Rationale for Summer Assignment:

This assignment is to jump start our class, so this summer assignment is very similar to what will be assigned to you weekly. You may use it to help you evaluate if you will be able to keep up with the rigor of AP World History. In class, you will be expected to stay two chapters ahead of where we are in class discussion and lessons. The difference here, though, is that you will not have your teacher with you over the summer to help guide you through the learning process. When you come in on the first day of school, I will use this assignment to help me see what you are able to do on your own. Good luck!

If you have any questions, you are welcome to email me over the summer at kskinner@ecisd.org.

All 3 parts of the summer assignment are due the FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

ASSIGNMENT 1: TAKING GOOD NOTES

What you will need: A LARGE multi-subject spiral

Resources: Your packet from the textbook. If you did not get one, you may download a packet from my web site. You may choose to check out a copy of the textbook and the World History in Documents reader instead of using the packet.

Directions: Read and take notes over the Prologue, Part ONE- First Things First, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2. Remember to use the Cornell Method of Note taking. If you are uncertain of how to create Cornell Notes you may use this web site: http://lsc.cornell.edu/Sidebars/Study_Skills_Resources/cornellsystem.pdf.

Remember, these notes will be INCOMPLETE. The Cue Column will be blank. We will complete this part in class. You will use the Note Taking Area and the Summary Area. DO NOT FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO WRITE EVERYTHING (only key terms and phrases). WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY is a good rule of thumb. Also, you do not have to write in complete sentences.

GRADE: Notes= students completing notes will earn an assigned score between 1-10, 10 being superior. These points contribute to the first week’s daily work grade and accounts for ¼ of the total daily grade. The rest comes from daily discussions, completing an exit ticket activity, and completing and annotating a reading the first week of school. (These 4 scores add up to 40 and will be converted to a 100 point scale as a daily grade.)
ASSIGNMENT 2: QUESTIONS/CHARTS/ACTIVITIES

Now that you are finished taking notes, answer the following questions in complete sentences, and complete the activities. Your response should be long enough to adequately cover the topic yet without lots of “fluff.”

ASSIGNMENT 2 GRADE: Questions 1-20 are worth 5 points each as a daily grade.

Prologue pp. lxxii- lxxix

1. First know what you believe: How might the teaching of World History be considered controversial? In what ways might evaluating the history of the world cause an individual’s belief systems to be challenged? What do you think is important to keep in mind when studying the beliefs, cultures, actions, events, and religious motives of people from different eras and different parts of the world?
2. What can be gained by studying world history?
3. Name at least three major turning points in the pre-human phases of “big history.”
4. What are the three C’s of world history, and how should they be used to examine world history?

Part ONE - First Things First

5. Describe the “Paleolithic Era” and explain why it is a significant part of history.

6. The National Geographic Society sponsors a project called the Genographic Project where people over the age of 18 can trace the migrations of their ancestral groups several thousand years ago by providing a DNA sample. Visit the site and watch the video: www.genographic.nationalgeographic.com. Explore the site and play with the interactive map. What are your thoughts about this project? Where do you think your ancestors came from?

Chapter 1: First Peoples; First Farmers; Most of History in a Single Chapter

7. Describe the sequence of human migration across the planet.

8. The Oxford English Dictionary defines migration as “the movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc., to settle in another.” Use the word migration in an original sentence to explain the Bantu migrations (see p. 35).

9. Compare the migration of people to the spread of agriculture.

10. In your own words, explain why people migrated.

11. What were at least two effects of these migrations?

12. In what ways did various Paleolithic societies differ from one another, and how did they change over time?

13. 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?

Chapter 2: First Civilizations: Cities, States, and Unequal Societies

14. What are three reasons given in the chapter that explains why civilizations emerged?

15. What was the role of cities in early civilizations?

16. In what ways was social inequality expressed in early civilizations?

17. Define patriarchy. In what ways have historians tried to explain the origins of patriarchy?

18. What were the sources of state authority in the first civilizations?

19. Create a chart displaying the similarities and differences of Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations.

20. To what extent did civilizations represent “progress” in comparison with earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies? In what ways did they constitute a setback for humankind?
ASSIGNMENT 3: QUESTIONS / ANALYSIS

You may check out a World History in Documents book or find the copy of the reading on-line.

Read Chapter 1 (Creation Stories pp. 14-24). Answer the following questions regarding these ancient stories. (NOTE: These questions can also be found on p. 14 of World History in Documents.) Again, write in complete sentences and thoroughly respond to the question without “fluff.”

1. What are the most important differences among the stories? Are the differences significant or superficial?
2. What do the stories have in common? Is it possible to identify similar elements in the origins beliefs of early human societies?
3. Do the stories group together in meaningful ways? Do the stories from early civilizations share elements that differentiate them from the hunting and gathering stories? Are there common elements in terms of geography?

For Further Discussion

1. What might have caused significant differences among the stories?
2. How do the stories compare to those of major religions, such as Christianity and Islam? Are they very different, and if so, why?
3. In addition to comparing features and causes, is it historically useful to evaluate comparatively? Are some of the stories better or more satisfying than others? On what basis can you judge?
4. Is it possible to infer significant characteristics of a society from a creation story? Does a story suggest distinctive religious beliefs or attitudes toward nature?

ASSIGNMENT 3 GRADE: Daily Grade (The seven questions are worth approximately 14 points each.)

All of the above (ASSIGNMENTS 1-3) are due THE FIRST DAY OF CLASS.

ASSIGNMENT 4: IN-CLASS QUIZ

Be ready for a quiz covering this reading assignment. This quiz, like all our in-class quizzes, will be timed. This quiz will be given during the first week of school. Students who completed their own notes, worked on their own questions and studied them should have no problem passing. The Quiz is a 25 question True/ False Quiz and is a daily grade.
PART ONE

First Things First
Beginnings in History

TO 500 B.C.E.

Contents

Chapter 1. First Peoples; First Farmers: Most of History in a Single Chapter, to 4000 B.C.E.
Chapter 2. First Civilizations: Cities, States, and Unequal Societies, 3500 B.C.E.-500 B.C.E.
THE BIG PICTURE

Turning Points in Early World History

Human beings have long been inveterate storytellers. Our myths, legends, "fairy tales," oral traditions, family sagas, and more have sought to distill meaning from experience, while providing guidance for the living. Much the same might be said of modern historians, although they must operate within accepted rules of evidence. But all tellers of stories—ancient and modern alike—have to decide at what point to begin their accounts and what major turning points in those narratives to highlight. For world historians seeking to tell the story of 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 3 million to 5 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 human-like 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. With a remarkable capacity for symbolic language that permitted the accumulation and transmission of learning, we too emerged first in Africa and quite recently, probably no more than 350,000 years ago (although specialists constantly debate 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 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, religion, and stories. Although often neglected by historians and history textbooks, this long period of the human experience merits greater attention and is the focus of the initial sections of Chapter 1.

