

# 1

## The Birth of Civilization

 Hear the **Audio** for Chapter 1 at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)



**Mohenjo-Daro Figure.** Scholars believe this limestone statue from about 2500 B.C.E. depicts a king or a priest from Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley in present-day Pakistan.

**Does this figure seem to emphasize the features of a particular person or the attributes of a particular role?**

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## EARLY HUMANS AND THEIR CULTURE *page 1*

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**WHY IS** “culture” considered a defining trait of human beings?

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## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO ABOUT 1000 B.C.E. *page 5*

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**HOW DID** control over water resources influence early Middle Eastern civilizations?

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## ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN EMPIRES *page 14*

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**HOW DID** conquest and trade shape early empires in the Near East?

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## EARLY INDIAN CIVILIZATION *page 16*

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**WHAT INFLUENCES** did the first Indus valley civilization have on later Indian religious and social practices?

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## EARLY CHINESE CIVILIZATION *page 23*

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**WHY DID** large territorial states arise in ancient China?

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## THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION IN THE AMERICAS *page 27*

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**HOW DID** agriculture influence the development of civilizations in Mesoamerica?

**T**he earliest humans lived by hunting, fishing, and collecting wild plants. Around 10,000 years ago, they learned to cultivate plants, herd animals, and make airtight pottery for storage. These discoveries transformed them from gatherers to producers, allowing them to grow in number and to lead a settled life. Beginning about 5,000 years ago, a far more complex way of life began to appear in some parts of the world. In these places humans learned how to increase harvests through irrigation and other methods. Much larger populations came together in towns, cities, and other centers, where they erected impressive structures and where industry and commerce flourished. They developed writing, enabling them to keep inventories of food and other resources. Specialized occupations emerged, complex religions took form, and social divisions increased. These changes marked the birth of civilization. ■

### **culture**

The ways of living built up by a group and passed on from one generation to another.

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## EARLY HUMANS AND THEIR CULTURE

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Humans are cultural beings. **Culture** is the sum total of the ways of living built up by a group and passed on from one generation to another. Culture includes behavior such as courtship or child-rearing practices; material things such as tools, clothing, and shelter; and ideas, institutions, and beliefs. Language, apparently a uniquely human trait, lies

**WHY IS** “culture” considered a defining trait of human beings?



## GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

### CIVILIZATIONS

The way of life of prehistoric cave dwellers differed immensely from that of humans today. Yet the few millennia in which we have been civilized are but a tiny fraction of the long span of human existence. Especially during recent millennia, changes in our culture—our way of life—have far outpaced changes in our bodies. We retain the emotional makeup and motor reflexes of prehistoric men and women while living highly organized and often sedentary lives.

We might best view the early civilizations by asking how they fit into the sweep of history. One notable feature of human history is the acceleration in the pace of change. From the time that modern humans first appeared 100,000 years ago until 7000 B.C.E., few changes occurred. Humans migrated from Africa to other parts of the world and adapted to new climes. All lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering. The chief advance in technology during this longest span of human existence was from rough to smooth stone weapons and tools.

Then, from about 7000 B.C.E., innovations began. Humans learned to till the soil, domesticate animals, and make pots for the storage of food. A few millennia later, bronze was discovered and the so-called river valley civilizations formed along the Nile,

the Tigris-Euphrates, the Indus, and the Yellow rivers. Cities rose. Writing was invented. Societies divided into classes or castes: Most members engaged in farming, a few traded, and others assumed military, priestly, or governmental roles. As these civilizations expanded, they became richer, more populous, and more powerful.

The last millennium B.C.E. witnessed two major developments. One was the emergence, during 600–300 B.C.E., of the religious and philosophical revolutions that would indelibly mark their respective civilizations: monotheistic Judaism from which would later develop the world religions of Christianity and Islam; Hinduism and Buddhism in southern Asia; the philosophies of Greece and China. The second development was the rise of the Iron Age empires—the Roman, the Mauryan along the Ganges, the Han in China—during the centuries straddling the end of the millennium.

After the fall of these early empires, swift changes occurred. For a millennium, Europe and Byzantium fell behind, while China and the Middle East led in technology and the arts of government. But by 1500 Europe had caught up, and after 1700, it led. India had invented Arabic numerals, and Arab thinkers inspired

behind our ability to create ideas and institutions and to transmit culture from one generation to another. Our flexible and dexterous hands enable us to hold and make tools and so to create the material artifacts of culture. Because culture is learned and not inherited, it permits rapid adaptation to changing conditions, making possible the spread of humanity to almost all lands of the globe.

### THE PALEOLITHIC AGE

Anthropologists designate early human cultures by their tools. The earliest period—the **Paleolithic Age** (from the Greek, “old stone”)—dates from the earliest use of stone tools some 1 million years ago to about 10,000 B.C.E. During this immensely long period, people were hunters, fishers, and gatherers, but not producers, of food.

Paleolithic people learned to make increasingly sophisticated tools and to control fire, and they acquired language.

Evidence of religious faith and practice, as well as of magic, goes as far back as archaeology can take us.

Fear or awe, exultation, gratitude, and empathy with the natural world are reflected in the cave art and in the ritual practices, such as burial, found at the Paleolithic. The sense that there is more to the world than meets the eye—in other words, the religious response to the world—seems to be as old as humankind.

Paleolithic culture could support only a sparsely settled society. If hunters were too numerous, game would not suffice. Since labor appears to have been divided according to sex, it was probably women, gathering food, who discovered how to plant and care for seeds. This knowledge eventually led to agriculture and the Neolithic Revolution.

#### Paleolithic Age

The earliest period when stone tools were used, from about 1,000,000 to 10,000 B.C.E. From the Greek meaning “old stone.”

#### Read the Document

From Hunter-gatherers to Food-producers-  
Overcoming Obstacles  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

#### Read the Document

The Development of Religion  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

#### Read the Document

The Toolmaker (3300 B.C.E.)  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

the Renaissance, but it was Europe that produced Copernicus and Newton.

The nineteenth century saw the invention of the steam engine, the steamship, the locomotive, the telegraph and telephone, and the automobile. After those inventions came electric lights, the radio, and, in the century that followed, the airplane.

In the twentieth century, invention and scientific discovery became institutionalized in university, corporate, and government laboratories. Ever increasing resources were committed to research. By the beginning of the twenty-first century man had walked on the moon, deciphered the human genome, and unlocked the power of the atom. Today, as discoveries occur ever more rapidly, we cannot imagine the science of a hundred years into the future.

If this process of accelerating change had its origins in 7000 B.C.E., what was the original impetus? Does the logic of nature dictate that once agriculture develops, cities will rise in alluvial valleys favorable to cultivation? Was it inevitable that the firing of clay to produce pots would produce metals from metallic oxides and lead to the discovery of smelting? Did the formation of aristocratic and priestly classes automatically lead to record keeping

and writing? If so, it is not at all surprising that parallel and independent developments should have occurred in regions as widely separated as China and the Middle East.

Or was the almost simultaneous rise of the ancient Eurasian civilizations the result of **diffusion**? Did migrating peoples carry seeds, new tools, and metals over long distances? The available evidence provides no definitive answer. Understanding the origins of the early civilizations and the lives of the men and women who lived in them from what is left of their material culture is like reconstructing a dinosaur from a broken tooth and a fragment of jawbone.

### Focus Questions

- ◆ What were the processes behind the creation of early civilizations?
- ◆ What are the similarities and differences among the world's earliest civilizations?
- ◆ Why has the pace of change accelerated with time?

## THE NEOLITHIC AGE

Anthropologists and archaeologists disagree as to why and how it happened, but around 10,000 years ago some groups in what we now call the Middle East began to change from a nomadic hunter-gatherer culture to a more settled agricultural one.

The shift to agriculture coincided with advances in stone tool technology, so this period is called the Neolithic Age (from the Greek, “new stone”). Productive animals, such as sheep and goats, were domesticated, as were food crops including wheat and barley.

Domestication allowed people to settle new areas. The invention of pottery enabled people to store, transport, and cook foods and liquids. People made cloth from flax and wool.

Because crops required constant care from planting to harvest, Neolithic farmers built permanent dwellings. Houses in a Neolithic village were normally all the same size, suggesting that most Neolithic villagers had about the same level of wealth and social status. Stones and shells were traded long distance, but Neolithic villages tended to be self-sufficient.

Two larger Neolithic settlements do not fit this village pattern. Çatal Hüyük, in a fertile agricultural region of present-day Turkey, was a large town with astonishingly diversified agriculture, arts, and crafts.

At an oasis near the Dead Sea, the town of Jericho was surrounded by a massive stone wall with at least one tower against the inner face. No other Neolithic settlement has been found with fortifications. These two sites show that the economies and settlement patterns of the Neolithic period may have been more complicated than scholars previously thought.

 See the Map

The Beginnings of Food Production  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 Hear the Audio  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 Read the Document

Redefining Self—From Tribe to Village to  
City 1500 B.C.E. at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



**Çatal Hüyük.** The illustration reconstructs part of Çatal Hüyük on the basis of archaeological findings.

**What impression does this image give you of life in Çatal Hüyük?**



### QUICK REVIEW

#### Neolithic Villages

- ◆ Houses were generally uniform size
- ◆ Villages were self-sufficient
- ◆ Ruins at Çatal Hüyük and Jericho differ from typical patterns

#### Neolithic Revolution

The shift beginning 10,000 years ago from hunter-gatherer societies to settled communities of farmers and artisans. Also called the Age of Agriculture, it witnessed the invention of farming, the domestication of plants and animals, and the development of technologies such as pottery and weaving. “Neolithic” comes from the Greek words for “new stone.”

#### Mesopotamia

Modern Iraq. The land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers where the first civilization appeared around 3000 B.C.E.

Throughout the Paleolithic Age, the human population had been small and relatively stable. Over time, in the regions where agriculture and animal husbandry appeared, the number of human beings grew at an unprecedented rate. Farmers usually had larger families than hunters, and their children matured at a younger age than the children of hunters. But farmers had to work harder and longer than hunters did, and they had to stay in one place. Some scholars refer to the dramatic changes in subsistence, settlement, technology, and population of this time as the **Neolithic Revolution**. The earliest Neolithic societies appeared in the Middle East in about 8000 B.C.E., based on the cultivation of wheat and barley. In China, Neolithic agriculture based on millet and rice emerged around 4000 B.C.E. The Neolithic period began about 3600 B.C.E. in India, and Neolithic agriculture based on corn developed in Mesoamerica several millennia later.

