoes, paddles, bows, bowls, and tool handles, all made from wood. A similar pattern of permanent settlement, a broader range of food sources, and specialized technologies is evident in parts of Scandinavia, Southeast Asia, North America, and the Middle East between 12,000 and 4,000 years ago. Bows and arrows seem to have been invented separately in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East during this period and spread later to the Americas. In Labrador, longhouses accommodating 100 people appear in the archeological record. Far more elaborate burial sites in many places testify to the growing complexity of human communities and the kinship systems that bound them together. Separate cemeteries for dogs suggest that humankind's best friend was also our first domesticated animal friend.

This process of settling down among gathering and hunting peoples—and the changes that followed from it—marked a major turn in human history, away from countless millennia of nomadic journeys by very small communities. It also provided the setting within which the next great transition would occur. Growing numbers of people, living in settled communities, placed a much greater demand on the environment than did small bands of wandering people. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that among the innovations that emerged in these more complex gathering and hunting societies was yet another way for increasing the food supply—agriculture. That epic transition is the subject of the next chapter.

Jomon Figurines
Female figurines, dating to perhaps 4,000 years ago, have been found among Japan's Paleolithic people, known as the Jomon. Many scholars believe these carvings had a ritual function, associated with fertility. (Tokyo National Museum, Collection of Mrs. Kane Yamazaka)

Comparing Paleolithic Societies

Over the 200,000 years or more of the Paleolithic era, human societies naturally differed from one another—in their tool kits, their adaptation to the environment, their beliefs, their social organization, and much more. Here we examine more carefully two such societies, the San of southern Africa and the Chumash of southern California. What they shared was a gathering and hunting way of life and a continuing existence into modern times. Unlike the gathering and hunting peoples who

succumbed to the relentless expansion of agricultural or industrial societies, the San and the Chumash maintained their ancient way of life into the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Even though modern gathering and hunting societies studied by anthropologists surely differed in many ways from their ancient counterparts, they do allow us to see the human face of a way of life long vanished from most parts of the earth.

The San of Southern Africa

Description
What are the most prominent features of San life?

On the northern fringe of the Kalahari Desert, in an area including Angola, Namibia, and Botswana, lies the country of the San people, who numbered 50,000 to 80,000 at the start of the twenty-first century. Linguistically, they are related to the great Khoisan language family, whose speakers have lived throughout eastern and southern Africa for many millennia. The immediate ancestors of the San have inhabited southern Africa for at least 5,000 years. Economically, Khoisan-speaking peoples practiced a gathering and hunting way of life with a technology of stone tools that was recognizable to their twentieth-century San descendants. Another cultural practice of long standing was the remarkable rock art of southern Africa, depicting people and animals, especially the antelope, in thousands of naturalistic scenes of hunts, battles, and dances. Dating to as far back as 26,000 years ago, this tradition persisted into the nineteenth century, making it the "oldest artistic tradition of humankind."[19] Modern scholars suggest that this art reflected the religious experience of trance healers, who were likely the artists who painted these images. (See chapter opening photo on p. 10.) When a late-nineteenth-century anthropologist showed some of these rock paintings to an elderly San couple, the woman began to sing and dance, while the man became sad, remembering the old songs.[20] In these and other ways, contemporary San people are linked to an ancient cultural tradition that is deeply rooted in the African past.

Most Khoisan gathering and hunting peoples had long ago been absorbed or displaced by the arrival of Bantu-speaking peoples bearing agriculture, domesticated animals, and iron tools, but the San, living in a relatively remote location, endured. Even the colonization of southern Africa by Europeans left the San largely intact until the 1960s and later, but not completely, for they traded with their agricultural neighbors and sometimes worked for them. The San also began to use iron arrowheads, fashioned from metals introduced by the newcomers. Drums, borrowed from their Bantu-speaking neighbors, now supplemented their own stringed instruments and became part of San musical tradition. Despite these borrowings, when anthropologists descended on the San in the 1950s and 1960s and studied every aspect of their culture, they found a people still practicing an ancient way of life. (See Document 1.1, pp. 34–39, for a description of San life from a twentieth-century woman's perspective.) The following account of San culture is drawn largely from the work of Richard Lee, an anthropologist who lived with and was adopted by one of

The San of Southern Africa

the San groups who called themselves the Ju/'hoansi.[21] The term literally means "real people"; the slash and the apostrophe in the name denote "clicks," which are a distinctive sound in the San language.

In the semidesert conditions of the northern Kalahari, the Ju/'hoansi have drawn a livelihood from a harsh land using some twenty-eight tools for gathering, hunting, and preparing food. The most important implements include an all-purpose wooden digging stick, a large leather garment used for carrying things and also as a blanket, woven ropes, nets, a knife, a spear, a bow, and arrows tipped with a potent poison. The Ju/'hoansi have identified and named some 260 species of wild animals, of which the kudu, wildebeest, and gemsbok are the most commonly hunted, entirely by men. More than 100 species of wild plants, including various nuts, berries, roots, fruits, melons, and greens, were collected, largely by women.

What kind of life did they create for themselves with this modest technology? According to Richard Lee, it was a "happy combination of an adequate diet and a short workweek." He calculated that the Ju/'hoansi consumed 2,355 calories on average every day, about 30 percent from meat and 70 percent from vegetables, well balanced with sufficient protein, vitamins, and minerals—and, he concluded, they "[did] not have to work very hard" to achieve this standard of living. An average workweek involved about seventeen hours of labor in getting food and another twenty-five hours in housework and making and fixing tools, with the total work divided quite equally between men and women. This left plenty of leisure time for resting, visiting, talking, and conducting rituals and ceremonies. Still, it was an uncertain and perpetually anxious life, with fluctuating rainfall, periodic droughts, seasonal depletion of plants, and the unpredictable movement of animals.

What made the Ju/'hoansi way of life possible was a particular kind of society, one characterized by mobility, sharing, and equality. The basic unit of social organization was a band or camp of roughly ten to thirty people, who were connected by ties of exchange and kinship with similar camps across a wide area. The membership of a camp fluctuated over time as many people claimed membership in more than one band. Furthermore, the camps themselves, consisting of quickly built grass huts, were moved frequently, with the Ju/'hoansi seldom staying more than a few months in any one place. The flexibility of this arrangement allowed them to adjust rapidly to the changing seasonal patterns of their desert environment.

At one level, Ju/'hoansi society was extremely simple. No formal leaders, chiefs, headmen, priests, or craft specialists existed, and decisions were made by individual families and camps after much discussion. On another level, social relationships were extremely complex, and it took Richard Lee several years to penetrate them. In addition to common kinship relations of marriage and descent, there were "joking" and "avoidance" relationships that determined the degree of familiarity with which people engaged one another. A further element of complexity lay in a unique "naming" system, which created a deep bond among people with the same name, even though they were not biologically related. For example, a man could not marry any woman who bore the same name as his mother or sister.

At the heart of such a small-scale society of intense personal relationships were values of modesty, cooperation, and equality, which the Ju/'hoansi went to great lengths to inculcate and maintain. One technique, known as "insulting the meat," involved highly negative comments about the size or quality of an animal killed by a hunter and the expectation that a successful hunter would disparage his own kill. As one man put it:

> When a young man kills much meat, he comes to think of himself as a chief or a big man, and he thinks of the rest of us as his servants or inferiors. We can't accept this. We refuse one who boasts, for someday his pride will make him kill someone. So we always speak of his meat as worthless. In this way we cool his heart and make him gentle.

Another practice tending toward equality was the principle that the owner of the arrow that killed an animal, not the successful hunter himself, had the right to distribute the meat from that animal. Because arrows were widely shared, and sometimes owned by women, this custom spread the prestige of meat distribution widely within the society and countered any possibility that the hunter might regard the meat as his private property.

Beyond the sharing of food within a camp was a system of unequal gift exchange among members of different camps. For example, I give you something today, and many months later, you may give me a gift that need not be equivalent in value. When Richard Lee appeared puzzled by the inequality of the exchange, he was told: "We don't trade with things; we trade with people." This system of exchange had more to do with establishing social relations than with accumulating goods. One famous and highly respected hunter named Toma "gave away everything that came into his hands. . . . [I]n exchange for his self-imposed poverty, he won the respect and following of all the people."[22] It was an economic system that aimed at leveling wealth, not accumulating it, and that defined security in terms of possessing friends or people with obligations to oneself, rather than possessing goods.

Social equality extended also to relations between women and men. Richard Lee noted "relative equality between the sexes with no-one having the upper hand." Teenagers engaged quite freely in sex play, and the concept of female virginity was apparently unknown, as were rape, wife beating, and the sexual double standard. Although polygamy was permitted, most marriages were in fact monogamous because women strongly resisted sharing a husband with another wife. Frequent divorce among very young couples allowed women to leave unsatisfactory marriages easily. Lee found that longer-term marriages seemed to be generally fulfilling and stable. Both men and women expected a satisfying sexual relationship, and both occasionally took lovers, although discreetly.

But not all was sweetness and light among the Ju/'hoansi. Frequent arguments about the distribution of meat or the laziness or stinginess of particular people generated conflict, as did rivalries among men over women. Lee identified twenty-two murders that had occurred between 1920 and 1955 and several cases in which

the community came together to conduct an execution of particularly disruptive individuals. Lesser tensions were handled through talk; more serious disputes might result in separation, with some people leaving to join another camp or to start their own.

In confronting the world beyond material and social life, the Ju/'hoansi reflected beliefs and practices that were arguably tens of thousands of years old. Unlike later peoples with their many gods, goddesses, spirits, and powers, the San populated the spiritual universe in a quite limited way. A Creator God, Gao Na, gave rise to the earth, men, women, animals, waterholes, and all other things; but like the Greek gods, Gao Na was a capricious deity who often visited misfortune on humankind, simply because he chose to do so. A lesser god, Gauwa, was even more destructive, spreading disease, conflict, and death, but also on occasion providing assistance to beleaguered humans. The most serious threat to human welfare came from the ghosts of dead ancestors, the *gauwasi,* who were viewed as primarily malevolent. Asked why the ancestral spirits were so destructive, one woman healer replied:

> Longing for the living is what drives the dead to make people sick. . . . They are very very sad. . . . They miss their people on earth. And so they come back to us. They hover near the villages and put sickness into people, saying "Come, come here to me."

The Ju/'hoansi had one powerful resource for counteracting these evil influences from the world of the gods and ancestors. It was *n/um*, a spiritual potency that lies in the stomach and becomes activated during "curing dances," powerful nightlong rituals held frequently, especially during the dry season when several camps converged on the remaining waterholes. Around a fire, an inner circle of women clapped and sang, while men danced in a circle behind them. Then someone went into a trance and, in that altered state of consciousness, sought to share his or her activated *n/um* with everyone in the camp, pulling the evil out of them. Doing so had the power to heal the sick, to bring harmony to the community, to affect the rainfall and the supply of animals, and to protect everyone from the evil designs of the ancestors.[23]

Recent analysis suggests that the rock art of southern Africa represents the visions achieved by ancient trance dancers as they did battle with the supernatural world. (See chapter opening photo on p. 10.) If so, the Ju/'hoansi of the twentieth century were participating in the longest and most continuous religious tradition in world history.

The trance dance was in many ways a distinctive tradition. It did not seek communion with the supernatural; no gifts or sacrifices were offered to the gods or the ancestors, and few prayers were made for their assistance. Viewing the gods as the source of disease, conflict, and death, the Ju/'hoansi hurled at them words of reproach, abuse, and rejection, seeking to ward them off, to expel them from society. It was, as one scholar put it, a "war with God."[24] The leaders of this war, the

trance dancers, were not possessed by any supernatural being but used the trance state to activate their own internal *n/um*. Nor were they a priestly elite. Men and women alike could become healers, although a fearful and extended process of spiritual preparation awaited them. Almost half of the men and one-third of the women whom Lee encountered had entered the trance state. It was a much-sought-after role, but it conveyed no permanent power or authority. Finally, Ju/'hoansi religious thinking located the source of evil and misfortune outside of the community in the activity of the gods and ancestors rather than within society in the form of sorcerers or witches. The curing dances brought the community together, united against the external and supernatural enemy.

The Chumash of Southern California

Comparison
In what ways, and why, did Chumash culture differ from that of the San?

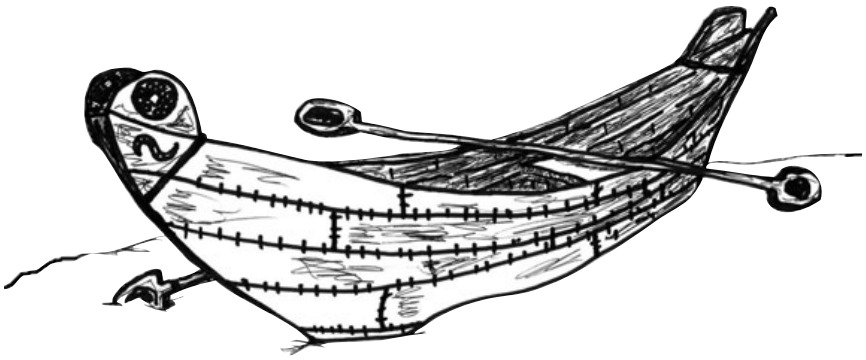
If the San Ju/'hoansi people provide a window into the life of at least one nomadic and long-established gathering and hunting society, the Chumash are more representative of those later post–Ice Age Paleolithic peoples who settled in permanent villages and constructed more complex societies. Together the San and the Chumash illustrate the immense variation that was possible within the limits of a gathering and hunting way of life.

Located in southern California in the vicinity of present-day Santa Barbara, the Chumash occupied a richer and more varied environment than did the San. Speaking a series of related dialects, they lived along the coast, in the immediate interior, and on a series of offshore islands. Thus they were able to draw on the resources of the sea as well as those of the land to support a much more densely settled population of perhaps 20,000 people when they first encountered the Spanish in the sixteenth century.

Although the area had been sparsely occupied for about 10,000 years, the history of its people comes into sharper focus only in the centuries of the Common Era. The first millennium C.E. witnessed a growing population, the overhunting and depletion of deer herds in the interior, likely food shortages, and consequently increasing levels of violence and warfare among rival groups. Evidence for this violence is found in the large number of skeletons with bashed-in skulls or arrow and spear wounds. Then, in the several centuries after 1150 C.E., the Chumash, according to a noted scholar, "created an entirely new society."[25] Whereas the history of the San is marked by long-term continuities with a distant past, the Chumash experienced an extraordinary transformation.

The Chumash of Southern California

A major element of that transformation lay in a remarkable technological innovation—the creation of a planked canoe, or *tomol*—an ocean-going vessel some twenty to thirty feet long and with a cargo capacity of two tons. Called "the most technically sophisticated watercraft developed in the New World," the tomol came into general use around 1000 C.E.[26] Building or owning one of these vessels brought immense prestige, wealth, and power, injecting a new element of inequality into Chumash society. The



A Chumash Tomol
A technologically sophisticated seagoing canoe, the tomol, shown here in a contemporary drawing, was constructed from redwood or pine planks sewn together and caulked with hard tar and pine pitch. In recent decades, Chumash descendants have built several tomols and paddled them from the California mainland to the Channel Islands, re-creating a voyage that their distant ancestors had made many times. These reenactments were part of an effort to preserve for future generations the culture and traditions of the ancient Chumash. (Gaviota Coast Conservancy/Redrawn by © Elizabeth Leahy)

boatbuilders organized themselves into an elite craft guild, the Brotherhood of the Tomol, which monopolized canoe production and held the tools, knowledge, and sacred medicine associated with these boats. The tomol stimulated a blossoming of trade along the coast and between the coast and the islands as plant food, animal products, tools, and beads now moved regularly among Chumash communities. The boats also made possible deep-sea fishing, with swordfish, central to Chumash religious practice, being the most highly prized and prestigious catch.

In other ways as well, the material life of the Chumash was far more elaborate than that of the San. They lived in round, permanent, substantial houses, covered by grass or reeds, some of them fifty feet in diameter and able to hold up to seventy people. Every village had its own sweathouse, built partially underground and entered through an opening in the roof. Soapstone bowls, wooden plates, beautifully decorated reed baskets, and a variety of items made from bone or shell reflected a pattern of technological innovation far beyond that of the San.

A resource-rich environment, a growing and settled population, flourishing commerce, and technological innovation combined to produce something that scholars not long ago would have considered impossible—a market economy among a gathering and hunting people. Whereas the economic life of the San was regulated almost entirely by custom and tradition, that of the Chumash involved important elements of a market-based system: individuals acting out of a profit motive; the use of money, in the form of stringed beads; regulation of the supply of money to prevent inflation; specialized production of goods such as beads, stone tools, canoes, and baskets; prices attached to various items; payment for services provided by dancers, healers, and buriers; and private ownership of canoes, stores of food, and some tools. This is how an early Spanish observer described the Chumash in 1792:

> All these Indians are fond of traffic and commerce. They trade frequently with those of the mountains, bringing them fish and beadwork which they exchange for seeds and shawls of foxskin and a kind of blanket. . . . When they trade for profit, beads circulate among them as if they were money, being strung on long threads, according to the greater or smaller wealth of each one. . . . These strings of beads . . . are used by the men to adorn their heads and for collars. . . . They all make a show of their wealth which they always wear in sight on their heads, whence it is taken for gambling and trafficking.[27]

How different is all this from the life of the Ju/'hoansi! Permanently settled villages, ranging in size from several hundred to a thousand people, would have struck the San as unsustainably large compared to their own mobile camps of twenty-five

to fifty people. The specialized skills of the Chumash probably would have surprised the Ju/'hoansi, because all San people possessed pretty much the same set of skills. The San no doubt would have been appalled by the public display of wealth, the impulse toward private accumulation, and the inequalities of Chumash society. A bearskin cape, worn only by the elite of canoe owners and village chiefs, marked the beginnings of class distinctions, as did burials, which were far more elaborate for the wealthy and their children than for commoners. Members of the Brotherhood of the Tomol often were buried with parts of their canoes.

Perhaps most offensive to the egalitarian and independent Ju/'hoansi would have been the emergence of a permanent and hereditary political elite among the Chumash. High-ranking Chumash chiefs, who inherited their positions through the male line, exercised control over a number of communities, but each village also had its own chief, some of whom were women. These political leaders, all of whom were also canoe owners, led their people in war, presided over religious rituals, and regulated the flourishing trade that followed the invention of the tomol. They also named the dates for periodic feasts, during which donations and collections from the wealthy were used to feed the poor and to set aside something for a rainy day. This effort at redistributing wealth might have earned the approval of the Ju/'hoansi, who continually sought to level any social and economic distinctions among themselves.

Whatever the Ju/'hoansi might have thought, these transformations—technological, economic, social, and political—created a more unified and more peaceful life among the Chumash in the several centuries after 1150. Earlier patterns of violence apparently subsided as specialized crafts and enhanced trade evened out the distribution of food, making various Chumash communities dependent on one another. More formal political leadership enabled the peaceful resolution of disputes, which formerly had been resolved in battle. Frequent celebrations served to bring various Chumash villages together, while a society-wide organization of ritual experts provided yet another integrating mechanism. These transformations represent a remarkable achievement, especially because they introduced in a gathering and hunting society many social elements normally associated only with agricultural peoples. However, the coming of the Europeans, with their guns, diseases, and missionaries, largely destroyed Chumash society in the centuries following that epic encounter. The mobile San, in their remote location, were able to preserve their ways of life far longer than the more settled, and therefore vulnerable, Chumash, who were unable to avoid the powerful newcomers.

Reflections: The Uses of the Paleolithic

Even when it is about a past as distant as the Paleolithic era, the study of history is also about those who tell it in the present. We search the past, always, for our own purposes. For a long time, modern people were inclined to view their Paleolithic ancestors as primitive or superstitious, unable to exercise control over nature, and

ignorant of its workings. Such a view was, of course, a kind of self-congratulation, designed to highlight the "progress" of modern humankind. It was a way of saying, "Look how far we have come."

In more recent decades, growing numbers of people, disillusioned with modernity, have looked to the Paleolithic era for material with which to criticize, rather than celebrate, contemporary life. Feminists have found in gathering and hunting peoples a much more gender-equal society and religious thinking that featured the divine feminine, qualities that encouragingly suggested that patriarchy was neither inevitable nor eternal. Environmentalists have sometimes identified peoples in the distant past who were uniquely in tune with the natural environment rather than seeking to dominate it. Some nutritionists have advocated a "Paleolithic diet" of wild plants and animals as well suited to our physiology. Critics of modern materialism and competitive capitalism have been delighted to discover societies in which values of sharing and equality predominated over those of accumulation and hierarchy. Still others have asked, in light of the long Paleolithic era, whether the explosive population and economic growth of recent centuries should be considered normal or natural. Perhaps they should be regarded as extraordinary, possibly even pathological. Finally, research about the Paleolithic era has been extremely important in efforts by contemporary gathering and hunting peoples, or their descendants, to maintain or recover their older identities amid the conflicting currents of modern life. All of these uses of the Paleolithic have been a way of asking, "What have we lost in the mad rush to modernity, and how can we recover it?"

Both those who look with disdain on Paleolithic "backwardness" and those who praise, often quite romantically, its simplicity and equality seek to use these ancient people for their own purposes. In our efforts to puzzle out the past, all of us—historians and students of history very much included—stand somewhere. None of us can be entirely detached when we view the past, but this is not necessarily a matter for regret. What we may lose in objectivity, we gain in passionate involvement with the historical record and the many people who inhabit it. Despite its remoteness from us in time and manner of living, the Paleolithic era resonates still in the twenty-first century, reminding us of our kinship with these distant people and the significance of that kinship to finding our own way in a very different world.

Second Thoughts

What's the Significance?

To assess your mastery of the material in this chapter, visit the **Student Center** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Paleolithic rock art
Venus figurines
Dreamtime
Clovis culture
megafaunal extinction
Austronesian migrations
"the original affluent society"
shamans
trance dance
Paleolithic settling down
San culture
"insulting the meat"
Chumash culture
Brotherhood of the Tomol

Big Picture Questions

1. What is the significance of the Paleolithic era in world history?
2. In what ways did various Paleolithic societies differ from one another, and how did they change over time?
3. Which statements in this chapter seem to be reliable and solidly based on facts, and which ones are more speculative and uncertain?
4. How might our attitudes toward the modern world influence our assessment of Paleolithic societies?

Next Steps: For Further Study

David Christian, *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* (2008). A lovely essay by a leading world historian, the first part of which provides a succinct survey of the Paleolithic era.

Brian M. Fagan, *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory* (2006). A global account of early human history, written by a leading archeologist.

Clive Gamble, *Timewalkers: The Prehistory of Global Colonization* (2003). A beautifully written account of the initial human settlement of the earth.

Sally McBreatry and Alison S. Brooks, "The Revolution That Wasn't: A New Interpretation of the Origin of Modern Human Behavior," *Journal of Human Evolution* 39 (2000). A long scholarly article laying out the archeological evidence for the emergence of humankind in Africa.

Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of an !Kung Woman* (2000). A vivid first-person account of a San woman's life in a twentieth-century gathering and hunting society.

"Prehistoric Art," http://witcombe.sbc.edu/ARTHprehistoric.html#general. An art history Web site with a wealth of links to Paleolithic art around the world.

For Web sites and additional documents related to this chapter, see **Make History** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Documents

Considering the Evidence: Glimpses of Paleolithic Life

For historians accustomed to working with documents written during the time period they are studying, the Paleolithic era has often been an exercise in frustration. No such documents exist for the long era of gathering and hunting societies, for writing did not develop until quite late in the history of humankind—around 3500 B.C.E., with the emergence of the first civilizations. Thus historians have been dependent on the slender archeological remains of Paleolithic people—their bones, tools, fossilized seeds, paintings, and sculptures—for understanding the lives of these most distant of our ancestors.

In the twentieth century, anthropologists and other scholars descended on the few remaining gathering and hunting peoples, studying their cultures and collecting their stories, myths, and oral traditions. Historians are often skeptical about the usefulness of such material for understanding the distant past of Paleolithic societies. After all, gatherers and hunters in the modern era have often mixed and mingled with agricultural societies, have come under European colonial rule, or have been in contact with elements of modern civilization. Thus their cultures may well have changed substantially from earlier patterns of Paleolithic life.

While recognizing that twentieth-century accounts may not precisely describe earlier gathering and hunting societies, we are nonetheless fortunate to have these more recent materials. Despite their limitations, they provide us at least a glimpse into ways of living and thinking that have almost completely vanished from the earth. The two documents that follow represent this kind of material.

Document 1.1

A Paleolithic Woman in the Twentieth Century

In 1971 the American anthropologist Marjorie Shostak was conducting research among the San people of the Kalahari Desert on the border of Botswana and South Africa (see map, p. 25). There she became acquainted with a fifty-year-old woman called Nisa. Although Nisa had interacted with neighboring cattle-keeping people and with Europeans, she had lived most of her life "in the

bush," fully participating in the gathering and hunting culture of her ancestors. Nisa proved willing to share with Shostak the intimate details of her life, including her memories of childhood, her five marriages, the birth of her children, her relationships with various lovers, and the deaths of loved ones. Those interviews became the basis for the remarkable book from which the following excerpts derive.

- What conflicts in San life does Nisa's account reveal?
- What does her story indicate about San attitudes toward sex and marriage? How might you compare those attitudes with those of contemporary society?
- How does Nisa understand God, or the divine?
- How does she understand the purpose of the curing rituals in which she took part?
- How would you describe Nisa's overall assessment of San life? Do you find it romanticized, realistic, or critical? What evidence from the passages supports your conclusions?
- How does this insider's account of San life support, contradict, or supplement the description of San culture found on pages 25–29?

Nisa

The Life and Words of an !Kung Woman

1969–1976

We are people who live in the bush, and who belong in the bush. We are not village people. I have no goats. I have no cattle. I am a person who owns nothing. That's what people say I am: a poor person.... No donkey, either. I still carry things myself, in my kaross when I travel, and that's why I live in the bush....

Family Life

We lived and lived, and as I kept growing, I started to carry my little brother around on my shoulders. My heart was happy then; I had grown to love him and carried him everywhere. I'd play with him for a while and whenever he would start to cry, I'd take him to Mother so he could nurse. Then I'd take him back with me and we'd play together again.

That was when Kumsa was little. But once he was older and started to talk and then to run around, that's when we were mean to each other and hit and fought all the time. Because that's how children play. One child does mean things and the other children do mean things back. If your father goes out hunting one day, you think, "Won't Daddy bring home meat? Then I can eat it, but I can also *stinge* it!" When your father does come home with meat, you say, "My daddy brought back meat and I won't let you have *any* of it!" The other children say, "How come we play together yet you always treat us so badly?"

Source: Marjorie Shostak, *Nisa: The Life and Words of an !Kung Woman* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 41, 69, 87–89, 153–55, 166, 210–11, 226–27, 271, 299, 301–2, 316–17.

When Kumsa was bigger, we were like that all the time. Sometimes we'd hit each other. Other times, I'd grab him and bite him and said, "Oooo…what is this thing that has such a horrible face and no brains and is so mean? How come it is so mean to me when I'm not doing anything to it?" Then he'd say, "I'm going to *hit* you! What's protecting you that I shouldn't?" And I'd say, "You're just a baby! I, *I* am the one who's going to hit *you*! Why are you so miserable to me?" I'd insult him and he'd insult me and I'd insult him back. We'd just stay together and play like that.…

Life in the Bush

We lived in the bush and my father set traps and killed steenbok and duiker and gemsbok and we lived, eating the animals and foods of the bush. We collected food, ground it in a mortar, and ate it. We also ate sweet nin berries and tsin beans. When I was growing up, there were no cows or goats.… I had never seen other peoples and didn't know anything other than life in the bush. That's where we lived and where we grew up.

Whenever my father killed an animal and I saw him coming home with meat draped over a stick, balanced on one shoulder—that's what made me happy. I'd cry out, "Mommy! Daddy's coming and he's bringing *meat*!" My heart would be happy when I greeted him, "Ho, ho, Daddy! We're going to eat meat!"

Or honey. Sometimes he'd go out and come home with honey. I'd be sitting around with my mother and then see something coming from way out in the bush. I'd look hard. Then, "Oooh, Daddy found a beehive! Oh, I'm going to eat honey! Daddy's come back with honey for us to eat!" And I'd thank him and call him wonderful names.

Sometimes my mother would be the one to see the honey. The two of us would be walking around gathering food and she'd find a beehive deep inside a termite mound or in a tree. I remember one time when she found it. I jumped and ran all around and was so excited I couldn't stop moving. We went to the village to get some containers, then went back to the termite mound. I watched as she took the honey out. Then, we went home.…

When we were living in the bush, some people gave and others stinged. But there were always enough people around who shared, people who liked one another, who were happy living together, and who didn't fight. And even if one person did stinge, the other person would just get up and yell about it, whether it was meat or anything else, "What's doing this to you, making you not give us meat?"

When I was growing up, receiving food made my heart happy. There really wasn't anything, other than stingy people, that made me unhappy. I didn't like people who wouldn't give a little of what they had.…

It's the same today. Here I am, long since an adult, yet even now, if a person doesn't give something to me, I won't give anything to that person.…

Marriage

…The day of the wedding, everyone was there. All of Tashay's friends were sitting around, laughing and laughing. His younger brother said, "Tashay, you're too old. Get out of the way so I can marry her. Give her to me." And his nephew said, "Uncle, you're already old. Now, let *me* marry her." They were all sitting around, talking like that. They all wanted me.