**The Revolution of Farming and Herding**

In 2012, almost all of the world's 7 billion people lived from foods grown on farms and gardens and from domesticated animals raised for their meat, milk, or eggs. But 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 farming and animal husbandry? What changes to human life did this new technology bring with it?

This food-producing revolution, also considered in Chapter 1, surely marks the single most significant and enduring transformation of the human condition. 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 raising animals 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; in the most favored areas, 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 to search for pasturage, 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 often designated as “civilizations,” more complex societies that were based in bustling cities and governed by formal states. Virtually all of the world’s people now live in such societies, so that states and cities have come to seem almost natural. In world history terms, however, their appearance 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 B.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 sharper class and gender inequalities, to new conceptions of masculinity and femininity, 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 in at least seven separate locations between 3500 and 500 B.C.E., have long fascinated professional historians and lovers of history everywhere. What was their relationship to the Agricultural Revolution? What new ways of living did they bring to the experience of humankind? These are the questions that inform Chapter 2.

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 as BP (Before the present).
or 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 forced relocation from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E. As with so much else, the maps of time that we construct reflect the cultures in which we have been born and the historical experience of our societies.
Mapping Part One

- Human entry to Americas, 30,000–15,000 BP
  Chapter 1
- Ishi
  Chapter 1
- Domestication of corn / Olmec civilization
  Chapters 1, 2
- Domestication of potato / Norte Chico
  Chapters 1, 2
- Human settlement by 12,500 BP
  Chapter 1
- Clovis culture
  Chapter 1
"We do not want cattle, just wild animals to hunt and water that we can drink." 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. The Hadza then represented one of the very last peoples on earth to continue a way of life that was universal among human-kind 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 by fishing. Known to scholars as "gathering and hunting" peoples, they were foragers.

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. Touron)
or food collectors rather than food producers. Because they used stone rather than metal tools, they also have been labeled “Paleolithic,” or “Old Stone Age,” peoples.

And then, around 12,000 ago years an enormous transformation began to unfold as a few human societies—in Eurasia, Africa, and the Americas alike—started to practice the deliberate cultivation of plants and the domestication of animals. This Agricultural or Neolithic (New Stone Age) Revolution marked a technological breakthrough of immense significance, with implications for every aspect of human life. This chapter, then, dealing with the long Paleolithic era and the initial transition to an agricultural way of life, represents most of human history—everything in fact before the advent of urban-based civilizations, which began around 5,500 years ago.

And yet, history courses and history books often neglect this long phase of the human journey and instead choose to begin the story with the early civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China, and elsewhere. Some historians identify “real history” with writing and so dismiss the Paleolithic and Neolithic eras as largely unknowable because their peoples did not write. Others, impressed by the rapid pace of change in human affairs in more recent times, assume that nothing much of real significance happened during the long Paleolithic era—and no change meant no history.

But does it make sense to ignore the first 120,000 years or more of human experience? Although written records are absent, scholars have learned a great deal about Paleolithic and Neolithic 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 and early agricultural societies. 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. And the breakthrough to agriculture arguably represents the single most profound transformation of human life in all of history. The changes wrought by our early ancestors, 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 and Neolithic eras.

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 200,000 to 250,000 years ago, in the grasslands of eastern and southern Africa, *Homo sapiens* first emerged, following in the footsteps of many other hominid
or human-like species before it. Time and climate have erased much of the record of these early people, and Africa has witnessed much less archaeological research than have other parts of the world. 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? 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 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 ochre as well as possible planned
burials suggest the kind of social and symbolic behavior that has characterized human activity ever since. The earliest evidence for this kind of human activity comes from the Blombos Cave in South Africa, where excavations in 2008 uncovered a workshop for the processing of ochre dating to around 100,000 years ago, well before such behavior 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, 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 the Northern Hemisphere. 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 parts of what is now Indonesia were linked to mainland Southeast Asia.

**Into Eurasia**

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. Most remarkably, they also left a record of their world in hundreds of cave paintings, depicting 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 sometimes accompanied the cave paintings.

Farther east, archaeologists 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 14...
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. Similar figurines have been found all across Eurasia, raising any number of controversial questions. Does their widespread distribution suggest a network of human communication and cultural diffusion over a wide area? If so, did they move from west to east or vice versa? What do they mean in terms of women’s roles and status in Paleolithic societies?

**Into Australia**

Early human migration to Australia, perhaps 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 in 1788, when the first Europeans arrived. Over tens of thousands of years, they 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, Aborigines 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.
The journeys of the Dreamtime's ancestral beings reflect the networks of migration, communication, and exchange that linked the continents 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 *piri* over distances of hundreds of miles. Such 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 to penetrate to the tip of South America. There is, however, good evidence of human activity in southern Chile by 12,500 years ago.

One of the first clearly defined and widespread cultural traditions 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 briefly around 13,000 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 men 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, rather abruptly, all trace of the Clovis culture disappeared from the archeological record at about 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.

**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 Bismark 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 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 made the Austronesian family of languages the most geographically widespread in the world and their trading networks, reaching some 3,000 miles from western Indonesia to the mid-Pacific, the most extensive. With the occupation of Aotearoa (New Zealand) around 1000 to 1300 C.E., the initial human settlement of the planet was finally complete (see Map 1.2).

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.
In contrast with all of the other initial migrations, these Pacific voyages were undertaken by agricultural people 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 involved the quick extinction of many species of animals, especially large flightless birds such as the moa of New Zealand, which largely vanished within a century of human arrival. On Rapa Nui (Easter Island) between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries C.E., deforestation accompanied famine, violent conflict, and a sharp population decline in this small island society, while the elimination of large trees ensured that no one could leave the island, for they could no longer build the canoes that had brought them there.

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 gathering and hunting societies that still exist in modern times, scholars have sketched out some of the common features of these early societies.

The First Human 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. The available technology permitted only a very low population density and ensured an extremely slow rate of population growth. Some scholars speculate that this growth was dramatically interrupted around 70,000 years ago by an enormous volcanic eruption on the island of Sumatra in present-day Indonesia, resulting in a cooler and drier global climate and causing human numbers to drop to some 10,000 or less. From that point of near extinction, world population grew slowly to 500,000 by 30,000 years ago and then to 6 million by 10,000 years ago. 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 later with agricultural and urban life. With no formal
chiefs, kings, bureaucrats, soldiers, nobles, or priests. Paleolithic men and women 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. The male role as hunter, especially of big game, perhaps gave rise to one of the first criteria of masculine identity: success in killing large animals.

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 the San people, a surviving 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. This division of labor underpinned what anthropologist Richard Lee called "relative equality between the sexes with no one having the upper hand." Among the San, 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.