### THE BRONZE AGE AND THE BIRTH OF CIVILIZATION

Another major shift occurred first in the plains along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in the region the Greeks and Romans called **Mesopotamia** (modern Iraq), later in the valley of the Nile River in Egypt, and somewhat later in India and the Yellow River basin in China. Towns grew alongside villages, and some towns then grew into much larger urban centers. The urban centers, or cities, usually had monumental buildings, such as temples and fortifications. These could be built only by the sustained effort of hundreds and even thousands of people over many years. Elaborate representational artwork appeared, sometimes made of rare and imported materials. New technologies, such as smelting and the manufacture of metal tools and weapons, were characteristic of urban life. Commodities such as pottery and textiles that had been made in individual houses in villages were mass-produced in cities, which also were characterized by social stratification—that is, different classes of people based on factors such as control of resources, family, religious or political authority, and personal wealth. The earliest

writing is also associated with the growth of cities. Writing, like representational art, was a powerful means of communicating over space and time and was probably invented to deal with urban problems of management and record keeping. These attributes—urbanism; technological, industrial, and social change; long-distance trade; and new methods of symbolic communication—are defining characteristics of the form of human culture called **civilization**. At about the time the earliest civilizations were emerging, someone discovered how to combine tin and copper to make a stronger and more useful material—bronze. Archaeologists coined the term **Bronze Age** to refer to the period 3100–1200 B.C.E. in the Near East and eastern Mediterranean.

## EARLY CIVILIZATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO ABOUT 1000 B.C.E.

By 4000 B.C.E., people had settled in large numbers in the river-watered lowlands of Mesopotamia and Egypt. By about 3000 B.C.E., when the invention of writing gave birth to history, urban life and the organization of society into centralized states were well established in the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Mesopotamia and the Nile River in Egypt.

Urban life is possible only when farmers and stockbreeders produce a substantial surplus beyond their own needs, so that city dwellers can eat. Water also has to be controlled. Mesopotamians had to build dikes to keep rivers from flooding their fields in the spring, and they had to store water for use in the autumn. In Egypt the Nile River flooded at the right moment for cultivation, so irrigation was simply a matter of directing the water to the fields.

### MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION

Mesopotamia is divided into two ecological zones, Assyria (roughly north of modern Baghdad) and Babylonia to the south. The oldest Mesopotamian cities seem to have been founded by the Sumerians during the fourth millennium B.C.E. in southern Babylonia. By 3000 B.C.E., the Sumerian city of Uruk was the largest city in the world (see Map 1–1 on page 6).

From about 2800 to 2370 B.C.E., during the Early Dynastic period, Sumerian city-states formed leagues among themselves that apparently had both political and religious significance. Quarrels over water and agricultural land led to incessant warfare, and in time, stronger towns and leagues formed kingdoms.

The people who occupied northern Mesopotamia and Syria spoke mostly Semitic languages (that is, languages in the same family as Arabic and Hebrew). Many of these Semitic peoples absorbed aspects of Sumerian culture, especially writing. The Mesopotamians believed that the large city of Kish, in northern Babylonia, had history's first kings.

In the east, a people known as the Akkadians established their own kingdom at a capital city called Akkad, under their first king, Sargon. The Akkadians conquered all the Sumerian city-states and invaded southwestern Iran and northern Syria. This was history's first empire, having a heartland, provinces, and an absolute ruler. It included numerous peoples, cities, languages, and cultures, as well as different ecological zones. Sargon's name became legendary as the first great conqueror of history. His grandson, Naram-Sin, ruled from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea, with a standardized administration, vast wealth and power, and a grand style. Naram-Sin even declared himself a god. External attack and internal weakness destroyed the Akkadian Empire, but several smaller states survived independently.

### civilization

A form of human culture marked by urbanism, technological adaptation, social complexity, long-distance trade, and symbolic communication.

### Bronze Age

The name given to the earliest civilized era, ca. 3100 to 1200 B.C.E. The term reflects the importance of the metal bronze, a mixture of tin and copper, for the peoples of this age for use as weapons and tools.

**HOW DID** control over water resources influence early Middle Eastern civilizations?

### Read the Document

Geography and Civilization: Egypt and Mesopotamia-Impact of Agriculture at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

### Read the Document

Sumerian Law Code at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



**MAP 1-1. The Ancient Near East.** Two river valley civilizations thrived in the Ancient Near East: Egypt, which was united into a single state, and Mesopotamia, which was long divided into a number of city-states.

**What Factors** in local geography might help explain the different political histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia?

 **Read the Document**

Two Accounts of an Egyptian Famine 2600s B.C.E.: at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 **View the Image**

Hammurabi Receives His Law Code from the Gods at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

**cuneiform**

A writing system invented by the Sumerians that used a wedge-shaped stylus, or pointed tool, to write on wet clay tablets that were then baked or dried (*cuneus* means “wedge” in Latin). The writing was also cut into stone.

**chattel slavery**

A form of slavery in which humans are owned as goods; the slave has no legal standing as a person and few, if any, rights.

In about 2125 B.C.E. the Sumerian city of Ur rose to dominance. Sumerian culture and literature flourished. Epic poems glorified the deeds of the ancestors of the kings of Ur. A highly centralized administration kept detailed records. After little more than a century, the Third Dynasty of Ur disintegrated in the face of famine and invasion. Elamites attacked from the east and captured the king. The Semitic-speaking Amorites invaded from the north and west, settling around the Sumerian cities and eventually founding their own dynasties. The Sumerians gradually disappeared as an identifiable group. The Sumerian language survived only in writing as the learned language of Babylonia taught in schools and used by priests and scholars.

The Amorite kings of Isin maintained relative peace until they were challenged by another Amorite dynasty at the city of Larsa, and a period of warfare began. A powerful new dynasty at Babylon defeated Isin, Larsa, and other rivals and dominated Mesopotamia for nearly 300 years. Its high point was the reign of its most famous king, Hammurabi (r. ca. 1792–1750 B.C.E.), best known today for the collection of laws that bears his name.

The Sumerians invented the writing system now known as **cuneiform** (from the Latin *cuneus*, meaning “wedge”) because of the wedge-shaped marks they made by writing on clay tablets with a cut-reed stylus. The Sumerian writing system was hard to learn. It used several thousand characters, some of which stood for words and some for sounds. Literacy was restricted to an elite who could afford to go to school.

The Sumerians also began the development of mathematics. Before around 3000 B.C.E., people had not conceptualized the idea of numbers independently of counting specific things. Once an independent concept of number was established, mathematics developed rapidly. The Sumerian system was based on the number 60 (sexagesimal) rather than the number 10 (decimal). Sumerian counting survives in the modern 60-minute hour and the circle of 360 degrees. By the time of Hammurabi, the Mesopotamians were expert in many types of mathematics, including mathematical astronomy.

The Sumerians and their successors worshiped many gods and goddesses. These took human forms but differed from humans in their greater power, sublime position in the universe, and immortality. The Mesopotamians believed that the human race was created to serve the gods. The gods were considered universal but also as residing in specific places, usually one important god or goddess in each city. Mesopotamian temples were run like great households where the gods were fed lavish meals, entertained with music, and honored with devotion and ritual. The Mesopotamians were religiously tolerant and readily accepted the possibility that different people might have different gods.

The Mesopotamians had a vague and gloomy picture of the afterworld. The winged spirits of the dead were recognizable as individuals. They were confined to a dusty, dark netherworld, doomed to perpetual hunger and thirst unless someone offered them food and drink. There was no preferential treatment in the afterlife for those who had led religious or virtuous lives—everyone was in equal misery. Mesopotamian religion focused on problems of this world and how to lead a good life before dying.

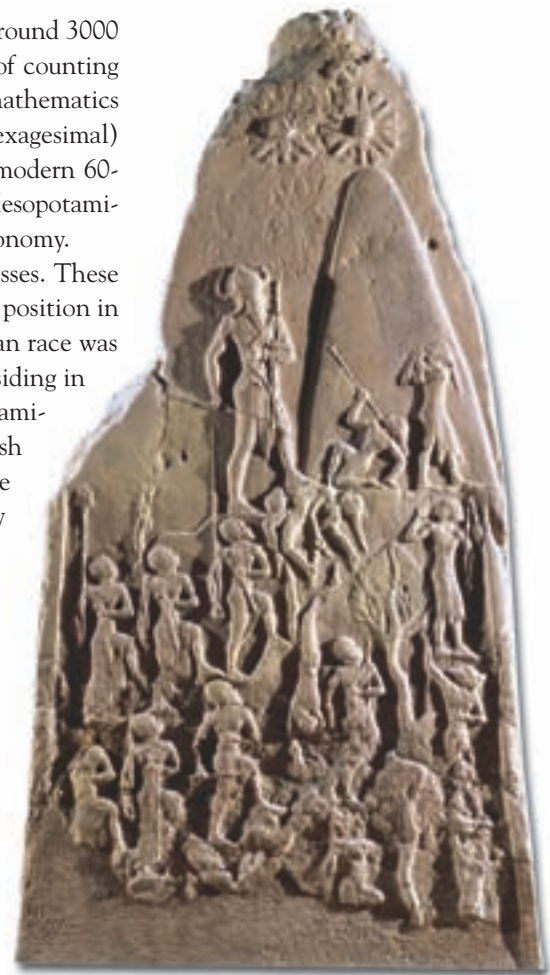
The Mesopotamian peoples who came after the Sumerians believed that the gods revealed a person's destiny to those who could understand the omens, or indications of what was going to happen. The Babylonians therefore developed an elaborate science of divination based on chance observations, such as a cat walking in the street, and on ritual procedures, such as asking a question of the gods and then slaughtering a sheep to examine its liver and entrails for certain marks and features. Illness was blamed on witchcraft.

Religion played a large part in the literature and art of Mesopotamia. Epic poems told of the deeds of the gods, such as how the world was created and organized, of a great flood the gods sent to wipe out the human race, and of the hero-king Gilgamesh, who tried to escape death by going on a fantastic journey to find the sole survivor of the great flood.

The most imposing religious structure was the *ziggurat*, a tower in stages, sometimes with a small chamber on top. The terraces may have been planted with trees to resemble a mountain. Their precise purpose is not known. Through the Bible, they have entered Western tradition as the Tower of Babel.