I went to my mother's hut and sat there. I was wearing lots of beads and my hair was completely covered and full with ornaments.

That night there was another dance. We danced, and some people fell asleep and others kept dancing.…

The next day they started [to build the marriage hut]. There were lots of people there—Tashay's mother, my mother, and my aunt worked on the hut; everyone else sat around, talking. Late in the day, the young men went and brought Tashay to the finished hut. They set him down beside it and stayed there with him, sitting around the fire.…

They came and brought me back. Then they laid me down inside the hut. I cried and cried. People told me, "A man is not something that kills you; he

is someone who marries you, who becomes like your father or your older brother. He kills animals and gives you things to eat. Even tomorrow, while you are crying, Tashay may kill an animal. But when he returns, he won't give you any meat; only he will eat. Beads, too. He will get beads but he won't give them to you. Why are you so afraid of your husband and what are you crying about?"

I listened and was quiet. Later, we went to sleep. Tashay lay down beside the opening of the hut, near the fire, and I lay down inside; he thought I might try and run away again. He covered himself with a blanket and slept. . . .

We began to live together, but I ran away, again and again. A part of my heart kept thinking, "How come I'm a child and have taken another husband?"...

We lived and lived, the two of us, together, and after a while I started to really like him and then, to love him. I had finally grown up and had learned how to love. I thought, "A man has sex with you. Yes, that's what a man does. I had thought that perhaps he didn't."

We lived on and I loved him and he loved me. I loved him the way a young adult knows how to love; I just *loved* him. Whenever he went away and I stayed behind, I'd miss him. I'd think, "Oh, when is my husband ever coming home? How come he's been gone so long?" I'd miss him and want him. When he'd come back my heart would be happy, "Eh, hey! My husband left and once again has come back."

We lived and when he wanted me, I didn't refuse; he just lay with me. . . .

I . . . gave myself to him, gave and gave. We lay with each other and my breasts were very large. I was becoming a woman.

Loss

It was while we were visiting in the Tswana village and just after Kxau was born that Tashay died. . . .

I lay there and thought, "Why did this happen? The two of us gave so much to each other and lived together so happily. Now I am alone, without a husband. I am already a widow. Why did God trick me and take my husband? God is stingy! He just takes them from you. God's heart is truly far from people."...

Then I was without my husband and my heart was miserable. Every night I missed him and every night I cried, "I am without the man I married." I thought, "Where will I see the food that will help my children grow? Who is going to help me raise this newborn? My older brother and my younger brother are far away. Who is going to help me now?" Because Kxau had only just been born; he was so small he almost didn't exist. Then I said, "Everyday food will do it. I will start today to gather the food that will bring them up," and I went out and brought back what I could. . . .

In your heart, your child, your mother, and your father are all equal. When any one of them dies, your heart feels pain. When your child dies, you think, "How come this little thing I held beside me and watched all that she did, today has died and left me? She was the only child I had with me; there wasn't another I spent my days with. We two stayed together and talked together. This God . . . his ways are foul! Why did he give me a little one and then take her away?"...

The death of your parents, husband, or children—they are equal in the amount of pain you feel when you lose them. But when they all die and you have no family left, then you really feel pain. There is no one to take care of you; you are completely alone. . . .

That's the way it is. God is the one who destroys. It isn't people who do it. It is God himself.

Lovers

. . . Besa [Nisa's fourth husband] and I did argue a lot, usually about sex. He was just like a young man, almost a child, who lies with his wife day after day after day. . . .

Every night Besa wanted me and every night he would make love to me. That Besa, something was wrong with his brain! . . .

We argued like that all the time. . . . That man, he wanted sex more than anything else! After a

while, I realized I didn't like his ways. That's when I thought, "Perhaps I will leave him. Perhaps I'll find another man and see what he is like."

I didn't leave him, not for many years. But I did have lovers and so did he. Because, as I am Nisa, my lovers have been many. At that time, there was Tsaa and Nanau. One day Tsaa would make love to me, another day Nanau. They were jealous of each other, and once Tsaa even went to Besa and told him that Nanau and I were lovers. Besa said, "What can I do about it?"...

Because affairs—one married person making love to another not her husband—is something that even people from long ago knew. Even my father's father's father's father knew. There have also always been fights where poison arrows are shot and people are killed because of that. Having affairs is one of the things God gave us.

I have told you about my lovers, but I haven't finished telling you about all of them, because they are as many as my fingers and toes. Some have died and others are still alive.... When you are a woman, you don't just sit still and do nothing—you have lovers. You don't just sit with the man of your hut, with just one man. One man can give you very little. One man gives you only one kind of food to eat. But when you have lovers, one brings you something and another brings you something else. One comes at night with meat, another with money, another with beads. Your husband also does things and gives them to you.

But sitting with just one man? We don't do that. Does one man have enough thoughts for you?...

A Healing Ritual

...N/um—the power to heal—is a very good thing. This is a medicine very much like your medicine because it is strong. As your medicine helps people, our n/um helps people. But to heal with n/um means knowing how to trance. Because, it is in trance that the healing power sitting inside the healer's body—the n/um—starts to work. Both men and women learn how to cure with it, but not everyone wants to. Trance-medicine really hurts! As you begin to trance, the n/um slowly heats inside you and pulls at you. It rises until it grabs your insides and takes your thoughts away. Your mind and your senses leave and you don't think clearly. Things become strange and start to change. You can't listen to people or understand what they say. You look at them and they suddenly become very tiny. You think, "What's happening? Is God doing this?" All that is inside you is the n/um; that is all you can feel.

You touch people, laying on hands, curing those you touch. When you finish, other people hold you and blow around your head and your face. Suddenly your senses go "Phah!" and come back to you. You think, "Eh hey, there are people here," and you see again as you usually do....

N/um is powerful, but it is also very tricky. Sometimes it helps and sometimes it doesn't, because God doesn't always want a sick person to get better....

I was a young woman when my mother and her younger sister started to teach me about drum-medicine. There is a root that helps you learn to trance, which they dug for me. My mother put it in my little leather pouch and said, "Now you will start learning this, because you are a young woman already." She had me keep it in my pouch for a few days. Then one day, she took it and pounded it along with some bulbs and some beans and cooked them together. It had a horrible taste and made my mouth feel foul. I threw some of it up. If she hadn't pounded it with the other foods, my stomach would have been much more upset and I would have thrown it all up; then it wouldn't have done anything for me. I drank it a number of times and threw up again and again. Finally I started to tremble. People rubbed my body as I sat there, feeling the effect getting stronger and stronger. My body shook harder and I started to cry. I cried while people touched me and helped me with what was happening to me.

Eventually, I learned how to break out of my self and trance. When the drum-medicine songs sounded, that's when I would start. Others would string beads and copper rings into my hair. As I began to trance, the women would say, "She's started to trance, now, so watch her carefully.

Don't let her fall." They would take care of me, touching me and helping. If another woman was also in a trance, she laid on hands and helped me. They rubbed oil on my face and I stood there—a lovely young woman, trembling—until I was finished.

Document 1.2

Australian Aboriginal Mythology

The Aboriginal, or native, peoples of Australia have lived on their island/continent for probably 60,000 years. Until the arrival of Europeans in the late eighteenth century, they practiced a gathering and hunting way of life. That culture persisted into the twentieth century, and a small number of Aboriginal people practice it still. Over many centuries, an elaborate body of myths, legends, and stories evolved, reflecting Aboriginal understandings of the world. Known collectively as the Dreamtime, such stories served to anchor the landscape and its human and animal inhabitants to distant events and mythical ancestors. A contemporary Aboriginal artist, Semon Deeb, explains:

> Around the beginning the Ancestral Beings rose from the folds of the earth and stretching up to the scorching sun they called, "I am!" As each Ancestor sang out their name, "I am Snake," "I am Honey Ant," they created the most sacred of their songs. Slowly they began to move across the barren land naming all things and thus bringing them into being. Their words forming verses as the Ancestors walked about, they sang mountains, rivers and deserts into existence. Wherever they went, their songs remained, creating a web of Songlines over the Country. As they travelled the Ancestors hunted, ate, made love, sang and danced leaving a trail of Dreaming along the songlines. Finally at the end of their journey the Ancestral Beings sang "back into" the earth where they can be seen as land formations, sleeping.[28]

Transmitted orally and changing over time, numerous Dreamtime stories have been collected and set down in writing over the past two centuries. The tale presented here deals with the relationship of men and women, surely among the great themes of human reflection everywhere.

- What does this story suggest about the relationships between women and men? Does it support or undermine notions of gender equality among Paleolithic peoples? Is it consistent with the story associated with Visual Source 1.2 (see p. 45)?
- How are the familiar features of the known world—rivers, mountains, humans, animals, and male dominance—linked to ancient happenings in the Dreamtime?
- What aspects of a gathering and hunting way of life are reflected in this tale?

Stories from the Dreamtime

Twentieth Century

In the Dreamtime, in the land of the Murinbata people, a great river flowed from the hills through a wide plain to the sea. As it is today, the land then was rich with much fish and game. From the river rose at one place a series of high hills, where lived an old woman named Mutjinga, a woman of power. She it was who called the invisible spirits to her side with secret incantations that none other knew. She was a *kirman*, leader of the ceremonies in which the people sang and danced the exploits of the totemic beings so their spirits would be pleased and would bring food in its season and many children for the people. In those days, all the things in the world had both a physical form that could be touched, seen, and felt, and a spirit form, which was invisible. When living things died, their spirits went to a secret cave where they remained until it was time for them to be born again. Mutjinga was caretaker of this cave. Only she knew where it was. In the cave, she kept the sacred totems to which the spirits returned.

Mutjinga could speak with the spirits. Because she had this power, she could do many things which the men could not. She could send the spirits to frighten away game, to waylay people at night, or to cause a child to be born without life. The men feared the power of Mutjinga and did not consort with her. They called upon her to lead their dances and teach them songs, but none came to sit by her fire.

Mutjinga became lonely and sent for her young granddaughter to keep her company.

Mutjinga and the girl gathered bulbs and nuts and caught small game, but Mutjinga found no satisfaction in this food, for she craved the flesh of men. . . .

[The story then recounts how Mutjinga dug a hole and covered it with branches in order to trap unsuspecting hunters. Magically turning herself into a goanna (a lizard), she appeared to hunters, led them to their deaths in the hole, and then ate them. This fate befell even the younger brother of her granddaughter, despite the girl's unsuccessful efforts to save him. He too was killed and partially eaten, while Mutjinga kept the rest of his body in a nearby stream.]

The next morning, the little girl was at her early chores when she saw two men coming up the hillside. As she watched, recognition lit her face and she turned toward Mutjinga.

"It is my father and brother who come. Please do not harm them," she implored.

"I crave their flesh. If you trick me again I shall eat you, as well as your father and brother," Mutjinga warned. "This time I shall wait beside you until the men appear so you cannot deceive me."

The men approached the fire, paid their respects to the old woman, and greeted the child warmly. "Daughter, have you seen your brother who came hunting this way yesterday?" the father asked.

Mutjinga hastened to reply for the child. "No, we have not seen him," she said. "It is too bad, for nearby are many goanna holes. There is a large goanna right there," and she pointed to the hole where she kept the club.

"I thirst. First give me water," said the father.

"There is cold water in the stream," the little girl told him as she pointed down the hill.

The two men walked through the bush to the stream. As the father bent to drink, he saw the leg of his elder son, which Mutjinga had weighted down in the water with a large rock. At once he understood.

"The old woman will kill us unless we kill her first," he said to his younger son, and the two men returned to the fire.

"The goanna went into the tall grass," Mutjinga told them when they appeared. "Leave your spears and light a fire to burn the grass. This will drive the goanna out, and when it runs toward its hole, you can kill it with your spears."

The men went to fire the grass. As soon as they were out of sight, the father said, "Son, climb this

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Source: Louis A. Allen, *Time Before Morning* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1975), 145–48.

tree and watch the old woman closely. She works powerful magic."

This the son did, and he saw Mutjinga speak the magic words. She repeated them twice. He watched as the woman and the girl changed into goannas. From the limb of the tree, he observed the larger goanna chase the smaller one into the bush. Soon great billows of smoke were rising from the burning grass. The small goanna scuttled from the bush, its companion nipping at its heels. They ran past the hunters and disappeared down the hole.

"Get the spears," the father commanded and ran toward the hole. Just as the son returned, spears in hand, the ground beneath the father gave way and he plunged through. Waiting at the bottom was Mutjinga, club raised for the kill. But the son hurled his spear and Mutjinga fell bleeding to the ground.

The father seized her roughly. "Say the magic words that will release my daughter or we shall kill you," he threatened.

Painfully Mutjinga did as she was bidden. The daughter changed into her human form and the two men and the girl climbed from the hole.

"Daughter, show us the secret cave where the spirits are hidden," said the father, "and teach us the magic words you have learned from the old woman. We shall take the spirits to another place, and we shall have the power."

And so it was. The father took the totems from that place and hid them in another cave. He became the *kirman*, the song leader, and he taught the people the sacred dances and ceremonies. To him they brought their problems and he judged between them when they quarreled. And to this day, the men have kept the power.

Using the Evidence: Glimpses of Paleolithic Life

1. **Considering human commonality and diversity:** The study of world history highlights both the common humanity of people from all times and places as well as the vast differences that have separated particular cultures from one another. How might these texts, as well as the paintings in the Visual Sources section (pp. 42–47), serve to illustrate both of these perspectives?
2. **Linking documents and text narrative:** How do these documents and images support or amplify particular statements made about Paleolithic life in this chapter? How might they challenge or contradict that narrative?
3. **Considering the relationship of technology and culture:** How might the gathering and hunting technology of the South African and Australian peoples discussed in this chapter have shaped their cultural understandings as expressed in these documents and images? In what ways might cultural expression, as a product of human imagination, have developed independently of their technology? Does it make sense to evaluate technology as more or less "advanced"? Should culture be assessed in the same way?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia

The rock paintings of the Aboriginal peoples of Australia represent what may be the longest continuously practiced artistic tradition in world history. Scholars have found evidence of these paintings dating to some 40,000 years ago, and the tradition has continued into the twentieth century and beyond as contemporary artists retouched and repainted ancient images and created new ones. A contemporary Aboriginal artist explained what those paintings meant to him:

> When I look at my [dreaming] paintings it makes me feel good—happy in heart, spirit. Everything is there: all there in the caves, not lost. This is my secret side. This is my home—inside me. . . . Our dreaming, secret side—we must hold on to this, like our fathers, looking after it. . . . We give to our sons when we die. The sons keep this from their fathers, grandfathers. The sons will remember, they can carry on, not be lost. And it is still there—fathers' country with rock hole, painted cave. . . . The people keep their ceremony things and pictures—they make them new. They bring young boys for learning to the caves, telling the stories, giving the laws from grandfathers' fathers, learning to do the paintings—[the dreaming] way.[29]

For native peoples of Australia, whose way of life has been so thoroughly disrupted by more than two centuries of European invasion and domination, this continuing artistic tradition provides a link to the past.

Created in caves and protected rock shelters all over this giant island/continent, these paintings were the products of the many distinct peoples of Paleolithic Australia. While they shared a common gathering and hunting way of life, each had its own language, stories, and ceremonies, which found expression in their paintings. Many of them depicted spirit figures or ancestors from the Dreamtime. Such images were often regarded, not as works of art by human artists, but as the actual ancestral beings themselves, able to convey their spiritual energy to their descendants. In this respect, they served something of the same purpose as the much later icons or religious paintings in the Christian world, said to convey the very presence of the divine. (See Visual Sources: Reading Byzantine Icons, pp. 466–71.)

Beyond religious or ceremonial purposes, Aboriginal rock painting also depicted various animals, some of them now extinct; stenciled images of human hands; and abstract designs, believed by scholars to represent coded symbols understood only by those who underwent proper ceremonial initiation. Other paintings portrayed scenes from daily life and were particularly focused on hunting. Still others recorded historical events such as the visits of fishermen from what is now Indonesia to the northern coasts of Australia. Images of European sailing ships, rifles, tools, and animals also found a place in the more recent expressions of Aboriginal rock painting.

The three images shown in this section are from the Kakudu National Park in Australia's Northern Territory, an area inhabited by humans for some 20,000 years. Some of the fading images in the park were repainted in the 1960s by Nayambolmi, one of the last of the traditional rock-art painters. As you examine these images, keep in mind that even the experts do not really know what they meant to the people who created them thousands of years ago. Our task is to appreciate, to imagine, and to speculate about these remarkable paintings rather than to decipher them with any precision.

In Visual Source 1.1, the largest and main figure at the top is Namondjok, a Creation Ancestor, who according to some accounts can be seen in the sky at night as a dark spot in the Milky Way galaxy. Other stories recount that Namondjok violated incest laws by sleeping with a woman from his clan who would have been considered his sister. To the right is Namarrgon, or Lightning Man, who generates the tremendous lightning storms that occur during the rainy season. The arc around his body represents the lightning, while the axes on his head, elbow, and feet are used to split the dark clouds, creating thunder and lightning. The female figure beneath Namondjok is Barrginj, the wife of Lightning Man, while the people below her, elaborately dressed, are perhaps on their way to a ceremony.

- What could an Aboriginal viewer learn about nature from this painting?
- What might he or she understand about the cosmic hierarchy?
- Why do you think the artist positioned people at the bottom of the picture? Might the positioning of Barrginj have meaning as well?
- How might you interpret the relative size of the various images in the painting?

Visual Source 1.1 Namondjok, Namarrgon (Lightning Man), and Barrginj (J. Marshall/Visual Connection Archive)

Visual Source 1.2 depicts Nabulwinjbulwinj, said to be a wicked and dangerous male spirit who kills females by hitting them with a yam and then eating them.

- What message might such a story seek to convey?
- Does this story seem consistent with Document 1.2, which seeks to explain why men have power over women?

Visual Sources 1.1 and 1.2 both reflect a distinctive style of Aboriginal painting known as the X-ray tradition, in which the internal bones and organs of human or animal figures are depicted while also showing their outward appearance.

- What internal structures can you distinguish in these images?
- What purposes or intentions might lay behind such a style?

Visual Source 1.2 Nabulwinjbulwinj (J. Marshall/Visual Connection Archive)

Visual Source 1.3 A Hunting Scene (Oz Outback Internet Services, Queensland, Australia)

Visual Source 1.3 depicts a hunting scene, featuring either people or the thin Mimi spirits, said to inhabit the nooks and crannies of the area's rock formations. Notice the spears that the hunters carry. Various kinds of spears and spear-throwing devices had earlier replaced or supplemented the boomerang, while bows and arrows were unknown to the hunters of Australia before contact with Europeans.

- If the painting depicts real people or actual hunters, what purposes might it serve?
- What different understandings might emerge if the painting is seen as portraying Mimi spirits?
- How might a contemporary Aboriginal artist, such as the one quoted on page 42, understand this painting?

Using the Evidence: The Aboriginal Rock Painting of Australia

1. **Comparing rock art traditions:** How do these Paleolithic-era paintings compare with those from South Africa and southern France shown on pages 00 and 00?
2. **Considering art and religion:** How do these images reflect the religious understandings of the Dreamtime (see Document 1.2, pp. 39–41)?
3. **Seeking further evidence:** What additional information might help you to understand these images more fully?
4. **Connecting past and present:** In what ways do these paintings retain their ability to speak to people living in industrial societies of the twenty-first century? Or do they have meaning only for those who made them?

CHAPTER TWO

First Farmers

The Revolutions of Agriculture

10,000 B.C.E.–3000 B.C.E.

"After me, I suppose there will be nothing here," remarked seventy-two-year-old Elsie Eiler in 2005. At the time, she was the sole remaining resident of the farm town of Monowi, Nebraska. "There is just no employment for people. Farming is hard and all the small farms have had to merge into bigger ones, and the young people just want to go away to college and a city. Few of them come back." Founded in 1902 by Czech immigrants, Monowi in the early twentieth century boasted a post office, two banks, a high school, a church, and rows of well-built homes. By the early twenty-first century, the church was boarded up, many houses had collapsed, deer and wild elk roamed the town's empty spaces, and flocks of birds nested in thick weeds along what had once been Main Street. With the death of her husband in 2004, Mrs. Eiler became the only living soul in Monowi, where she served as the town's mayor and ran its only business, a tavern whose customers came from passing traffic and nearby settlements.[1]

MRS. EILER'S STORY AND THAT OF HER TOWN were part of a much larger global process taking place over the past several centuries of the industrial age—a dramatic decline in the number of people directly earning their living as farmers. The United States represents an extreme case of this worldwide phenomenon: at the beginning of the twenty-first century, only about 5 percent of Americans lived on farms, and many of them were over the age of sixty-five. Despite the

The Statues of Ain Ghazal: Among the largest of the early agricultural settlements investigated by archeologists is that of Ain Ghazal, located in the modern state of Jordan. Inhabited from about 7200 to 5000 B.C.E., in its prime it was home to some 3,000 people, who lived in multiroomed stone houses; cultivated barley, wheat, peas, and lentils; and herded domesticated goats. These remarkable statues, around three feet tall and made of limestone plaster applied to a core of bundled reeds, were among the most startling finds at that site. Did they represent heroes, gods, goddesses, or ordinary people? No one really knows. (Courtesy, Department of Antiquities of Jordan [DoA]. Photo: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Washington, DC)

small number of American farmers, modern agriculture was so productive that those few people were able to feed the entire country and to export a large amount of food as well. This modern retreat from the farm marked a dramatic reversal of a much more ancient pattern in which growing numbers of people began to farm and agriculture became for the first time the primary occupation for the vast majority of humankind. The beginnings of that epic process represent the central theme of this chapter.

The Agricultural Revolution in World History

The chief feature of the long Paleolithic era—and the first human process to operate on a global scale—was the initial settlement of the earth. Then, beginning around 12,000 years ago, a second global pattern began to unfold—agriculture. The term "Neolithic" (New Stone Age) or "Agricultural Revolution" refers to the deliberate cultivation of particular plants as well as the taming and breeding of particular animals. Thus a whole new way of life gradually replaced the earlier practices of gathering and hunting in most parts of the world. Although it took place over centuries and millennia, the coming of agriculture represented a genuinely revolutionary transformation of human life all across the planet and provided the foundation for almost everything that followed: growing populations, settled villages, animal-borne diseases, horse-drawn chariot warfare, cities, states, empires, civilizations, writing, literature, and much more.

Among the most revolutionary aspects of the age of agriculture was a new relationship between humankind and other living things, for now men and women were not simply using what they found in nature but were actively changing nature as well. They were consciously "directing" the process of evolution. The actions of farmers in the Americas, for example, transformed corn from a plant with a cob of an inch or so to one measuring about six inches by 1500. Later efforts more than doubled that length. Farmers everywhere stamped the landscape with a human imprint in the form of fields with boundaries, terraced hillsides, irrigation ditches, and canals. Animals too were transformed as selective breeding produced sheep that grew more wool, cows that gave more milk, and chickens that laid more eggs than their wild counterparts.

This was "domestication"—the taming, and the changing, of nature for the benefit of humankind—but it created a new kind of mutual dependence. Many domesticated plants and animals could no longer survive in the wild and relied on human action or protection in order to reproduce successfully. Similarly, human beings in the agricultural era lost the skills of their gathering and hunting ancestors, and in any event there were now too many people to live in that older fashion. As a consequence, farmers and herders became dependent on their domesticated plants and animals. From an outside point of view, it might well seem that corn and cows had tamed human beings, using people to ensure their own survival and growth as a species, as much as the other way around.

A further revolutionary aspect of the agricultural age is summed up in the term "intensification." It means getting more for less, in this case more food and resources—far more—from a much smaller area of land than was possible with a gathering and hunting technology. More food meant more people. Growing populations in turn required an even greater need for the intensive exploitation of the environment. And so was launched the continuing human effort to "subdue the earth" and to "have dominion over it," as the biblical story in Genesis recorded God's command to Adam and Eve.

Comparing Agricultural Beginnings

Perhaps the most extraordinary feature of the Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution was that it occurred, separately and independently, in many widely scattered parts of the world: the Fertile Crescent of Southwest Asia, several places in sub-Saharan Africa, China, New Guinea, Mesoamerica, the Andes, and eastern North America (see the Snapshot on p. 52). Even more remarkably, all of this took place at roughly the same time (at least as measured by the 250,000-year span of human history on the planet)—between 12,000 and 4,000 years ago. These facts have generated many questions with which historians and other scholars have long struggled. Why was the Agricultural Revolution so late in the history of humankind? What was unique about the period after 10,000 B.C.E. that may have triggered or facilitated this vast upheaval? In what different ways did the Agricultural Revolution take shape in its various locations? How did it spread from its several points of origin to the rest of the earth? And what impact did it have on the making of human societies?

Common Patterns

■ Change
What accounts for the emergence of agriculture after countless millennia of human life without it?

It is no accident that the Agricultural Revolution coincided with the end of the last Ice Age, a process of global warming that began some 16,000 years ago. By about 11,000 years ago, the Ice Age was over, and climatic conditions similar to those of our own time generally prevailed. This was but the latest of some twenty-five periods of glaciation and warming that have occurred over the past several million years of the earth's history and which are caused by minor periodic changes in the earth's orbit around the sun. The end of the last Ice Age, however, coincided with the migration of *Homo sapiens* across the planet and created new conditions that made agriculture possible. Combined with active hunting by human societies, climate change in some areas helped to push into extinction various species of large mammals on which Paleolithic people had depended, thus adding to the pressure to find new food sources. The warmer, wetter, and more stable conditions, particularly in the tropical and temperate regions of the earth, also permitted the flourishing of more wild plants, especially cereal grasses, which were the ancestors of many domesticated crops. What climate change took away with one hand, it apparently gave back with the other.

Snapshot Agricultural Breakthroughs[2]

Location	Dates (B.C.E.)	Plants	Animals
Southwest Asia (Fertile Crescent)	9000–7000	barley, wheat, lentils, figs	goats, sheep, cattle, pigs
China	6500–5000	rice, millet, soybeans	pigs, chickens, water buffalo
Saharan and sub-Saharan Africa	3000–2000	sorghum, millet, yams, teff	cattle (perhaps 8000 B.C.E.)
Highland New Guinea	7000–4000	taro, bananas, yams, sugarcane	—
Andes region	3000–2000	potatoes, quinoa, manioc	llamas, alpaca, guinea pig
Mesoamerica	3000–2000	maize, squash (perhaps 7000 B.C.E.), beans	turkey
Eastern woodlands of North America	2000–1000	sunflower, goosefoot, sumpweed	—

Over their long history, gathering and hunting peoples had already developed a deep knowledge of the natural world and in some cases an ability to manage it actively. They had learned to make use of a large number of plants and to hunt and eat both small and large animals, creating what archeologists call a "broad spectrum diet." In the Middle East, people had developed sickles for cutting newly available wild grain, baskets to carry it, mortars and pestles to remove the husk, and storage pits to preserve it. Peoples of the Amazon and elsewhere had learned to cut back some plants to encourage the growth of their favorites. Native Australians had built elaborate traps in which they could capture, store, and harvest large numbers of eels.

In hindsight, much of this looks like a kind of preparation for agriculture. Because women in particular had long been intimately associated with collecting wild plants, most scholars believe that they were the likely innovators who led the way to deliberate farming, with men perhaps taking the lead in domesticating animals. Clearly the knowledge and technology necessary for agriculture were part of a longer process involving more intense human exploitation of the earth. Nowhere was agriculture an overnight invention.

Using such technologies, and benefiting from the global warming at the end of the last Ice Age, gathering and hunting peoples in various places were able to settle down and establish more permanent villages, abandoning their nomadic ways and more intensively exploiting the local area. This was particularly the case in resource-rich areas close to seas, lakes, marshes, and rivers. In settling down, however, they soon lost some of the skills of their ancestors and found themselves now required

to support growing populations. Evidence for increasing human numbers around the world during this period of global warming has persuaded some scholars that agriculture was a response to an impending "food crisis."[3] If the number of people outstripped the local resources, or if sudden fluctuations in climate—prolonged drought or a cold snap, for example—diminished those resources, these newly settled communities were in trouble. It was no longer so easy to simply move away. These vagaries surely motivated people to experiment and to innovate in an effort to increase the food supply. Clearly, many of the breakthroughs to agriculture occurred only *after* gathering and hunting peoples had already grown substantially in numbers and had established a sedentary way of life.