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 furnish them with all things necessary for life, they covet not Magnifient 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 necessaries of Life.

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. And some

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Change

In what ways did a gathering and hunting economy shape other aspects of Paleolithic societies?
Aboriginal myths sought to explain how men achieved power over women. Among the San, frequent arguments about the distribution of meat or the laziness or stinginess of particular people generated conflict, as did rivalries among men over women. Richard 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. More generally, recent studies have found that in Paleolithic societies some 15 percent of deaths occurred through violence at the hands of other people, a rate far higher than in later civilizations, where violence was largely monopolized by the state.  
Although sometimes romanticized by outsiders, the relative equality of Paleolithic societies 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. Various 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, modern people viewed their gathering and hunting ancestors as primitive and 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.  
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 “Flores man,” discovered in 2003 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. Clear evidence exists, however, for a rich interior life. The presence of rock art deep inside caves and far from living spaces suggests a “ceremonial space” separate from ordinary life. The extended rituals of contemporary Australian Aboriginals, 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.

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. The prevalence of Venus figurines and other symbols all across Europe has convinced some, but not all, scholars that Paleolithic religious thought had a strongly feminine dimension, embodied in a Great Goddess and concerned with the regeneration and renewal of life. 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, pregnancy, new birth, and death. These 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. Nor did Paleolithic people make sharp distinctions between the material and spiritual worlds, for they understood that animals, rocks, trees, mountains, and much more were animated by spirit or possessed souls of their own. Earlier scholars sometimes dubbed such views as “animistic” and regarded them as “primitive” or “simple” in comparison to later literate religions. More recent accounts generally avoid the term, preferring to focus on the specifics of particular religious traditions rather than some overall evolutionary scheme. 

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)
Settling Down: The Great Transition

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, analogous perhaps to the miniaturization of electronic components in the twentieth century. 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. Another important change in the strategies of Paleolithic people involved 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.
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, 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. In Labrador, longhouses accommodating 100 people appear in the archaeological 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.

Among the most stunning and unexpected achievements of such sedentary Paleolithic people comes from the archeological complex of Gobekli Tepe (goh- BEHK-lee TEH-peh) in southeastern Turkey, under excavation since 1994. Dating to 11,600
years ago, it consists of massive limestone pillars, some weighing as much as sixteen tons, which were carved in a T shape and arranged in a set of some twenty circles or rings. Gracefully carved animals—gazelles, snakes, boars, foxes—decorate the pillars. Gobekli Tepe was probably a ceremonial site, for little evidence of human habitation has been found. Those who constructed or staffed the complex dined on animals hunted at a distance. Dubbed the “world’s oldest temple,” Gobekli Tepe was the product of people practicing a gathering and hunting way of life though living at least part of the year in settled villages. It represents a kind of monumental construction long associated only with agricultural societies and civilizations.18

Studies of more recent gathering and hunting societies, which were able to settle permanently in particular resource-rich areas, show marked differences from their more nomadic counterparts. Among the Chumash of southern California, for example, early Spanish settlers found peoples who had developed substantial and permanent structures accommodating up to seventy persons, hereditary political elites, elements of a market economy including the use of money and private ownership of some property, and the beginnings of class distinctions.

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 men and women, 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.

**Breakthroughs to Agriculture**

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 terms “Neolithic (New Stone Age) Revolution” or “Agricultural Revolution” refer 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 hillides, 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 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.

**Common Patterns**

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 Map 1.3). 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 8,000 years ago. These facts have generated many questions with which historians 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?
Change
What accounts for the emergence of agriculture after countless millennia of human life without it?

Map 1.3 The Global Spread of Agriculture and Pastoralism
From ten or more separate points of origin, agriculture spread to adjacent areas, eventually encompassing almost all of the world's peoples.

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 that 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 more 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 tem-
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**Change**

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perate 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.

Over their long history, gathering and hunting peoples had already developed a deep knowledge of the natural world and, in some cases, the 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, 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 resource-rich areas were able to settle down and establish more permanent villages, abandoning their nomadic ways and more intensively exploiting the local area. 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 the need for additional food, perhaps even a “food crisis.” Such conditions 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.

Göbekli Tepe in Turkey provides a possible example of the process. Klaus Schmidt, the chief archeologist at the site, argues that the need for food to supply those who built and maintained this massive religious complex may well have stimulated the development of agriculture in the area. Certainly, some of the earliest domesticated wheat in the region has been located just twenty miles away and at roughly the same date. If this connection holds, it suggests that the human impulse to worship collectively in a village-based setting played a significant role in generating the epic transformation of the Agricultural Revolution.

These were some of the common patterns that facilitated the Agricultural Revolution. New opportunities appeared with the improved climatic conditions 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. From some combination of these opportunities and incentives emerged the profoundly transforming process of the Agricultural Revolution.

**Variations**

This new way of life initially operated everywhere with a simple technology—the digging stick or hoe. Plows were developed much 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. 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.

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, Jordan, and southern Turkey (see Map 1.4). In this region, an extraordinary variety of wild plants and animals

![Map 1.4 The Fertile Crescent](image_url)

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.
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 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. Figs were apparently the first cultivated crop, dating to about 9400 B.C.E. In the millennium or so that followed, 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.

Archaeological evidence suggests that the transition to a fully agricultural way of life in parts of this region 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 shrine-like 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. 2

At roughly the same time, perhaps a bit later, another process of domestication was unfolding on the African continent in the eastern part of what is now the Sahara in present-day Sudan. Between 10,000 and 5,000 years ago, however, scholars tell us that there was no desert in this region, which received more rainfall than currently, had extensive grassland vegetation, and was "relatively hospitable to human life." 3 It seems likely that cattle were domesticated in this region about 4,000 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 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 (used as a flavoring for cola drinks) emerged as important crops. The scattered location of these domestinations 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 west-
ern South America, in Mesoamerica, in the Mississippi River 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 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 called teosinte (tee-uh-SIHN-tee), looks nothing like what we now know as corn or maize.

The Statues of Ain Ghazal
Among the largest of the early agricultural settlements investigated by archaeologists 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 multroomed stone houses; cultivated barley, wheat, peas, beans, 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.)
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." 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 unfolding 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 North Africa/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.

**The Globalization of Agriculture**

From the various places where it originated, agriculture spread gradually to much of the rest of the earth, although for a long time it coexisted with gathering and hunting ways of life. Broadly speaking, this extension of farming occurred in two ways. The first, known as diffusion, 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.