Hundreds of thousands of cuneiform texts—royal letters, administrative records, and numerous documents belonging to private families—reveal how peoples in ancient Mesopotamia conducted their lives. Many of Hammurabi's laws deal with commerce, land tenure, and land rights. The subject that is most highly regulated in Hammurabi's code is the maintenance and protection of family, including marriage, inheritance, and adoption. Parents usually arranged marriages, and the bride usually left her own family to join her husband's. A marriage started out monogamous, but a husband whose wife was childless or sickly could take a second wife. Women could own property and conduct business independently.

There were two main types of slavery in Mesopotamia: **chattel slavery** and **debt slavery**. Chattel slaves were bought like any other piece of property and had no legal rights. They were often non-Mesopotamians bought from slave merchants



**Akkadian Victory Stele.** The victory stele of Naram-Sin, king of Akkad, over the mountain-dwelling Lullubi, Mesopotamian, Akkadian period, ca. 2230 B.C.E. (pink sandstone). The king, wearing the horned helmet denoting divine power, strides forward at the head of his army. This is one of the finest sculptures to survive from the Akkadian period.

Louvre, Paris, France. The Bridgeman Art Library International Ltd.

**How does this glorify the king? What makes him seem especially important?**

## QUICK REVIEW

### Mesopotamian Religion

- ◆ Sumerians worshiped gods with human forms
- ◆ Babylonians sought evidence of divine action in movements of heavenly bodies
- ◆ Religion played an important part in Mesopotamian art and literature

#### Read the Document

The Development of Religion in Primitive Cultures at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

#### Read the Document

Excerpts from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)





## A Closer Look

### Babylonian World Map

Cartography was among the many intellectual achievements of the Babylonians. The map illustrated here was inscribed on a clay tablet in about 600 B.C.E., and appears to be the earliest surviving map of the world.

The Babylonians did not intend this map to be a precise or literal picture of the universe or even of the land on which human beings lived, for they omitted any representation of such important and numerous peoples as the Egyptians and Persians whom they knew very well.

There is a text written in cuneiform script above the picture and on the back of the tablet that helps make its identification as a map secure.

All the lands are encircled by a "Bitter River". Beyond that are seven islands arranged to form a seven-pointed star.

The tablet shows the world from a Babylonian point of view as flat and round, with Babylon sitting at its center on the Euphrates River.



Surrounding Babylon are cities and lands, including Armenia and Assyria.

Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum. © The British Museum.

### Questions

1. What can we learn from this map about how the Babylonians saw the world around them and their own place in it?
2. Why do you think this map locates some of the Babylonians' neighbors but ignores other important neighboring cultures?
3. Why has cartography remained so important throughout the ages?
4. Is the subjectivity reflected here confined to this map, or is it a general characteristic of cartography throughout history?



To examine this image in an interactive fashion, please go to [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

and were used in domestic service rather than in production. Chattel slaves were expensive luxuries. True chattel slavery did not become common until the Neo-Babylonian period (612–539 B.C.E.).

Debt slavery was more common. Rates of interest were high, as much as  $33\frac{1}{3}$  percent, so people often defaulted on loans. If debtors had pledged themselves or members of their families as surety for a loan, they became the slave of the creditor; their labor went to pay the interest on the loan. Debt slaves could not be sold but could redeem their freedom by paying off the loan. Slaves and masters often labored side by side; little separated them except the misfortune of indebtedness.

## EGYPTIAN CIVILIZATION

From its sources in Lake Victoria and the Ethiopian highlands, the Nile flows north some 4,000 miles to the Mediterranean. Ancient Egypt included the 750-mile stretch of smooth, navigable river from Aswan to the sea. South of Aswan the river's course is interrupted by several cataracts—rocky areas of rapids and whirlpools.

The Egyptians recognized two sets of geographical divisions in their country. Upper (southern) Egypt consisted of the narrow valley of the Nile. Lower (northern) Egypt referred to the broad triangular area, named by the Greeks after their letter *delta*, formed by the Nile as it branches out to empty into the Mediterranean. They also made a distinction between what they termed the “black land,” the dark fertile fields along the Nile, and the “red land,” the desert cliffs and plateaus bordering the valley.

The Nile alone made agriculture possible in Egypt's desert environment. Each year the rains of central Africa caused the river to rise over its floodplain. When the floodwaters receded, they left a rich layer of organically fertile silt. The construction and maintenance of canals, dams, and irrigation ditches to control the river's water, together with careful planning and organization of planting and harvesting, produced agricultural prosperity unmatched in the ancient world.

The Nile served as the major highway connecting Upper and Lower Egypt (see Map 1–2 on page 10). The cataracts, the desert, and the sea made Egypt relatively isolated. Egypt's security, along with the predictable flood calendar, gave its civilization a more optimistic outlook than that of Mesopotamia.

The 3,000-year span of ancient Egyptian history is traditionally divided into thirty-one royal dynasties, clustered into eight periods. During three so-called Intermediate periods, Egypt experienced political and social disintegration, and rival dynasties often set up separate power bases in Upper and Lower Egypt until a strong leader reunified the land. The unification of Egypt was vital, for it meant that the entire Nile valley could benefit from an unimpeded distribution of resources.

During the more than 400 years of the Old Kingdom (2700–2200 B.C.E.), Egypt enjoyed internal stability and great prosperity. The ruler, later given the title **pharaoh**, was a king who was also a god (the term comes from the Egyptian for “great house,” much as we use “White House” to refer to the president). From his capital at Memphis, the god-king ruled Egypt according to principles that included *maat*, an ideal of order, justice, and truth.

In return for the king's building and maintaining temples, the gods preserved the equilibrium of the state and ensured the king's continuing power, which was absolute. Because the king was obligated to act infallibly in a benign and beneficent manner, the welfare of the people of Egypt was automatically guaranteed and safeguarded.

## CHRONOLOGY

### KEY EVENTS AND PEOPLE IN MESOPOTAMIAN HISTORY

ca. 3500 B.C.E.	Development of Sumerian cities, especially Uruk
ca. 2800–2370 B.C.E.	Early Dynastic period of Sumerian city-states
ca. 2370 B.C.E.	Sargon establishes Akkadian Dynasty and Empire
ca. 2125–2027 B.C.E.	Third Dynasty of Ur
ca. 2000–1800 B.C.E.	Establishment of Amorites in Mesopotamia
ca. 1792–1750 B.C.E.	Reign of Hammurabi
ca. 1550 B.C.E.	Establishment of Kassite Dynasty at Babylon

### pharaoh

The god-kings of ancient Egypt. The term originally meant “great house” or palace.

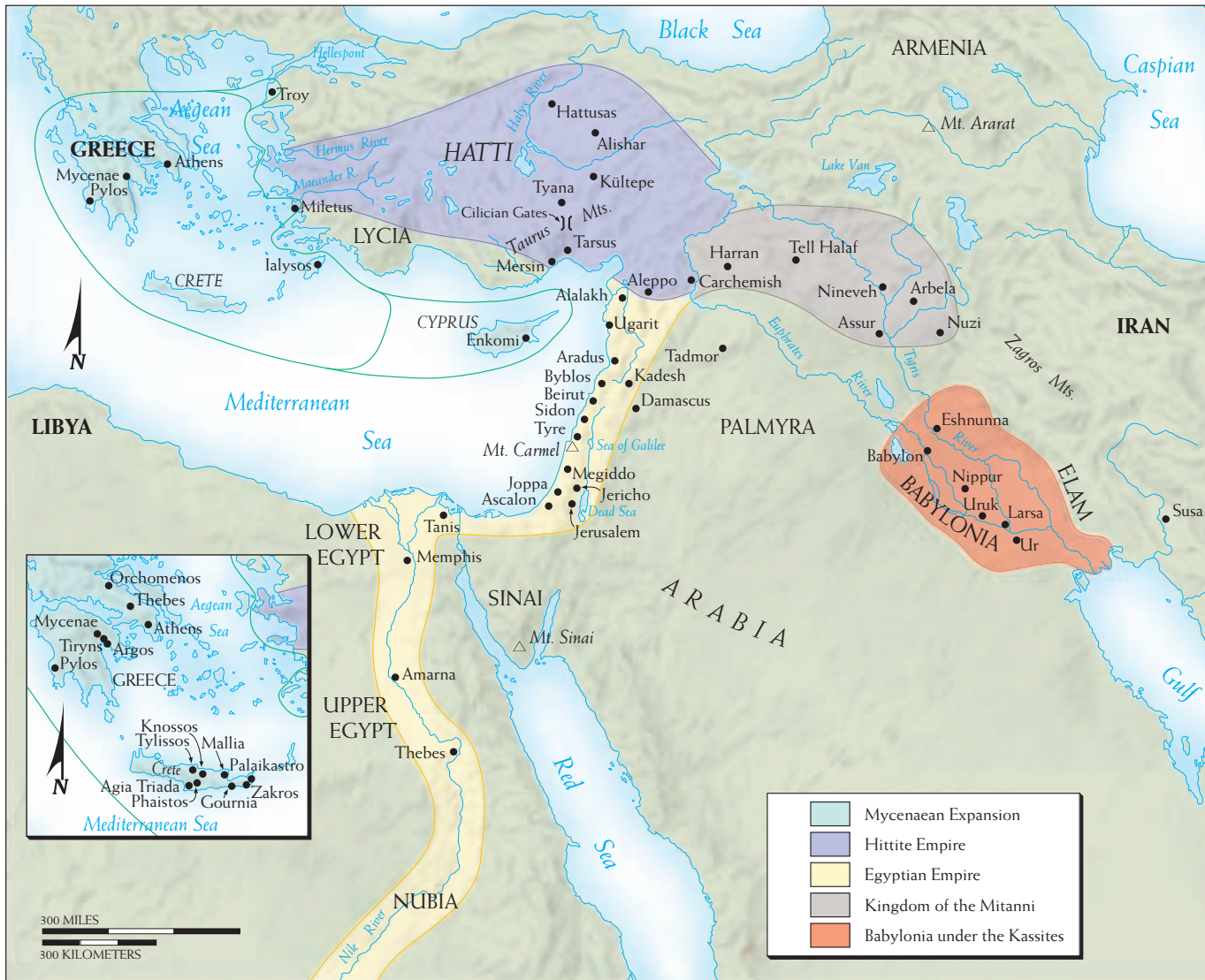
### Read the Document

Workings of Ma'at: “The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant” at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



MAP EXPLORATION

To explore this map further, go to <http://www.myhistorylab.com>



MAP 1-2. The Near East and Greece, ca. 1400 B.C.E.