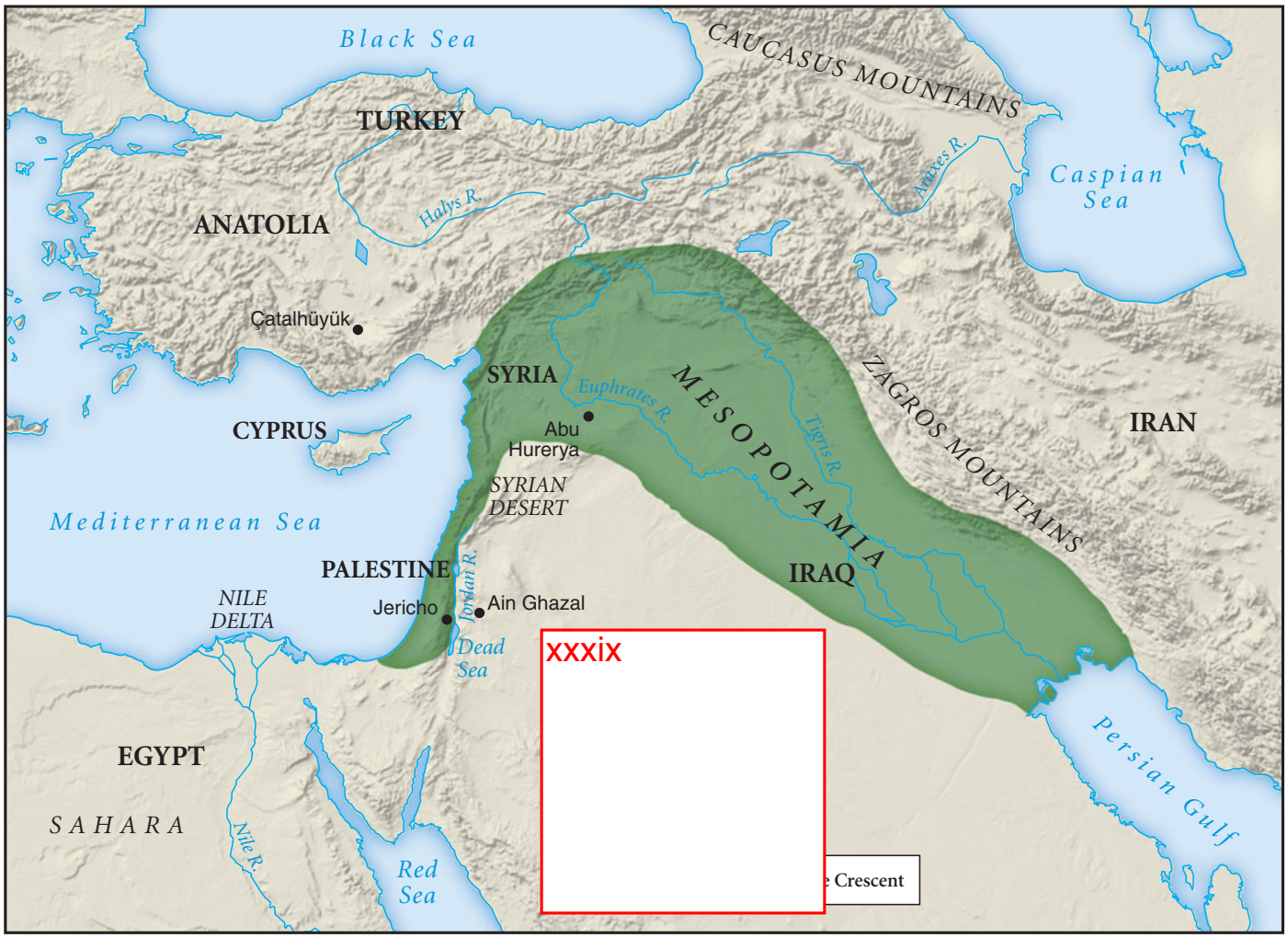
These were some of the common patterns that facilitated the Agricultural Revolution. New opportunities appeared with the improved conditions that came at the end of the Ice Age. New knowledge and technology emerged as human communities explored and exploited that changed environment. The disappearance of many large mammals, growing populations, newly settled ways of life, and fluctuations in the process of global warming—all of these represented pressures or incentives to increase food production and thus to minimize the risks of life in a new era.[4] From some combination of these opportunities and incentives emerged the profoundly transforming process of the Agricultural Revolution.

This new way of life initially operated everywhere with a simple technology—the digging stick or hoe (the plow was developed only later). But the several transitions to this hoe-based agriculture, commonly known as horticulture, varied considerably, depending on what plants and animals were available locally. For example, potatoes were found in the Andes region, but not in Africa or Asia; wheat and wild pigs existed in the Fertile Crescent, but not in the Americas. Furthermore, of the world's 200,000 plant species, only several hundred have been domesticated, and just five of these—wheat, corn, rice, barley, and sorghum—supply more than half of the calories that sustain human life. Only fourteen species of large mammals have been successfully domesticated, of which sheep, pigs, goats, cattle, and horses have been the most important. Because they are stubborn, nervous, solitary, or finicky, many animals simply cannot be readily domesticated.[5] In short, the kind of Agricultural Revolution that unfolded in particular places depended very much on what happened to be available locally, and that in turn depended on sheer luck.

Variations

■ Comparison
In what different ways did the Agricultural Revolution take shape in various parts of the world?

Among the most favored areas—and the first to experience a full Agricultural Revolution—was the Fertile Crescent, an area sometimes known as Southwest Asia, consisting of present-day Iraq, Syria, Israel/Palestine, and southern Turkey (see Map 2.1). In this region, an extraordinary variety of wild plants and animals capable of domestication provided a rich array of species on which the now largely settled gathering and hunting people could draw. What triggered the transition to agriculture, it seems, was a cold and dry spell between 11,000 and 9500 B.C.E., a temporary



Map 2.1 The Fertile Crescent
Located in what is now called the Middle East, the Fertile Crescent was the site of many significant processes in early world history, including the first breakthrough to agriculture and later the development of some of the First Civilizations.

interruption in the general process of global warming. Larger settled populations were now threatened with the loss of the wild plants and animals on which they had come to depend. Their solution was domestication. In the millennium or so after 9000 B.C.E., figs, wheat, barley, rye, peas, lentils, sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle all came under human control, providing the foundation for the world's first, and most productive, agricultural societies.

Archeological evidence suggests that the transition to a fully agricultural way of life in this region sometimes took place quite quickly, within as few as 500 years. Signs of that transformation included large increases in the size of settlements, which now housed as many as several thousand people. In these agricultural settings, archeologists have found major innovations: the use of sun-dried mud bricks; the appearance of monuments or shrinelike buildings; displays of cattle skulls; more elaborate human burials, including the removal of the skull; and more sophisticated tools, such as sickles, polished axes, and awls.[6] Environmental deterioration in ecologically fragile regions was yet another indication of this new way of life. Numerous settlements in the Jordan River valley and Palestine were abandoned as growing populations of people and goats stripped the area of trees and ground cover, leading to

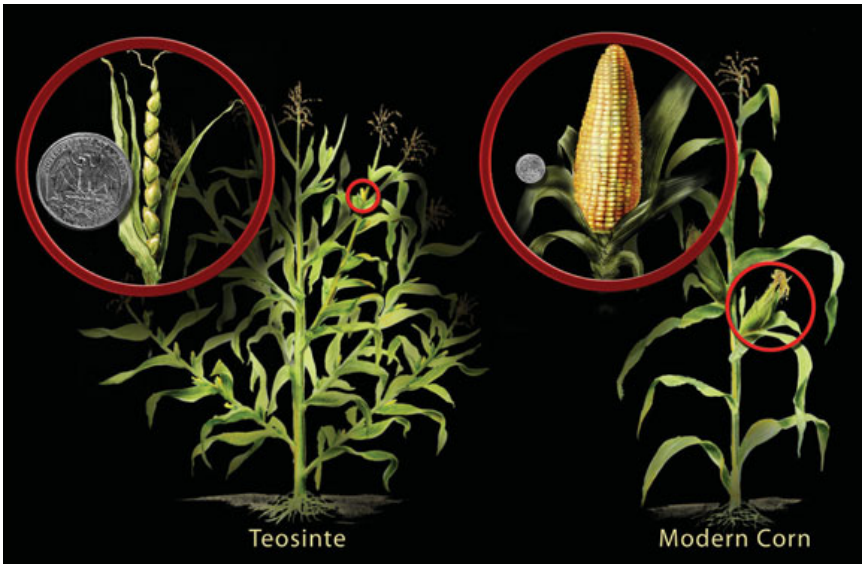
soil erosion and food shortages, which required their human inhabitants to scatter.[7] (See the chapter opening photograph, p. 48, for sculptures from the early agricultural settlement of Ain Ghazal in the Middle East.)

At roughly the same time, perhaps a bit later, another process of domestication was unfolding on the African continent in a most unlikely place—the eastern part of what is now the Sahara in present-day Sudan. Between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, however, "the Saharan desert . . . effectively did not exist," according to scholars, as the region received more rainfall than currently, had extensive grassland vegetation, and was "relatively hospitable to human life."[8] It seems likely that cattle were domesticated in this region about 1,000 years before they were separately brought under human control in the Middle East and India. At about the same time, the donkey also was domesticated in northeastern Africa near the Red Sea and spread from there into Southwest Asia, even as the practice of raising sheep and goats moved in the other direction. In Africa, animal domestication thus preceded the domestication of plants, while elsewhere in the world it was the other way around.

In terms of farming, the African pattern again was somewhat different. Unlike the Fertile Crescent, where a number of plants were domesticated in a small area, sub-Saharan Africa witnessed the emergence of several widely scattered farming practices. Sorghum, which grows well in arid conditions, was the first grain to be "tamed" in the eastern Sahara region. In the highlands of Ethiopia, teff, a tiny, highly nutritious grain, as well as enset, a relative of the banana, came under cultivation. In the forested region of West Africa, yams, oil palm trees, okra, and the kola nut (still used as a flavoring for Coca-Cola and Pepsi) emerged as important crops. The scattered location of these domestications generated a less productive agriculture than in the more favored and compact Fertile Crescent, but a number of the African domesticates—sorghum, castor beans, gourds, millet, the donkey—subsequently spread to enrich the agricultural practices of Eurasian peoples.

Yet another pattern of agricultural development took shape in the Americas. Like the Agricultural Revolution in Africa, the domestication of plants in the Americas occurred separately in a number of locations—in the coastal Andean regions of western South America, in Mesoamerica, in the Mississippi valley, and perhaps in the Amazon basin—but surely its most distinctive feature lay in the absence of animals that could be domesticated. Of the fourteen major species of large mammals that have been brought under human control, only one, the llama/alpaca, existed in the Western Hemisphere. Without goats, sheep, pigs, cattle, or horses, the peoples of the Americas lacked the sources of protein, manure (for fertilizer), and power (to draw plows or pull carts, for example) that were widely available to societies in the Afro-Eurasian world. Because they could not depend on domesticated animals for meat, agricultural peoples in the Americas relied more on hunting and fishing than did peoples in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Furthermore, the Americas lacked the rich cereal grains that were widely available in Afro-Eurasia. Instead they had maize or corn, first domesticated in southern Mexico by 4000 to 3000 B.C.E. Unlike the cereal grains of the Fertile Crescent, which closely resemble their wild predecessors, the ancestor of corn, a mountain grass



Teosinte and Maize/Corn The sharp difference in size between the tiny cobs of teosinte, a wild grass, and usable forms of domesticated maize meant that the Agricultural Revolution took place more slowly in Mesoamerica than it had in Mesopotamia. (Nicolle Rager Fuller, National Science Foundation)

called *teosinte*, looks nothing like what we now know as corn or maize. Thousands of years of selective adaptation were required to develop a sufficiently large cob and number of kernels to sustain a productive agriculture, an achievement that one geneticist has called "arguably man's first, and perhaps his greatest, feat of genetic engineering."[9] Even then, corn was nutritionally poorer than the protein-rich cereals of the Fertile Crescent. To provide sufficient dietary protein, corn had to be supplemented with squash and beans, which were also domesticated in the Americas. Thus while Middle Eastern societies quite rapidly replaced their gathering and hunting economy with agriculture, that process took 3,500 years in Mesoamerica.

Another difference in the progress of the Agricultural Revolution lay in the north/south orientation of the Americas, which required agricultural practices to move through, and adapt to, quite distinct climatic and vegetation zones if they were to spread. The east/west axis of Eurasia meant that agricultural innovations could spread more rapidly because they were entering roughly similar environments. Thus corn, beans, and squash, which were first domesticated in Mesoamerica, took several thousand years to travel the few hundred miles from their Mexican homeland to the southwestern United States and another thousand years or more to arrive in eastern North America. The llama, guinea pig, and potato, which were domesticated in the Andean highlands, never reached Mesoamerica.[10]

The Globalization of Agriculture

Connection
In what ways did agriculture spread? Where and why was it sometimes resisted?

From the various places where it originated, agriculture spread to much of the rest of the earth, although for a long time it coexisted with gathering and hunting ways of life (see Map 2.2). Broadly speaking, this extension of farming occurred in two ways. The first is called diffusion, which refers to the gradual spread of agricultural techniques, and perhaps of the plants and animals themselves, but without the extensive movement of agricultural people. Neighboring groups exchanged ideas and products in a down-the-line pattern of communication. A second process involved the slow colonization or migration of agricultural peoples as growing populations pushed them outward. Often this meant the conquest, absorption, or displacement of the earlier gatherers and hunters, along with the spread of the languages and cultures of the migrating farmers. In many places, both processes took place.[11] The spread of corn-based agriculture in the Americas, highlighted in the Snapshot on page 57, illustrates the process.

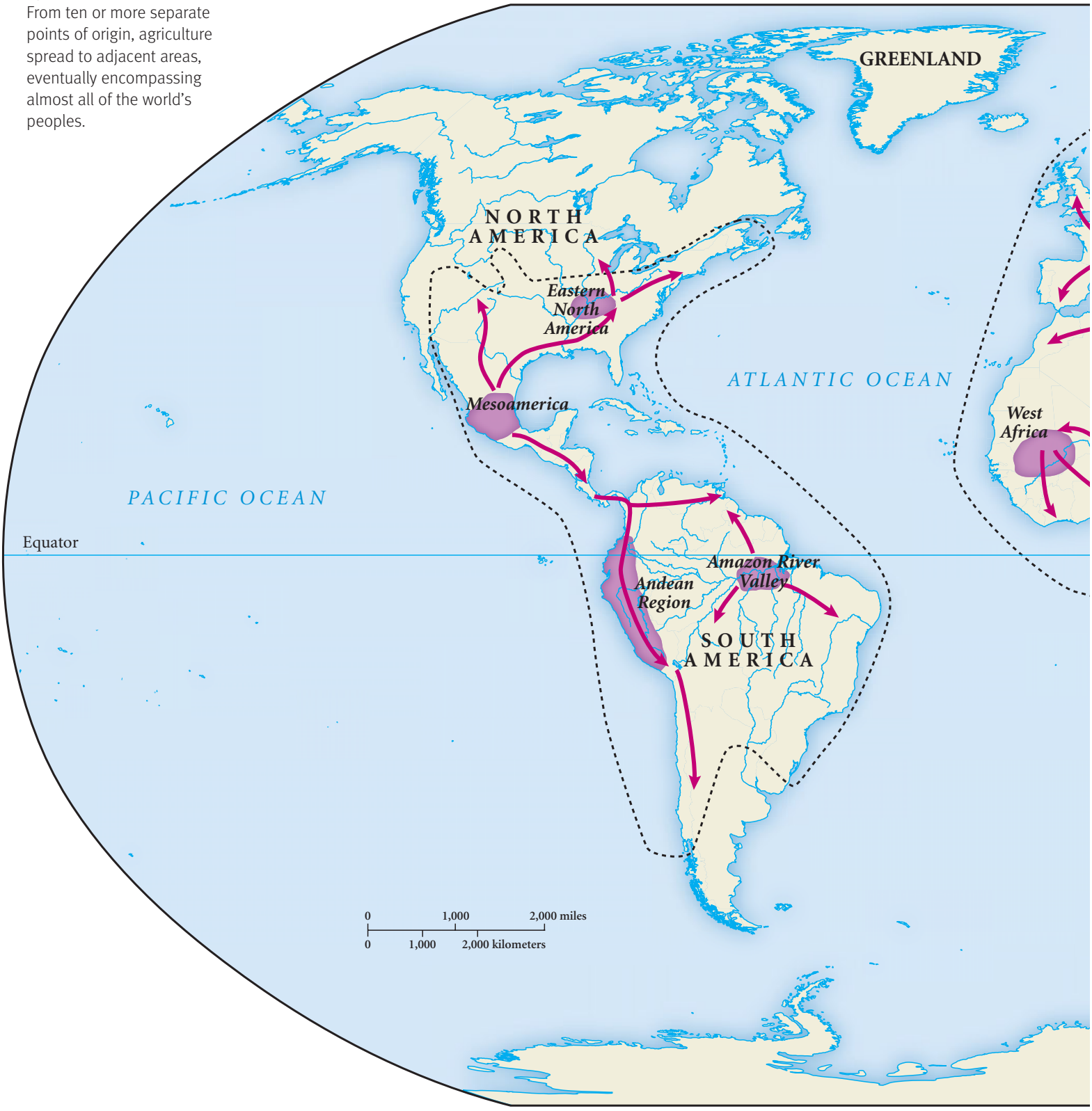
Snapshot The History of Maize/Corn[12]

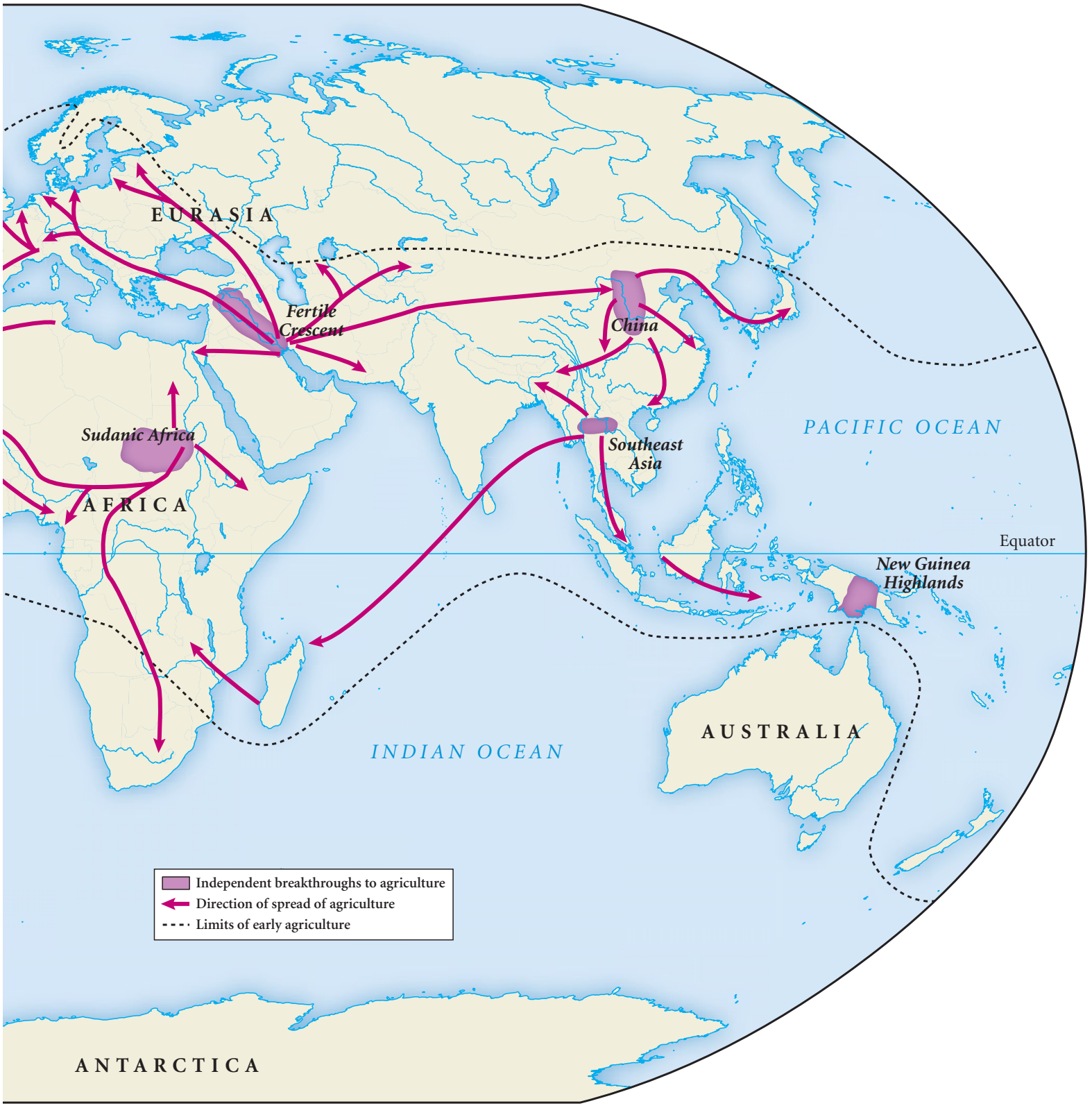
The earliest domestication of teosinte—a grass from which modern maize/corn subsequently developed in a process of adaptation and "genetic engineering" over thousands of years—occurs in southern Mexico. It may have been used for the sugary syrup found in its stalk as well as the nutritional value of its kernels.	9000–8000 B.C.E.
Maize cultivation spreads to South America (Ecuador, Peru).	2300–1000 B.C.E.
Maize cob reaches length of about six centimeters. There is evidence that corn was ground with stone mortars and baked in flat bread.	by 2000 B.C.E.
Maize becomes the staple of Mesoamerican agriculture. Its cultural importance was reflected in its prominence in various myths of origin. Such stories among the Maya, for example, held that humankind was made first of mud, then of wood, and finally, and most successfully, from maize dough.	1500 B.C.E.
Maize spreads to the southwestern United States as farming people migrate.	1000 B.C.E.
In Peru, the average size of a maize cob doubles. Maize is used for making maize beer.	500 B.C.E.–1 C.E.
Maize cultivation reaches the eastern woodlands of the Mississippi River valley, largely through diffusion, although people of this region had already domesticated several minor crops, such as sunflowers.	500 C.E.
Maize farming is introduced in New England and is widespread by 1300, about 300 years before the arrival of the Pilgrims.	1000 C.E.
Maize spreads to Europe, Africa, and Asia, following European conquest of the Americas.	16th–18th centuries C.E.

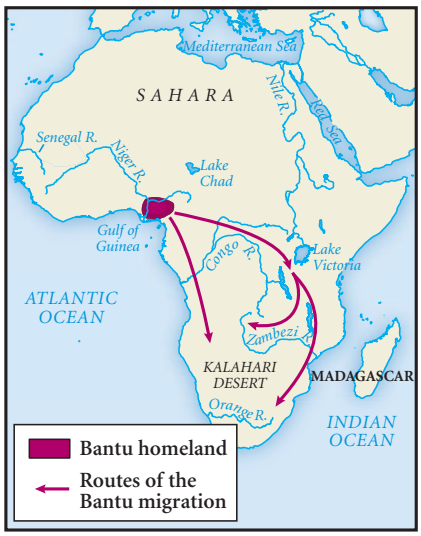
Triumph and Resistance

Some combination of diffusion and migration took the original agricultural package of Southwest Asia and spread it widely into Europe, Central Asia, Egypt, and North Africa between 6500 and 4000 B.C.E. Languages originating in the core region accompanied this movement of people and farming practices. Thus Indo-European languages, which originated probably in Turkey and are widely spoken even today from India to Europe, reflect this movement of culture associated with the spread of agriculture. In a similar process, the Chinese farming system moved into Southeast Asia and elsewhere, and with it a number of related language families developed. India received agricultural influences from the Middle East, Africa, and China alike.

Map 2.2 The Global Spread of Agriculture
From ten or more separate points of origin, agriculture spread to adjacent areas, eventually encompassing almost all of the world's peoples.




EURASIA
Fertile Crescent
China
Sudanic Africa
Southeast Asia
PACIFIC OCEAN
AFRICA
Equator
New Guinea Highlands
AUSTRALIA
INDIAN OCEAN
ANTARCTICA
Independent breakthroughs to agriculture
Direction of spread of agriculture
Limits of early agriculture



Bantu Migrations

Within Africa, the development of agricultural societies in the southern half of the continent is associated with the migration of peoples speaking one or another of the some 400 Bantu languages. Beginning from what is now southern Nigeria or Cameroon around 3000 B.C.E., Bantu-speaking people moved east and south over the next several millennia, taking with them their agricultural, cattle-raising, and, later, ironworking skills, as well as their languages. The Bantus generally absorbed, killed, or drove away the indigenous Paleolithic peoples or exposed them to animal-borne diseases to which they had no immunities. A similar process brought agricultural Austronesian-speaking people, who originated in southern China, to the Philippine and Indonesian islands, with similar consequences for their earlier inhabitants. Later, Austronesian speakers carried agriculture to the uninhabited islands of the Pacific and to Madagascar off the coast of southeastern Africa (see Map 1.2 on p. 19).

The globalization of agriculture was a prolonged process, lasting 10,000 years or more after its first emergence in the Fertile Crescent, but it did not take hold everywhere. The Agricultural Revolution in New Guinea, for example, did not spread much beyond its core region. In particular, it did not pass to the nearby peoples of Australia, who remained steadfastly committed to gathering and hunting ways of life. The people of the west coast of North America, arctic regions, and southwestern Africa also maintained their gathering and hunting way of life into the modern era. A very few, such as the Hadza, described at the beginning of Chapter 1, practice it still.

Some of those who resisted the swelling tide of agriculture lived in areas unsuitable to farming, such as harsh desert or arctic environments; others lived in regions of particular natural abundance, like the territory of the Chumash, so they felt little need for agriculture. Such societies found it easier to resist agriculture if they were not in the direct line of advance of more powerful agricultural people. But the fact that many of the remaining gathering and hunting peoples knew about agricultural practices from nearby farming neighbors suggests that they quite deliberately chose to resist it, preferring the freer life of their Paleolithic ancestors.

Nonetheless, by the beginning of the Common Era, the global spread of agriculture had reduced gathering and hunting peoples to a small and dwindling minority of humankind. If that process meant "progress" in certain ways, it also claimed many victims as the relentlessly expanding agricultural frontier slowly destroyed gathering and hunting societies. Whether this process occurred through the peaceful diffusion of new technologies, through intermarriage, through disease, or through the violent displacement of earlier peoples, the steady erosion of this ancient way of life has been a persistent thread of the human story over the past 10,000 years. The final chapters of that long story are being written in our own century. After the Agricultural Revolution, the future, almost everywhere, lay with the farmers and herders and with the distinctive societies that they created.

The Culture of Agriculture

■ Change
What was revolutionary about the Agricultural Revolution?

What did that future look like? In what ways did societies based on the domestication of plants and animals differ from those rooted in a gathering and hunting economy? In the first place, the Agricultural Revolution led to an increase in human population, as the greater productivity of agriculture was able to support much larger numbers. An early agricultural settlement uncovered near Jericho in present-day Israel probably had 2,000 people, a vast increase in the size of human communities compared to much smaller Paleolithic bands. On a global level, scholars estimate that the world's population was about 6 million around 10,000 years ago, before the Agricultural Revolution got under way, and shot up to some 50 million by 5,000 years ago and 250 million by the beginning of the Common Era. Here was the real beginning of the human dominance over other forms of life on the planet.

But larger communities and more people did not necessarily mean an improved life for ordinary people. Farming involved hard work and more of it than in many earlier gathering and hunting societies. The remains of early agricultural people show some deterioration in health—more tooth decay and anemia, a shorter physical stature, and diminished life expectancy. Living close to animals subjected humans to new diseases—smallpox, flu, measles, chicken pox, malaria, tuberculosis, rabies—while living in larger communities generated epidemics for the first time in human history.[13] Furthermore, relying on a small number of plants or animals rendered early agricultural societies vulnerable to famine, in case of crop failure, drought, or other catastrophes. The advent of agriculture bore costs as well as benefits.

Agriculture also imposed constraints on human communities. Some Paleolithic people had settled in permanent villages, but all agricultural people did so, as farming required a settled life. A good example of an early agricultural settlement comes from northern China, one of the original independent sources of agriculture, where rice, millet, pig, and chicken farming gave rise to settled communities by about 7,000 years ago. In 1953, workers digging the foundation for a factory uncovered the remains of an ancient village, now called Banpo, near the present-day city of Xian. Millet, pigs, and dogs had been domesticated, but diets were supplemented with wild plants, animals, and fish. Some forty-five houses covered with thatch laid over wooden beams provided homes to perhaps 500 people. More than 200 storage pits permitted the accumulation of grain, and six kilns and pottery wheels enabled the production of various pots, vases, and dishes, many decorated with geometric designs and human and animal images. A large central space suggests an area for public religious or political activity, and a trench surrounding the village indicates some common effort to defend the community.

Early agricultural villages such as Banpo reveal another feature of the age of agriculture—an explosion of technological innovation. Mobile Paleolithic peoples had little use for pots, but such vessels were essential for settled societies, and their creation and elaboration accompanied agriculture everywhere. So too did the weaving of textiles, made possible by collecting the fibers of domesticated plants (cotton

Women and Weaving
During the Paleolithic era and beyond, the weaving of cloth was widely regarded as women's work. It still is in many places, as this picture from an early twenty-first-century carpet-weaving workshop in Isfahn (Iran) illustrates. (Phil Weymout/Lonely Planet Images/Getty Images)

and flax, for example) and animals such as sheep. Evidence for the invention of looms of several kinds dates back to 7,000 years ago, and textiles, some elaborately decorated, show up in Peru, Switzerland, China, and Egypt. Like agriculture itself, weaving clearly seems to be a technology in which women were the primary innovators. It was a task that was compatible with child-rearing responsibilities, which virtually all human societies assigned primarily to women.[14] Another technology associated with the Agricultural Revolution was metallurgy. The working of gold and copper, then bronze, and, later, iron became part of the jewelry-, tool-, and weapon-making skill set of humankind. The long "stone age" of human technological history was coming to an end, and the age of metals was beginning.