**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 6000 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.

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-feeding, 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 immunity. A similar pro-
cess 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 uninhab-
ited islands of the Pacific and to Madagascar off the coast of southeastern Africa (see
Map 1.3, 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 every-
where. 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 south-western Af-
rica also maintained their gathering and hunting economies into the modern era. A
very few, such as the Hadza, described at the beginning of this chapter, 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 par-
ticular natural abundance, so they felt little need for agriculture. Such societies found
it easier to resist agriculture if they were not in the direct line of advancing, more
powerful farming peoples. But many of the remaining gathering and hunting peoples
knew about agricultural practices from nearby neighbors, suggesting that they quite
deliberately chose to resist it in favor of the free life of their Paleolithic ancestors.

Nonetheless, by the beginning of the Common Era, the global spread of agricul-
ture 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
In late August of 1911, an emaciated and nearly naked man, about fifty years old, staggered into the corral of a slaughterhouse in northern California. As it turned out, he was the last member of his people, a gathering and hunting group known as the Yahi, pushed into extinction by the intrusion of more powerful farming, herding, and "civilized" societies. It was a very old story, played out for over 10,000 years since the Agricultural Revolution placed Paleolithic cultures on the defensive, inexorably eroding their presence on the earth. The tragic story of this individual allows us to put a human face on that enormous and largely unrecorded process.

Within a few days, this bedraggled and no doubt bewildered man was taken into the care of several anthropologists from the University of California, who brought him to a museum in San Francisco, where he lived until his death from tuberculosis in 1916. They called him Ishi, which means "person" in his native language, because he was unwilling to provide them with his own given name. In his culture, it was highly impolite to reveal one's name, especially to strangers.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Yahi consisted of about 300 to 400 people living in a rugged and mountainous area of northern California. Here they hunted, fished, gathered acorns, and otherwise provided for themselves in a fashion familiar to gathering and hunting peoples the world over. But the 1849 California gold rush brought a massive influx of American settlers, miners, and farmers that quickly pushed the Yahi to the edge of extinction. Yahi raiding and resistance was met by massacres at the hands of local militias and vigilantes, only too glad to "clean up the In-

The Culture of Agriculture

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 underway, and shot up to some 50 million by 5,000 years ago and
diants," killing and scalping hundreds. One such massacre in 1868 likely killed Ishi's father, while the young Ishi, his mother, and a few others escaped.

By 1876, Ishi's community had dwindled to fifteen or sixteen people, living in an even more inaccessible region of their homeland. In these desperate circumstances, traditional gender roles blurred, even as they undertook great efforts to conceal their presence. To avoid making footprints when traveling, they jumped from rock to rock; they ground acorns on smooth stones rather than on more obvious hollowed out rocks and carefully camouflaged their thatched dwellings and campsites. By 1894, this tiny Yahi community numbered only five people: Ishi, his mother, his sister or cousin, and an older man and woman.

Then in 1908, a group of American surveyors came across a naked Ishi harpooning fish in the river, and a few days later they found the tiny settlement that sheltered the remaining Yahi. Only Ishi's aged mother was present, hidden under a pile of skins and rags. They did not harm her, but they took away every movable item — tools, food, baskets, bows and arrows — as souvenirs. Ishi returned to carry his mother away and she soon died. He never saw his sister/cousin or the others again. For some time, then, Ishi lived absolutely alone until he stumbled into the slaughterhouse on August 29, 1911, his hair burned short in a Yahi sign of mourning.

In his new home in the museum, Ishi became something of a media sensation, willingly demonstrating his skills for visitors — fashioning tools and weapons of stone and bone, starting a fire, but refusing to make baskets, because it was women's work. Actively cooperating with anthropologists who sought to document the culture of his people, he took them on a hunt one summer, teaching them how to track and kill deer and to process the meat on the spot. All who met him remarked on his gentleness and kindness, his love of company, his delight in children, his fondness for laughing and joking. According to Alfred Kroeber, the primary anthropologist involved with Ishi: "He was the most patient man I ever knew. . . . without trace of self-pity or of bitterness to dull the purity of his cheerful endurance."

Questions: What accounts for the ability of Ishi's people to survive into the twentieth century? What emotional or moral posture toward Ishi's life seems most appropriate? What perspective does it lend to the larger story of the gradual erosion of gathering and hunting societies the world over?

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.

That dominance was reflected in major environmental transformations. In a growing number of places, forests and grasslands became cultivated fields and grazing lands. Human selection modified the genetic composition of numerous plants and 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. The advent of more intensive agriculture associated with city-based civilizations only heightened this human impact on the landscape.

Human life too changed dramatically in farming communities, and not necessarily for the better. 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, malnutrition, and anemia, a shorter physical stature, and diminished life expectancy. Living close to animals subjected humans to new diseases — smallpox, flu, measles, chickenpox, malaria, tuberculosis, rabies — while
living in larger communities generated epidemics for the first time in human history. 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 the domestication of rice, millet, pigs, and chickens 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 and flax, for example) and raising 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 was a technology in which women were probably the primary innovators. It was a task that was compatible with child-rearing responsibilities, which virtually all human societies assigned primarily to women. Another technology associated with the Agricultural Revolution was metallurgy. The working of gold and copper, then bronze, and, later, iron became parts 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.” 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 animals did not exist in the Americas, this
revolutionary new source of power and transportation was available only in the Eastern Hemisphere.

Finally the Agricultural Revolution presented to humankind the gift of wine and beer, often a blessing, sometimes a curse. As barley, wheat, rice, and grapes were domesticated, their potential for generating alcoholic beverages was soon discovered. Evidence for wine making in the mountains of present-day northwestern Iran dates to around 5000 B.C.E., though its expense rendered it an elite beverage for millennia. Chinese wine making can be traced to around 4000 B.C.E. Drunken debauchery and carousing among the aristocracy prompted an unsuccessful effort by one Chinese ruler around 1046 B.C.E. to outlaw the beverage. The precise origins of beer are unclear, but its use was already quite widespread in the Middle East by 4000 B.C.E., when a pictogram on a seal from Mesopotamia showed two figures using straws to drink beer from a large pottery jar. Regarded as a gift from the gods, beer, like bread, was understood in Mesopotamia as something that could turn a savage into a fully human and civilized person. 26

Social Variation in the Age of Agriculture

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, certain 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. 29 Known as herders, pastoralists, or nomads, such people emerged in Central Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahara, and 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 several thousand years later the 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, we will encounter pastoral societies repeatedly, particularly as they interact with neighboring agricultural and “civilized” peoples.

Within pastoral communities the relative equality of men and women, characteristic of most Paleolithic societies, persisted, perhaps because their work was so essential. Women were centrally involved in milking animals, in processing that milk, and in producing textiles such as felt, so widely used in Central Asia for tents, beds, rugs, and clothing. Among the Saka pastoralists in what is now Azerbaijan, women rode horses and participated in battles along with men. A number of archeological sites around the Black Sea have revealed high-status women buried with armor, swords, daggers, and arrows. In the Xinjiang region of western China, still other women were buried with the apparatus of healers and shamans, strongly suggesting an important female role in religious life.