About 1400 B.C.E., the Near East was divided among four empires. Egypt extended south to Nubia and north through Palestine and Phoenicia. Kassites ruled in Mesopotamia, Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Mitanni in Assyrian lands. In the Aegean, the Mycenaean kingdoms were at their height.

**Do Certain** empires seem more geographically “natural” to you than others? Besides coastal access and rivers, what physical factors might help unify some of these empires?

QUICK REVIEW

Egyptian Kingship

- ◆ Egyptian kings were considered gods
- ◆ Kings were the direct source of law and justice
- ◆ Egyptian government was an aspect of religion

Nothing better illustrates the nature of Old Kingdom royal power than the pyramids built as pharaonic tombs. Beginning in the Early Dynastic period, kings constructed increasingly elaborate burial complexes in Upper Egypt. Djoser, a Third Dynasty king, was the first to erect a monumental six-step pyramid of hard stone. Subsequent pharaohs built other stepped pyramids until Snefru, the founder of the Fourth Dynasty, converted a stepped pyramid to a true pyramid over the course of putting up three monuments.

Djoser’s son Khufu (Cheops in the Greek version of his name) chose the desert plateau of Giza, south of Memphis, as the site for the largest pyramid ever constructed. Its dimensions are prodigious: 481 feet high, 756 feet long on each side, and its base

covering 13.1 acres. The pyramid is made of 2.3 million stone blocks averaging 2.5 tons each. It is also a geometrical wonder, barely deviating from absolutely level and square.

Khufu's successors, Khafre (Chephren) and Menkaure (Mycerinus), built equally perfect pyramids at Giza, and together the three constitute one of the most extraordinary achievements in human history. Khafre also built the huge composite creature, part lion and part human, which the Greeks named the Sphinx. Recent research has shown that the Sphinx played a crucial role in the solar cult aspects of the pyramid complex.

The pyramids are remarkable not only for the great technical skill they demonstrate, but also for the concentration of resources they represent. They are evidence that the pharaohs controlled vast wealth and had the power to focus and organize enormous human effort over the years it took to build each pyramid. They also provide a visible indication of the nature of the Egyptian state: The pyramids, like the pharaohs, tower above the land, while the low tombs at their base, like the officials buried there, seem to huddle in relative unimportance.

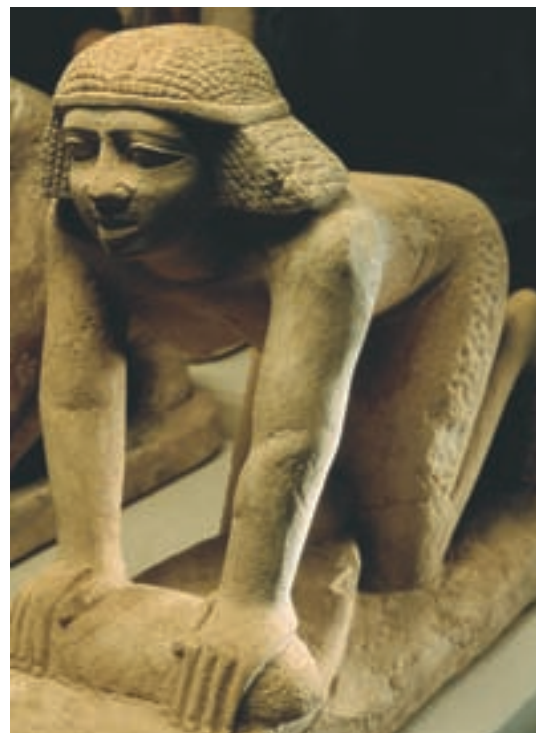
In about 2200 B.C.E. the Old Kingdom collapsed and gave way to the decentralization and disorder of the First Intermediate period (2200–2025 B.C.E.). Later, Middle Kingdom (2025–1630 B.C.E.) pharaohs sought to evoke the past by building pyramid complexes like those of the later Old Kingdom rulers. Yet the events of the First Intermediate period had irrevocably changed the nature of Egyptian kingship. Gone was the absolute, distant god-king; the king was now more directly concerned with his people. In art, instead of the supremely confident faces of the Old Kingdom pharaohs, the Middle Kingdom rulers seem thoughtful, careworn, and brooding.

Egypt's relations with its neighbors became more aggressive during the Middle Kingdom. To the south, royal fortresses were built to control Nubia and the growing trade in African resources. To the north and east, Syria and Palestine increasingly came under Egyptian influence, even as fortifications sought to prevent settlers from the Levant from moving into the Delta.

The western Delta established an independent dynasty, ushering in the Second Intermediate period (1630–1550 B.C.E.). The eastern Delta came under the control of the Hyksos. Much later sources describe the Hyksos as ruthless invaders from parts unknown, but they were almost certainly Amorites from the Levant, part of the gradual infiltration of the Delta during the Middle Kingdom. After nearly a century of rule, the Hyksos were expelled, and the New Kingdom (1550–1075 B.C.E.) was established. During the Eighteenth Dynasty, Egypt pursued foreign expansion with renewed vigor. Military expeditions reached as far north as the Euphrates in Syria with frequent campaigns in the Levant. To the south, major Egyptian temples were built in the Sudan. Egypt's economic and political power was at its height.

Egypt's position was reflected in the unprecedented luxury and cosmopolitanism of the royal court and in the ambitious palace and temple projects undertaken throughout the country. The Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs were the first to cut their tombs deep into the rock cliffs of a desolate valley in Thebes, known today as the Valley of the Kings. To date, only one intact royal tomb has been discovered there, that of the young Eighteenth Dynasty king Tutankhamun, and even it had been disturbed shortly after his death. The thousands of goods buried with him, many of them marvels of craftsmanship, give a glimpse of Egypt's material wealth during this period.

Following the premature death of Tutankhamun in 1323 B.C.E., a military commander named Horemheb assumed the kingship, which passed in turn to his own army



**Making Bread.** A hallmark of the early river civilizations was the development of techniques to increase harvests. This statue from the Old Kingdom in Egypt (ca. 2700–2200 B.C.E.) shows a woman kneading dough for bread.

**What clues does this sculpture offer about this woman's quality of life?**

[View the Image](#)  
The Pyramids at Giza  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

[View the Image](#)  
The Sphinx at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

[See the Map](#)  
Egypt in the Middle Kingdom  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



**Pyramids at Giza.** The three largest pyramids of Egypt, located at Giza, near Cairo, are the colossal tombs of pharaohs of the Fourth Dynasty (ca. 2640–2510 B.C.E.): Khufu (right), Chafre (center), and Menkaure (left). The small pyramids and tombs at their bases were those of the pharaohs' queens and officials.

**What does the relative size of these pyramids suggest about the distribution of power in ancient Egypt?**

 [View the Image](#)  
at [myhistorylab.com](#)



 [View the Image](#)  
Great Temple of Abu Simbel  
at [myhistorylab.com](#)

 [See the Map](#)  
Egypt in the New Kingdom  
at [myhistorylab.com](#)

### hieroglyphs

The complicated writing script of ancient Egypt. It combined picture writing with pictographs and sound signs. Hieroglyph means “sacred carvings” in Greek.

commander, Ramses I. The Ramessides of Dynasty 19 undertook numerous monumental projects, among them Ramses II's rock-cut temples at Abu Simbel, south of the First Cataract, which had to be moved to a higher location when the Aswan High Dam was built in the 1960s. There and elsewhere, Ramses II left textual and pictorial accounts of his battle in 1285 B.C.E. against the Hittites at Kadesh on the Orontes in Syria. Sixteen years later, the Egyptians and Hittites signed a formal peace treaty, forging an alliance against an increasingly volatile political situation in the Middle East and the eastern Mediterranean during the thirteenth century B.C.E.

Merneptah, one of the hundred offspring of Ramses II, held off a hostile Libyan attack, as well as incursions by the Sea Peoples, a loose coalition of Mediterranean raiders who seem to have provoked and taken advantage of unsettled conditions. One of Merneptah's inscriptions commemorating his military triumphs contains the first known mention of Israel.

Despite Merneptah's efforts, by the end of the Twentieth Dynasty, Egypt's period of imperial glory had passed. The next thousand years witnessed a Third Intermediate period, a Saite renaissance, Persian domination, conquest by Alexander the Great, the Ptolemaic period, and finally, defeat at the hands of the Roman emperor Octavian in 30 B.C.E.

Writing first appears in Egypt about 3000 B.C.E. The writing system, dubbed **hieroglyphs** (“sacred carvings”) by the Greeks, was highly sophisticated, involving hundreds of picture signs that remained relatively constant in the way they were rendered for

over 3,000 years. Texts were usually written horizontally from right to left but could be written from left to right, as well as vertically from top to bottom in both horizontal directions. Egyptian literature includes narratives, myths, books of instruction in wisdom, letters, religious texts, and poetry, written on papyri, limestone flakes, and potsherds. The Egyptian language, part of the Afro-Asiatic (or Hamito-Semitic) family, evolved through several stages—Old, Middle, and Late Egyptian, Demotic, and Coptic—and has a history of continuous recorded use well into the medieval period.

The Egyptian gods, or pantheon, defy neat categorization, in part because of the common tendency to combine the character and function of one or more

## CHRONOLOGY

### MAJOR PERIODS IN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN HISTORY (DYNASTIES IN ROMAN NUMERALS)

<b>3100–2700 B.C.E.</b>	Early Dynastic period (I–II)
<b>2700–2200 B.C.E.</b>	Old Kingdom (III–VI)
<b>2200–2025 B.C.E.</b>	First Intermediate period (VII–XI)
<b>2025–1630 B.C.E.</b>	Middle Kingdom (XII–XIII)
<b>1630–1550 B.C.E.</b>	Second Intermediate period (XIV–XVII)
<b>1550–1075 B.C.E.</b>	New Kingdom (XVIII–XX)

gods. Amun, one of the eight entities in the Hermopolitan cosmogony, provides a good example. Thebes, Amun's cult center, rose to prominence in the Middle Kingdom. In the New Kingdom, Amun was elevated above his seven cohorts and took on aspects of the sun god Re to become Amun-Re.