A further set of technological changes, beginning around 4000 B.C.E., has been labeled the "secondary products revolution."[15] These technological innovations involved new uses for domesticated animals, beyond their meat and hides. Agricultural people in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa learned to milk their animals, to harvest their wool, and to enrich the soil with their manure. Even more important, they learned to ride horses and camels and to hitch various animals to plows and carts. Because these types of animals did not exist in the Americas, this revolutionary new source of power and transportation was available only in the Eastern Hemisphere.

A final feature of early agricultural societies lay in their growing impact on the environment, as farming and herding peoples deliberately altered the natural ecosystem by removing the natural ground cover for their fields, by making use of irrigation, and by grazing their now-domesticated animals. In parts of the Middle East within a thousand years after the beginning of settled agricultural life, some villages were abandoned when soil erosion and deforestation led to declining crop yields, which could not support mounting populations.[16] The advent of more intensive agriculture associated with city-based civilizations only heightened this human impact on the landscape (see Chapter 3).

Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture

■ Comparison
What different kinds of societies emerged out of the Agricultural Revolution?

The resources generated by the Agricultural Revolution opened up vast new possibilities for the construction of human societies, but they led to no single or common outcome. Differences in the natural environment, the encounter with strangers, and sometimes deliberate choices gave rise to several distinct kinds of societies early on in the age of agriculture, all of which have endured into modern times.

Pastoral Societies

One variation of great significance grew out of the difference between the domestication of plants and the domestication of animals. Many societies made use of both, but in regions where farming was difficult or impossible—arctic tundra, some grasslands, and deserts—some people came to depend far more extensively on their animals, such as sheep, goats, cattle, horses, camels, or reindeer. Animal husbandry was a "distinct form of food-producing economy," relying on the milk, meat, and blood of animals.[17] Known as herders, pastoralists, or nomads, such people emerged in Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahara, and in parts of eastern and southern Africa. What they had in common was mobility, for they moved seasonally as they followed the changing patterns of vegetation necessary as pasture for their animals.

The particular animals central to pastoral economies differed from region to region. The domestication of horses by 4000 B.C.E. and the later mastery of horseback-riding skills enabled the growth of pastoral peoples all across the steppes of Central Asia by the first millennium B.C.E. Although organized primarily in kinship-based clans or tribes, these nomads periodically created powerful military confederations, which played a major role in the history of Eurasia for thousands of years. In the Inner Asian, Arabian, and Saharan deserts, domesticated camels made possible the human occupation of forbidding environments. The grasslands south of the Sahara and in parts of eastern Africa supported cattle-raising pastoralists. The absence of large animals capable of domestication meant that no pastoral societies emerged in the Americas.

The relationship between nomadic herders and their farming neighbors has been one of the enduring themes of Afro-Eurasian history. Frequently, it was a relationship of conflict as pastoral peoples, unable to produce their own agricultural products, were attracted to the wealth and sophistication of agrarian societies and sought access to their richer grazing lands as well as their food crops and manufactured products. The biblical story of the deadly rivalry between two brothers—Cain, a "tiller of the ground," and Abel, a "keeper of sheep"—reflects this ancient conflict, which persisted well into modern times. But not all was conflict between pastoral and agricultural peoples. The more peaceful exchange of technologies, ideas, products, and people across the ecological frontier of pastoral and agricultural societies also served to enrich and to change both sides. In the chapters that follow, and especially in Chapter 12, we will encounter pastoral

The Domestication of Animals
Although farming often gets top billing in discussions of the Neolithic Revolution, the raising of animals was equally important, for they provided meat, pulling power, transportation (in the case of horses and camels), and manure. Animal husbandry also made possible pastoral societies, which were largely dependent on their domesticated animals. In this Egyptian carving, dating to about 2380 B.C.E., two workers lead a prime bull to the fields. (G. Dagli Orti/The Art Archive)

societies repeatedly, particularly as they interact with neighboring agricultural and "civilized" peoples. (See Visual Source 2.3, p. 80, for a rock-art painting of an early pastoral community in the Sahara.)

Agricultural Village Societies

The most characteristic early agricultural societies were those of settled village-based farmers, such as those living in Banpo or Jericho. Such societies retained much of the equality and freedom of gathering and hunting communities, as they continued to do without kings, chiefs, bureaucrats, or aristocracies.

An example of this type of social order can be found at Çatalhüyük, a very early agricultural village in southern Turkey. A careful excavation of the site revealed a population of several thousand people who buried their dead under their houses and then filled the houses with dirt and built new ones on top, layer upon layer. No streets divided the houses, which were constructed adjacent to one another. People moved about the village on adjoining rooftops, from which they entered their homes. Despite the presence of many specialized crafts, few signs of inherited social inequality have surfaced. Nor is there any indication of male or female dominance, although men were more closely associated with hunting wild animals and women with plants and agriculture. "Both men and women," concludes one scholar, "could carry out a series of roles and enjoy a range of positions, from making tools to grinding grain and baking to heading a household."[18] (See Visual Sources: Art and Life in the Early Agrarian Era, pp. 76–83, for additional images from Çatalhüyük and for other architectural and artistic expressions of early agricultural settlements.)

Many such village-based agricultural societies flourished well into the modern era, usually organizing themselves in terms of kinship groups or lineages, which incorporated large numbers of people well beyond the immediate or extended family. Such people traced their descent through either the male or the female line to some common ancestor, real or mythical. In many African societies, for example, a lineage system provided the framework within which large numbers of people could make and enforce rules, maintain order, and settle disputes without going to war. In short, the lineage system performed the functions of government, but without the formal apparatus of government, and thus did not require kings or queens, chiefs, or permanent officials associated with a state organization. (See Document 2.2, pp. 71–73 for a description of an East African agricultural village society, the Gikuyu.) The Tiv of central Nigeria organized close to a million people in this fashion at the end of the nineteenth century. Theirs was a system in which power was dispersed

Çatalhüyük
Since the 1960s, archeologists have uncovered the connected homes of Çatalhüyük, shown here in a photo of the excavation, as well as many artifacts, murals, and sculptures from this early agricultural settlement in southern Turkey. (Courtesy, James Mellaart/ Çatalhöyük Research Project)

throughout the society rather than being concentrated in particular people or institutions. In fact, the Tiv had no word for "politics" as a separate aspect of life, for there was no state that specialized in political matters.

Despite their democratic qualities and the absence of centralized authority, village-based lineage societies sometimes developed modest social and economic inequalities. Elders could exploit the labor of junior members of the community and sought particularly to control women's reproductive powers, which were essential for the growth of the lineage. Among the Igbo of southern Nigeria, "title societies" enabled men and women of wealth and character to earn a series of increasingly prestigious "titles" that set them apart from other members of their community, although these honors could not be inherited. Lineages also sought to expand their numbers, and hence their prestige and power, by incorporating war captives or migrants in subordinate positions, sometimes as slaves.

Many agricultural societies, in Africa and elsewhere, conducted their affairs without formal centralized states or full-time rulers, even when they were aware of these institutions and practices from nearby peoples. Given the frequent oppressiveness of organized political power in human history, such experiments with "stateless societies" represent an intriguing alternative to states, kingdoms, and empires, so frequently highlighted in the historical record. These agricultural village societies pioneered the human settlement of vast areas; adapted to a variety of environments; created numerous cultural, artistic, and religious traditions; incorporated new crops, institutions, and people into their cultures; and interacted continuously with their neighbors.

Chiefdoms

■ Comparison
How did chiefdoms differ from stateless agricultural village societies?

In other places, agricultural village societies came to be organized politically as chiefdoms, in which inherited positions of power and privilege introduced a more distinct element of inequality, but unlike later "kings," chiefs could seldom use force to compel the obedience of their subjects. Instead they relied on their generosity or gift giving, their ritual status, or their personal charisma to persuade their followers. The earliest such chiefdoms seem to have emerged in the Tigris-Euphrates river valley called Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq), sometime after 6000 B.C.E., when temple priests organized irrigation systems and controlled trade with nearby societies.

Many chiefdoms followed in all parts of the world, and the more recent ones have been much studied by anthropologists. (See Documents 2.1, pp. 68–71, and 2.3, pp. 73–75, for examples of chiefdoms in Europe and the Caribbean.) For example, chiefdoms emerged everywhere in the Pacific islands, which had been colonized by agricultural Polynesian peoples. Chiefs usually derived from a senior lineage, tracing their descent to the first son of an imagined ancestor. With both religious and secular functions, chiefs led important rituals and ceremonies, organized the community for warfare, directed its economic life, and sought to resolve internal conflicts. They collected tribute from commoners in the form of food, manufactured goods, and raw materials. These items in turn were redistributed to warriors, craftsmen, religious specialists, and other subordinates, while the chief kept enough to maintain

Cahokia
Pictured here in an artist's reconstruction, Cahokia (near St. Louis, Missouri) was the center of an important agricultural chiefdom around 1100 C.E. See Chapter 7 for details. (Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, Illinois. Painting by Lloyd K. Townsend)

his prestigious position and his imposing lifestyle.[19] In North America as well, a remarkable series of chiefdoms emerged in the eastern woodlands, where an extensive array of large earthen mounds testify to the organizational capacity of these early societies. The largest of them, known as Cahokia, flourished around 1100 C.E. In such agricultural chiefdoms—both ancient and more recent—the distinction between elite and commoner, based on birth rather than age or achievement, began to take root. It was a fateful turn in the organization of human societies—one that was replicated, elaborated, and assumed to be natural in all later states and civilizations.

Reflections: The Legacies of Agriculture

Because it is practiced around the world and has achieved virtually universal acceptance, agriculture, or domestication, may seem to be a natural or inevitable feature of the human story. In terms of world history, however, it is a recent development, an adaptation to the unique conditions of the latest interglacial period. Who can say how long those conditions will last or whether agriculture would remain a viable way of life in a renewed Ice Age?

No matter how it turns out in the very long run, during the last 10,000 years or so, the Agricultural Revolution has radically transformed both the trajectory of the human journey and the evolution of life on the planet. This epic transformation granted to one species, *Homo sapiens*, a growing power over many other species of plants and animals. Agriculture made possible an increase in human numbers far beyond what a gathering and hunting economy could support, and it enabled human beings to control and manipulate both plants and animals for their own purposes far more than ever before.

But if agriculture provided humankind with the power to dominate nature, it also, increasingly, enabled some people to dominate others. This was not immediately apparent, and for several thousand years, and much longer in some places, agricultural villages retained much of the social equality that had characterized

Paleolithic life. Slowly, though, many of the resources released by the Agricultural Revolution accumulated in the hands of a few. Rich and poor, chiefs and commoners, landowners and dependent peasants, rulers and subjects, dominant men and subordinate women, slaves and free people—these distinctions, so common in the record of world history, took shape most extensively in highly productive agricultural settings, which generated a substantial economic surplus. There the endless elaboration of such distinctions, for better or worse, became a major feature of those distinctive agricultural societies known to us as "civilizations."

Second Thoughts

What's the Significance?

end of the last Ice Age
"broad spectrum diet"
Fertile Crescent
teosinte
diffusion
Bantu migration
peoples of Australia
Banpo
"secondary products revolution"
pastoral societies
Çatalhüyük
"stateless societies"
chiefdoms

To assess your mastery of the material in this chapter, visit the **Student Center** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Big Picture Questions

1. The Agricultural Revolution marked a decisive turning point in human history. What evidence might you offer to support this claim, and how might you argue against it?
2. How did early agricultural societies differ from those of the Paleolithic era? How does the example of settled gathering and hunting peoples such as the Chumash complicate this comparison?
3. Was the Agricultural Revolution inevitable? Why did it occur so late in the story of humankind?
4. "The Agricultural Revolution provides evidence for 'progress' in human affairs." How would you evaluate this statement?

Next Steps: For Further Study

For Web sites and additional documents related to this chapter, see **Make History** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First* 20,000 *Years* (1994). Explores the role of women in early technological development, particularly textile making.

Peter Bellwood, *First Farmers* (2005). A recent and up-to-date account of the Agricultural Revolution, considered on a global basis.

Mark Nathan Cohen, *The Food Crisis in Prehistory* (1977). An older work arguing that mounting human population triggered the breakthrough to agriculture.

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997). A provocative and much-publicized explanation for regional economic differences, based on variations among early agricultural revolutions.

Steven Mithen, *After the Ice: A Global Human History, 20,000–5000 B.C.* (2004). An imaginative tour of world archeological sites during the Agricultural Revolution.

Neil Roberts, *The Holocene: An Environmental History* (1998). Explores the role of climate change and human activity in shaping the global environment during the age of agriculture.

"The Agricultural Revolution," http://www.wsu.edu/gened/learn-modules/top_agrev/agrev-index.html. A Web-based tutorial from Washington State University.

Documents

Considering the Evidence: Agricultural Village Societies

The Agricultural Revolution was arguably the most significant turning point in the larger story of humankind, at least before the Industrial Revolution. And the most celebrated outcome of the agricultural breakthrough was "civilization"—the early city- and state-based societies of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, China, Peru, and elsewhere (see Chapter 3). Yet the domestication of plants and animals did not everywhere and always lead to civilizations, and certainly not immediately. In the Middle East and Northeastern Africa, for example, thousands of years passed before the transition to agriculture generated a recognizable civilization. Elsewhere, fully agricultural societies without the characteristic features of civilization—cities, empires, written languages, and pronounced social inequalities—persisted well into modern times.

The earliest agricultural village societies, which emerged well before writing had been developed anywhere, have passed into history leaving no documentary record. Therefore, we focus here on three much later examples of such societies—the Germanic neighbors of the Roman Empire during the first century C.E., the Gikuyu people of East Africa in the early twentieth century, and the Taino of the Caribbean islands during the sixteenth century. Since these peoples lacked writing, our documentary evidence about them derives from the descriptions of literate outsiders or from more recent accounts by educated insiders. While varying greatly in their historical and cultural settings, the documents that follow and the peoples they describe nonetheless provide us with some exposure to those agricultural village societies and chiefdoms that were among the major outcomes of the Agricultural Revolution.

Document 2.1

Germanic Peoples of Central Europe

Ancient Germanic-speaking peoples, occupying much of Central Europe north of the Roman Empire, were never a single "nation" but rather a collection of tribes, clans, and chiefdoms, regarded by the Romans as barbarians though admired and feared for their military skills (see Map 4.4, p. 156). They were

famously described by Tacitus (56–117 C.E.), a Roman official and well-known historian. Tacitus himself had never visited the lands of the people he describes; rather, he relied on earlier written documents and interviews with merchants and soldiers who had traveled and lived in the region.

- What can we learn from Tacitus's account about the economy, politics, society, and culture of the Germanic peoples of the first century C.E.?
- Which statements of Tacitus might you regard as reliable and which are more suspect? Why?
- Why did Tacitus regard Germanic peoples as distinctly inferior to Romans? How might he have responded to the idea that these people would play a major role in the collapse of the Roman Empire several centuries later?
- Modern scholars have argued that Tacitus used the Germanic peoples to criticize aspects of his own Roman culture. What evidence might support this point of view?

Tacitus

Germania

First Century C.E.

The Germans themselves I should regard as aboriginal, and not mixed at all with other races through immigration or intercourse.... [W]ho would leave Asia, or Africa, or Italy for Germany, with its wild country, its inclement skies, its sullen manners and aspect, unless indeed it were his home? In their ancient songs, their only way of remembering or recording the past, they celebrate an earth-born god, Tuisco, and his son Mannus, as the origin of their race, as their founders....

The tribes of Germany are free from all taint of intermarriages with foreign nations, and they appear as a distinct, unmixed race, like none but themselves. Hence, too, the same physical peculiarities throughout so vast a population. All have fierce blue eyes, red hair, huge frames, fit only for a sudden exertion. They are less able to bear laborious work. Heat and thirst they cannot in the least endure; to cold and hunger their climate and their soil inure them....

They choose their kings by birth, their generals by merit. These kings have not unlimited or arbitrary power, and the generals do more by example than by authority.... But to reprimand, to imprison, even to flog, is permitted to the priests alone, and that not as a punishment, or at the general's bidding, but, as it were, by the mandate of the god whom they believe to inspire the warrior.... And what most stimulates their courage is that their squadrons or battalions, instead of being formed by chance or by a fortuitous gathering, are composed of families and clans. Close by them, too, are those dearest to them, so that they hear the shrieks of women, the cries of infants....

Tradition says that armies already wavering and giving way have been rallied by women who, with earnest entreaties and bosoms laid bare, have vividly represented the horrors of captivity, which the Germans fear with such extreme dread on behalf of their women.... They even believe that the sex

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Source: Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, *The Agricola and Germania of Tacitus* (London: Macmillan, 1877), pp. 87ff.

has a certain sanctity and prescience, and they do not despise their counsels, or make light of their answers. . . .

Mercury is the deity whom they chiefly worship, and on certain days they deem it right to sacrifice to him even with human victims. . . .

Augury and divination by lot no people practice more diligently. The use of lots is simple. A little bough is lopped off a fruit-bearing tree, and cut into small pieces; these are distinguished by certain marks, and thrown carelessly and at random over a white garment. In public questions the priest of the particular state, in private the father of the family invokes the gods, and, with his eyes toward heaven, takes up each piece three times, and finds in them a meaning according to the mark previously impression on them. . . .

When they go into battle, it is a disgrace for the chief to be surpassed in valor, a disgrace for his followers not to equal the valor of the chief. And it is an infamy and a reproach for life to have survived the chief, and return from the field. To defend, to protect him, to ascribe one's own brave deeds to his renown, is the height of loyalty. The chief fights for victory; his vassals fight for their chief. . . . Feasts and entertainments, which though inelegant, are plentifully furnished, are their only pay. The means of this bounty come from war or rapine.° Nor are they as easily persuaded to plough the earth and to wait for the year's produce as to challenge an enemy and earn the honor of wounds. Nay, they actually think it tame and stupid to acquire by the sweat of toil what they might win by their blood.

Whenever they are not fighting, they pass much of their time in the chase, and still more in idleness giving themselves up to sleep and to feasting, the bravest and the most warlike doing nothing, and surrendering the management of the household of the home, and of the land, to the women, the old men, and all the weakest members of the family. . . . It is the custom of the states to bestow by voluntary and individual contribution on the chief a present of cattle or of grain, which, while accepted as a compliment, supplies their wants. They are particularly delighted by gifts from neighboring tribes . . . such as choice steeds, heavy armor, trappings, and neckchains. We have now taught them to accept money also.

It is well known that the nations of Germany have no cities, and that they do not even tolerate closely contiguous dwellings. They live scattered and apart, just as a spring, a meadow, or a wood has attracted them. Their villages they do not arrange in our fashion, . . . but every person surrounds his dwelling with an open space, either as a precaution against the disasters of fire, or because they do not know how to build. No use is made by them of stone or tile; they employ timber for all purposes, rude masses without ornament or attractiveness. . . .

They all wrap themselves in a cloak which is fastened with a clasp, or, if this is not forthcoming, with a thorn, leaving the rest of their persons bare. . . . They also wear the skins of wild beasts. . . .

Their marriage code, however, is strict, and indeed no part of their manners is more praiseworthy. Almost alone among barbarians they are content with one wife, except a very few among them. . . . Lest the woman should think herself to stand apart from aspirations after noble deeds and from the perils of war, she is reminded by the ceremony which inaugurates marriage that she is her husband's partner in toil and danger, destined to suffer and to dare with him alike both in peace and in war. . . .

Very rare for so numerous a population is adultery, the punishment of which is prompt, and in the husband's power. Having cut off the hair of the adulteress and stripped her naked, he expels her from the house in the presence of her kinfolk, and then flogs her through the whole village. The loss of chastity meets with no indulgence; neither beauty, youth, nor wealth will procure the culprit a husband. No one in Germany laughs at vice, nor do they call it the fashion to corrupt and to be corrupted. . . . To limit the number of their children or to destroy any of their subsequent offspring is accounted infamous, and good habits are here more effectual than good laws elsewhere. . . .

It is the duty among them to adopt the feuds as well as the friendships of a father or a kinsman. These feuds are not implacable; even homicide is expiated by the payment of a certain number of cattle and of sheep, and the satisfaction is accepted by the entire family, greatly to the advantage of the state, since

°**rapine:** a seizure or robbery.

feuds are dangerous in proportion to a people's freedom. . . .

[S]laves are not employed after our manner with distinct domestic duties assigned to them, but each one has the management of a house and home of his own. The master requires from the slave a certain quantity of grain, of cattle, and of clothing, as he would from a tenant, and this is the limit of subjection. All other household functions are discharged by the wife and children. . . .

Of lending money on interest and increasing it by compound interest they know nothing—a more effectual safeguard than if it were prohibited.

Land proportioned to the number of inhabitants is occupied by the whole community in turn, and afterward divided among them according to rank. A wide expanse of plains makes the partition easy. They till fresh fields every year, and they have still more land than enough; . . . corn [wheat] is the only produce required from the earth.

Document 2.2

Social Organization among the Gikuyu

Occupying the fertile highlands of central Kenya in East Africa, the Gikuyu were an agricultural, iron-working, and Bantu-speaking people who were incorporated into the British Empire during the late nineteenth century (see the map on p. 60). They were among the many "stateless societies" of world history, for they did not organize themselves in a large-scale centralized political authority. Over many centuries, however, they had developed or adapted from their neighbors a mechanism known as age-sets to facilitate social integration and political decision-making. Age-sets were groups of men who were initiated at the same time and then rose collectively through a series of age-grades, or ranks, over the course of their lives. Here, the Gikuyu age-set system, as well as its gendered division of labor, is described by Jomo Kenyatta, a well-known nationalist leader in colonial Kenya and the country's first African president. In his book *Facing Mount Kenya*, published in 1938, Kenyatta described Gikuyu life in a positive (perhaps idealized) fashion, intended to counteract negative British images of African life as primitive, backward, or savage.

- How does Kenyatta describe the division of labor and marriage practices in Gikuyu families? Does his description suggest gender equality or patriarchy?
- What were the major stages through which Gikuyu men passed during their lives? What duties were associated with each of the age-grades?
- How did the age-set system perform some of the functions of states, while avoiding their often oppressive features? How might you define the advantages and disadvantages of a stateless society in comparison to human communities organized around a formal government or state?
- In light of the colonial setting in which Kenyatta was living, what message was he trying to convey?

Jomo Kenyatta

Facing Mount Kenya

1938

The chief occupations among the Gikuyu are agriculture and the rearing of livestock, such as cattle, sheep, and goats. Each family, i.e., a man, his wife or wives, and their children, constitute an economic unit. This is controlled and strengthened by the system of division of labor according to sex....

In house-building, the heavy work of cutting timbers and putting up the framework falls on men. Carrying and cutting of the grass for thatching and plastering the wall with clay or cow-dung is the work of women.... The entire housework naturally falls within the sphere of women's activities. They cook, bring water from the rivers, wash utensils, and fetch firewood from the forests and bush. They also perform the task of carrying the loads on their backs....

In cultivating the fields, men clear the brush and cut big trees, and also break the virgin soil with digging sticks and hoes. Women come behind them and prepare the ground for sowing seeds. Planting is shared by both sexes.... Weeding is done collectively.... Harvesting is done chiefly by women.... Tending of cattle, sheep, and goats and also slaughtering and distributing the meat and preparing the skins is entirely men's duty. Dressmaking, pottery, and weaving of baskets is exclusively women's profession.... The brewing of beer is done jointly by both men and women.... Trading is done by both sexes....

The Gikuyu customary law of marriage provides that a man may have as many wives as he can support, and that the larger one's family, the better it is for him and the tribe.... The custom also provides that all women must be under the protection of men... and that all women must be married in their teens, i.e., fifteen to twenty. Thus there is no term in the Gikuyu language for "unmarried" or "old maids."...

The teaching of social obligations is... emphasized by the classification of age-groups.... This binds together those of the same status in ties of closest loyalty and devotion. Men circumcised at the same time stand in the very closest relationship to each other....

The fellowship and unity of these age-groups is rather a remarkable thing. It binds men from all parts of the country, and though they may have been circumcised in places hundreds of miles apart, it is of no consequence. They are like old boys of the same school, though I question whether the Europeans have any association with the same high standards of mutual obligation.... Age-groups further emphasize the social grades of junior and senior, inferior and superior.... The older group takes precedence over the younger and has rights to service and courtesy which the younger must acknowledge.

...The circumcision ceremony was the only qualification which gave a man the recognition of manhood and the full rights of citizenship.... As soon as his circumcision wounds heal, he joins the national council of junior warriors. At this stage his father provides him with necessary weapons, namely spear, shield, and sword; then a sheep or a male goat is given to the senior warriors of the district.... The animal is killed for a ceremony of introducing the young warrior into the general activities and etiquette of the warrior class.

The second stage in warriorhood was celebrated about eighty-two moons or twelve rain seasons following the circumcision ceremony. At this juncture the junior warrior was promoted to the council of the senior warriors.... The initiation fee to this rank was two sheep or goats....

The third stage in manhood is marriage. When a man is married and has established his own homestead, he is required to join the council of elders

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Source: Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1938), 53–55, 174, 115–16, 198–205.

(*kiama*); he pays one male goat or sheep and then he is initiated into a first grade of eldership.... [They] act as messengers to the *kiama*, and help to skin animals, to light fires, to bring firewood, to roast meat for the senior elders, and to carry ceremonial articles to and from the *kiama* assemblies. They must not eat kidneys, spleen, or loin, for these are reserved for the senior elders.

Next... comes the council of peace. This stage is reached when a man has a son or daughter older enough to be circumcised.... After this [an elaborate ceremony of induction into this new age-grade], the candidate is invested with his staff of office and a bunch of sacred leaves. This signifies that he is now a peaceful man, that he is no longer a carrier of spear and shield, or a pursuer of the vanity of war and plunder. That he has now attained a stage where he has to take the responsibility of carrying the symbols of peace and to assume the duties of peace-maker in the community....

The last and most honored status in the man's life history is the religious and sacrificial council. This stage is reached when a man has had practically all his children circumcised, and his wife (or wives) has passed the child-bearing age.... The elders of this grade assume a role of "holy men." They are the high priests. All religious and ethical ceremonies are in their hands.

Document 2.3

Religion in a Caribbean Chiefdom

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Caribbean region in the late fifteenth century, he found a densely settled agricultural people known as the Taino inhabiting the islands now called Hispaniola (modern Haiti and Dominican Republic), Cuba, Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Organized into substantial village communities governed by a hierarchy of chiefs (*cacique*), Taino society featured modest class distinctions. An elite group of chiefs, warriors, artists, and religious specialists enjoyed a higher status than commoners, who worked the fields, fished, and hunted. Within a half century of Columbus's arrival, almost all of the Taino had perished, victims of Spanish brutality and Old World diseases. Among the witnesses to this catastrophe was the Spanish missionary and Dominican priest Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566). His extensive writings contained a vehement denunciation of Spanish actions in the Americas as well as an informed description of Taino life and culture. Here, Las Casas describes his understanding of Taino religion.

- Based on this account, how might you describe Taino religious practice?
- To what extent does Las Casas's Christian perspective color his account of Taino religion?
- What was the function of the *zemis* in Taino culture?
- What was the relationship between Taino political authorities and the "priests," or *behiques*?
- Which features of Taino religious life did Las Casas appreciate and which did he find offensive or erroneous?

Bartolomé de Las Casas

Apologetic History of the Indies

1566

The people of this island Hispaniola had a certain faith in and knowledge of a one and true God, who was immortal and invisible, for none can see him, who had no beginning, whose dwelling place and residence is heaven, and they called him Yócahu Vagua Maórocoti....

Into this true and catholic knowledge of the true God these errors intruded, to wit: that God had a mother, whose name was Atabex, and a brother Guaca, and other relatives in like fashion. They must have been like people without a guide on the road of the truth; rather there was one who would lead them astray, clouding the light of their natural reason that could have guided them....

[T]hey had some idols or good-luck statues, and these were generally called *zemis*.... They believed these zemis gave them water and wind and sun when they had need of them, and likewise children and other things they wanted to have. Some of these were made of wood and others of stone....

[P]riests, who are called *behiques* in the language of these islands and who were their theologians, prophets, and soothsayers, practiced some deceptions upon these people, primarily when they acted as physicians, in accordance with what the devil, from the domain allowed to him, dictated to them what they were to say or do. They led the people to believe they spoke with those statues and that the statues revealed their secrets to them, and they find out from those secrets everything they want to know. And it must have been so, because the devil surely spoke in those statues....