**Agricultural Village Societies**

The most characteristic early agricultural societies were those of settled village-based horticultural farmers, such as those living in Banpo or Jericho. Many such societies also retained much of the social and gender equality 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 Çatalhöyük (cha-TAHL-hoo-YOOK), 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.”

In many horticultural villages, women’s critical role as farmers as well as their work in the spinning and weaving of textiles no doubt contributed to a social position of relative equality with men. Some such societies traced their descent through the female line and practiced marriage patterns in which men left their homes to live with their wives’ families. Archeologist Marija Gimbutas has highlighted the prevalence of female imagery in the art of early agricultural societies in Europe and Anatolia, suggesting to her a widespread cult of the Goddess, focused on “the mystery of birth, death and the renewal of life.” But early agriculture did not produce identical gender systems everywhere. Some practiced patrilineal descent and required a woman to live in the household of her husband. Grave sites in early eastern European farming communities reveal fewer adult females than males, indicating perhaps the practice of female infanticide. Some early written evidence from China suggests a long-term preference for male children.

In all of their diversity, many 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 a 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. 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 well into the twentieth century, “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.
Given the frequent oppressiveness of organized political power in human history, agricultural village societies represent an intriguing alternative to states, kingdoms, and empires, so often highlighted in the historical record. They pioneered the human settlement of vast areas, adapted to a variety of environments, maintained a substantial degree of social and gender equality; created numerous cultural, artistic, and religious traditions; and interacted continuously with their neighbors.

**Chiefdoms**

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 chiefs 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 may have 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. 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 chiefs kept enough to maintain their prestigious positions and imposing lifestyle. 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.

Thus the Agricultural Revolution radically transformed both the trajectory of the human journey and the evolution of life on the planet. This epic process granted to one species, *Homo sapiens*, a growing power over many other species of plants and animals and made possible an increase in human numbers far beyond what a gathering and hunting economy could support.

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 and pastoral communities 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 differences, for better or worse, became a major feature of those distinctive agricultural societies known to us as "civilizations."

**Reflections: The Uses of the Paleolithic**

Even when it is about the distant past, history is also about those who tell it in the present. We search the past, always, for our own purposes. For example, modern people have long been inclined to view their Paleolithic or gathering and hunting 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, however, 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 are better seen as extraordinary, possibly even pathological. 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 men and women who have inhabited 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.

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**Second Thoughts**

**What's the Significance?**

- Venus figurines, 14–15; 23
- Dreamtime, 15
- Clovis culture, 18–19
- megafaunal extinction, 18–19
- Austro-Asiatic migrations, 19–20
- "the original affluent society," 22
- shamans, 23
- trance dance, 23
- Paleolithic settling down, 24–26
- Gobekli Tepe, 25–26; 30
- Fertile Crescent, 27; 30–32
- teosinte, 33–34
- diffusion, 34
- Bantu migration, 35
- Ishi, 36–37
- Banpo, 38
- "secondary products revolution," 38–39
- pastoral societies, 39–40
- Çatalhöyük, 40–41
- chiefdoms, 42–43

**Big Picture Questions**

1. In what ways did various Paleolithic societies differ from one another, and how did they change over time?
2. 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?
3. How did early agricultural societies differ from those of the Paleolithic era?
4. Was the Agricultural Revolution inevitable? Why did it occur so late in the story of humankind?
5. "The Agricultural Revolution provides evidence for 'progress' in human affairs." How would you evaluate this statement?
"Where could one go if one wanted to escape civilization?" So read an inquiry from a Colorado woman on an Internet forum about "personal development" in 2007. In reply, another subscriber to the forum wrote: "Are you just tired of urban sprawl or are you fed up with people in general? I have lived 'off the land' in Kentucky, with no car, power lines, running water, phones etc. and I survived to tell the tale." This ironic online conversation—using the Internet to express an interest in abandoning civilization—refers to the "back-to-the-land" movement that began in the mid-1960s as an alternative to the pervasive materialism of modern life. Growing numbers of urban dwellers, perhaps as many as a million in North America, exchanged their busy city lives for a few acres of rural land and a very different way of living.

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 "civilize" 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 civilizations among the major achievements of humankind and yet people within

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, an "Inspector of the scribes" during Egypt's Fifth Dynasty (about 2550 B.C.E.), in an affectionate pose with his wife, Mersankh. (Musées Nationaux d'Art et d'Histoire, N.Y.)
them have often sought to escape the constraints, artificiality, hierarchies, and other discontents of civilized living.

**SEEkING THE MAIN POINT**

What distinguished "civilizations" from earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies?

**Something New: The Emergence of Civilizations**

Like agriculture, civilization was a global phenomenon, showing up independently in seven 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 2.1). In the long run of human history, these civilizations—small breakthroughs to a new way of life—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 likely 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 compare 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, archaeologists have found monumental architecture in the form of earth platform mounds, one of them measuring 60 feet tall and 300 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
Map 2.1 First Civilizations

Seven First Civilizations emerged independently in locations scattered across the planet, all within a few thousand years, from 3500 to 4000 B.C.E.
and elephants as religious symbols, styles of clothing and jewelry—continued to nourish the later civilization of the Indian subcontinent. In fact they persist into the present.

The early civilization of China, dating to perhaps 2500 B.C.E., was very different from that of the Indus Valley. The ideal— if not always the reality— of a centralized state was evident from the days of the Xia (shiah) dynasty (2070–1600 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 (1600–1046 B.C.E.) and the Zhou (1046–771 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 next world. 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.

Central Asia was the site of yet another First Civilization. In the Oxus or Amu Darya river valley and nearby desert oases (what is now northern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan), a quite distinctive and separate civilization took shape very quickly after 2200 B.C.E. Within two centuries, a number of substantial fortified centers had emerged, containing residential compounds, artisan workshops, and temples, all surrounded by impressive walls and gates. Economically based on irrigation agriculture and stock raising, this Central Asian or Oxus civilization had a distinctive cultural style, expressed in its architecture, ceramics, burial techniques, seals, and more, though it did not develop a literate culture. Evidence for an aristocratic social hierarchy comes from depictions of gods and men in widely differing dress performing various functions from eating at a banquet to driving chariots to carrying heavy burdens. Visitors to this civilization would have found occasional goods from China, India, and Mesopotamia, as well as products from pastoral nomads of the steppe land and the forest dwellers of Siberia. According to a leading historian, this Central Asian civilization was the focal point of a “Eurasian-wide system of intellectual and commercial exchange.” Compared to Egypt or Mesopotamia, however, it had a relatively brief history, for by 1700 B.C.E., it had faded away as a civilization, at about the
same time as a similar fate befall its Indus Valley counterpart. Its cities were abandoned and apparently forgotten until their resurrection by archeologists in the twentieth century. And yet its influence persisted as elements of this civilization's cultural style show up much later in Iran, India, and the eastern Mediterranean world.