Not surprisingly in a nearly rainless land, solar cults and mythologies were highly developed. Much thought was devoted to conceptualizing what happened as the sun god made his perilous way through the underworld in the night hours between sunset and sunrise. Three long texts trace Re's journey as he vanquishes immense snakes and other foes.

The Eighteenth Dynasty was one of several periods during which solar cults were in ascendancy. Early in his reign, Amunhotep IV promoted a single, previously minor aspect of the sun, the Aten ("disc") above Re himself and the rest of the gods. He declared that the Aten was the creator god who brought life to humankind and all living beings, with himself and his queen Nefertiti the sole mediators between the Aten and the people. He went further, changing his name to Akhenaten ("the effective spirit of the Aten"), building a new capital called Akhetaten ("the horizon of the Aten") near Amarna north of Thebes and chiseling out the name of Amun from inscriptions everywhere. Shortly after his death, Amarna was abandoned and partially razed. A large diplomatic archive of tablets written in Akkadian was left at the site, which give us a vivid, if one-sided, picture of the political correspondence of the day. During the reigns of Akhenaten's successors, Tutankhamun (born Tutankhaten) and Horemheb, Amun was restored to his former position, and Akhenaten's monuments were defaced and even demolished.

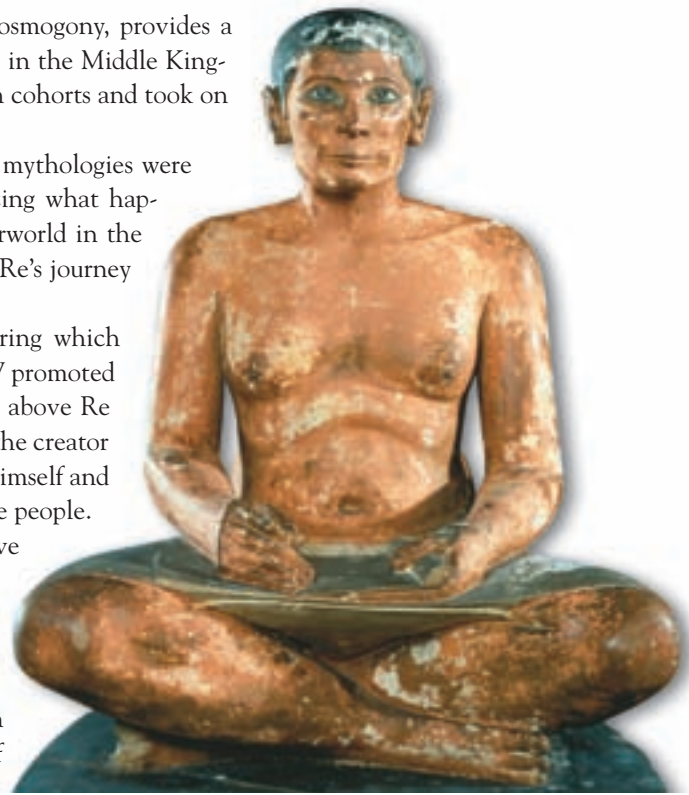
In representations, Egyptian gods have human bodies, possess human or animal heads, and wear crowns, celestial discs, or thorns. The lone exception is the Aten, made nearly abstract by Akhenaten, who altered its image to a plain disc with solar rays ending in small hands holding the hieroglyphic sign for life to the nostrils of Akhenaten and Nefertiti. The gods were thought to reside in their cult centers, where, from the New Kingdom on, increasingly ostentatious temples were built and staffed by full-time priests. At Thebes, for instance, for over 2,000 years successive kings enlarged the great Karnak temple complex dedicated to Amun.

Though the ordinary person could not enter a temple precinct, great festivals took place for all to see. During Amun's major festival of Opet, the statue of the god traveled in a divine boat along the Nile, whose banks were thronged with spectators.

The Egyptians thought that the afterlife was full of dangers, which could be overcome by magical means, among them the spells in the *Book of the Dead*.

The goals were to join and be identified with the gods, especially Osiris, or to sail in the "boat of millions." Originally only the king could hope to enjoy immortality with the gods, but gradually this became available to all. Since the Egyptians believed that the preservation of the body was essential for continued existence in the afterlife, early on they developed mummification, a process that by the New Kingdom took seventy days.

It is difficult to assess the position of women in Egyptian society because our pictorial and textual evidence comes almost entirely from male sources. Women's prime roles were connected with the management of the household. They could not hold office, go to scribal schools, or become artisans. Nevertheless, women could own and control property, sue for divorce, and, at least in theory, enjoy equal legal protection. Royal women often wielded considerable influence. The most remarkable was Hatshepsut, who ruled as pharaoh for nearly twenty years.



**Seated Egyptian Scribe.** One of the hallmarks of the early river valley civilizations was the development of writing. Ancient Egyptian scribes had to undergo rigorous training but were rewarded with a position of respect and privilege. This statue from the Fifth Dynasty (ca. 2510–2460 B.C.E.) is of painted limestone and measures 21 inches (53 cm) in height.

Musée du Louvre, Paris, © Giraudon/ Art Resource, New York.

**What clues does this sculpture offer about this man's quality of life?**

 **Watch the Video**  
The Temple of Karnak  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 **Read the Document**  
Papyrus of Ani, The Egyptian Book of the Dead c. 1200 B.C.E. at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 **View the Image**  
Scene from the Egyptian Afterlife  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



**Scene from the *Book of the Dead*.** The Egyptians believed in the possibility of life after death through the god Osiris. Before the person could be presented to Osiris, forty-two assessor-gods tested aspects of the person's life. In this scene from a papyrus manuscript of the *Book of the Dead*, the deceased and his wife (on the left) watch the scales of justice weighing his heart (on the left side of the scales) against the feather of truth. The jackal-headed god Anubis also watches the scales, while the ibis-headed god Thoth keeps the record.

**What does the presence of so many gods at a person's judgment ceremony suggest about the Egyptians' sense of an individual's significance?**



 [View the Image](#)  
Egyptian Relief of Anubis  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 [Watch the Video](#)  
Ramses II's Abu Simbel  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

## QUICK REVIEW

### Women in Ancient Egypt

- ◆ Household management was women's responsibility
- ◆ In theory women had legal rights equal to men's
- ◆ Royal women could hold great power



**HOW DID** conquest and trade shape early empires in the Near East?

In art, both royal and nonroyal women are conventionally shown smaller than their husbands or sons, yet it is probably of greater significance that they are so frequently depicted in such a wide variety of contexts. Much care was lavished on details of their gestures, clothing, and hairstyles. With their husbands, they attend banquets, boat in the papyrus marshes, make and receive offerings, and supervise the myriad affairs of daily life.

Slaves did not become numerous in Egypt until the growth of Egyptian imperial power in the Middle Kingdom and the imperial expansion of the New Kingdom. Black Africans from Nubia to the south and Asians from the east were captured in war, branded, and brought back to Egypt as slaves. Sometimes an entire people were enslaved, as the Hebrews were, according to the Bible. Slaves in Egypt performed many tasks. Egyptian slaves could be freed, although manumission seems to have been rare. Nonetheless, former slaves were not set apart and could expect to be assimilated into the mass of the population.

## ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN EMPIRES

In the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt, new groups of peoples had established themselves in the Near East: the Kassites in Babylonia, the Hittites in Asia Minor, and the Mitannians in northern Syria and Mesopotamia (see Map 1–2). The Kassites and Mitannians were warrior peoples who ruled as a minority over more civilized folk and absorbed their culture. The Hittites established a kingdom of their own and forged an empire that lasted some 200 years.

### THE HITTITES

The Hittites were an Indo-European people, speaking a language related to Greek and Sanskrit. By about 1500 B.C.E., the Hittites had established a strong, centralized government with a capital near Ankara, the capital of modern Turkey. Between 1400 and 1200 B.C.E., they contested Egypt's control of Palestine and Syria. They played an important role in transmitting the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia and Egypt to the Greeks, who lived on their western frontier. The government of the Hittites was different from that of Mesopotamia in that Hittite kings did not claim to be divine or even to be the chosen representatives of the gods. In the early period, a council of nobles limited the king's power, and the assembled army had to ratify his succession to the throne.

 [Read the Document](#)  
Hittite Law Code: excerpts from *The Code of the Nesilim* at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

By 1200 B.C.E., the Hittite Kingdom disappeared, swept away in invasions and the collapse of Middle Eastern nation-states at that time. Successors to the empire, called the Neo-Hittite states, flourished in southern Asia Minor and northern Syria until the Assyrians destroyed them in the first millennium B.C.E.

An important technological change took place in northern Anatolia, somewhat earlier than the creation of the Hittite Kingdom, but perhaps within its region. This was the discovery of how to smelt iron and the decision to use it rather than copper or bronze to manufacture weapons and tools. Archaeologists refer to the period after 1100 B.C.E. as the Iron Age.

### THE KASSITES

The Kassites were a people of unknown origin who spoke their own language and who established at Babylon a dynasty that ruled for nearly 500 years. The Kassites were organized into large tribal families and carved out great domains for themselves in Babylonia. They promoted Babylonian culture, and many of the most important works of Babylonian literature were written during their rule. They supported a military aristocracy based on horses and chariots, the prestige weaponry of the age.

### THE MITANNIANS

The Mitannians belonged to a large group of people called the Hurrians, some of whom had been living in Mesopotamia and Syria in the time of the kings of Akkad and Ur. Their language is imperfectly understood, and the location of their capital city, Washukanni, is uncertain. The Hurrians were important mediators of Mesopotamian culture to Syria and Anatolia. They developed the art of chariot warfare and horse training to a high degree and created a large state that reached from the Euphrates to the foothills of Iran. The Hittites destroyed their kingdom, and the Assyrian Empire eventually incorporated what was left of it.

### THE ASSYRIANS

The Assyrians were originally a people living in Assur, a city in northern Mesopotamia on the Tigris River. They spoke a Semitic language closely related to Babylonian. They had a proud, independent culture heavily influenced by Babylonia. Assur had been an early center for trade but emerged as a political power during the fourteenth century B.C.E., after the decline of Mitanni. The first Assyrian Empire spread north and west against the neo-Hittite states but was brought to an end in the general collapse of Near Eastern states at the end of the second millennium. A people called the Arameans, a Semitic nomadic and agricultural people originally from northern Syria who spoke a language called Aramaic, invaded Assyria. Aramaic is still used in parts of the Near East and is one of the languages of medieval Jewish and Middle Eastern Christian culture.