They had other idols or images of stone which those priests and physicians made the people believe they took out of the bodies of those who were sick, and these stones were of three kinds. I never saw their form, but they held each one to have its own power: one had the power to favor their sown lands; the second, so that women would have good fortune in childbirth; the power of the third was that they would have water and good rains when they had need of them. Thus they must have been like the gods of the ancients, each one of whom had the responsibility of presiding in his domain, although these peoples sensed this more crudely and simply than the ancients. The kings and lords boasted, and in this the other people must have followed them, about their zemis or gods and considered them more glorious, saying that they had better zemis than the other peoples and lords, and they endeavored to steal them from each other; and although they took great care in guarding these statues or idols or whatever they may have been from other Indians from other kingdoms and dominions, they took incomparably greater care in guarding and concealing them from the Spaniards, and when they suspected their approach, they would take them and hide them in the mountains....

We found that in the season when they gathered the harvest of the fields they had sown and cultivated, which consisted of the bread made from roots, yams, sweet potatoes, and corn, they donated a certain portion as first fruits, almost as if they were giving thanks for benefits received. Since they had no designated temples or houses of religion, as has been said above, they put this portion of first fruits of the crops in the great house of the lords and caciques, which they called *caney*, and they offered and dedicated it to the zemi. They said the zemi sent the water and brought the sun and nurtured all those fruits and gave them children and the other benefits which were there in abundance. All the things offered in this way were left there either until they rotted or the children took them or played with them or until they were spoiled, and thus they were consumed....

Source: Bartolomé de Las Casas, "Apologetic History of the Indies, 1566," in *Taino: Pre-Columbian Art and Culture from the Caribbean*, edited by Fatima Bercht et al., translated by Susan C. Griswold (New York: Monacelli Press, 1997), 175–79.

When I would ask the Indians at times: "Who is this zemi you name?" they answered me: "He who makes it rain and makes the sun shine and gives us children and the other benefits we desire."...

I saw them celebrate their cohoba° a few times, and it was something to see how they took it and what they said. The first to begin was the lord, and while he took it everyone kept silent; when he had taken his cohoba (which is to inhale those powders through the nostrils...), and they took it seated on some low but very well carved benches which they called *duhos*..., he would stay a while with his head turned to one side and his arms placed on his knees, and afterward he would lift his face toward heaven and speak his certain words, which must have been his prayer to the true God, or to the one whom he held to be a god; then everyone would respond almost like when we respond amen, and they would do this with a great clamor of voices or sounds, and then they would give thanks to him, and they must have flattered him with praises, winning his benevolence and begging him to tell what he had seen. He would give them an account of his vision, saying that the zemi had spoken and assured him of good or adverse times, or that there were to be children, or that there was to be a death among them, or that they were to have some contention or war with their neighbors, and other foolishness that came to their imagination, stirred up by that intoxication, or that the devil, perhaps and haplessly, had insinuated to them so as to deceive them and inculcate in them a devotion to him....

[One particular] zemi brought diseases to men, according to their belief, for which they sought the help of the priests or behiques, who were their prophets and theologians as has been said; these priests would respond that the disease had befallen them because they had been negligent or forgetful in bringing cassava bread and yams and other things to eat to the ministers who swept and cleaned the house or hermitage of Vaybrama, good zemi, and that he had told him so.

°**cohoba:** a hallucinogenic drug used in religious ceremonies.

Using the Evidence: Agricultural Village Societies

1. **Comparing agricultural societies:** How would you compare the social organization of the three societies described in Documents 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3?
2. **Comparing agricultural and Paleolithic societies:** What features of gathering and hunting societies persisted among agricultural peoples? In what ways did they differ from their Paleolithic ancestors?
3. **Evaluating documents:** Documents 2.1 and 2.3 derive from outsiders to the societies they portray. In what ways did their outsider status influence the authors' understanding of these societies? And how did Kenyatta's position as a modern and Western-educated Gikuyu living in a colonial setting shape his description of his own people in Document 2.2? What assumptions and purposes did each of these writers bring to his task?
4. **Assessing the credibility of sources:** Consider these documents as sources of historical information about the societies they describe. What statements might historians reliably use as evidence and what might they discard or view with skepticism?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: Art and Life in the Early Agrarian Era

The long period of world history between the beginnings of settled agriculture and the rise of civilizations is known as the early agrarian era or sometimes the Neolithic age. It was a time when the revolutionary implications of the breakthrough to agriculture began to be felt. Since these transformations took place before the advent of writing, historians depend heavily on material remains—art, artifacts, and architecture—for understanding the life of these people. In the absence of written records, scholars are sometimes hard-pressed to know precisely what motivated the creation of these works or what they signified to those who made them. Inference, imagination, and sometimes speculation play an important role in the analysis of this evidence.

Given human creativity and the global scope of the early agrarian era, generalizations about Neolithic art as a whole are difficult to make. But in comparison with the Paleolithic era, the new economy generated by agriculture gave rise to many artistic innovations. Weaving and pottery making became major industries, offering new opportunities for creative expression. Larger-scale stone structures, known as megaliths, appeared in various places, and settled farming communities required more elaborate dwellings, including some substantial stone fortifications. Agrarian societies also produced much larger sculptures than did gathering and hunting societies. Finally, while animals continued to be a focus of Neolithic art, human figures became more prominent and were more realistically depicted than in the cave paintings and Venus figurines of the Paleolithic era.

The art of the early agrarian era sometimes included representations of the distinctive social and economic patterns of this new phase of human history. One example is a remarkable wall painting from Çatalhüyük, an early farming community located in south-central Turkey (see pp. 64–65 and Map 2.1, p. 54). Dated to about 6200 B.C.E., the painting is apparently a stylized portrayal of the village itself, showing some eighty buildings arranged on rising terraces. Behind the town rises an erupting twin-peaked volcano, resembling the nearby actual volcano of Hasan Dag, which was active during the time that Çatalhüyük flourished. In this painting, we have a record of one of the most distinctive outcomes of the Agricultural Revolution—the establishment of settled agricultural villages. It is also perhaps the earliest map and landscape painting

Visual Source 2.1 Çatalhüyük: An Early Map and Landscape Painting (James Mellaart/Çatalhöyuk Research Project)

uncovered to date. Visual Source 2.1 is a reconstruction of that image, which was about ten feet long in its original form.

- What particular features of the mountain/volcano can you identify? What do you think the dots on the mountain represent? Notice that the volcano is venting from both the top and the base of the mountain, as volcanoes often do.
- Compare the map with the photograph on page 64 of the uncovered remains of Çatalhüyük. What similar features do you see?
- Notice that this image contains neither human nor animal figures. What might be the significance of this absence?
- What do you think the purpose of such an image might have been? Keep in mind that obsidian (black volcanic glass) found at the base of the mountain was a very valuable, and perhaps sacred, item in Çatalhüyük and an important product in regional trading patterns.

Archeological investigation at Çatalhüyük has generated a major debate about the role of women in the religious and social life of this early agricultural village. The first major dig at the site, undertaken by James Mellaart in the 1960s, uncovered a number of small female figurines, the most famous of which is shown here as Visual Source 2.2. It dates to about 5000 B.C.E. and is some eight inches in height. The baked-clay figure depicts a seated female whose arms are resting on two lionesses or leopards. For Mellaart, this was evidence for an ancient and powerful cult of the "mother Goddess," an idea that proved compelling to a number of feminist scholars and goddess worshippers. This understanding also gained support from the absence of similar male figurines. Some goddess devotees have come to view Çatalhüyük as a pilgrimage site.

Visual Source 2.2 Women, Men, and Religion in Çatalhüyük (Museum of Anatolian Civilization, Ankara/Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive)

- What features of this statue might support such a view?
- How might the fact that this figurine was discovered in an abandoned grain bin affect your thinking about its significance?
- Why might feminist scholars have been attracted to Mellaart's interpretation of this figure?
- What alternative understandings of this figure can you imagine?

Later archeological research, ongoing since 1993 under the leadership of Ian Hodder, has called some aspects of this "mother Goddess" interpretation into question. Hodder, for example, doubts the existence of an organized cult with an attached priesthood, as Mellaart theorized. Rather, Hodder noted

that the image suggests "a close connection between ritual and daily functions." He added:

> I do not think that there was a separate religious elite. I think the religion was an integral part of daily life. It may be wrong to think of the Çatal art as religious or symbolic at all. It may be more that people thought that they had to paint, or make relief sculptures, in order to achieve certain practical ends (such as make the crops grow, or prevent children from dying).[20]

Furthermore, Hodder suggested that while women were certainly prominent in the symbolism of the village, there is little evidence for a "matriarchal society" in which women dominated. Rather, he wrote that "men and women had the same social status. There was a balance of power."[21]

- Why do you think the life of this small Neolithic village some 7,000 or more years ago continues to provoke such passionate debate? (You might want to do a little research about the controversies surrounding Çatalhüyük.)

The Neolithic or Agricultural Revolution gave rise not only to settled farming communities but also to pastoral nomadic societies, dependent on their herds of domesticated animals (see p. 63). Nowhere has this transformation been more thoroughly documented than in the rock art of the central Sahara region of Africa. There the domestication of cattle actually preceded the development of farming and from perhaps 4500 B.C.E. or earlier, pastoral societies flourished in the area. Later, horses and camels were introduced into the region as well. Visual Source 2.3, a rock-art painting from Tassili-n-Ajjer, in southeastern Algeria, illustrates the early development of such pastoral societies. The multiple colors of the cattle indicate that they were a long-domesticated species.

- On the left, women and children are attending a line of calves roped together. What might this suggest to historians seeking to understand this society?
- How would you describe the activities of the other human figures, presumably men? Does this suggest anything about the division of labor in such societies?
- Notice that the herd of cattle is portrayed in front of some huts, indicated by stylized circles. What might this indicate about the nature of this community?
- How might you compare the society depicted in this image with that of Çatalhüyük in Visual Source 2.1?

Among the most famous sites of the early agrarian era is Stonehenge, a series of earthworks accompanied by circles of standing stones located in

Visual Source 2.3 An African Pastoral Community (Henri Lhote)

southern England, where the Agricultural Revolution emerged around 4000 B.C.E. Construction of the Stonehenge site began around 3100 B.C.E. and continued intermittently for another 1,500 years.

- Have a close look at the aerial photograph of Stonehenge in Visual Source 2.4. How would you describe its major features to someone who had never seen it? What questions about the site come to mind?

Almost everything about Stonehenge has been a matter of controversy and speculation among those scholars who have studied it. Prominent among those debates have been the questions of motivation and function. Why was it constructed? What purposes did it serve for those early farming peoples who used it? The discovery of the cremated remains of some 240 individuals, dating to the first five centuries of its existence, has convinced some scholars that

it was a burial site, perhaps for members of a single high-ranking family. It was the "domain of the dead" or an abode of the ancestors, remarked one archeologist, linked ritually perhaps to a nearby village of Durrington Walls, a "land of the living" consisting of 300 to 1,000 homes.[22] Others have cast Stonehenge as an astronomical observatory, aligned with the solstices and able to predict eclipses and the movement of heavenly bodies, or perhaps a center of sun worship. Most recently, it has been depicted as "a place of pilgrimage for the sick and injured of the Neolithic world," based on the number of burials in the area that show signs of serious illness, trauma, or deformity as well as the presence of many bluestone rock chips thought to have magical healing properties.[23]

Whatever its purposes, still other controversies surround the manner of its construction. How were those huge slabs of rock, some as heavy as fifty tons and others coming from a location 240 miles away, transported to Stonehenge and put into place? Were they dragged overland or transported partway by boat along the Avon River? Or did the movement of earlier glaciers deposit them in the region?

Visual Source 2.4 The Mystery of Stonehenge (© Skyscan/Corbis)

- What does a structure of the magnitude of Stonehenge suggest about the Neolithic societies that created it?
- What kinds of additional evidence would be most useful to scholars seeking to puzzle out the mysteries of Stonehenge?

The first millennium B.C.E. witnessed the flourishing of an impressive artistic tradition, arising out of the Nok culture, among the agricultural peoples of what is now northern Nigeria. Unlike the earlier Neolithic peoples highlighted in this section, they had learned to make and use iron. Amid the stone axes, iron implements, and pottery found in the region, the material remains of this ancient African culture also yielded a treasure of terra-cotta (fired clay) figures, often life-size, depicting animals and especially people. The highly stylized human figures shared several features: elongated heads often disproportionately large in comparison to their bodies; triangular eyes; pierced noses,

Visual Source 2.5 A Sculpture from the Nok Culture (Musée du Quai Branly/Scala/Art Resource, NY)

pupils, ears, and lips (perhaps to vent the air during the firing process); and elaborate attention to hairstyles, ornamentation, and dress. The artistic sophistication of these pieces has suggested to some scholars that their creators drew on an even earlier, as yet undiscovered, tradition. Some similarities with much later sculptures from Ife and Benin in southern Nigeria suggest the possibility of a long-lasting and widespread artistic tradition in West Africa. Visual Source 2.5 presents one of these Nok sculptures, dating to somewhere between 600 B.C.E. and 600 C.E.

- What features of Nok sculpture, described above, can you identify in this figure?
- How might you describe the mood that this figure evokes? Some scholars have dubbed this and many similar Nok sculptures "thinkers." Does it seem more likely that this notion reflects a present-day sensibility or that it might be an insight into the mentality of the ancient artist who created the image? Why?
- What might you infer about the status of the person represented in this sculpture?
- No one actually knows the purpose of these works. What possibilities come to mind as you consider Visual Source 2.5?

Using the Evidence: Art and Life in the Early Agrarian Era

1. **Assessing personal reactions:** How do you respond personally to Visual Sources 2.1–2.5? What do you find surprising or impressive about them? Which of them are most accessible to a person of the early twenty-first century? Which are least accessible? Do you find these images easier to understand than the Paleolithic rock art featured in Chapter 1? Why or why not?
2. **Considering art as evidence:** What insights about early agrarian life might we derive from these images? In what ways do they reflect the technological or economic changes of the Agricultural Revolution?
3. **Reflecting on speculation:** You will notice that our understanding of all of these works is highly uncertain, inviting a considerable amount of speculation, guesswork, or imagination. Why are historians willing to articulate uncertain interpretations of ancient art? Is this an appropriate undertaking for historians, or should scholars remain silent when the evidence does not allow them to speak with certainty and authority?

CHAPTER THREE

First Civilizations

Cities, States, and Unequal Societies

3500 B.C.E.–500 B.C.E.

"Over 100 miles of wilderness, deep exploration into pristine lands, the solitude of backcountry camping, 4×4 trails, and ancient American Indian rock art and ruins. You can't find a better way to escape civilization!"[1] So goes an advertisement for a vacation in Utah's Canyonlands National Park, one of thousands of similar attempts to lure apparently constrained, beleaguered, and "civilized" city-dwellers into the spacious freedom of the wild and the imagined simplicity of earlier times. This urge to "escape from civilization" has long been a central feature in modern life. It is a major theme in Mark Twain's famous novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in which the restless and rebellious Huck resists all efforts to "sivilize" him by fleeing to the freedom of life on the river. It is a large part of the "cowboy" image in American culture, and it permeates environmentalist efforts to protect the remaining wilderness areas of the country. Nor has this impulse been limited to modern societies and the Western world. The ancient Chinese teachers of Daoism likewise urged their followers to abandon the structured and demanding world of urban and civilized life and to immerse themselves in the eternal patterns of the natural order. It is a strange paradox that we count the creation of civilization among the major achievements of humankind and yet people within these civilizations have often sought to escape the constraints, artificiality, hierarchies, and other discontents of city living.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE THESE CIVILIZATIONS that have generated such ambivalent responses among their inhabitants? When, where,

Raherka and Mersankh: Writing was among the defining features of civilizations almost everywhere. In ancient Egyptian civilization, the scribes who possessed this skill enjoyed both social prestige and political influence. This famous statue shows Raherka, the chief of the scribes during Egypt's Fifth Dynasty (about 2350 B.C.E.), in an affectionate pose with his wife, Mersankh. (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, NY)

and how did they first arise in human history? What changes did they bring to the people who lived within them? Why might some people criticize or seek to escape from them? These are the issues addressed in this chapter.

As historians commonly use the term, civilization represents a new and particular type of human society, made possible by the immense productivity of the Agricultural Revolution. Such societies encompassed far larger populations than any earlier form of human community and for the first time concentrated some of those people in sizable cities, numbering in the many tens of thousands. In these cities, people were organized and controlled by powerful states whose leaders could use force to compel obedience. Profound differences in economic function, skill, wealth, and status sharply divided the people of civilizations, making them far less equal, and subject to much greater oppression, than had been the case in earlier agricultural villages, pastoral societies, and chiefdoms. Pyramids, temples, palaces, elaborate sculptures, written literature, complex calendars, as well as class, slavery, patriarchy, and large-scale warfare—all of these have been among the cultural products of civilization.

Something New: The Emergence of Civilizations

■ Change
When and where did the First Civilizations emerge?

Like agriculture, civilization was a global phenomenon, showing up independently in six major locations scattered around the world during the several millennia after 3500 B.C.E. and in a number of other smaller expressions as well (see Map 3.1). At the time, these breakthroughs to a new way of life were small islands of innovation in a sea of people living in much older ways. In the long run of human history, however, civilizations gradually absorbed, overran, or displaced people practicing other ways of living. Over the next 5,000 years, civilization, as a unique kind of human community, gradually encompassed ever-larger numbers of people and extended over ever-larger territories, even as particular civilizations rose, fell, revived, and changed.

Introducing the First Civilizations

The earliest of these civilizations emerged around 3500 B.C.E. to 3000 B.C.E. in three places. One was the "cradle" of Middle Eastern civilization, expressed in the many and competing city-states of Sumer in southern Mesopotamia (located in present-day Iraq). Much studied by archeologists and historians, Sumerian civilization gave rise to the world's earliest written language, which was used initially by officials to record the goods received by various temples. Almost simultaneously, the Nile River valley in northeastern Africa witnessed the emergence of Egyptian civilization, famous for its pharaohs and pyramids, as well as a separate civilization known as Nubia, farther south along the Nile. Unlike the city-states of Sumer, Egyptian civilization took shape as a unified territorial state in which cities were rather less prominent. Later in this chapter, we will explore these two First Civilizations in greater detail.

Less well known and only recently investigated by scholars was a third early civilization that was developing along the central coast of Peru from roughly 3000 B.C.E. to 1800 B.C.E., at about the same time as the civilizations of Egypt and Sumer. This desert region received very little rainfall, but it was punctuated by dozens of rivers that brought the snowmelt of the adjacent Andes Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. Along a thirty-mile stretch of that coast and in the nearby interior, a series of some twenty-five urban centers emerged in an area known as Norte Chico, the largest of which was Caral, in the Supe River valley. In Norte Chico, archeologists have found monumental architecture in the form of earthen platform mounds, one of them measuring 60 feet tall and 500 feet long, as well as large public ceremonial structures, stone buildings with residential apartments, and other signs of urban life.

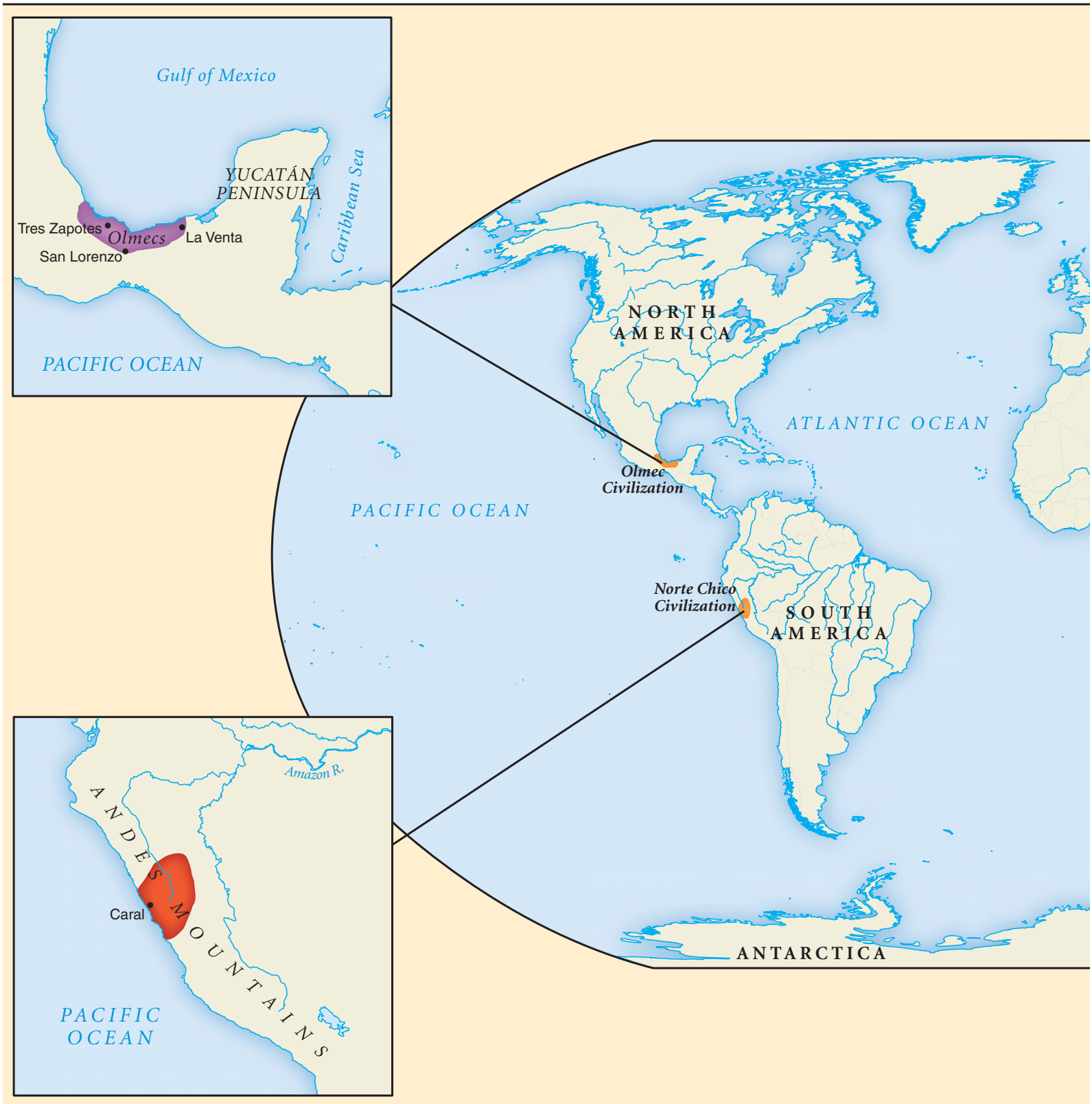
Norte Chico was a distinctive civilization in many ways. Its cities were smaller than those of Mesopotamia and show less evidence of economic specialization. The economy was based to an unusual degree on an extremely rich fishing industry in anchovies and sardines along the coast. These items apparently were exchanged for cotton, essential for fishing nets, as well as food crops such as squash, beans, and guava, all of which were grown by inland people in the river valleys using irrigation agriculture. Unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, Peruvian civilization did not rest upon grain-based farming; the people of Norte Chico did not develop pottery or writing; and few sculptures, carvings, or drawings have been uncovered so far. Archeologists have, however, found a 5,000-year-old *quipu* (a series of knotted cords, later used extensively by the Inca for accounting purposes), which some scholars have suggested may have been an alternative form of writing. Furthermore, the cities of Norte Chico lacked defensive walls, and archeologists have discovered little evidence of warfare, such as burned buildings and mutilated corpses. It was also an unusually self-contained civilization. Whereas Egypt and Mesopotamia had long interacted with each other, the only import from the outside world evident in Norte Chico, or in Andean civilization generally, was maize (corn), which was derived ultimately from Mesoamerica, though without direct contact between the two regions. Norte Chico apparently "lighted a cultural fire" in the Andes and established a pattern for the many Andean civilizations that followed—Chavín, Moche, Nazca, and, much later, the Inca.[2]

Somewhat later, three additional First Civilizations made their appearance. In the Indus and Saraswati river valleys of what is now Pakistan, a remarkable civilization arose during the third millennium B.C.E. By 2000 B.C.E., it embraced a far larger area than Mesopotamia, Egypt, or coastal Peru and was expressed primarily in its elaborately planned cities. All across this huge area, about twice the size of Texas, common patterns prevailed: standardized weights, measures, architectural styles, even the size of bricks. As elsewhere, irrigated agriculture provided the economic foundation for the civilization, and a written language, thus far undeciphered, provides evidence of a literate culture.

Unlike its Middle Eastern counterparts, the Indus Valley civilization apparently generated no palaces, temples, elaborate graves, kings, or warrior classes. In short,

Map 3.1 First Civilizations

Six First Civilizations emerged independently in locations scattered across the planet, all within a few thousand years, from 3500 to 1000 B.C.E.




Caspian Sea
Ninevah
Euphrates R.
Tigris R.
Babylon
Nippur
Lagash
SUMER
Ur
ARABIAN DESERT
Persian Gulf
Anyang
Yellow R.
Yellow Sea
Zhengzhou
Yangzi R.
East China Sea
EUROPE
ASIA
Chinese Civilization: Shang Dynasty
Mesopotamian Civilization
Indus Valley Civilization
Nile Valley Civilizations
PACIFIC OCEAN
AFRICA
INDIAN OCEAN
AUSTRALIA
Mediterranean Sea
Jericho
Dead Sea
LOWER EGYPT
Giza
Memphis
SINAI PENINSULA
Akhetaten
Nile R.
Red Sea
Thebes
UPPER EGYPT
Aswan
First Cataract
Second Cataract
NUBIA
Third Cataract
Kerma
Fifth Cataract
Fourth Cataract
Meroë
Sixth Cataract
Indus R.
Harappa
Mohenjo-Daro
Arabian Sea

the archeological evidence provides little indication of a political hierarchy or centralized state. This absence of evidence has sent scholars scrambling to provide an explanation for the obvious specialization, coordination, and complexity that the Indus Valley civilization exhibited. A series of small republics, rule by priests, an early form of the caste system—all of these have been suggested as alternative mechanisms of integration in this first South Asian civilization. Although no one knows for sure, the possibility that the Indus Valley may have housed a sophisticated civilization without a corresponding state has excited the imagination of scholars. (See Visual Sources: Indus Valley Civilization, pp. 126–31.)

Whatever its organization, the local environmental impact of the Indus Valley civilization, as in many others, was heavy and eventually undermined its ecological foundations. Repeated irrigation increased the amount of salt in the soil and lowered crop yields. The making of mud bricks, dried in ovens, required an enormous amount of wood for fuel, generating large-scale deforestation and soil erosion. As a result, these magnificent cities were abandoned by about 1700 B.C.E. and largely forgotten thereafter. Nonetheless, many features of this early civilization—ceremonial bathing, ritual burning, yoga positions, bulls and elephants as religious symbols, styles of clothing and jewelry—continued to nourish the later classical civilization of the Indian subcontinent and in fact persist into the present.[3]

The early civilization of China, dating to perhaps 2200 B.C.E., was very different from that of the Indus Valley. The ideal of a centralized state was evident from the days of the Xia dynasty (2200–1766 B.C.E.), whose legendary monarch Wu organized flood control projects that "mastered the waters and made them to flow in great channels." Subsequent dynasties—the Shang (1766–1122 B.C.E.) and the Zhou (1122–256 B.C.E.)—substantially enlarged the Chinese state, erected lavish tombs for their rulers, and buried thousands of human sacrificial victims to accompany them in the world to come. By the Zhou dynasty, a distinctive Chinese political ideology had emerged, featuring a ruler, known as the Son of Heaven. This monarch served as an intermediary between heaven and earth and ruled by the Mandate of Heaven only so long as he governed with benevolence and maintained social harmony among his people. An early form of written Chinese has been discovered on numerous oracle bones, which were intended to predict the future and to assist China's rulers in the task of governing. Chinese civilization, more than any other, has experienced an impressive cultural continuity from its earliest expression into modern times.

A final First Civilization, known as the Olmec, took shape around 1200 B.C.E. along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico near present-day Veracruz in southern Mexico. Based on an agricultural economy of maize, beans, and squash, Olmec cities arose from a series of competing chiefdoms and became ceremonial centers filled with elaborately decorated temples, altars, pyramids, and tombs of rulers. The most famous artistic legacy of the Olmecs lay in some seventeen colossal basalt heads, weighing twenty tons or more. Recent discoveries suggest that the Olmecs may well have created the first written language in the Americas by about 900 B.C.E.

Sometimes regarded as the "mother civilization" of Mesoamerica, Olmec cultural patterns—mound building, artistic styles, urban planning, a game played with a rubber ball, ritual sacrifice, and bloodletting by rulers—spread widely throughout the region and influenced subsequent civilizations, such as the Maya and Teotihuacán.

Beyond these six First Civilizations, other, smaller civilizations also flourished. Lying south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, Nubian civilization was clearly distinctive and independent of its northern neighbor, although Nubia was involved in a long and often contentious relationship with Egypt. Likewise in China, a large city known as Sanxingdui, rich in bronze sculptures and much else, arose separately but at the same time as the more well-known Shang dynasty. As a new way of living and a new form of human society, civilization was beginning its long march toward encompassing almost all of humankind by the twentieth century.

Shang Dynasty Bronze
This bronze tiger, created around 1100 B.C.E., illustrates Chinese skill in working with bronze and the mythological or religious significance of the tiger as a messenger between heaven and the human world. (Jiangxi Provincial Museum, Nanchang/Visual Connection Archive)

The Question of Origins

Change
What accounts for the initial breakthroughs to civilization?