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, 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 Teotihuacan.

Beyond these seven First Civilizations, other, smaller civilizations also flourished. Lying south of Egypt in the Nile Valley, an early Nubian civilization known as Ta-Seti was clearly distinctive and independent of its northern neighbor, although Nubia was later involved in a long and often contentious relationship with Egypt. Likewise in China, a large city known as Sansingdui, rich in bronze sculptures and much else, arose separately but at the same time as the more well-known Shang dynasty. As a new form of human society, civilization was beginning its long march toward encompassing almost all of humankind by the twentieth century. At the time, however, these breakthroughs to new forms of culture and society were small islands of innovation in a sea of people living in much older ways.

The Question of Origins

The first question that historians ask about almost everything is "How did it get started?" Scholars of all kinds—archaeologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians—have been arguing about the origins of civilization for a very long time, with no end in sight. 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. But 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 historians have emphasized the need to organize large-scale irrigation projects as a stimulus for the earliest civilizations, but archaeologists have found that the more complex water control systems appeared long after states and civilizations had
already been established. Alternatively, perhaps states responded to the human need for order as larger and more diverse populations grew up in particular localities. Others have suggested that 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. 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 neighboring 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 elites 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 outcome 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 more intensively. All across the Afro-Eurasian hemisphere, though not in the Americas, animal-drawn plows and metalworking greatly enhanced the productivity of farming. Ritual sacrifice, sometimes including people, accompanied the growth of civilization, and the new rulers normally served as high priests, their right to rule legitimated by association with the sacred.

**An Urban Revolution**

It was the resources from agriculture that made possible one of the most distinctive features of the First Civilizations—cities. What would an agricultural village 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. 63). Inside the city, our village visitor would have found
other temples as well, serving as centers of ritual performance and as places for the redistribution of stored food. Numerous craftsmen 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."\(^{57}\) 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.\(^{6}\)

Equally impressive to a village visitor would have been the city of Mohenjo Daro (moe-hen-joe DAHR-oh), which flourished along the banks of the Indus River around 2600 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 grid-like 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.

Even larger, though considerably later, was the Mesoamerican city of Teotihuacán (tay-oh-ti-ah-See-ahn), 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, were central to most of the First Civilizations, though to varying degrees. They were
political/administrative capitals; they functioned as 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 or Paleolithic camps. 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 outside of agriculture — scholars, officials, merchants, priests, and artisans of all kinds. 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. None of these people, of course, grew their own food; they were supported by the highly productive agriculture of farmers.

Hierarchies of Class

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 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 and in agricultural chiefdoms, but the advent of urban-based civilizations multiplied and magnified these inequalities many times over, as the more 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 (hahm-moo-RAH-bee) depended on social status. 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 of the First 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? 

At the bottom of social hierarchies everywhere were slaves. Slavery and civilization, in fact, seem to have emerged together. 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 owners; 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 5). 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.

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**War and Slavery**

This Mesopotamian victory monument, dating to about 2200 B.C.E., shows the Akkadian ruler Naram-Sin crushing his enemies. Prisoners taken in such wars were a major source of slaves in the ancient world. (Louvre, Paris/The Bridgeman Art Library)
Hierarchies of Gender

No division of human society has held greater significance for the lives of individuals than those of sex and gender. Sex describes the obvious biological differences between males and females. More important to historians, however, has been gender, which refers to the many and varied ways that cultures have assigned meaning to those sexual differences. To be gendered as masculine or feminine defines the roles and behavior considered appropriate for men and women in every human community. At least since the emergence of the First Civilizations, gender systems have been patriarchal, meaning that women have been subordinate to men in the family and in society generally. The inequalities of gender, like those of class, decisively shaped the character of the First Civilizations and those that followed.

The patriarchal ideal regarded men as superior to women and sons preferable to daughters. Men had legal and property rights unknown to most women. Public life in general was associated with masculinity, which defined men as rulers, warriors, scholars, and heads of households. Women's roles—both productive and reproductive—took place in the home, mostly within a heterosexual family, where women were defined largely by their relationship to a man: as a daughter, wife, mother, or widow. Frequently men could marry more than one woman and claim the right to regulate the social and sexual lives of the wives, daughters, and sisters in their families. Widely seen as weak but feared as potentially disruptive, women required both the protection and control of men.

But the reality of the lives of men and women did not always correspond to these ideals. Most men, of course, were far from prominent and exercised little power, except perhaps over the women and children of their own families. Gender often interacted with class to produce a more restricted but privileged life for upper-class women, who were largely limited to the home and the management of servants. By contrast, the vast majority of women always had to be out in public, working in the fields, tending livestock, buying and selling in the streets, or serving in the homes of their social superiors. A few women also operated in roles defined as masculine, acting as rulers, priests, and scholars, while others pushed against the limits and restrictions assigned to women. But most women no doubt accepted their assigned roles, unable to imagine anything approaching gender equality, even as most men genuinely believed that they were protecting and providing for their women.

The big question for historians lies in trying to explain the origins of this kind of patriarchy. Clearly it was neither natural nor long-standing. For millennia beyond measure, gathering and hunting societies had developed gender systems without the sharp restrictions and vast inequalities that characterized civilizations. Even early horticultural societies, those using a hoe or digging stick for farming, continued the relative gender equality that had characterized Paleolithic peoples. What was it, then, about civilization that seemed to generate a more explicit and restrictive 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 thus more deeply involved in child care than before. Hence, 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."  

Women have long been identified not only with the home but also with nature, for they are intimately involved in the primordial natural process of reproduction. But civilization seemed to highlight culture, or the human mastery of nature, through agriculture, monumental art and architecture, and 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?  

A further aspect of civilization that surely contributed to patriarchy was warfare. While earlier forms of human society certainly experienced violent conflict, large-scale military clashes with professionally led armies were a novel 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 enhanced the values, power, and prestige of a male warrior class and cemented the association of masculinity with organized violence and with the protection of society and especially of its women. Private property and commerce, central elements of the First Civilizations, may also have helped to shape early patriarchies. 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

Whatever the precise origins of patriarchy, women's subordination permeated the First Civilizations, marking a gradual change from the more equal relationships of men and women within agricultural villages or Paleolithic bands. By the second millennium B.C.E. in Mesopotamia, 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. Di-
voice 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. While wealthy women might own and operate their own businesses or act on behalf of their powerful husbands, they too saw themselves as dependent. "Let all be well with [my husband]," prayed one such wife, "that I may prosper under his protection."\(^{13}\)

Furthermore, women in Mesopotamian civilization were sometimes divided into two sharply distinguished categories. Under an Assyrian law code that was in effect between the fifteenth and eleventh centuries B.C.E., 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, in some places, 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. This "deornion of the goddess," argues historian Gera Lerner, culminated in the Hebrew Scriptures, in which a single male deity, Yahweh (YAH-way), alone undertakes the act of creation without any participation of a female counterpart. Yet this deornion did not occur always or everywhere; in Mesopotamia, for example, the prominent goddess Inanna or Ishtar long held her own against male gods and was regarded as a goddess of love and sexuality as well as a war deity. In a hymn to Inanna dating to around 2250 B.C.E., the poet and priestess Enheduanna declared: "It is her game to speed conflict and battle, untiring, strapping on her sandals."