### THE SECOND ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

After 1000 B.C.E., the Assyrians began a second period of expansion, and by 665 B.C.E. they controlled all of Mesopotamia, much of southern Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt to its southern frontier.

They succeeded thanks to a large, well-disciplined army and a society that valued military skills. Some Assyrian kings boasted of their atrocities, so that their names inspired terror throughout the Near East. They constructed magnificent palaces at Nineveh and Nimrud (near modern Mosul, Iraq), surrounded by parks and gardens.



**Assyrian Palace Relief.** This eighth-century B.C.E. relief of a hero gripping a lion formed part of the decoration of an Assyrian palace. The immense size of the figure and his powerful limbs and muscles may well have suggested the might of the Assyrian king.

Gilgamesh. Relief from the Temple of Saragon II, Khorsabad. Assyrian, 8th century B.C.E. Giraudon/Art Resource, New York.

**What else besides size and muscles suggests the power of this king?**

 **Read the Document**

Empire of Assyria, ca. 1800 B.C.E.  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)





## CHRONOLOGY

### KEY EVENTS IN THE HISTORY OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN EMPIRES

<b>ca. 1400–1200 B.C.E.</b>	Hittite Empire
<b>ca. 1100 B.C.E.</b>	Rise of Assyrian power
<b>732–722 B.C.E.</b>	Assyrian conquest of Syria–Palestine
<b>671 B.C.E.</b>	Assyrian conquest of Egypt
<b>612 B.C.E.</b>	Destruction of Assyrian capital at Nineveh
<b>612–539 B.C.E.</b>	Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire

The Assyrians systematically exploited their empire. They used various methods of control, collecting tribute from some regions, stationing garrisons in others, and sometimes pacifying districts by deporting and scattering their inhabitants.

The empire became too large to govern efficiently. The last years of Assyria are obscure, but civil war apparently divided the country. The Medes, a powerful people from western and central Iran, had been expanding across the Iranian plateau. They were feared for their cavalry and archers, against which traditional Middle Eastern armies were ineffective. The Medes attacked Assyria and were joined by the Babylonians, who had al-

ways been restive under Assyrian rule, under the leadership of a general named Nebuchadnezzar. In 612 B.C.E., they so thoroughly destroyed the Assyrian cities, including Nineveh, that Assyria never recovered. The ruins of the great Assyrian palaces lay untouched until archaeologists began to explore them in the nineteenth century.

### THE NEO-BABYLONIANS

The Medes did not follow up on their conquests, so Nebuchadnezzar took over much of the Assyrian Empire. Under him and his successors, Babylon grew into one of the greatest cities of the world.

The Greek traveler Herodotus described its wonders, including its great temples, fortification walls, boulevards, parks, and palaces, to a Greek readership that had never seen the like. Babylon prospered as a center of world trade, linking Egypt, India, Iran, and Syria–Palestine by land and sea routes. For centuries, an astronomical center at Babylon kept detailed records of observations that were the longest running chronicle of the ancient world. Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty did not last long, and the government passed to various men in rapid succession. The last independent king of Babylon set up a second capital in the Arabian Desert and tried to force the Babylonians to honor the moon god above all other gods. He allowed dishonest or incompetent speculators to lease huge areas of temple land for their personal profit. These policies proved unpopular—some said that the king was insane—and many Babylonians may have welcomed the Persian conquest that came in 539 B.C.E. After that, Babylonia began another, even more prosperous phase of its history as one of the most important provinces of another great Eastern empire, that of the Persians. We shall return to the Persians in Chapter 4.



The Neo-Babylonian Empire, ca. 580 B.C.E.  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

## EARLY INDIAN CIVILIZATION



**WHAT INFLUENCES**  
did the first Indus valley civilization have on later Indian religious and social practices?

To the east of Mesopotamia, beyond the Iranian plateau and the mountains of Baluchistan, the Asian continent bends sharply southward below the Himalayan mountain barrier to form the Indian subcontinent (see Map 1–3 on page 17). Several sizable rivers flow west and south out of the Himalayas in Kashmir and the Punjab (*Panjab*, “five rivers”), merging into the single stream of the Indus River in Sind before emptying into the Indian Ocean. The headwaters of South Asia's other great river system—the Ganges and its tributaries—are also in the Himalayas but flow south and east to the Bay of Bengal on the opposite side of the subcontinent.



**MAP 1-3. Indus and Vedic Aryan Cultures.**

Indus culture likely influenced the Vedic Aryans, although the influence cannot be proved. Some scholars surmise, for example, that the fortified Aryan city of Hariyupiya, mentioned in later texts, may have been the same site as the older Indus city of Harappa.

**What Geographical** features appear to have influenced the size and shape of regions dominated by different cultures?

The subcontinent's earliest literate, urban civilization arose in the valley of the Indus River sometime after 2600 B.C.E. and by about 2300 B.C.E. was trading with Mesopotamia. Known as the **Harappan** or Indus civilization, it lasted only a few centuries. The region's second identifiable civilization dates to about 1500 B.C.E. and is known as the Vedic Aryan civilization—after the nomadic Indo-European immigrant people, or **Aryans**, who founded it, and their holy texts, or **Vedas**. This civilization endured for nearly 1,000 years without cities or writing, but its religious and social traditions commingled with older traditions in the subcontinent to form the Indian civilization as it has developed over the past 2,500 years.

#### **Harappan**

Term used to describe the first civilization of the Indus valley.

#### **Aryans**

The Indo-European speakers who invaded India and Iran in the second and first millennia B.C.E.

#### **Vedas**

The sacred texts of the ancient Aryan invaders of India. The Rig-Vedas are the oldest materials in the Vedas.



## THE INDUS CIVILIZATION

Archaeologists discovered the existence of the Indus culture at the site of Harappa in the 1920s. Since then, some seventy cities, the largest being Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, have been identified. This urban civilization had bronze tools, writing, covered drainage systems, and a diversified social and economic organization. Because its writing is still undeciphered, it remains the least understood of the early river valley civilizations. Archaeological evidence and inferences from later Indian life, however, allow us to reconstruct something of its highly developed and once thriving culture.

The Indus culture covered a huge area, yet it was remarkably homogeneous. City layouts, building construction, weights and measures, seal inscriptions, patterned pottery and figurines, and even the burnt brick used for buildings and flood walls are unusually uniform in all Indus towns, suggesting an integrated economic system and good internal communications.

Indus culture was also remarkably constant over time. Because the main cities and towns lay in river lowlands subject to flooding, they were rebuilt often, with each reconstruction closely following the previous pattern. Similarly, the Indus script, known from more than 2,000 stamp seals and apparently using both pictographic and phonetic symbols, shows no evidence of change over time. This evidence of stability, regularity, and traditionalism has led scholars to speculate that a centralized government, perhaps a conservative (priestly) theocracy, controlled this far-flung society.

Both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro apparently had populations of more than 35,000 and were meticulously designed on a similar plan. To the west of each town stood a large, walled citadel on a raised rectangular platform. The town proper was laid out on a grid of main avenues, some as wide as 30 feet. The “blocks” formed by the main avenues were crisscrossed by small, less rigidly planned lanes, off which opened private houses, sometimes of more than one story. The typical house was built around a central courtyard and presented only blank walls to the lanes or streets outside, an arrangement still com-

mon in many Near Eastern and South Asian cities.

Perhaps the most striking feature of these cities was a complex system of covered drains and sewers. Private houses were serviced by wells, bathrooms, and latrines, and the great bath at Mohenjo-Daro was filled from its own large well. The drainage system that served these facilities was an engineering feat unrivaled until the time of the Romans, nearly 2,000 years later.

The economy of the Indus state or states was based on agriculture. Wheat and barley were the main crops. The Indus valley people wove cloth from cotton, made metal tools, and used the potter’s wheel. Evidence points to trade between the Indus culture and Mesopotamia. Metals and semiprecious stones were apparently imported into the Indus region from present-day Iran and Afghanistan, as well as from Central Asia, from farther south on the Indian peninsula, and perhaps from Arabia. Similarities in artistic styles suggest that trade contacts resulted in cultural borrowings.

Among the most striking accomplishments of the Indus culture are fine bronze and stone sculptures. Other evidence of the skill of Indus artisans includes copper and bronze tools and vessels, black-on-red painted pottery, dressed stonework, stone and terra-cotta figurines and toys, silver vessels and ornaments, gold jewelry, and dyed woven fabric.



**Ancient Mohenjo-Daro.** Like most cities of the Indus valley civilization, Mohenjo-Daro was built principally of mud brick. The structures are laid on straight lines; streets cross each other at right angles. The impression is one of order, prosperity, and civic discipline.

Borromeo/Art Resource, New York.

**How do the uniformity and regular placement of bricks influence your reaction to this site?**

The elaborate bath facilities suggest that ritual bathing and water purification rites were important, as they still are in India today. The stone images from the so-called temples of Mohenjo-Daro and the more common terra-cotta figurines from other sites also suggest links to later Indian religious practices and symbols. The many images of male animals such as the humped bull might be symbols of power and fertility or might indicate animal worship. A recurring image of a male figure with leafy headdress and horns, often seated in a posture associated later in India with yogic meditation, has been likened to the Vedic Aryan “Lord of All Creatures.” Terra-cotta figurines of females, often pregnant or carrying a child, are similar to female images in several prehistoric cultures. As possible precursors of Shiva’s consort, they too may represent an element of pre-Aryan religion that reemerged later to figure in “Hindu” culture. Other aspects of Indus religion—burial customs, for example—are not clearly related to later Indian practices.

Sometime between 1800 and 1700 B.C.E., Indus civilization disappeared. Aryan invaders, changes in the course of the Indus, or a long period of dessication might have contributed to the Indus culture’s demise. This civilization remains too shadowy for us to measure its influence, but Harappan predecessors of the Aryans likely contributed to later life in the subcontinent in ways that we have yet to discover.

### THE VEDIC ARYAN CIVILIZATION

We know more about the Aryan culture that effectively “refounded” Indian civilization around 1500 B.C.E. Yet unlike Indus civilization, it was not urban and left neither city ruins nor substantial artifacts beyond tools, weapons, and pottery. Virtually our only source of knowledge about ancient Aryan life are the words of the Vedas, the Aryan sacred texts—hence we know the culture as “Vedic.” Although the latest Vedic texts date from perhaps 500 B.C.E., the earliest may go back to 1700 B.C.E. Transmitted orally through the centuries, the Vedas were not written down until writing was reintroduced to India sometime after 700 B.C.E. The Vedas are priestly works, not histories; they reveal little about events but do offer insight into the religion, society, values, and thought of early Aryan India.