The first question that historians ask about almost everything is "How did it get started?" Scholars of all kinds—archeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians—have been arguing about the origins of civilization for a very long time, with no end in sight.[4] Amid all the controversy, one thing seems reasonably clear: civilizations had their roots in the Agricultural Revolution. That is the reason they appeared so late in the human story, for only an agricultural technology permitted human communities to produce sufficient surplus to support large populations and the specialized or elite minorities who did not themselves produce food. Furthermore, all of the First Civilizations emerged from earlier and competing chiefdoms, in which some social ranking and economic specialization had already developed. It was a gradual and evolutionary process. However, not all agricultural societies or chiefdoms developed into civilizations, so something else must have been involved. It is the search for this "something else" that has provoked such great debate among scholars.

Some scholars have emphasized the need to organize large-scale irrigation projects as a stimulus for the earliest civilizations, but archeologists have found that the more complex water control systems appeared long after states and civilizations

had already been established. Others have suggested that powerful states were useful in protecting the privileges of favored groups. Warfare and trade have figured in still other explanations for the rise of civilizations. Anthropologist Robert Carneiro combined several of these factors in a thoughtful approach to the question.[5] He argued that a growing density of population, producing more congested and competitive societies, was a fundamental motor of change, and especially in areas where rich agricultural land was limited, either by geography (oceans, deserts, mountains) or by powerful competing societies. Such settings provided incentives for innovations, such as irrigation or plows that could produce more food, because opportunities for territorial expansion were not readily available. But circumscribed environments with dense populations also generated intense competition among rival groups, which led to repeated warfare. A strong and highly organized state was a decided advantage in such competition. Because losers could not easily flee to new lands, they were absorbed into the winner's society as a lower class. Successful leaders of the winning side emerged as an elite with an enlarged base of land, a class of subordinated workers, and a powerful state at their disposal—in short, a civilization.

Although such a process was relatively rapid by world history standards, it took many generations, centuries, or perhaps millennia to evolve. It was, of course, an unconscious undertaking in which the participants had little sense of the long-term outcome as they coped with the practical problems of survival on a day-to-day basis. What is surprising, though, is the rough similarity of the result in many widely separated places from about 3500 B.C.E. to the beginning of the Common Era.

However they got started (and much about this is still guesswork), the First Civilizations, once established, represented a very different kind of human society than anything that came before. All of them were based on highly productive agricultural economies. Various forms of irrigation, drainage, terracing, and flood control enabled these early civilizations to tap the food-producing potential of their regions. In dry lands with good soil, such as northern China and southern Iraq, water made all the difference and vastly increased the agricultural output. In all these civilizations, pottery likewise enhanced the productivity of farming, as did animal-drawn plows and metalworking in Afro-Eurasia. Ritual sacrifice, often including people, usually accompanied the growth of civilization, and the new rulers normally served as high priests or were seen as divine beings, their right to rule legitimated by association with the sacred.

An Urban Revolution

■ Change
What was the role of cities in the early civilizations?

It was the resources from agriculture that made possible one of the most distinctive features of the First Civilizations—cities. What would an agricultural villager have made of Uruk, ancient Mesopotamia's largest city? Uruk had walls more than twenty feet tall and a population around 50,000 in the third millennium B.C.E. The city's center, visible for miles around, was a stepped pyramid, or ziggurat, topped with a

temple (see the photo on p. 100). Inside the city, our village visitor would have found other temples as well, serving as centers of worship and as places for the redistribution of stored food. Numerous craftspeople labored as masons, copper workers, weavers, and in many other specialties, while bureaucrats helped administer the city. It was, surely, a "vibrant, noisy, smelly, sometimes bewildering and dangerous, but also exciting place."[6] Here is how the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Mesopotamia's ancient epic poem, describes the city:

> Come then, Enkidu, to ramparted Uruk,
> Where fellows are resplendent in holiday clothing,
> Where every day is set for celebration,
> Where harps and drums are played.
> And the harlots too, they are fairest of form,
> Rich in beauty, full of delights,
> Even the great gods are kept from sleeping at night.[7]

Equally impressive to a village visitor would have been the city of Mohenjo Daro, which flourished along the banks of the Indus River around 2000 B.C.E. With a population of perhaps 40,000, Mohenjo Daro and its sister city of Harappa featured large, richly built houses of two or three stories, complete with indoor plumbing, luxurious bathrooms, and private wells. Streets were laid out in a gridlike pattern, and beneath the streets ran a complex sewage system. Workers lived in row upon row of standardized two-room houses. Grand public buildings, including what seems to be a huge public bath, graced the city, while an enormous citadel was surrounded by a brick wall some forty-five feet high (see Visual Source 3.1, p. 127).

Even larger, though considerably later, was the Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacán, located in the central valley of Mexico. It housed perhaps 200,000 people in the middle of the first millennium C.E. Broad avenues, dozens of temples, two huge pyramids, endless stone carvings and many bright frescoes, small apartments for the ordinary, palatial homes for the wealthy—all of this must have seemed another world for a new visitor from a distant village. In shopping for obsidian blades, how was she to decide among the 350 workshops in the city? In seeking relatives, how could she find her way among many different compounds, each surrounded by a wall and housing a different lineage? And what would she make of a neighborhood composed entirely of Mayan merchants from the distant coastal lowlands?

Cities, then, lay at the heart of all of the First Civilizations. They were

Mohenjo Daro
Flourishing around 2000 B.C.E., Mohenjo Daro was by far the largest city of the Indus Valley civilization, covering more than 600 acres. This photograph shows a small part of that city as it has been uncovered by archeologists during the past century. The large watertight tank or pool, shown in the foreground, probably offered bathers an opportunity for ritual purification. In the ruins of Mohenjo Daro, writes archeologist Gregory Possehl, "one can walk down streets well defined by the high walls of homes and other buildings, climb the stairways used in antiquity, peer down ancient wells, and stand in bathing rooms used over 4,000 years ago." (Harappa Images)

political/administrative capitals; they were centers for the production of culture, including art, architecture, literature, ritual, and ceremony; they served as marketplaces for both local and long-distance exchange; and they housed most manufacturing activity. Everywhere they generated a unique kind of society, compared to earlier agricultural villages. Urban society was impersonal, for it was no longer possible to know everyone. Relationships of class and occupation were at least as important as those of kinship and village loyalty. Most notably, the degree of specialization and inequality far surpassed that of all preceding human communities.

The Erosion of Equality

Among the most novel features of early urban life, at least to our imaginary village visitor, was the amazing specialization of work. In Document 3.5 (pp. 123–25), an Egyptian teacher tries to persuade a reluctant student, preparing to be a scribe (a literate public official), to take his lessons seriously by pointing out the disadvantages of the many other occupations that await him. In ancient Mesopotamia, even scribes were subdivided into many categories: junior and senior scribes, temple scribes and royal scribes, scribes for particular administrative or official functions.[8] None of these people, of course, grew their own food; they were supported by the highly productive agriculture of farmers.

Hierarchies of Class

■ Change
In what ways was social inequality expressed in early civilizations?

Alongside the occupational specialization of the First Civilizations lay their vast inequalities—in wealth, status, and power. Here we confront a remarkable and persistent feature of the human journey. As ingenuity and technology created more-productive economies, the greater wealth now available to societies was everywhere piled up rather than spread out. Early signs of this erosion of equality were evident in the more settled and complex gathering and hunting societies such as the Chumash and in agricultural chiefdoms such as Cahokia, but the advent of urban-based civilizations multiplied and magnified these inequalities many times over, as the egalitarian values of earlier cultures were everywhere displaced. This transition represents one of the major turning points in the social history of humankind.

As the First Civilizations took shape, inequality and hierarchy soon came to be regarded as normal and natural. Upper classes everywhere enjoyed great wealth in land or salaries, were able to avoid physical labor, had the finest of everything, and occupied the top positions in political, military, and religious life. Frequently, they were distinguished by the clothing they wore, the houses they lived in, and the manner of their burial. Early Chinese monarchs bestowed special clothing, banners, chariots, weapons, and ornaments on their regional officials, and all of these

items were graded according to the officials' precise location in the hierarchy. In Mesopotamia, the punishments prescribed in the famous Code of Hammurabi depended on social status (see Document 3.2, pp. 118–21). A free-born commoner who struck a person of equal rank had to pay a small fine, but if he struck "a man who is his superior, he shall receive 60 strokes with an oxtail whip in public." Clearly, class had consequences.

In all civilizations, free commoners represented the vast majority of the population and included artisans of all kinds, lower-level officials, soldiers and police, servants, and, most numerous of all, farmers. It was their surplus production—appropriated through a variety of taxes, rents, required labor, and tribute payments—that supported the upper classes. At least some of these people were aware of, and resented, these forced extractions and their position in the social hierarchy. Most Chinese peasants, for example, owned little land of their own and worked on plots granted to them by royal or aristocratic landowners. An ancient poem compared the exploiting landlords to rats and expressed the farmers' vision of a better life:

> Large rats! Large rats!
> Do not eat our spring grain!
> Three years have we had to do with you.
> And you have not been willing to think of our toil.
> We will leave you,
> And go to those happy borders.
> Happy borders, happy borders!
> Who will there make us always to groan?[9]

At the bottom of social hierarchies everywhere were slaves. Slavery and civilization, in fact, seem to have emerged together. (For early references to slavery, see Document 3.2, pp. 118–21). Female slaves, captured in the many wars among rival Mesopotamian cities, were put to work in large-scale semi-industrial weaving enterprises, while males helped to maintain irrigation canals and construct ziggurats. Others worked as domestic servants in the households of their owners. In all of the First Civilizations, slaves—derived from prisoners of war, criminals, and debtors—were available for sale; for work in the fields, mines, homes, and shops of their owner; or on occasion for sacrifice. From the days of the earliest civilizations until the nineteenth century, the practice of "people owning people" was an enduring feature of state-based societies everywhere.

The practice of slavery in ancient times varied considerably from place to place. Egypt and the Indus Valley civilizations initially had far fewer slaves than did Mesopotamia, which was highly militarized. Later, the Greeks of Athens and the Romans employed slaves far more extensively than did the Chinese or Indians (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, most ancient slavery differed from the type of slavery practiced in the Americas during recent centuries; in the early civilizations, slaves were not a primary agricultural labor force, many children of slaves could become

free people, and slavery was not associated primarily with "blackness" or with Africa.

Hierarchies of Gender

■ Change
In what ways have historians tried to explain the origins of patriarchy?

Accompanying the hierarchies of class were those of gender, as civilizations everywhere undermined the earlier and more equal relationships between men and women. Most scholars agree that early horticultural societies, those using a hoe or digging stick, continued the relative gender equality that had characterized Paleolithic peoples. In such societies, women were much involved in agricultural labor, which generated most of the food for the village. Women were also engaged in spinning, weaving, and pottery making—activities that were compatible with their role as mothers. Their central economic function, together with their amazing capacity to produce new life, gave women considerable respect and, arguably, a status generally equal to that of men. Some scholars have seen this respect and status reflected, at least in Europe and the Middle East, in a proliferation of figurines, masks, signs, symbols, and myths, all featuring women and feminine themes dealing with birth, growth, death, and regeneration.[10]

But as the First Civilizations took shape, the institutions and values of male dominance, often referred to as patriarchy, gradually emerged. The big question, of course, lies in trying to explain this momentous change. What was it about civilization that seemed to generate patriarchy?

One approach to answering this question highlights the role of a new and more intensive form of agriculture, involving the use of animal-drawn plows and the keeping and milking of large herds of animals. Unlike earlier farming practices that relied on a hoe or digging stick, plow-based agriculture meant heavier work, which men were better able to perform. Taking place at a distance from the village, this new form of agriculture was perhaps less compatible with women's primary responsibility for child rearing. Furthermore, the growing population of civilizations meant that women were more often pregnant and even more deeply involved in child care than before. Thus, in plow-based communities, men took over most of the farming work, and the status of women declined correspondingly, even though their other productive activities—weaving and food preparation, for example—continued. "As women were increasingly relegated to secondary tasks . . . ," writes archeologist Margaret Ehrenberg, "they had fewer personal resources with which to assert their status."[11]

Because patriarchy also developed in civilizations untouched by plow agriculture, such as those of Mesoamerica and the Andes, perhaps something else was at work as well. Historian David Christian suggests that the declining position of women was connected more generally to the growth of social complexity in civilizations as economic, religious, and political "specialists" became more prominent. Because men were less important in the household, they may have been more avail-

able to assume the powerful and prestigious specialist roles. From these positions of authority, men were able to shape the values and practices of their societies in ways that benefited themselves at the expense of women. Here, perhaps, lies the origin of an ancient distinction between the realm of the home, defined as the domain of women, and the world of public life, associated with men.[12]

Women have long been identified not only with the home but also with nature, for they are intimately involved in the fundamental natural process of reproduction. But civilization seemed to highlight culture, or the human mastery of nature, through agriculture, monumental art and architecture, and the creation of large-scale cities and states. Did this mean, as some scholars have suggested, that women were now associated with an inferior dimension of human life (nature), while men assumed responsibility for the higher order of culture?[13]

A further aspect of civilization that may well have contributed to patriarchy was warfare. Large-scale military conflict with professionally led armies was a feature of almost all of the First Civilizations, and female prisoners of war often were the first slaves. With military service largely restricted to men, its growing prominence in the affairs of civilizations served to enhance the power and prestige of a male warrior class. So too, perhaps, did private property and commerce, central elements of the First Civilizations. Without sharp restrictions on women's sexual activity, how could a father be certain that family property would be inherited by his offspring? In addition, the buying and selling associated with commerce were soon applied to male rights over women, as female slaves, concubines, and wives were exchanged among men.

Patriarchy in Practice

■ Comparison
How did Mesopotamian and Egyptian patriarchy differ from each other?

Whatever the precise origins of patriarchy, male dominance permeated the First Civilizations, marking a gradual change from the more equal relationships of men and women within agricultural villages or Paleolithic bands. Historian Gerda Lerner documented this transition in ancient Mesopotamian civilization. By the second millennium B.C.E., various written laws codified and sought to enforce a patriarchal family life that offered women a measure of paternalistic protection while insisting on their submission to the unquestioned authority of men. Central to these laws was the regulation of female sexuality. A wife caught sleeping with another man might be drowned at her husband's discretion, whereas he was permitted to enjoy sexual relations with his female servants, though not with another man's wife. Divorce was far easier for the husband than for the wife. Rape was a serious offense, but the injured party was primarily the father or the husband of the victim, rather than the violated woman herself. Even elite women, who were often allowed to act on behalf of their powerful husbands, saw themselves as dependent. "Let all be well with [my husband]," prayed one such wife, "that I may prosper under his protection."[14]

Furthermore, women in Mesopotamian civilization were sometimes divided into two sharply distinguished categories. Respectable women, those under the protection and sexual control of one man, were required to be veiled when outside the home, whereas nonrespectable women, such as slaves and prostitutes, were forbidden to wear veils and were subject to severe punishment if they presumed to cover their heads.

Finally, the powerful goddesses of earlier times were gradually relegated to the home and hearth. They were replaced in the public arena by dominant male deities, who now were credited with the power of creation and fertility and viewed as the patrons of wisdom and learning. The culmination of this "demotion of the goddess," argues Gerda Lerner, lies in the Hebrew Scriptures, in which a single male deity, Yahweh, alone undertakes the act of creation without any participation of a female goddess.

Patriarchy was not everywhere the same, however. Egypt, while clearly patriarchal, afforded its women greater opportunities than did most other First Civilizations. In Egypt, women were recognized as legal equals to men, able to own property and slaves, to administer and sell land, to make their own wills, to sign their own marriage contracts, and to initiate divorce. Royal women occasionally exercised significant political power, acting as regents for their young sons or, more rarely, as queens in their own right. Clearly, though, this was seen as abnormal, for Egypt's most famous queen, Hatshepsut (reigned 1472–1457 B.C.E.), was sometimes portrayed in statues as a man, dressed in male clothing and sporting the traditional false beard of the pharaoh. Moreover, married women in Egypt were not veiled as in Mesopotamia. Statues and paintings often showed men and women in affectionate poses and as equal partners, as can be seen in the photo (p. 84) at the beginning of this chapter. Although marriages were clearly arranged by parents, the love poetry of New Kingdom Egypt (1550–1064 B.C.E.) suggests an element of romance and longing. One lovesick boy lamented the absence of his beloved, referred to as a "sister":

> Seven days since I saw my sister,
> and sickness invaded me; . . .
> The sight of her makes me well . . .
> Her speaking makes me strong;
> Embracing her expels my malady. . . .

And a young woman exults at the sight of her love:

> I passed before his house,
> I found his door ajar;
> My brother stood by his mother; . . .
> He looked at me as I passed by, . . .
> How my heart exulted in gladness,
> My brother, at your sight.[15]

The Rise of the State

What, we might reasonably ask, held ancient civilizations together despite the many tensions and complexities of urban living and the vast inequalities of civilized societies? Why did they not fly apart amid the resentments born of class and gender hierarchies? The answer, in large part, lay in yet another distinctive feature of the First Civilizations—states. Organized around particular cities or larger territories, early states were headed almost everywhere by kings, who employed a variety of ranked officials, exercised a measure of control over society, and defended the state against external enemies. To modern people, the state is such a familiar reality that we find it difficult to imagine life without it. Nonetheless, it is a quite recent invention in human history, with the state replacing, or at least supplementing, kinship as the basic organizing principle of society and exercising far greater authority than earlier chiefdoms.

Coercion and Consent

■ Change
What were the sources of state authority in the First Civilizations?

Early states in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Mesoamerica, and elsewhere drew their power from various sources, all of which assisted in providing cohesion for the First Civilizations. One basis of power was the recognition that the complexity of life in cities or densely populated territories required some authority to coordinate and regulate the community. Someone had to organize the irrigation systems of river valley civilizations. Someone had to adjudicate conflicts among the many different peoples, unrelated to one another, who rubbed elbows in the early cities. Someone had to direct efforts to defend the city or territory against aggressive outsiders. The state, in short, solved certain widely shared problems and therefore had a measure of voluntary support among the population. For many people, it was surely useful.

The state, however, was more useful for some people than for others, for it also served to protect the privileges of the upper classes, to require farmers to give up a portion of their product to support city-dwellers, and to demand work on large public projects such as pyramids and fortifications. If necessary, state authorities had the ability, and the willingness, to use force to compel obedience. The Egyptian teacher mentioned earlier described to his reluctant student what happens to a peasant unable to pay his tax in grain:

> Now the scribe lands on the shore. He surveys the harvest. Attendants are behind him with staffs, Nubians with clubs. One says [to the peasant], "Give grain." There is none. He is beaten savagely. He is bound, thrown into a well, submerged head down. His wife is bound in his presence. His children are in fetters. His neighbors abandon them and flee.[16]

Such was the power of the state, as rulers accumulated the resources to pay for officials, soldiers, police, and attendants. This capacity for violence and coercion marked

A Mesopotamian Ziggurat
This massive ziggurat/temple to the Mesopotamian moon god Nanna was built around 2100 B.C.E. in the city of Ur. The solitary figure standing atop the staircase illustrates the size of this huge structure. (Richard Ashworth/Robert Harding World Imagery/Corbis)

off the states of the First Civilizations from earlier chiefdoms, whose leaders had only persuasion, prestige, and gifts to back up their authority.

Force, however, was not always necessary, for the First Civilizations soon generated ideas suggesting that state authority and class and gender inequalities were normal, natural, and ordained by the gods. Kingship everywhere was associated with the sacred. Ancient Chinese kings were known as the Son of Heaven, and they alone could perform the rituals and sacrifices necessary to keep the cosmos in balance. Mesopotamian rulers were thought to be the stewards of their city's patron gods. Their symbols of kingship—crown, throne, scepter, mace—were said to be of divine origin, sent to earth when the gods established monarchy. Egyptians, most of all, invested their pharaohs with divine qualities. Rulers claimed to embody all the major gods of Egypt, and their supernatural power ensured the regular flooding of the Nile and the defeat of the country's enemies.

But if religion served most often to justify unequal power and privilege, it might also on occasion be used to restrain, or even undermine, the established order. Hammurabi claimed that his law code was inspired by Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, and was intended to "bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak."[17] Another Mesopotamian monarch, Urukagina from the city of Lagash, claimed authority from the city's patron god for reforms aimed at ending the corruption and tyranny of a previous ruler. In China during the Zhou dynasty (1122–256 B.C.E.), emperors ruled by the Mandate of Heaven, but their bad behavior could result in the removal of that mandate and their overthrow.

Writing and Accounting

A further support for state authority lay in the remarkable invention of writing. It was a powerful and transforming innovation, regarded almost everywhere as a gift from the gods, while people without writing often saw it as something magical or supernatural. Distinctive forms of writing emerged in all of the First Civilizations

Snapshot Writing in Ancient Civilizations

Most of the early writing systems were "logophonetic," using symbols to designate both whole words and particular sounds or syllables. Chinese characters, which indicated only words, were an exception. None of the early writing systems employed alphabets.

Location	Type	Initial Use	Example	Comment
Sumer	Cuneiform: wedge-shaped symbols on clay tablets representing objects, abstract ideas, sounds, and syllables	Records of economic transactions, such as temple payments and taxes	 bird	Regarded as the world's first written language; other languages such as Babylonian and Assryian were written with Sumerian script
Egypt	Hieroglyphs ("sacred carvings"): a series of signs that denote words and consonants (but not vowels or syllables)	Business and administrative purposes; later used for religious inscriptions, stories, poetry, hymns, and mathematics	 rain, dew, storm	For everyday use, less formal systems of cursive writing (known as "hieratic" and "demotic") were developed
Andes	Quipu: a complex system of knotted cords in which the color, length, type, and location of knots conveyed mostly numerical meaning	Various accounting functions; perhaps also used to express words	 numerical data (possibly in codes), words, and ideas	Widely used in the Inca Empire; recent discoveries place quipus in Caral some 5,000 years ago
Indus River Valley	Some 400 pictographic symbols representing sounds and words, probably expressing a Dravidian language currently spoken in southern India	Found on thousands of clay seals and pottery; probably used to mark merchandise	 6 fish	As yet undeciphered
China	Oracle bone script: pictographs (stylized drawings) with no phonetic meaning	Inscribed on turtle shells or animal bones; used for divination (predicting the future) in the royal court of Shang dynasty rulers	 horse	Direct ancestor of contemporary Chinese characters
Olmec	Signs that represent sounds (syllables) and words; numbering system using bars and dots	Used to record the names and deeds of rulers and shamans, as well as battles and astronomical data	 jaguar	Structurally similar to later Mayan script; Olmec calendars were highly accurate and the basis for later Mesoamerican calendars

except the Andes, although some scholars now regard their knotted strings, or quipus, as a kind of writing.[18]

Writing sustained the First Civilizations and their successors in many ways. Literacy defined elite status and conveyed enormous prestige to those who possessed it. (See Document 3.5, pp. 123–25, for a celebration of writing.) Because it can be learned, writing also provided a means for some commoners to join the charmed circle of the literate. Writing as propaganda, celebrating the great deeds of the kings, was prominent, especially among the Egyptians and later among the Maya. A hymn to the pharaoh, dating to about 1850 B.C.E., extravagantly praised the ruler:

> He has come unto us . . . and has given peace to the two Riverbanks
> . . . and has made Egypt to live; he hath banished its suffering;
> . . . he has caused the throat of the subjects to breathe
> . . . and has trodden down foreign countries
> . . . he has delivered them that were robbed
> . . . he has come unto us, that we may [nurture up?] our children and bury our aged ones.[19]

In Mesopotamia and elsewhere, writing served an accounting function, recording who had paid their taxes, who owed what to the temple, and how much workers had earned. Thus it immensely strengthened bureaucracy. Complex calendars indicated precisely when certain rituals should be performed. Writing also gave weight and specificity to orders, regulations, and laws. Hammurabi's famous law code (see Document 3.2, pp. 118–21), while correcting certain abuses, made crystal clear that fundamental distinctions divided men and women and separated slaves, commoners, and people of higher rank.

Once it had been developed, writing, like religion, proved hard to control and operated as a wild card in human affairs. It gave rise to literature and philosophy, to astronomy and mathematics, and, in some places, to history. On occasion, the written word proved threatening, rather than supportive, to rulers. China's so-called First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (reigned 221–210 B.C.E.), allegedly buried alive some 460 scholars and burned their books when they challenged his brutal efforts to unify China's many warring states, or so his later critics claimed (see Chapter 4). Thus writing became a major arena for social and political conflict, and rulers always have sought to control it.

The Grandeur of Kings

Yet another source of state authority derived from the lavish lifestyle of elites, the impressive rituals they arranged, and the imposing structures they created. Everywhere, kings, high officials, and their families lived in luxurious palaces, dressed in splendid clothing, bedecked themselves with the loveliest jewelry, and were attended by endless servants. Their deaths triggered elaborate burials, of which the pyramids of the Egyptian pharaohs were perhaps the most ostentatious. Almost all of the First

Civilizations accompanied high-status funerals with the human sacrifice of numerous retainers, who would nourish the souls or serve the needs of their rulers in the afterlife. Monumental palaces, temples, ziggurats, pyramids, and statues conveyed the immense power of the state and its elite rulers. The Olmec civilization of Mesoamerica (1200–400 B.C.E.) erected enormous human heads, more than ten feet tall and weighing at least twenty tons, carved from blocks of basalt and probably representing particular rulers. Somewhat later the Maya Temple of the Giant Jaguar, towering 154 feet tall, was the most impressive among many temples, pyramids, and palaces that graced the city of Tikal. All of this must have seemed overwhelming to common people in the cities and villages of the First Civilizations.

Olmec Head
This colossal statue, some six feet high and five feet wide, is one of seventeen such carvings, dating to the first millennium B.C.E., that were discovered in the territory of the ancient Olmec civilization. Thought to represent individual rulers, each of the statues has a distinct and realistically portrayed face. (Danny Lehman/Corbis)

Comparing Mesopotamia and Egypt

A productive agricultural technology, city living, immense class inequalities, patriarchy, the emerging power of states—all of these were common features of First Civilizations across the world and also of those that followed. Still, these civilizations were not everywhere the same, for differences in political organization, religious beliefs and practices, the role of women, and much more gave rise to distinctive traditions. Nor were they static. Like all human communities, they changed over the centuries. Finally, these civilizations did not exist in isolation, for they participated in networks of interactions with near and sometimes more distant neighbors. In looking more closely at two of these First Civilizations—Mesopotamia and Egypt—we can catch a glimpse of the differences, changes, and connections that characterized early civilizations.

Comparison
In what ways did Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations differ from each other?

Environment and Culture

The civilizations of both Mesopotamia and Egypt grew up in river valleys and depended on their rivers to sustain a productive agriculture in otherwise arid lands. Those rivers, however, were radically different. At the heart of Egyptian life was the Nile, "that green gash of teeming life," which rose predictably every year to bring the soil and water that nurtured a rich Egyptian agriculture. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which gave life to Mesopotamian civilization, also rose annually, but "unpredictably and fitfully, breaking man's dikes and submerging his crops."[20]

Snapshot Key Moments in Mesopotamian History

Beginning of irrigated agriculture	6000 B.C.E.
Period of independent Sumerian city-states	3200–2350 B.C.E.
Earliest cuneiform texts	3000 B.C.E.
First Sumerian law codes	2500 B.C.E.
First Mesopotamian empire: conquest of Sumer by Sargon of Akkad	2350 B.C.E.
Epic of Gilgamesh compiled	after 2000 B.C.E.
Babylonian empire	1900–1500 B.C.E.
Reign of Hammurabi	1792–1750 B.C.E.
Assyrian rule in Mesopotamia	900–612 B.C.E.
Assyrian conquest of Israel	722 B.C.E.
Babylonian conquest of Judah by King Nebuchadnezzar	586 B.C.E.
Mesopotamia incorporated into Persian empire	by 500 B.C.E.

(See Map 3.2.) Furthermore, an open environment without serious obstacles to travel made Mesopotamia far more vulnerable to invasion than the much more protected space of Egypt, which was surrounded by deserts, mountains, seas, and cataracts. For long periods of its history, Egypt enjoyed a kind of "free security" from external attack that Mesopotamians could only have envied.

Does the physical environment shape the human cultures that develop within it? Most historians are reluctant to endorse any kind of determinism, especially one suggesting that "geography is destiny," but in the case of Mesopotamia and Egypt, many scholars have seen some relationship between the physical setting and culture.

In at least some of its literature, the Mesopotamian outlook on life, which developed within a precarious, unpredictable, and often violent environment, viewed humankind as caught in an inherently disorderly world, subject to the whims of capricious and quarreling gods, and facing death without much hope of a pleasant life beyond. A Mesopotamian poet complained: "I have prayed to the gods and sacrificed, but who can understand the gods in heaven? Who knows what they plan for us? Who has ever been able to understand a god's conduct?"[21] The famous Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, excerpted in Document 3.1, pages 115–18, likewise depicted a rather pessimistic view of the gods and of the possibility for eternal life.