Thus expressions of patriarchy varied among the first civilizations. 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. Moreover, married women in Egypt were not veiled as they were at times in Mesopotamia. 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 (r. 1572-1458 B.C.E.), was sometimes portrayed in statues as a man, dressed in male clothing and sporting the traditional false beard of the pharaoh.

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 to these questions is complex, and the answers we have developed in this book most likely underestimate the degree to which the state relied on an array of repressive coercive forces. The state itself did not exist in a vacuum-it was forged at the same time that the societies in which it flourished were. World history is the narrative of how the human capacity for violence, domination, and control has been harnessed by the state and those who wield power in its name.
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 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 power than earlier chiefdoms. But the power of central states in the First Civilizations was limited and certainly not “totalitarian” in the modern sense of that term. The temple and the private economy rivaled and checked the power of rulers, and most authority was local rather than directed from the capital.

**Coercion and Consent**

Yet early states in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Mesoamerica, and elsewhere were influential, drawing their power from various sources, all of which assisted in providing cohesion for the First Civilizations. One basis of authority lay in 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 direct efforts to defend the city or territory against aggressive outsiders. Someone had to adjudicate conflicts among the many different peoples, unrelated to one another, who rubbed elbows in the early cities. 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. An Egyptian document described 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.  

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 off the states of the First Civilizations from earlier chiefdoms, whose leaders had only persuasion, prestige, and gifts to back up their authority. But as states increasingly monopolized the legitimate right to use violence, rates of death from interpersonal violence declined as compared to earlier nonstate communities.
Force, however, was not always necessary, for the First Civilizations soon generated ideas suggesting that state authority as well as 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 only they or the authorized priests 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.”

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 Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 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 most of the First Civilizations (see Snapshot, p. 65), sustaining them and their successors in many ways. Literacy defined elite status and conveyed enormous prestige to those who possessed it. 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 into... 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. 17

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, 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, often recording what had long been oral traditions. On occasion, the written word proved threatening, rather than supportive, to rulers. China’s so-called First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi (r. 221–210 B.C.E.), allegedly buried alive some 400 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 3). 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. Monumental palaces, temples, ziggurats, pyramids, and statues conveyed the imposing power of the state and its elite rulers. The Olmec civilization of Mesoamerica (1200–400 B.C.E.) erected enormous
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Initial Use</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sumer</td>
<td>Cuneiform: wedge-shaped symbols on clay tablets representing objects, abstract ideas, sounds, and syllables</td>
<td>Records of economic transactions, such as temple payments and taxes</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Bird" /></td>
<td>Regarded as the world's first written language; other languages such as Babylonian and Assyrian were written with Sumerian script.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Hieroglyphs (&quot;sacred carvings&quot;): a series of signs that denote words and consonants (but not vowels or syllables)</td>
<td>Business and administrative purposes; later used for religious inscriptions, stories, poetry, hymns, and mathematics</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Rain, Dew, Storm" /></td>
<td>For everyday use, less formal systems of cursive writing (known as &quot;hieratic&quot; and &quot;demotic&quot;) were developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andes</td>
<td>Quipu: a complex system of knotted cords in which the color, length, type, and location of knots conveyed mostly numerical meaning</td>
<td>Various accounting functions; perhaps also used to express words</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Quipu" /></td>
<td>Widely used in the Inca Empire; recent discoveries place quipus in Caral some 5,000 years ago.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indus River Valley</td>
<td>Some 400 pictographic symbols representing sounds and words, probably expressing a Dravidian language currently spoken in southern India</td>
<td>Found on thousands of clay seals and pottery; probably used to mark merchandise</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="6 Fish" /></td>
<td>As yet undeciphered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Oracle bone script: pictographs (stylized drawings) with no phonetic meaning</td>
<td>Inscribed on turtle shells or animal bones; used for divination (predicting the future) in the royal court of Shang dynasty rulers</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Horse" /></td>
<td>Direct ancestor of contemporary Chinese characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olmec</td>
<td>Signs that represent sounds (syllables) and words; numbering system using bars and dots</td>
<td>Used to record the names and deeds of rulers and shamans, as well as battles and astronomical data</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Jaguar" /></td>
<td>Structurally similar to later Mayan script; Olmec calendars were highly accurate and the basis for later Mesoamerican calendars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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.

**Comparing Mesopotamia and Egypt**

A productive agricultural technology, city living, distinct class and gender inequalities, 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 complete 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.

**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.”15 (See Map 2.2.) 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 clearly lacked.

But 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, it is hard to deny 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 ca-
pricous and quarreling gods, and facing death without much hope of a blessed 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?" The famous Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh 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 pyramids, constructed during Egypt's Old Kingdom (2686–195 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 describe an afterlife of abundance and tranquility that Gilgamesh could only have envied. Over time, larger groups of people, beyond the pharaoh and his entourage,
came to believe that they too could gain access to the afterlife if they followed proper procedures and lived a morally upright life. 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. The Epic of Gilgamesh inscribed in mythology the deforestation of Mesopotamia. When the ruler Gilgamesh sought to make for himself “a name that endures” by building walls, ramparts, and temple, he required much timber. But to acquire it, he had first to kill Humbaba, appointed by the gods to guard the forests. The epic describes what happened next: “Then there followed confusion... Now the mountains were moved and all the hills, for the guardian of the forest was killed. They attacked the cedars... So they pressed on into the forest... and while Gilgamesh felled the first of the trees of the forest, Enkidu [the friend of Gilgamesh] cleared their roots as far as the banks of Euphrates.”

In Sumer (southern Mesopotamia), such deforestation and the soil erosion that followed from it sharply decreased crop yields 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.

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 (2350–2100 B.C.E.) and later the Babylonians (1900–1600 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.

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 could not replicate.

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 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, 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 did not always match the ideal, as the Portrait of Paneb so vividly illustrates (see pp. 70–71). 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
Paneb, An Egyptian Criminal

The life of Paneb (ca. thirteenth-century B.C.E.) illuminates an underside of Egyptian life rather different from the images of order and harmony portrayed in much of ancient Egyptian art and literature. Paneb was born into a family and a village of tomb workers—people who quarried, sculpted, and painted the final resting places of the pharaohs at a time when royal pyramids were no longer being constructed. Granted generous allowances of grain, beer, fish, vegetables, firewood, and clothing, tomb workers represented a prestigious occupation in ancient Egypt.