*Veda*, which means “knowledge,” is the collective term for the texts still recognized today by most Indians as the holiest sources of their tradition. For Hindus, *Veda* is the eternal wisdom of primordial seers preserved for thousands of years in an unbroken oral tradition. The Vedas are the four major compilations of Vedic ritual, explanatory, and speculative texts. The collection of 1,028 religious hymns known as the *Rig-Veda* represents the oldest materials of the Vedas. The latest of these hymns date from about 1000 B.C.E., the oldest from perhaps 1700–1200 B.C.E., when the Aryans spread across the northern plains to the upper reaches of the Ganges.

*Aryan* is a different kind of term. The second-millennium invaders of northern India called themselves *Aryas* as opposed to the peoples whom they conquered. Vedic Sanskrit, the language of the invaders, gave this word to later Sanskrit as a term for “noble” or “free-born” (*arya*). The word is found also in old Iranian, or Persian, texts, and even the term *Iran* is derived from the Old Persian equivalent of *arya*. The peoples who came to India are more precisely designated Indo-Aryans, or Vedic Aryans.

In the nineteenth century, *Aryan* was the term applied to the widespread language group known today as **Indo-European**. This family includes Greek, Latin, the Romance and Germanic languages, the Slavic tongues, and the Indo-Iranian languages, including Persian and Sanskrit and their derivatives. The Nazis perversely misused “Aryan” to refer to a white “master race.” Today most scholars use *Aryan* only to

### QUICK REVIEW

#### Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro

- ◆ Both cities had populations of more than 35,000 people
- ◆ The cities were laid out in grids
- ◆ Both had complex systems of drains and sewers



**Indus Stamp Seal.** Note the familiar humped bull of India on this stone stamp seal.

© Scala/Art Resource, New York.

**What impression does the level of detail in this depiction give you?**

#### Indo-European

A widely distributed language group that includes most of the languages spoken in Europe, Persian, Sanskrit, and their derivatives.



identify the Indo-European speakers who invaded India and the Iranian plateau in the second millennium B.C.E. and the Indo-Iranian languages.

The Vedic Aryans were seminomadic warriors who reached India in small tribal groups through the mountain passes of the Hindu Kush. They were horsemen and cattle herders rather than farmers and city builders. They left their mark not in material culture but in the changes that their conquests brought to the regions they overran: a new language, social organization, techniques of warfare, and religious forms and ideas.

The early Aryans penetrated first into the Punjab and the Indus valley around 1800–1500 B.C.E., presumably in search of grazing lands for their livestock. Their horses, chariots, and copper-bronze weapons likely gave them military superiority over the Indus peoples or their successors. Rig-Vedic hymns echo these early conflicts. One late hymn praises the king of the *Bharatas*, giving us the Indian name for modern India, *Bharat*, “land of the Bharatas.”

During the Rig-Vedic age (ca. 1700–1000 B.C.E.), the newcomers settled in the Punjab and beyond, where they took up agriculture and stockbreeding. Then, between about 1000 and 500 B.C.E., the *Late Vedic Age*, these Aryan Indians spread across the plain between the Yamuna and the Ganges and eastward. They cleared (probably by burning) the heavy forests that covered this region and then settled there. They also moved farther northeast to the Himalayan foothills and southeast along the Ganges, in what was to be the cradle of subsequent Indian civilization. The late Vedic period is also called the Brahmanic Age because it was dominated by the priestly religion of the Brahman class, as evidenced in commentaries called the *Brahmanas* (ca. 1000–800 or 600 B.C.E.). It is also sometimes called the Epic Age because it provided the setting for India’s two classical epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.

Both epics reflect the complex cultural and social mixing of Aryan and other earlier subcontinent peoples.

By about 200 CE, this mixing produced a distinctive new “Indian” civilization over most of the subcontinent. Its basis was clearly Aryan, but its language, society, and religion incorporated many non-Aryan elements. Harappan culture vanished, but both it and other regional cultures contributed to the formation of Indian culture as we know it.

Aryan society was apparently patrilineal—with succession and inheritance in the male line—and its gods were likewise predominantly male. Marriage appears to have been monogamous, and widows could remarry. Related families formed larger kin groups. The largest social grouping was the tribe, ruled by a chieftain or *raja* (“king” in Sanskrit), who shared power with a tribal council. In early Vedic days the ruler was chosen for his prowess; his chief responsibility was to lead in battle, and he had no priestly function or sacred authority. A chief priest looked after the sacrifices on which religious life centered. By the Brahmanic age the king, with the help of priests, had assumed the role of judge in legal matters and become a hereditary ruler claiming divine qualities. The power of the priestly class had also increased.

Although there were probably subgroups of warriors and priests, Aryan society seems originally to have had only two basic divisions: noble and common. The Dasas—the darker, conquered peoples—came to form a third group (together with those who intermarried with them) of the socially excluded. Over time, a more rigid scheme of four social classes (excluding the non-Aryan Dasas) evolved. By the late Rig-Vedic period, religious theory explicitly sanctioned these four divisions, or *varnas*—the priestly (*Brahman*), the warrior/noble (*Kshatriya*), the peasant/tradesman (*Vaishya*), and the servant (*Shudra*). Only the members of the three upper classes participated fully in social, political, and religious life. This scheme underlies the rigid caste system that later became fundamental to Indian society.

### **Mahabharata and Ramayana**

The two classical Indian epics.

 Read the Document

Excerpt from Mahābhārata  
(1000–600 B.C.E.) at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

### **raja**

An Indian king.

## OVERVIEW The First Civilizations

Civilization is a form of human culture usually marked by the development of cities, the ability to make and use metal tools and instruments, and the invention of a system of writing. The first civilizations appeared in the Middle East between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E., and by the second millennium B.C.E., there were civilized societies in Eurasia, China, and the Americas.

<b>Mesopotamia</b>	Sumerians arrive in the Tigris-Euphrates River valley, ca. 3500 B.C.E., and establish the first city-states, ca. 2800 B.C.E.
<b>Egypt</b>	Egyptian civilization develops along the Nile River, ca. 3100 B.C.E. Egypt becomes a unified state, ca. 2700 B.C.E.
<b>Indus Valley</b>	Flourishing urban civilization develops in northern India along the Indus River, ca. 2250 B.C.E.
<b>China</b>	City-states appear in the Yellow River basin, ca. 1766 B.C.E.
<b>Americas</b>	Agricultural surplus gives rise to the first cities in Mesoamerica, ca. 1500 B.C.E., and to the first Andean civilization in South America, ca. 2750 B.C.E.

The early seminomadic Aryans lived simply in wood-and-thatch or, later, mud-walled dwellings. They measured wealth in cattle and were accomplished at carpentry and bronze working (iron probably was not known in India before 1000 B.C.E.). They used gold for ornamentation and produced woolen textiles. They also cultivated some crops, especially grains, and were familiar with intoxicating drinks, including soma, used in religious rites, and a kind of mead. Music and gambling with dice appear to have been popular.

The Brahmanic Age left few material remains. Urban culture remained undeveloped, although mud-brick towns appeared as new lands were cleared for cultivation. Established kingdoms with fixed capitals now existed. Trade grew, especially along the Ganges, although there is no evidence of a coinage system. Later texts mention specialized artisans, including goldsmiths, basket makers, weavers, potters, and entertainers. Writing had been reintroduced to India around 700 B.C.E., perhaps from Mesopotamia along with traded goods.

Vedic India's main identifiable contributions to later history were religious. The central Vedic cult—controlled by priests serving a military aristocracy—remained dominant until the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. By that time other, perhaps older, religious forms were evidently asserting themselves among the populace. The increasing ritual formalism of Brahmanic religion provoked challenges both in popular practice and in religious thought that culminated in Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu traditions of piety and practice (see Chapter 2).

The earliest Indo-Aryans seem to have worshiped numerous gods, most of whom embodied or were associated with powers of nature. (See Document, “Hymn to Indra” on page 22.) The Rig-Vedic hymns are addressed to anthropomorphic deities linked to natural phenomena such as the sky, the clouds, and the sun. These gods are comparable to those of ancient Greece (see Chapter 3) and are apparently distantly related to them through the Indo-European heritage the Greeks and Aryans shared. The name of the Aryan father-god Dyaus, for example, is linguistically related to the Greek Zeus. The Vedic hymns praise each god they address as possessing almost all powers, including those associated with other gods.

Ritual sacrifice was the central focus of Vedic religion, its goal apparently being to invoke the presence of the gods to whom an offering was made rather than to expiate sins or express thanksgiving. Drinking soma juice was part of the ritual. A recurring



## DOCUMENT

## Hymn to Indra

**T**his hymn celebrates the greatest deed ascribed to Indra, the slaying of the dragon Vritra to release the waters needed by people and livestock (which is also heralded at one point in the hymn as the act of creation itself). These waters are apparently those of the dammed-up rivers, but possibly also the rains as well. This victory also symbolizes the victory of the Aryans over the dark-skinned Dasas. Note the sexual as well as water imagery. The kadrukas may be the bowls used for soma in the sacrifice. The vajra is Indra's thunderbolt; the name Dasa for the lord of the waters is also that used for the peoples defeated by the Aryans and for all enemies of Indra, of whom the Pani tribe is one.

- **WHAT** are the main kinds of imagery used for Indra and his actions in the hymn? What divine acts does the hymn ascribe to Indra?

Indra's heroic deeds, indeed, will I proclaim, the first ones which the wielder of the vajra accomplished. He killed the dragon, released the waters, and split open the sides of the mountains.

He killed the dragon lying spread out on the mountain; for him Tvashtar fashioned the roaring vajra. Like bellowing cows, the waters, gliding, have gone down straightway to the ocean.

Showing off his virile power he chose soma; from the three kadrukas he drank of the extracted soma. The bounteous god took up the missile, the vajra; he killed the first-born among the dragons.

When you, O Indra, killed the first-born among the dragons and further overpowered the wily tricks (maya) of the tricksters, bringing forth, at that very moment, the sun, the heaven and the dawn—since then, indeed, have you not come across another enemy. Indra killed Vritra, the greater enemy, the shoulderless one, with his mighty and fatal weapon, the vajra. Like branches of a tree lopped off with an axe, the dragon lies prostrate upon the earth. . . .