By contrast, elite literate culture in Egypt, developing in a more stable, predictable, and beneficent environment, produced a rather more cheerful and hopeful outlook on the world. The rebirth of the sun every day and of the river every year seemed to assure Egyptians that life would prevail over death. The amazing

Map 3.2 Mesopotamia
After about 1,000 years of independent and competitive existence, the city-states of Sumer were incorporated into a number of larger imperial states based in Akkad, Babylon, and then Assyria.

pyramids, constructed during Egypt's Old Kingdom (2663–2195 B.C.E.), reflected the firm belief that at least the pharaohs and other high-ranking people could successfully make the journey to eternal life in the Land of the West. Incantations for the dead, such as those illustrated in Document 3.3, describe an afterlife that Gilgamesh could only have envied. Over time, larger groups of people, beyond the pharaoh and his entourage, came to believe that they could gain access to the afterlife if they followed proper procedures and lived a morally upright life (see Documents 3.3 and 3.4, pp. 121–23). Thus Egyptian civilization not only affirmed the possibility of eternal life but also expanded access to it.

If the different environments of Mesopotamia and Egypt shaped their societies and cultures, those civilizations, with their mounting populations and growing demand for resources, likewise had an impact on the environment.[22] In Sumer (southern Mesopotamia), deforestation and soil erosion decreased crop yields by some 65 percent between 2400 and 1700 B.C.E. Also contributing to this disaster was the increasing salinization of the soil, a long-term outcome of intensive irrigation. By 2000 B.C.E., there were reports that "the earth turned white" as salt accumulated in the soil. As a result, wheat was largely replaced by barley, which is far

more tolerant of salty conditions. This ecological deterioration clearly weakened Sumerian city-states, facilitated their conquest by foreigners, and shifted the center of Mesopotamian civilization permanently to the north.

Egypt, by contrast, created a more sustainable agricultural system, which lasted for thousands of years and contributed to the remarkable continuity of its civilization. Whereas Sumerian irrigation involved a complex and artificial network of canals and dikes that led to the salinization of the soil, its Egyptian counterpart was much less intrusive, simply regulating the natural flow of the Nile. Such a system avoided the problem of salty soils, allowing Egyptian agriculture to emphasize wheat production, but it depended on the general regularity and relative gentleness of the Nile's annual flooding. On occasion, that pattern was interrupted, with serious consequences for Egyptian society. An extended period of low floods between 2250 and 1950 B.C.E. led to sharply reduced agricultural output, large-scale starvation, the loss of livestock, and, consequently, social upheaval and political disruption. Nonetheless, Egypt's ability to work *with* its more favorable natural environment enabled a degree of stability and continuity that proved impossible in Sumer, where human action intruded more heavily into a less benevolent natural setting.

Cities and States

Politically as well as culturally and environmentally, Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations differed sharply. For its first thousand years (3200–2350 B.C.E.), Mesopotamian civilization, located in the southern Tigris-Euphrates region known as Sumer, was organized in a dozen or more separate and independent city-states. Each city-state was ruled by a king, who claimed to represent the city's patron deity and who controlled the affairs of the walled city and surrounding rural area. Quite remarkably, some 80 percent of the population of Sumer lived in one or another of these city-states, making Mesopotamia the most thoroughly urbanized society of ancient times. The chief reason for this massive urbanization, however, lay in the great flaw of this system, for frequent warfare among these Sumerian city-states caused people living in rural areas to flee to the walled cities for protection. With no overarching authority, rivalry over land and water often led to violent conflict. After one such conflict destroyed the city of Ur and desecrated its temple, a poet lamented the city's sad fate:

> After your city had been destroyed, how now can you exist!
> After your house had been destroyed, how has your heart led you on!
> Your city has become a strange city . . .
> Your house has become a house of tears.[23]

These conflicts, together with environmental devastation, eventually left Sumerian cities vulnerable to outside forces, and after about 2350 B.C.E., stronger peoples from northern Mesopotamia conquered Sumer's warring cities, bringing an end to the Sumerian phase of Mesopotamian civilization. First the Akkadians (2350–2000 B.C.E.) and later the Babylonians (1900–1500 B.C.E.) and the Assyrians (900–612

B.C.E.) created larger territorial states or bureaucratic empires that encompassed all or most of Mesopotamia. Periods of political unity now descended upon this First Civilization, but it was unity imposed from outside. Much later, a similar process befell the Greek city-states, whose endemic warfare invited Macedonian invasion and their subsequent incorporation into the empires of Alexander the Great and then of the Romans (see Chapter 4).

Egyptian civilization, by contrast, began its history around 3100 B.C.E., with the merger of several earlier states or chiefdoms into a unified territory that stretched some 1,000 miles along the Nile. For an amazing 3,000 years, Egypt maintained that unity and independence, though with occasional interruptions. A combination of wind patterns that made it easy to sail south along the Nile and a current flowing north facilitated communication, exchange, unity, and stability within the Nile Valley. Here was a record of political longevity and continuity that the Mesopotamians and many other ancient peoples might well have envied.

Cities in Egypt were less important than in Mesopotamia, although political capitals, market centers, and major burial sites gave Egypt an urban presence as well. Most people lived in agricultural villages along the river rather than in urban centers, perhaps because Egypt's greater security made it less necessary for people to

Snapshot Key Moments in Nile Valley Civilizations

Small-scale states in Sudanic Africa	5000 B.C.E.
Nubian kingdom of Ta-Seti	3400–3200 B.C.E.
Unification of Egypt as a single state	3100 B.C.E.
Frequent warfare between Egypt and Nubian states	3100–2600 B.C.E.
Old Kingdom Egypt (high point of pharaohs' power and pyramid building)	2663–2195 B.C.E.
Nubian kingdom of Kush established	2500 B.C.E.
Egyptian commercial expeditions to Nubia	2300 B.C.E.
Hyksos invasion and rule of Egypt	1650–1550 B.C.E.
New Kingdom Egypt	1550–1064 B.C.E.
Emergence of Egyptian empire	1500 B.C.E.
Queen Hatshepsut launches expeditions to Land of Punt, probably along the East African coast	1473–1458 B.C.E.
Kush conquest of Egypt	760–660 B.C.E.
Assyrian conquest of Egypt	671–651 B.C.E.
Persian rule in Egypt	525–404 B.C.E.
Roman conquest of Egypt	30 B.C.E.

gather in fortified towns. The focus of the Egyptian state resided in the pharaoh, believed to be a god in human form. He alone ensured the daily rising of the sun and the annual flooding of the Nile. All of the country's many officials served at his pleasure; the law of the land was simply the pharaoh's edict; and access to the afterlife lay in proximity to him and burial in or near his towering pyramids.

This image of the pharaoh and his role as an enduring symbol of Egyptian civilization persisted over the course of three millennia, but the realities of Egyptian political life changed over time. By 2400 B.C.E., the power of the pharaoh had diminished, as local officials and nobles, who had been awarded their own land and were able to pass their positions on to their sons, assumed greater authority. When changes in the weather resulted in the Nile's repeated failure to flood properly around 2200 B.C.E., the authority of the pharaoh was severely discredited, and Egypt dissolved for several centuries into a series of local principalities.

Even when centralized rule was restored around 2000 B.C.E., the pharaohs never regained their old power and prestige. Kings were now warned that they too would have to account for their actions at the Day of Judgment. Nobles no longer sought to be buried near the pharaoh's pyramid but instead created their own more modest tombs in their own areas. Osiris, the god of the dead, became increasingly prominent, and "all men who were worthy . . . not merely those who had known the pharaoh in life" could aspire to immortality in his realm.[24]

Interaction and Exchange

Connection
In what ways were Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations shaped by their interactions with near and distant neighbors?

Although Mesopotamia and Egypt represented separate and distinct civilizations, they interacted frequently with each other and with both near and more distant neighbors. Even in these ancient times, the First Civilizations were embedded in larger networks of commerce, culture, and power. None of them stood alone.

The early beginnings of Egyptian civilization illustrate the point. Its agriculture drew upon wheat and barley, which reached Egypt from Mesopotamia, as well as gourds, watermelon, domesticated donkeys, and cattle, which derived from Sudan. Some scholars argue that Egypt's step pyramids and its system of writing were stimulated by Mesopotamian models. The practice of "divine kingship" seems to have derived from the central or eastern Sudan, where small-scale agricultural communities had long viewed their rulers as sacred and buried them with various servants and officials. From this complex of influences, the Egyptians created something distinct and unique, but that civilization had roots in both Africa and Southwest Asia.[25]

Furthermore, once they were established, both Mesopotamia and Egypt carried on extensive long-distance trade. Sumerian merchants had established seaborne contact with the Indus Valley civilization as early as 2300 B.C.E. Other trade routes connected it to Anatolia (present-day Turkey), Egypt, Iran, and Afghanistan. During Akkadian rule over Mesopotamia, a Sumerian poet described its capital of Agade:

> In those days the dwellings of Agade were filled with gold,
> its bright-shining houses were filled with silver,
> into its granaries were brought copper, tin, slabs of
> lapis lazuli [a blue gemstone], its silos bulged at the sides . . .
> its quay where the boats docked were all bustle. . . .[26]

All of this and more came from far away.

Egyptian trade likewise extended far afield. Beyond its involvement with the Mediterranean and the Middle East, Egyptian trading journeys extended deep into Africa, including Nubia, south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, and Punt, along the East African coast of Ethiopia and Somalia. One Egyptian official described his return from an expedition to Nubia: "I came down with three hundred donkeys laden with incense, ebony, . . . panther skins, elephant tusks, throw sticks, and all sorts of good products."[27] What most intrigued the very young pharaoh who sent him, however, was a dancing dwarf that accompanied the expedition back to Egypt.

Along with trade goods went cultural influence from the civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Among the smaller societies of the region to feel this influence were the Hebrews, who had migrated from Mesopotamia to Palestine and Egypt early in their history. Their sacred writings, recorded in the Old Testament, showed the influence of Mesopotamia in the "eye for an eye" principle of their legal system and in the story of a flood that destroyed the world. Unique to the Hebrews, however, was their emerging awareness of a merciful and single deity, Yahweh, who demanded an ethical life from his people. This conception subsequently achieved global significance when it was taken over by Christianity and Islam.

The Phoenicians, who were commercially active in the Mediterranean basin from their homeland in present-day Lebanon, also were influenced by Mesopotamian civilization. They adopted the Mesopotamian fertility goddess Ishtar, renaming her Astarte. They also adapted the Sumerian cuneiform method of writing to a much easier alphabetic system, which later became the basis for Greek and Latin writing. Various Indo-European peoples, dispersing probably from north-central Anatolia, also

Egypt and Nubia
By the fourteenth century B.C.E., Nubia was a part of an Egyptian empire. This wall painting shows Nubian princes bringing gifts or tribute, including rings and bags of gold, to Huy, the Egyptian viceroy of Nubia. The mural comes from Huy's tomb. (Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum)

Map 3.3 An Egyptian Empire

During the New Kingdom period after 1550 B.C.E., Egypt became for several centuries an empire, extending its political control southward into Nubia and northward into Palestine.

incorporated Sumerian deities into their own religions as well as bronze metallurgy and the wheel into their economies. When their widespread migrations carried them across much of Eurasia, they took these Sumerian cultural artifacts with them.

Egyptian cultural influence likewise spread in several directions. Nubia, located to the south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, not only traded with its more powerful neighbor but also was subject to periodic military intervention and political control from Egypt. Skilled Nubian archers were actively recruited for service as mercenaries in Egyptian armies. They often married Egyptian women and were buried in Egyptian style. All of this led to the diffusion of Egyptian culture in Nubia, expressed in building Egyptian-style pyramids, worshipping Egyptian gods and goddesses, and making use of Egyptian hieroglyphic writing. Despite this cultural borrowing, Nubia remained a distinct civilization, developing its own alphabetic script, retaining many of its own gods, developing a major ironworking industry by 500 B.C.E., and asserting its political independence whenever possible. The Nubian kingdom of Kush, in fact, invaded Egypt in 760 B.C.E. and ruled it for about 100 years.

In the Mediterranean basin, clear Egyptian influence is visible in the art of the Minoan civilization, which emerged on the island of Crete about 2500 B.C.E. More controversial has been the claim by historian Martin Bernal in a much-publicized book, *Black Athena* (1987), that ancient Greek culture—its art, religion, philosophy, and language—drew heavily upon Egyptian as well as Mesopotamian precedents. His book lit up a passionate debate among scholars. To some of his critics, Bernal seemed to undermine the originality of Greek civilization by suggesting that it had Afro-Asian origins. His supporters accused the critics of Eurocentrism. Whatever its outcome, the controversy surrounding Bernal's book served to focus attention on Egypt's relationship to black Africa and to the world of the Mediterranean basin.

Influence was not a one-way street, however, as Egypt and Mesopotamia likewise felt the impact of neighboring peoples. Pastoral peoples, speaking Indo-European languages and living in what is now southern Russia, had domesticated the horse by perhaps 4000 B.C.E. and later learned to tie that powerful animal to wheeled carts and chariots. This new technology provided a fearsome military potential that enabled various chariot-driving peoples to temporarily overwhelm ancient civilizations. Based in Anatolia, the Hittites overran the powerful Babylonian empire of Mesopotamia in 1595 B.C.E. About the same time, another pastoral group with chariots, the Hyksos, invaded Egypt and ruled it for more than a century (1650–1535 B.C.E.). But chariot technology was portable, and soon both the Egyptians and the Mesopotamians incorporated it into their own military forces. In fact, this powerful military innovation, together with the knowledge of bronze metallurgy, spread quickly and widely, reaching China by 1200 B.C.E. There it enabled the creation of a strong Chinese state ruled by the Shang dynasty. All of these developments provide evidence of at least indirect connections across the entire Eurasian landmass in ancient times. Even then, no civilization was wholly isolated from larger patterns of interaction.

In Egypt, the intrusion of the chariot-driving Hyksos shattered the sense of security that this Nile Valley civilization had long enjoyed. It also stimulated the normally complacent Egyptians to adopt a number of technologies pioneered earlier in Asia, including the horse-drawn chariot; new kinds of armor, bows, daggers, and swords; improved methods of spinning and weaving; new musical instruments; and olive and pomegranate trees. Absorbing these foreign innovations, Egyptians expelled the Hyksos and went on to create their own empire, both in Nubia and in the eastern Mediterranean regions of Syria and Palestine. By 1500 B.C.E., the previously self-contained Egypt became for several centuries an imperial state bridging Africa and Asia, ruling over substantial numbers of non-Egyptian peoples (see Map 3.3). It also became part of an international political system that included the Babylonian and later Assyrian empires of Mesopotamia as well as many other peoples of the region. Egyptian and Babylonian rulers engaged in regular diplomatic correspondence, referred to one another as "brother," exchanged gifts, and married their daughters into one another's families. One Babylonian king complained to an Egyptian pharaoh that the delegation that had come to take his daughter to Egypt contained only five carriages. What would his courtiers say about the daughter of a great ruler traveling with such a paltry escort?[28]

Reflections: "Civilization": What's in a Word?

In examining the cultures of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, we are worlds away from life in agricultural villages or Paleolithic camps. Much the same holds for those of the Indus Valley, China, Mesoamerica, and the Andes. Strangely enough, historians have been somewhat uncertain as to how to refer to these new forms of human community. Following common practice, I have called them "civilizations," but scholars have reservations about the term for two reasons. The first is its implication of superiority. In popular usage, "civilization" suggests refined behavior, a "higher" form of society, something unreservedly positive. The opposite of "civilized"—"barbarian," "savage," or "uncivilized"—is normally understood as an insult implying inferiority. That, of course, is precisely how the inhabitants of many civilizations have viewed those outside their own societies, particularly those neighboring peoples living without the alleged benefit of cities and states.

Modern assessments of the First Civilizations reveal a profound ambiguity about these new, larger, and more complex societies. On the one hand, these civilizations have given us inspiring art, profound reflections on the meaning of life, more productive technologies, increased control over nature, and the art of writing—all of which have been cause for celebration. On the other hand, as anthropologist Marvin Harris noted, "[H]uman beings learned for the first time how to bow, grovel, kneel, and kowtow."[29] Massive inequalities, state oppression, slavery, large-scale warfare, the subordination of women, and epidemic disease also accompanied the rise of civilization, generating discontent, rebellion, and sometimes the urge to

escape. This ambiguity about the character of civilizations has led some historians to avoid the word, referring to early Egypt, Mesopotamia, and other regions instead as complex societies, urban-based societies, state-organized societies, or some more neutral term.

A second reservation about using the term "civilization" derives from its implication of solidity—the idea that civilizations represent distinct and widely shared identities with clear boundaries that mark them off from other such units. It is unlikely, however, that many people living in Mesopotamia, Norte Chico, or ancient China felt themselves part of a shared culture. Local identities defined by occupation, clan affiliation, village, city, or region were surely more important for most people than those of some larger civilization. At best, members of an educated upper class who shared a common literary tradition may have felt themselves part of some more inclusive civilization, but that left out most of the population. Moreover, unlike modern nations, none of the earlier civilizations had definite borders. Any identification with that civilization surely faded as distance from its core region increased. Finally, the line between civilizations and other kinds of societies is not always clear. Just when does a village or town become a city? At what point does a chiefdom become a state? Scholars continue to argue about these distinctions.

Given these reservations, should historians discard the notion of civilization? Maybe so, but this book continues to use it both because it is so deeply embedded in our way of thinking about the world and because no alternative concept has achieved widespread usage for making distinctions among different kinds of human communities. When the term appears in the text, try to keep in mind two points. First, as used by historians, "civilization" is a purely descriptive term, designating a particular type of human society—one with cities and states—and does not imply any judgment or assessment, any sense of superiority or inferiority. Second, it is used to define broad cultural patterns in particular geographic regions—Mesopotamia, the Peruvian coast, or China, for example—even though many people living in those regions may have been more aware of differences and conflicts than of those commonalities.

Second Thoughts

What's the Significance?

Norte Chico/Caral
Indus Valley civilization
Olmec civilization
Uruk
Mohenjo Daro/Harappa
Code of Hammurabi
patriarchy
rise of the state
Epic of Gilgamesh
Egypt: "the gift of the Nile"
Nubia
Hyksos

To assess your mastery of the material in this chapter, visit the **Student Center** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Big Picture Questions

1. What distinguished civilizations from other forms of human community?
2. How does the use of the term "civilization" by historians differ from that of popular usage? How do you use the term?
3. "Civilizations were held together largely by force." Do you agree with this assessment, or were there other mechanisms of integration as well?
4. In the development of the First Civilizations, what was gained for humankind, and what was lost?

Next Steps: For Further Study

For Web sites and additional documents related to this chapter, see **Make History** at bedfordstmartins.com/strayer.

Cyril Aldred, *The Egyptians* (1998). A brief and up-to-date account from a widely recognized expert.

Samuel Noah Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer* (1981). A classic account of Sumerian civilization, filled with wonderful stories and anecdotes.

David B. O'Connor, *Ancient Nubia: Egypt's Rival in Africa* (1994). An overview of this ancient African civilization, with lovely illustrations based on a museum exhibit.

Christopher A. Pool, *Olmec Archeology and Early Mesoamerica* (2007). A scholarly and up-to-date account of the earliest civilization in Mesoamerica.

Lauren Ristvet, *In the Beginning* (2007). A sweeping examination of the early phases of world history, from human evolution to the First Civilizations.

"The Ancient Indus Civilization," http://www.harappa.com/har/haro.html. Hundreds of vivid pictures and several brief essays on the Indus Valley civilization.

The British Museum, "Ancient Egypt," http://www.ancientegypt.co.uk/menu.html. An interactive exploration of Egyptian civilization.

Documents

Considering the Evidence: Life and Afterlife in Mesopotamia and Egypt

The advent of writing was not only a central feature of the First Civilizations but also a great boon to later historians. Access to early written records from these civilizations allows us some insight, in their own words, as to how these ancient peoples thought about their societies and their place in the larger scheme of things. Such documents, of course, tell only a small part of the story, for they most often reflect the thinking of the literate few—usually male, upper-class, powerful, and well-to-do—rather than the outlook of the vast majority who lacked such privileged positions. Nonetheless, historians have been grateful for even this limited window on the life of at least some of our ancient ancestors.

Among the First Civilizations, accessible written records are most widely available for Mesopotamia and Egypt. Those excerpted here disclose something about those peoples' beliefs regarding life in this world—class and gender, crime and justice, occupation and kingship—as well as about what awaits in the life beyond. Such reflections about life and afterlife allow us to catch a glimpse of the social organization and cultural outlook of these First Civilizations.

Document 3.1

In Search of Eternal Life

The most well-known of the writings from the world of the First Civilizations is surely the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Inscribed on clay tablets in various versions, the Gilgamesh epic has been pieced together by scholars over the past century or so. Its origins no doubt go back to stories and legends circulating during the life of the historical Gilgamesh, the powerful ruler of the Sumerian city of Uruk around 2700 B.C.E., although the earliest written version of the epic dates to around 2000 B.C.E. (see Map 3.2, p. 105).

The epic poem itself recounts the adventures of Gilgamesh, said to be part human and part divine. As the story opens, he is the energetic and yet oppressive ruler of Uruk. The pleas of his people persuade the gods to send Enkidu, an uncivilized man from the wilderness, to counteract this oppression. But before he can confront the erring monarch, Enkidu must become civilized,

a process that occurs at the hands of a seductive harlot. When the two men finally meet, they engage in a titanic wrestling match from which Gilgamesh emerges victorious. Thereafter they bond in a deep friendship and undertake a series of adventures together. In the course of these adventures, they offend the gods, who then determine that Enkidu must die. Devastated by the loss of his friend and the realization of his own mortality, Gilgamesh undertakes an extended search for eternal life. During this search, he meets a tavern owner, a wise woman named Siduri, as well as Utnapishtim, the only human being ever granted immortality by the gods. In the end, however, Gilgamesh learns that eternal life is not available to mere mortals and thus his quest proves futile.

The excerpts that follow illustrate something of Mesopotamian views of kingship, of the gods, and of the possibilities of life and afterlife.

- How would you define the Mesopotamian ideal of kingship? What is the basis of the monarch's legitimacy?
- What understanding of the afterlife does the epic suggest?
- What philosophy of life comes across in the Gilgamesh story?
- How does the *Epic of Gilgamesh* portray the gods and their relationship to humankind?

The Epic of Gilgamesh

ca. 2700 B.C.E.–2500 B.C.E.

On Kingship

[These first selections deal with the nature of kingship. They tell of the great deeds of Gilgamesh and his oppression of the people as well as recounting the instructions about kingship from Enlil, the chief Sumerian god, who is responsible for determining the destinies of humankind.]

I will proclaim to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh. This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out with labor, returning he rested, he engraved on a stone the whole story.

When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two-thirds they made him god and one-third man.

In Uruk he built walls, a great rampart, and the temple of blessed Eanna for the god of the firmament Anu, and for Ishtar the goddess of love. Look at it still today: the outer wall where the cornice runs, it shines with the brilliance of copper; and the inner wall, it has no equal. Touch the threshold, it is ancient. Approach Eanna the dwelling of Ishtar, our lady of love and war, the like of which no latter-day king, no man alive can equal. Climb upon the wall of Uruk; walk along it, I say; regard the foundation terrace and examine the masonry: is it not burnt brick and good? The seven sages laid the foundations.

Gilgamesh went abroad in the world, but he met with none who could withstand his arms till he

Source: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated by N. K. Sanders (London: Penguin, 1972), 61–62; 70; 92–93; 101–2; 106–11.

came to Uruk. But the men of Uruk muttered in their houses, "Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute."

Enlil of the mountain, the father of the gods, had decreed the destiny of Gilgamesh. So Gilgamesh dreamed and Enkidu said, "The meaning of the dream is this. The father of the gods has given you kingship, such is your destiny; everlasting life is not your destiny. Because of this do not be sad at heart, do not be grieved or oppressed. He has given you power to bind and to loose, to be the darkness and the light of mankind. He has given you unexampled supremacy over the people, victory in battle from which no fugitive returns, in forays and assaults from which there is no going back. But do not abuse this power, deal justly with your servants in the palace, deal justly before Shamash.

On the Search for Immortality

[As Enkidu lies dying, he tells Gilgamesh of a dream he had about the afterlife.]

"[T]his is the dream I dreamed last night. The heavens roared, and earth rumbled back an answer; between them stood I before an awful being, the somber-faced man-bird; he had directed on me his purpose. His was a vampire face, his foot was a lion's foot, his hand was an eagle's talon. He fell on me and his claws were in my hair, he held me fast and I smothered; then he transformed me so that my arms became wings covered with feathers. He turned his stare toward me, and he led me away to the palace of Irkalla, the Queen of Darkness, to the house from which none who enters ever returns, down the road from which there is no coming back.

"There is the house whose people sit in darkness; dust is their food and clay their meat. They are clothed like birds with wings for covering, they see no light, they sit in darkness. I entered the house of dust and I saw the kings of the earth, their crowns put away for ever; rulers and princes, all those who once wore kingly crowns and ruled the world in the days of old. They who had stood in the place of the gods like Anu and Enlil, stood now like servants to fetch baked meats in the house of dust, to carry cooked meat and cold water from the water-skin. In the house of dust which I entered were high priests and acolytes, priests of the incantation and of ecstasy. . . . Then I awoke like a man drained of blood who wanders alone in a waste of rushes."

[When Gilgamesh in his quest for immortality meets Siduri, the tavern keeper, he confesses to her his fear and anguish, and receives some wise counsel in return.]

"[M]y friend who was very dear to me and who endured dangers beside me, Enkidu my brother, whom I loved, the end of mortality has overtaken him. I wept for him seven days and nights till the worm fastened to him. Because of my brother I am afraid of death, because of my brother I stray through the wilderness and cannot rest. But now, young woman, maker of wine, since I have seen your face do not let me see the face of death which I dread so much."

She answered, "Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to? You will never find that life for which you are looking. When the gods created man they allotted to him death, but life they retained in their own keeping. As for you, Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things; day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice. Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water, cherish the little child that holds your hand, and make your wife happy in your embrace; for this too is the lot of man."

[Later, when Gilgamesh reaches Utnapishtim, the only man to survive the great flood and receive eternal life from the gods, he hears a similar message.]

Utnapishtim said, "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time? Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever, does the flood-time of rivers endure?. . . From the days of old there is no permanence. The sleeping and the dead, how alike they are, they are like a painted death. What is there

between the master and the servant when both have fulfilled their doom? When the Anunnaki, the judges, come together, and Mammetun the mother of destinies, together they decree the fates of men. Life and death they allot but the day of death they do not disclose."

On the Gods

[In his conversation with Utnapishtim, Gilgamesh learns something about the nature of Mesopotamian gods and the origins of the great flood, which ages ago had destroyed humankind.]

"You know the city Shurrupak, it stands on the banks of the Euphrates? That city grew old and the gods that were in it were old. There was Anu, lord of the firmament, their father, and warrior Enlil their counselor, Ninurta the helper, and Ennugi watcher over canals; and with them also was Ea. In those days the world teemed, the people multiplied, the world bellowed like a wild bull, and the great god was aroused by the clamor. Enlil heard the clamor and he said to the gods in council, 'The uproar of mankind is intolerable and sleep is no longer possible by reason of the babel.' So the gods agreed to exterminate mankind. . . .

"With the first light of dawn a black cloud came from the horizon; it thundered within where Adad, lord of the storm, was riding. In front over hill and plain Shullat and Hanish, heralds of the storm, led on. Then the gods of the abyss rose up; Nergal pulled out the dams of the nether waters, Ninurta the war-lord threw down the dykes, and the seven judges of hell, the Annunaki, raised their torches, lighting the land with their livid flame. A stupor of despair went up to heaven when the god of the storm turned daylight to darkness, when he smashed the land like a cup. One whole day the tempest raged, gathering fury as it went, it poured over the people like the tides of battle; a man could not see his brother nor the people be seen from heaven. Even the gods were terrified at the flood, they fled to the highest heaven, the firmament of Anu; they crouched against the walls, cowering like curs. Then Ishtar the sweet-voiced Queen of Heaven cried out like a woman in travail: 'Alas the days of old are turned to dust because I commanded evil; why did I command this evil in the council of all the gods? I commanded wars to destroy the people, but are they not my people, for I brought them forth? Now like the spawn of fish they float in the ocean.' The great gods of heaven and of hell wept, they covered their mouths."

Document 3.2

Law and Justice in Ancient Mesopotamia

If the *Epic of Gilgamesh* affords us some insight into Mesopotamian cultural and religious thinking, the so-called Code of Hammurabi provides a glimpse of this First Civilization's social and economic life. Hammurabi (reigned ca. 1795–1750 B.C.E.) was the ruler of the Babylonian Empire, which for a time gave a measure of political unity to the rival cities and kingdoms of Mesopotamia. Sometime during his reign he ordered inscribed on a large stone pillar a number of laws, judgments, or decrees. They were intended, in Hammurabi's words, "to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil-doers; so that the strong should not harm the weak . . . , to further the well-being of mankind."

- If you knew nothing else about ancient Mesopotamia, what could you conclude from the Code of Hammurabi about the economy and society of this civilization in the eighteenth century B.C.E.? How might you describe the economy of the region? What distinct social groups are mentioned in the code? What rights did women enjoy and to what restrictions were they subject?
- What can you infer from the code about the kind of social problems that afflicted ancient Mesopotamia?
- How would you define the principles of justice that underlay Hammurabi's code? In what different ways might twenty-first-century observers and those living at the time of Hammurabi assess that system of justice?
- How did the code seek to realize the aims of Hammurabi as described above?