Paneb was apparently orphaned as a youngster and raised by another tomb-working family, that of the childless Neferhotep, a foreman of the tomb workers’ crew who brought his adopted son into the profession. But Paneb quarreled violently with Neferhotep, on one occasion smashing the door to his house and threatening to kill him.

As an adult, Paneb married and sired a large family of eight or nine children. He also indulged in numerous affairs with married women and was involved in at least one rape. One of his lovers was the wife of a man with whom Paneb had grown up in Neferhotep’s home; the couple subsequently divorced, a frequent occurrence in ancient Egypt. In another case, Paneb seduced both a married woman and her daughter and shared the sexual favors of the daughter with his son Apehuty. It is not difficult to imagine the tensions that such behavior created in a small close-knit village.

When Paneb’s adoptive father Neferhotep died—he was perhaps murdered—Paneb succeeded him as workplace foreman, thus incurring the lifelong hostility of Neferhotep’s brother, Amennakht, who felt he had better claim to the job. What turned the tide in Paneb’s favor was his “gift” of five servants, made to the vizier, the pharaoh’s highest official, who was responsible for such appointments. To add insult to Amennakht’s injury, those servants had belonged to Neferhotep himself.

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

Interaction and Exchange
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.
While such bribes were common practice in obtaining promotions, it was Paneb’s use of his position as foreman of the tomb workers’ crew that got him into ever deeper trouble. He actively harassed his rival Amennakht, preventing him and his family from using the small chapel in which workers celebrated the festivals of their gods. He quarreled with the foreman of another work crew saying: “I’ll attack you on the mountain and I’ll kill you.” Such angry outbursts led to frequent fighting and gained Paneb a reputation for brutality.

Paneb also exploited his position as foreman to his own advantage. He used—or stole—expensive tools given to the work crew for his own purposes. He ordered members of his work crew to do personal work for him—making a bed which he then sold to a high official, feeding his own, weaving baskets for his personal use, and preparing and decorating his own tomb, using materials pilfered from the royal tombs he was charged with constructing. On one occasion he stole the covering of a royal chariot and another time he entered a royal tomb, drank the wine intended for the pharaoh’s afterlife, and in an act of enormous disrespect… even blasphemy… actually sat on the sarcophagus containing the embalmed body of the ruler.

Although rebuked from time to time by high officials, Paneb’s bad behavior continued. “He could not stop his clamor,” according to an official document. At some point, Paneb’s son publicly denounced his father’s sexual escapades. But the final straw that broke his career came from Amennakht, Paneb’s long-time rival. He apparently had had enough and drew up a long list of particulars detailing Paneb’s crimes. That document, from which our knowledge of Paneb largely derives, has survived. It concluded in this fashion:

He is thus not worthy of this position. For truly, he seems well, [but] he is like a crazy person. And he kills people to prevent them from carrying out a mission of the Pharaoh. See, I wish to convey knowledge of his condition to the vizier.

The outcome of this complaint is unclear, for Paneb subsequently disappears from the historical record, and a new foreman was appointed in his place. It was not, however, Amennakht.

Questions: Since most of the evidence against Paneb comes from his archrival, how much weight should historians grant to that account? How might the story appear if written from Paneb’s viewpoint? What perspectives on the Egypt of his time does Paneb’s career disclose? How do those perspectives differ from more conventional and perhaps idealized understandings?

The early beginnings of Egyptian civilization illustrate the point. Its agriculture drew upon wheat and barley, which likely reached Egypt from Mesopotamia, as well as gourds, watermelon, domesticated donkeys, and cattle, which came from the Sudan to the south. The practice of “divine kingship” probably 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.

Furthermore, once they were established, both Mesopotamia and Egypt carried on long-distance trade, mostly in luxury goods destined for the elite. Sumerian merchants had established seaborne contact with the Indus Valley civilization as early as 2300 B.C.E., while Indus Valley traders and their interpreters had taken up residence.
in Mesopotamia. 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,
it was so 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...

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.”

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. 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. The Phoenicians, who were commercially active in the Mediterranean basin from their homeland in present-day Lebanon, also were influenced by Mesopotamian civilization. They venerated Asartu, a local form of the Mesopotamian fertility goddess Ishtar. They also adapted the Su-
merian 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 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 1000 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. (See the Portrait of Piye, pp. 186–87.)

In the Mediterranean basin, clear Egyptian influence is visible in the art of 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 ignited 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 use that powerful animal to wheeled carts and chariots. This new technology provided a fearsome military potential that enabled various chariot-driving peoples, such as the Hittites, to threaten ancient civilizations. Based in Anatolia, the Hittites sacked the city of Babylon in 1595 B.C.E. Several centuries later, conflict between the Hittites and Egypt over control of Syria resulted in the world's first written peace treaty. 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 parts of the Afro-Eurasian landmass in ancient times. Even then, no civilization was wholly isolated from larger patterns of interaction.

In Egypt, the centuries following 1650 B.C.E. witnessed the migration of foreigners from surrounding regions and conflict with neighboring peoples, shaking 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 went on to create their own empire both in Nubia and 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 2.3). 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. Or at least

Map 2.3: 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.
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, Central Asia, 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, “human beings learned for the first time how to bow, grovel, kneel, and kowtow.”

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 other more neutral term.

A second reservation about using the term “civilization” derives from its implication of solidarity—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 acceptance for making distinctions among different kinds of human communities. When the term appears in the text, keep in mind two points. First, as used by historians, "civilization" is a purely descriptive term, designating a particular and distinctive 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.

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**Second Thoughts**

**What's the Significance?**

- Norte Chico/Caral, 49; 52
- Indus Valley civilization, 52
- Central Asian/Oxus civilization, 53–54
- Olmec civilization, 54
- Uruk, 55–56
- Mohenjo Daro/Harappa, 56
- Epic of Gilgamesh, 56; 67
- Code of Hammurabi, 57–58
- Patriarchy, 59–63
- Rise of the state, 61–66
- Egypt: "the gift of the Nile," 66–75
- PANAB, 70–71
- Nubia, 72

**Big Picture Questions**

1. How does the use of the term "civilization" by historians differ from that of popular usage? How do you use the term?
2. "Civilizations were held together largely by force." Do you agree with this assessment, or were there other mechanisms of integration as well?
3. How did the various First Civilizations differ from one another?
4. **Looking Back:** To what extent did civilizations represent "progress" in comparison with earlier Paleolithic and Neolithic societies? And in what ways did they constitute a setback for humankind?