The Law Code of Hammurabi

ca. 1800 B.C.E.

On Crime, Punishment, and Justice

2. If any one bring an accusation against a man, and the accused go to the river and leap into the river, if he sink in the river his accuser shall take possession of his house. But if the river prove that the accused is not guilty, and he escape unhurt, then he who had brought the accusation shall be put to death, while he who leaped into the river shall take possession of the house that had belonged to his accuser. . . .

3. If any one bring an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if it be a capital offense charged, be put to death. . . .

5. If a judge try a case, reach a decision, and present his judgment in writing; if later error shall appear in his decision, and it be through his own fault, then he shall pay twelve times the fine set by him in the case, and he shall be publicly removed from the judge's bench, and never again shall he sit there to render judgment. . . .

22. If any one is committing a robbery and is caught, then he shall be put to death. . . .

196. If a man put out the eye of another man, his eye shall be put out.

197. If he break another man's bone, his bone shall be broken. . . .

On the Economy

26. If a chieftain or a man [common soldier], who has been ordered to go upon the king's highway for war does not go, but hires a mercenary, if he withholds the compensation, then shall this officer or man be put to death, and he who represented him shall take possession of his house. . . .

30. If a chieftain or a man leave his house, garden, and field and hires it out, and some one else takes possession of his house, garden, and field and uses it for three years: if the first owner return and claims his house, garden, and field, it shall not be given to him, but he who has taken possession of it and used it shall continue to use it. . . .

Source: *The Code of Hammurabi*, translated by L. W. King, 1915.

53. If any one be too lazy to keep his dam in proper condition, and does not so keep it; if then the dam break and all the fields be flooded, then shall he in whose dam the break occurred be sold for money, and the money shall replace the corn which he has caused to be ruined....

104. If a merchant give an agent corn, wool, oil, or any other goods to transport, the agent shall give a receipt for the amount, and compensate the merchant therefore. Then he shall obtain a receipt from the merchant for the money that he gives the merchant....

122. If any one give another silver, gold, or anything else to keep, he shall show everything to some witness, draw up a contract, and then hand it over for safe keeping....

229. If a builder build a house for some one, and does not construct it properly, and the house which he built fall in and kill its owner, then that builder shall be put to death....

253. If any one agree with another to tend his field, give him seed, entrust a yoke of oxen to him, and bind him to cultivate the field, if he steal the corn or plants, and take them for himself, his hands shall be hewn off....

271. If any one hire oxen, cart, and driver, he shall pay one hundred and eighty ka of corn per day....

On Class and Slavery

8. If any one steal cattle or sheep, or an ass, or a pig or a goat, if it belong to a god or to the court, the thief shall pay thirtyfold therefore; if they belonged to a freed man of the king he shall pay tenfold; if the thief has nothing with which to pay, he shall be put to death....

15. If any one take a male or female slave of the court, or a male or female slave of a freed man, outside the city gates, he shall be put to death....

17. If any one find runaway male or female slaves in the open country and bring them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver....

117. If any one fail to meet a claim for debt, and sell himself, his wife, his son, and daughter for money or give them away to forced labor: they shall work for three years in the house of the man who bought them, or the proprietor, and in the fourth year they shall be set free....

198. If he put out the eye of a freed man, or break the bone of a freed man, he shall pay one gold mina.

199. If he put out the eye of a man's slave, or break the bone of a man's slave, he shall pay one-half of its value....

202. If any one strike the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public....

215. If a physician make a large incision with an operating knife and cure it, or if he open a tumor [over the eye] with an operating knife, and saves the eye, he shall receive ten shekels in money.

216. If the patient be a freed man, he receives five shekels.

217. If he be the slave of some one, his owner shall give the physician two shekels....

On Men and Women

110. If a "sister of a god" [a woman formally dedicated to the temple of a god] open a tavern, or enter a tavern to drink, then shall this woman be burned to death....

128. If a man take a woman to wife, but have no intercourse with her, this woman is no wife to him.

129. If a man's wife be surprised with another man, both shall be tied and thrown into the water, but the husband may pardon his wife and the king his slaves.

130. If a man violate the wife [betrothed wife or child-wife] of another man, who has never known a man, and still lives in her father's house, and sleep with her and be surprised, this man shall be put to death, but the wife is blameless.

131. If a man bring a charge against one's wife, but she is not surprised with another man, she must take an oath and then may return to her house.

132. If the "finger is pointed" at a man's wife about another man, but she is not caught sleeping with the other man, she shall jump into the river for her husband....

136. If any one leave his house, run away, and then his wife go to another house, if then he return, and wishes to take his wife back: because he fled from his home and ran away, the wife of this runaway shall not return to her husband.

137. If a man wish to separate from a woman who has borne him children, or from his wife who has borne him children: then he shall give that wife her dowry, and a part of the usufruct [the right to use] of field, garden, and property, so that she can rear her children. When she has brought up her children . . . she may then marry the man of her heart. . . .

142. If a woman quarrel with her husband, and say: "You are not congenial to me," the reasons for her prejudice must be presented. If she is guiltless, and there is no fault on her part, but he leaves and neglects her, then no guilt attaches to this woman, she shall take her dowry and go back to her father's house.

143. If she is not innocent, but leaves her husband, and ruins her house, neglecting her husband, this woman shall be cast into the water. . . .

148. If a man take a wife, and she be seized by disease, if he then desire to take a second wife, he shall not put away his wife who has been attacked by disease, but he shall keep her in the house which he has built and support her so long as she lives.

Document 3.3

The Afterlife of a Pharaoh

Egyptian thinking about life, death, and afterlife bears comparison with that of Mesopotamia. In the selections that follow, we catch a glimpse of several Egyptian ways of understanding these fundamental human concerns. The first excerpt comes from a group of so-called pyramid texts, inscribed on the walls of a royal tomb as spells, incantations, or prayers to assist the pharaoh in entering the realm of eternal life among the gods in the Land of the West. This one was discovered in the tomb of the Egyptian king Teti, who ruled between roughly 2345 and 2333 B.C.E. Such texts represent the oldest religious writings in world history.

- How is the afterlife of the pharaoh represented in this text?
- How does it compare with depictions of the afterlife in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*?

A Pyramid Text

2333 B.C.E.

Oho! Oho! Rise up, O Teti!
Take your head, collect your bones,
Gather your limbs, shake the earth from your flesh!
Take your bread that rots not, your beer that sours not,
Stand at the gates that bar the common people!
The gatekeeper comes out to you, he grasps your hand,

Source: Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 1:41–42.

Takes you into heaven, to you father Geb.
He rejoices at your coming, gives you his hands,
Kisses you, caresses you,
Sets you before the spirits, the imperishable stars. . . .
The hidden ones worship you,
The great ones surround you,
The watchers wait on you,
Barley is threshed for you,
Emmer° is reaped for you,
Your monthly feasts are made with it,
Your half-month feasts are made with it,
As ordered done for you by Geb, your father,
Rise up, O Teti, you shall not die!

°**Emmer:** a variety of wheat

Document 3.4

A New Basis for Egyptian Immortality

Much later, during the New Kingdom period of ancient Egyptian history (1550–1064 B.C.E.), the *Book of the Dead* was compiled, gathering together a number of magical spells designed to ensure a smooth passage to eternal life. Written on papyrus, the spells could be purchased by anyone who could afford them. The owner then inscribed his own name and title and had the document placed in his tomb. The most famous of these texts is the so-called Negative Confession, which portrays the deceased person appearing before the gods in a place of judgment to demonstrate his moral life and his fitness for a place in the Land of the West. Such practices extended to people other than just the pharaoh the possibility of magical assistance in gaining eternal life with the gods.

- What changes in Egyptian religious thinking does the Negative Confession mark?
- On what basis are the users of the Negative Confession making their claim for eternal life?
- What does the Negative Confession suggest about the sources of conflict and discord in New Kingdom Egypt? How do these compare with the social problems revealed in the Code of Hammurabi?

Book of the Dead

ca. 1550–1064 B.C.E.

When the deceased enters the hall of the goddesses of Truth, he says:

Homage to thee, O great god, thou Lord of Truth. I have come to thee, my Lord, and I have brought myself hither that I may see thy beauties. I know thee, I know thy name. I know the names of the Two-and-Forty gods who live with thee in this Hall of Maati. In truth I have come to thee. I have brought Truth to thee. I have destroyed wickedness for thee.

I have not sinned against men.
I have not oppressed (or wronged) [my] kinsfolk.

Source: E. A. Wallis Budge, *Osiris, the Egyptian Religion of Resurrection* (London: P. L. Warner; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 1:337–39.

I have not committed evil in the place of truth.°
I have not known worthless men.
I have not committed acts of abomination.
I have not caused my name to appear for honors.
I have not domineered over slaves.
I have not thought scorn of the god.
I have not defrauded the poor man of his goods.
I have not caused harm to be done to the slave by his master.
I have caused no man to suffer.
I have allowed no man to go hungry.
I have made no man weep. I have slain no man.
I have not given the order for any man to be slain.
I have not caused pain to the multitude.
I have not filched the offerings in the temples.
I have not purloined the cakes of the gods.
I have not stolen the offerings of the spirits.
I have not defiled myself in the pure places of the god of my city.
I have not cheated in measuring of grain.
I have not filched land or added thereto.
I have not encroached upon the fields of others.
I have not added to the weight of the balance.
I have not cheated with the pointer of the scales.
I have not taken away the milk from the mouths of the babes.
I have not driven away the beasts from their pastures.
I have not netted the geese of the preserves of the gods.
I have not obstructed water when it should run.
I have not cut a cutting in a canal of rating water.
I have not extinguished a flame when it ought to burn.
I have not abrogated the days of offering the chosen offerings.
I have not turned off cattle from the property of the gods.
I am pure. I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.

°**place of truth:** a temple or burial place.

Document 3.5

The Occupations of Old Egypt

Compared to small Paleolithic communities and later agricultural village societies, civilizations developed a far more complex division of labor and a much greater sense of social hierarchy. Such features of the First Civilizations are on display in the Egyptian text commonly known as "Be a Scribe." Dating from the Middle Kingdom period (2066–1650 B.C.E.), it was a school text that students training for administrative positions would copy in an effort to improve their writing. It also conveyed to them the exalted position of a scribe in contrast to many other occupations. One such text suggested that writing granted a kind of immortality to the scribe: "Man decays; his corpse is dust; all his kin have perished. But a book makes him remembered through the mouth of its reciter."[30]

- What might historians learn from this text about the occupational and social structure of Middle Kingdom Egypt?
- What does learning to write offer to a young Egyptian? What advantages of a scribal position are suggested in the document?
- What timeless frustrations of a teacher are evident in this text?

Be a Scribe

ca. 2066–1650 B.C.E.

Apply yourself to [this] noble profession. . . .You will find it useful. . . . You will be advanced by your superiors. You will be sent on a mission. . . . Love writing, shun dancing; then you become a worthy official. . . . By day write with your fingers; recite by night. Befriend the scroll, the palette. It pleases more than wine. Writing for him who knows it is better than all other professions. It pleases more than bread and beer, more than clothing and ointment. It is worth more than an inheritance in Egypt, than a tomb in the west.

Young fellow, how conceited you are! . . . But though I beat you with every kind of stick, you do not listen. . . . You are a person fit for writing, though you have not yet known a woman. Your heart discerns, your fingers are skilled, your mouth is apt for reciting. . . .

But though I spend the day telling you "Write," it seems like a plague to you. . . .

See for yourself with your own eye. The occupations lie before you.

The washerman's day is going up, going down. All his limbs are weak, [from] whitening his neighbor's clothes every day, from washing their linen.

The maker of pots is smeared with soil. . . . [H]e is like one who lives in the bog.

The cobbler mingles with vats. His odor is penetrating. His hands are red . . . , like one who is smeared with blood. . . .

The watchman prepares garlands and polishes vase-stands. He spends a night of toil just as one on whom the sun shines.

The merchants travel downstream and upstream. They are as busy as can be, carrying goods from one town to another. They supply him who has wants. But the tax collectors carry off the gold, that most precious of metals.

The ships' crews from every house [of commerce], they receive their loads. They depart from Egypt for Syria, and each man's god is with him. [But] not one of them says: "We shall see Egypt again!"

[The] outworker who is in the fields, his is the toughest of all the jobs. He spends the day loaded with his tools, tied to his toolbox. When he returns home at night, he is loaded with the toolbox and the timbers, his drinking mug, and his whetstones. . . .

Let me also expound to you the situation of the peasant, that other tough occupation. [Comes] the inundation and soaks him . . . , he attends to his equipment. By day he cuts his farming tools; by night he twists rope. Even his midday hour he spends on farm labor. He equips himself to go to the field as if he were a warrior. . . . When he reaches his field he finds [it?] broken up. He spends time cultivating, and the snake is after him. It finishes off the seed as it is cast to the ground. He does not see a green blade. He does three plowings with borrowed grain. His wife has gone down to the merchants and found nothing for barter. . . .

If you have any sense, be a scribe. If you have learned about the peasant, you will not be able to be one. . . . Look, I instruct you to . . . make you become one whom the king trusts; to make you gain entrance to treasury and granary. To make you receive the shipload at the gate of the granary. To make you issue the offerings on feast days. You are dressed in fine clothes; you own horses. Your boat is on the river; you are supplied with attendants. You stride about inspecting. A mansion is built in your town. You have a powerful office, given you by the king. Male and female slaves are about you. Those who are in the fields grasp your hand, on plots that you have made. . . . Put the writings in your heart, and you will be protected from all kinds of toil. You will become a worthy official.

Do you not recall the [fate of] the unskilled man? His name is not known. He is ever burdened

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Source: Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 2:168–72.

[like an ass carrying things] in front of the scribe who knows what he is about.

Come, [let me tell] you the woes of the soldier, and how many are his superiors: the general, the troop-commander, the officer who leads, the standard-bearer, the lieutenant, the scribe, the commander of fifty, and the garrison-captain. They go in and out in the halls of the palace, saying: "Get laborers!" He is awakened at any hour. One is after him as [after] a donkey. He toils until the Aten sets in his darkness of night. He is hungry, his belly hurts; he is dead while yet alive. When he receives the grain-ration, having been released from duty, it is not good for grinding.

He is called up for Syria. He may not rest. There are no clothes, no sandals.... His march is uphill through mountains. He drinks water every third day; it is smelly and tastes of salt. His body is ravaged by illness. The enemy comes, surrounds him with missiles, and life recedes from him. He is told: "Quick, forward, valiant soldier! Win for yourself a good name!" He does not know what he is about. His body is weak, his legs fail him. When victory is won, the captives are handed over to his majesty, to be taken to Egypt.... His wife and children are in their village; he dies and does not reach it. If he comes out alive, he is worn out from marching....

Be a scribe, and be spared from soldiering! You call and one says: "Here I am." You are safe from torments. Every man seeks to raise himself up. Take note of it!

Using the Evidence: Life and Afterlife in Mesopotamia and Egypt

1. **Defining civilization:** What features of civilization, described in Chapter 3, do these documents illustrate?
2. **Making comparisons:** What similarities and differences between ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations can you infer from these documents? How might you account for the differences?
3. **Considering past and present:** What elements of thought and practice from these early pieces of written literature resonate still in the twenty-first century? What elements remain strange or unfamiliar to modern sensibilities?
4. **Seeking further evidence:** What dimensions of these civilizations' social life and religious thinking are not addressed in these documents? What other perspectives might you want to seek out?
5. **Reading between the lines:** Historians often use documents to obtain insights or information that the authors did not intend to convey. How might these documents be used in this fashion? What are the advantages and dangers in this use of ancient texts?

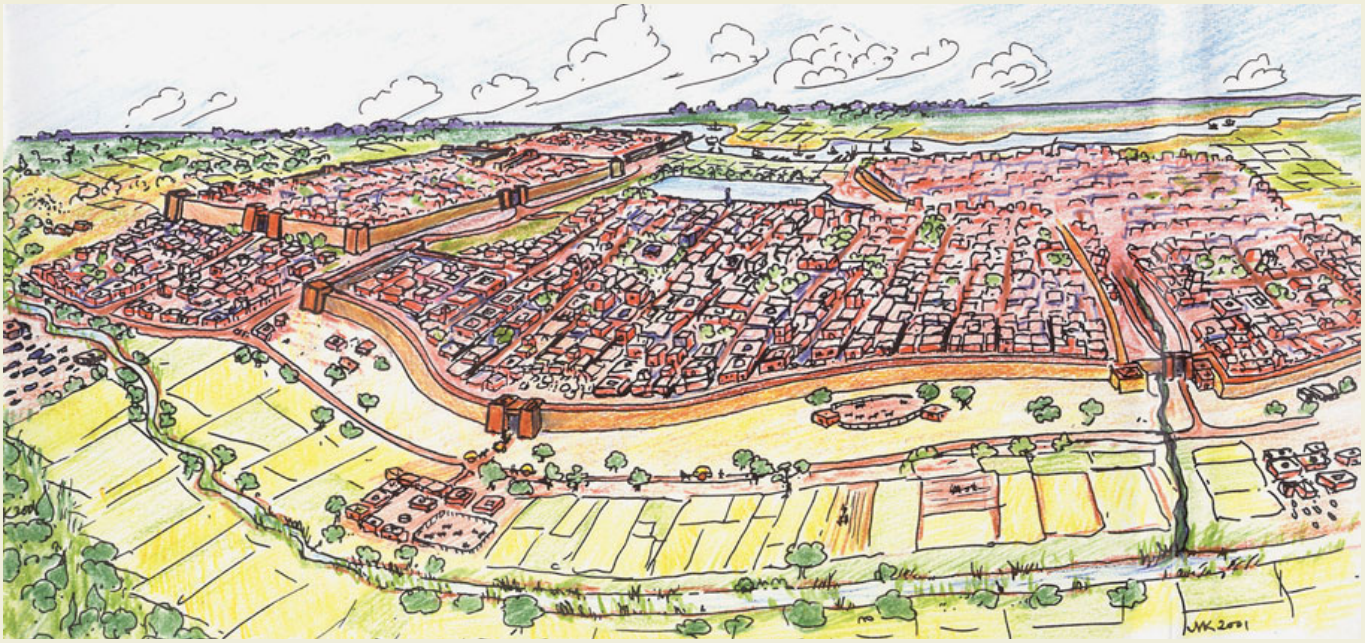
Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: Indus Valley Civilization

In most accounts of the First Civilizations, Egypt and Mesopotamia hold center stage. And yet the civilization of the Indus River valley was much larger, and its archeological treasures have been equally impressive, though clearly distinctive (see pp. 86–91). This civilization arose around 2600 B.C.E., about a thousand years later than its better-known counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa. By 1500 B.C.E. Indus Valley civilization was in decline, as the center of Indian or South Asian civilization shifted gradually eastward to the plains of the Ganges River. In the process, all distinct memory of the earlier Indus Valley civilization vanished, to be rediscovered only in the early twentieth century as archeologists uncovered its remarkable remains. Here is yet another contrast with Egypt and Mesopotamia, where a memory of earlier achievements persisted long after those civilizations had passed into history. The images that follow are drawn from archeological investigations of the Indus Valley civilization and offer us a glimpse of its many achievements and unique features. Since its written language was limited in extent and has not yet been deciphered, scholars have been highly dependent on its physical remains for understanding this First Civilization.

Among the most distinctive elements of Indus Valley civilization were its cities, of which Mohenjo Daro and Harappa were the largest and are the most thoroughly investigated. Laid out systematically on a grid pattern and clearly planned, they were surrounded by substantial walls made from mud bricks of a standardized size and interrupted by imposing gateways. Inside the walls, public buildings, market areas, large and small houses, and craft workshops stood in each of the cities' various neighborhoods. Many houses had indoor latrines, while wide main streets and narrow side lanes had drains to carry away polluted water and sewage. Visual Source 3.1 is a modern drawing of ancient Harappa by one of the leading archeologists of the city, Jonathan M. Kenoyer. Also see the photo on page 93, which shows a section of the excavated city of Mohenjo Daro.

- Based on these images, how would you describe an Indus Valley city to someone who had never seen it?
- Compare these images of Indus Valley cities with those of the early agrarian village of Çatalhüyük (see the photo on p. 64 and Visual



Visual Source 3.1 Ancient Harappa (J. Mark Kenoyer/Harappa Images)

Source 2.1 on p. 77). What differences can you identify between these two types of settlements? What had changed in the intervening centuries?

In many ancient and more recent societies, seals have been used for imprinting an image on a document or a product. Such seals have been among the most numerous artifacts found in the Indus Valley cities. They generally carried the image of an animal—a bull, an elephant, a crocodile, a buffalo, or even a mythic creature such as a unicorn—as well as a title or inscription in the still undeciphered script of this civilization. Thus the seals were accessible to an illiterate worker loading goods on a boat as well as to literate merchants or officials. Particular seals may well have represented a specific clan, a high official, or a prominent individual. Unicorn seals have been the most numerous finds and were often used to make impressions on clay tags attached to bundled goods, suggesting that their owners were involved in trade or commerce. Because bull seals, such as that shown in Visual Source 3.2, were rarer, their owners may have been high-ranking officials or members of a particularly powerful clan. The bull, speculates archeologist Jonathan Kenoyer, "may symbolize the leader of the herd, whose strength and virility protects the herd and ensures the procreation of the species, or it may stand for a sacrificial animal."[31] Indus Valley seals, as well as pottery, have been found in Mesopotamia, indicating a well-developed trade between these two First Civilizations.

- How might a prominent landowner, a leading official, a clan head, or a merchant make use of such a seal?
- What meaning might you attach to the use of animals as totems or symbols of a particular group or individual?

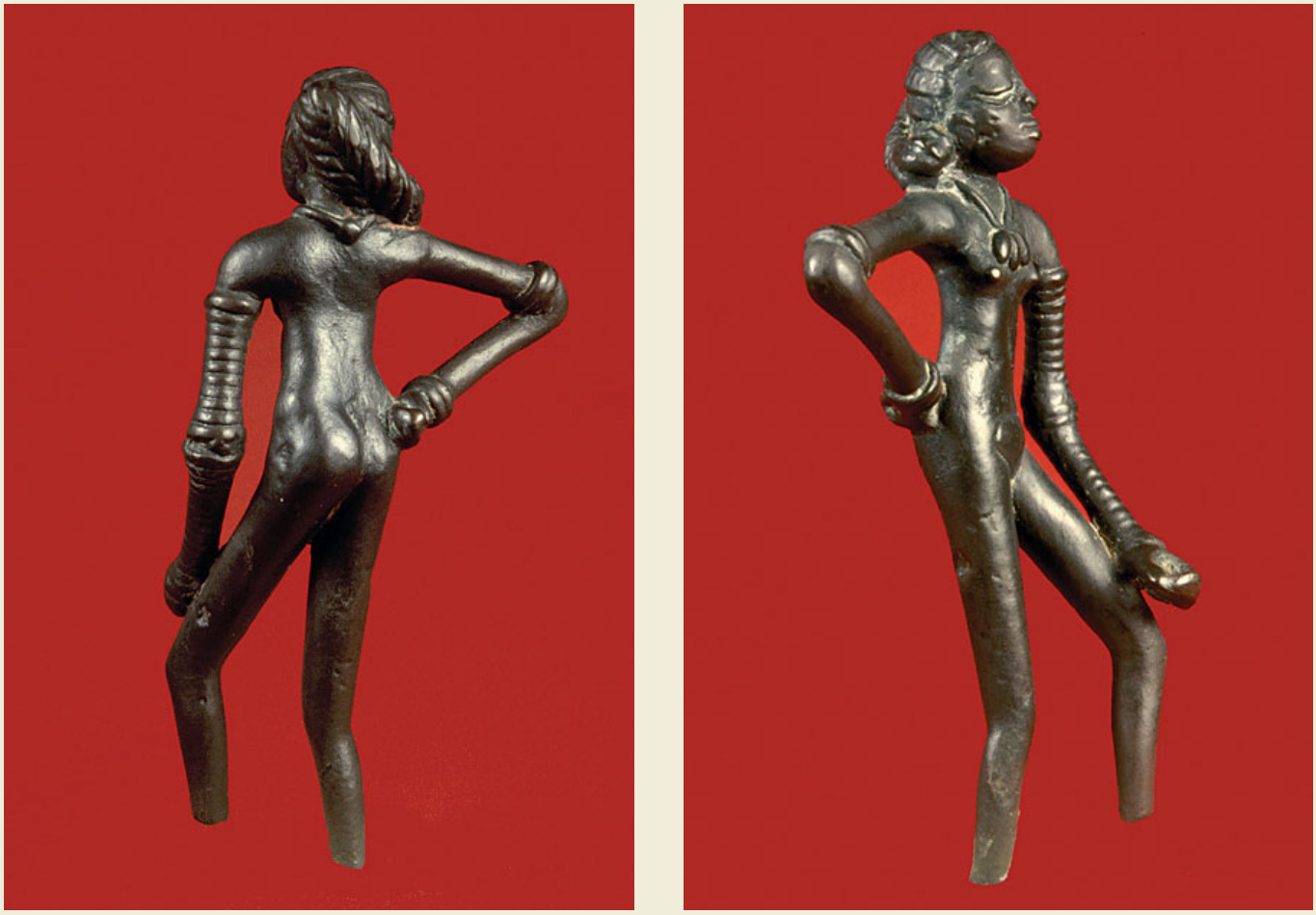
Visual Source 3.2 A Seal from the Indus Valley (J. Mark Kenoyer/Harappa Images)

- Notice the five characters of the Indus Valley script at the top of the seal. Do a little research on the script with an eye to understanding why it has proved so difficult to decipher.

The most intriguing features of Indus Valley civilization involve what is missing, at least in comparison with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. No grand temples or palaces; no elite burial places filled with great wealth; no images of warfare, conquest, or the seizing of captives; no monuments to celebrate powerful rulers. These absences have left scholars guessing about the social and political organization of this civilization. Kenoyer has suggested that the great cities were likely controlled not by a single ruler, but by "a small group of elites, comprised of merchants, landowners, and ritual specialists."[32] Visual Source 3.3, a statue seven inches tall and found in Mohenjo Daro, likely depicts one of these elite men.

- What specific features of the statue can you point out?
- What possible indication of elite status can you identify?
- What overall impression does the statue convey?

Visual Source 3.3 Man from Mohenjo Daro (Department of Archaeology and Museums, Karachi, Pakistan)



Visual Source 3.4 Dancing Girl (Courtesy, National Museum, New Delhi. Photo: Professor Gregory Possehl, Curator, Asian Department, University of Pennsylvania Museum)

Limited archeological evidence suggests that at least some urban women played important social and religious roles in the Indus Valley civilization. Figurines of women or goddesses are more common than those of men. Women, apparently, were buried near their mothers and grandmothers, while men were not interred with their male relatives. The great variety of clothing, hairstyles, and decorations displayed on female figurines indicates considerable class, ethnic, and perhaps individual variation.

Among the most delightful discoveries in the Indus Valley cities is the evocative statue shown in Visual Source 3.4. It is about four inches tall and dated to around 2500 B.C.E. This young female nude is known generally as the "dancing girl." Cast in bronze using a sophisticated "lost wax" method, this statue provides evidence for a well-developed copper/bronze industry. The figure herself was portrayed in a dancer's pose, her hair gathered in a bun and her left arm covered with bangles and holding a small bowl. Both her arms and legs seem disproportionately long. She has been described variously as a queen, a high-status woman, a sacred temple dancer, and a tribal girl.

Although no one really knows her precise identity, she has evoked wide admiration and appreciation. Mortimer Wheeler, a famous British archeologist, described her as "a girl perfectly, for the moment, perfectly confident of herself and the world." American archeologist Gregory Possehl, also active in the archeology of the Indus Valley civilization, commented: "We may not be certain that she was a dancer, but she was good at what she did and she knew it."[33]

- What features of this statue may have provoked such observations?
- How do you react to this statue? What qualities does she evoke?
- What does Visual Source 3.4 suggest about views of women, images of female beauty, and attitudes about sexuality and the body?

Using the Evidence: Indus Valley Civilization

1. **Using art as evidence:** What can we learn about Indus Valley civilization from these visual sources? How does our level of understanding of this civilization differ from that of Egypt and Mesopotamia where plentiful written records are available?
2. **Considering art without writing:** Based on these visual sources and those in Chapters 1 and 2, consider the problem of interpreting history through art, artifacts, or archeological sites in the absence of writing. What can we know with some certainty? What can we only guess at?
3. **Comparing art across time:** How would you compare the rock art of Australian Paleolithic peoples (Chapter 1), the art of early agricultural and pastoral peoples (Chapter 2), and the art from the Indus Valley? Consider issues of style, content, and accessibility to people of the twenty-first century. Is it possible to speak of artistic "progress" or "development," or should we be content with simply noticing differences?
4. **Comparing representations of people:** Notice the various ways that human figures were portrayed in the visual sources shown in Chapters 1–3. How might you define those differences? What variations in the depiction of men and women can you identify?
5. **Seeking further evidence:** What additional kinds of archeological discoveries would be helpful in furthering our understanding of Indus Valley civilization?