Over him, who lay in that manner like a shattered reed flowed the waters for the sake of man. At the feet of the very waters, which Vritra had [once] enclosed with his might, the dragon [now] lay [prostrate]. . . .

With the Dasa as their lord and with the dragon as their warder, the waters remained imprisoned, like cows held by the Pani. Having killed Vritra, [Indra] threw open the cleft of waters which had been closed.

You became the hair of a horse's tail, O Indra, when he [Vritra] struck at your sharp-pointed vajra—the one god [eka deva] though you were. You won the cows, O brave one, you won soma; you released the seven rivers, so that they should flow. . . .

Indra, who wields the vajra in his hand, is the lord of what moves and what remains rested, of what is peaceful and what is horned. He alone rules over the tribes as their king; he encloses them as does a rim the spokes.

—*Rig-Veda* 1.32

Source: From *Sources of Indian Tradition* by William Theodore de Bary. Copyright © 1988 by Columbia University Press. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

**Upanishads**

The Upanishads, which date to about the seventh century B.C.E., have been perennial sources of spiritual knowledge for Hindus. The word *upanishad* means “secret and sacred knowledge.” This word occurs in the Upanishads themselves in more than a dozen places in this sense. The word also means “texts incorporating such knowledge.” There are ten principal Upanishads.

theme of the Vedic hymns that accompanied the rituals is the desire for prosperity, health, and victory. The late Vedic texts emphasize magical and cosmic aspects of ritual and sacrifice. Indeed, some of the *Brahmanas* maintain that only exacting performance of the sacrifice can maintain the world order.

The word *Brahman*, originally used to designate the ritual utterance or word of power, came to refer also to the generalized divine power present in the sacrifice. In the **Upanishads**, some of the latest Vedic texts and the ones most concerned with speculation about the universe, *Brahman* was extended to refer to the Absolute, the transcendent principle of reality. As the guardian of ritual and the master of the sacred word, the priest was known throughout the Vedic Aryan period by a related word, *Brahmana*, for which the English is *Brahman*. Echoes of these associations were to lend force in later Hindu tradition to the special status of the Brahman caste groups as the highest social class (see Chapter 4).

## CHRONOLOGY

### ANCIENT INDIA

<b>ca. 2250–1750 (2500–1500?) B.C.E.</b>	Indus (Harappan) civilization (written script still undeciphered)
<b>ca. 1800–1500 B.C.E.</b>	Aryan peoples invade northwestern India
<b>ca. 1500–1000 B.C.E.</b>	Rig-Vedic period: composition of Rig-Vedic hymns; Punjab as center of Indo-Aryan civilization
<b>ca. 1000–500 B.C.E.</b>	Late Vedic period: Doab as center of Indo-Aryan civilization
<b>ca. 1000–800/600 B.C.E.</b>	Composition of Brahmanas and other Vedic texts
<b>ca. 800–500 B.C.E.</b>	Composition of major Upanishads
<b>ca. 700–500 B.C.E.</b>	Probable reintroduction of writing
<b>ca. 400 B.C.E.–200 C.E.</b>	Composition of great epics, the <i>Mahabharata</i> and <i>Ramayana</i>

## EARLY CHINESE CIVILIZATION

### NEOLITHIC ORIGINS IN THE YELLOW RIVER VALLEY

Agriculture began in China in about 4000 B.C.E. in the basin of the southern bend of the Yellow River. This is the northernmost of eastern Asia's four great river systems, all of which drain eastward into the Pacific Ocean. In recent millennia, the Yellow River has flowed through a deforested plain, cold in winter and subject to periodic droughts. But in 4000 B.C.E., its climate was warmer, with forested highlands in the west and swampy marshes to the east.

The chief crop of China's agricultural revolution was millet. A second agricultural development focusing on rice may have occurred on the Huai River. In time, wheat entered China from the west. The early Chinese cleared land and burned its cover to plant millet and cabbage and, later, rice and soybeans. When the soil became exhausted, fields were abandoned, and sometimes early villages were abandoned, too. Pigs, sheep, cattle, dogs, and chickens were domesticated, but hunting continued to be important to the village economy. Grain was stored in pottery, and stone tools included axes, hoes, spades, and sickle-shaped knives.

The earliest cultivators lived in wattle-and-daub pit dwellings with wooden support posts and sunken, plastered floors. Their villages were located in isolated clearings along slopes of river valleys. Archaeological finds of weapons and remains of earthen walls suggest tribal warfare between villages. Little is known of the religion of these people, although some evidence suggests the worship of ancestral spirits. They practiced divination by applying heat to a hole drilled in the shoulder bone of a steer or the under-shell of a tortoise and then interpreting the resulting cracks in the bone. They buried their dead in cemeteries with jars of food. Tribal leaders wore rings and beads of jade.

### EARLY BRONZE AGE: THE SHANG

The traditional history of China tells of three ancient dynasties: Xia (2205–1766 B.C.E.), Shang (1766–1050 B.C.E.), and Zhou (1050–256 B.C.E.).

**WHY DID** large territorial states arise in ancient China?

 [See the Map](#)


Ancient China at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 [Hear the Audio](#)  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)





 [See the Map](#)  
The Shang Kingdom  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

 [View the Image](#)  
An Inscribed Oracle Bone  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)



**Oracle Bone.** Inscribed oracle bone from the Shang Dynasty city of Anyang.

**Does the quality of the inscriptions on this bone make you think the bone is more a symbolic object or a tool?**

Until early in the twentieth century, historians thought the first two were legendary. Then, in the 1920s, archaeological excavations near present-day Anyang uncovered the ruins of a walled city that had been a late Shang capital.

Other Shang cities have been discovered more recently. The ruins contained the archives of the department of divination of the Shang court, with thousands upon thousands of “oracle bones” incised with archaic Chinese writing.

The names of kings on the bones fit almost perfectly those of the traditional historical record. This evidence that the Shang actually existed has led historians to suggest that the Xia may also have been an actual dynasty.

The characteristic political institution of Bronze Age China was the city-state. The largest was the Shang capital, which, frequently moved, lacked the monumental architecture of Egypt or Mesopotamia. The walled city contained public buildings, altars, and the residences of the aristocracy; it was surrounded by a sea of Neolithic tribal villages. The military aristocracy went to war in chariots, supported by levies of foot soldiers. The Shang fought against barbarian tribes and, occasionally, against other city-states in rebellion against Shang rule. Captured prisoners were enslaved.

The three most notable features of Shang China were writing, bronzes, and the appearance of social classes. Scribes at the Shang court kept records on strips of bamboo, but these have not survived. What have survived are inscriptions on bronze artifacts and the oracle bones. Some bones contain the question put to the oracle, the answer, and the outcome of the matter. Representative questions were: Which ancestor is causing the king’s earache? If the king goes hunting at Qi, will there be a disaster? Will the king’s child be a son? If the king sends his army to attack an enemy, will the deity help him? Was a sacrifice acceptable to ancestral deities?

What we know of Shang religion is based on the bones. The Shang believed in a supreme “Deity Above,” who had authority over the human world. Also serving at the court of the Deity Above were lesser natural deities—the sun, moon, earth, rain, wind, and the six clouds. Even the Shang king sacrificed not to the Deity Above but to his ancestors, who interceded with the Deity Above on the king’s behalf. Kings, while alive at least, were not considered divine but were the high priests of the state.

In Shang times, as later, religion in China was closely associated with cosmology. The Shang people observed the movements of the planets and stars and reported eclipses. Celestial happenings were seen as omens from the gods. The chief cosmologists also recorded events at the court. The Shang calendar had a month of 30 days and a year of 360 days. Adjustments were made periodically by adding an extra month. The king used the calendar to tell his people when to sow and when to reap.

Bronze appeared in China in about 2000 B.C.E., 1,000 years later than in Mesopotamia and 500 years later than in India. Because Shang casting methods were more advanced than those of Mesopotamia and because the designs on Shang bronzes continued those of the preceding black pottery culture, the Shang probably developed its bronze technology independently.

Among the Shang, as with other early river valley civilizations, the increasing control of nature through agriculture and metallurgy was accompanied by the emergence of a rigidly stratified society in which the many were compelled to serve the few. A monopoly of bronze weapons enabled aristocrats to exploit other groups. Nowhere was the gulf between the royal lineage and the baseborn more apparent than it was in the Shang institution of human sacrifice. When a king died, hundreds of slaves or prisoners of war, sometimes together with those who had served the king during his lifetime, might be buried with him. Sacrifices also were made when a palace or an altar was built.

## LATE BRONZE AGE: THE WESTERN ZHOU

To the west of the area of Shang rule, in the valley of the Wei River, lived the warlike Zhou people. The last Shang kings were weak, cruel, and tyrannical. By 1050 B.C.E., they had been debilitated by campaigns against nomads in the north and rebellious tribes in the east. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the Zhou made alliances with disaffected city-states and swept in, conquering the Shang.

In most respects, the Zhou continued the Shang pattern of life and rule. The agrarian-based city-state continued to be the basic unit of society, and the Zhou social hierarchy was similar to that of the Shang. The Zhou assimilated Shang culture, continuing without interruption the development of China's ideographic writing. The Zhou also maintained the practice of casting bronze ceremonial vessels, but their vessels lacked the fineness that set the Shang above the rest of the Bronze Age world.

The Zhou kept their capital in the west but set up a secondary capital at Luoyang, along the southern bend of the Yellow River. They appointed their kinsmen or other aristocratic allies to rule in other city-states. Blood or lineage ties were essential to the Zhou pattern of rule.

One difference between the Shang and the Zhou was in the nature of the political legitimacy each claimed. The Shang kings, descended from shamanistic (priestly) rulers, had a built-in religious authority and needed no theory to justify their rule. But the Zhou, having conquered the Shang, needed a rationale for why they were now the rightful rulers. Their argument was that Heaven (the name for the supreme being that gradually replaced the Deity Above during the early Zhou), appalled by the wickedness of the last Shang king, had withdrawn its mandate to rule from the Shang, awarding it instead to the Zhou. This concept of the **Mandate of Heaven** was subsequently invoked by every dynasty in China down to the twenty-first century.

## IRON AGE: THE EASTERN ZHOU

In 771 B.C.E. the Wei valley capital of the Western Zhou was overrun by barbarians. The heir to the throne, with some members of the court, escaped to the secondary capital at Luoyang, 200 miles to the east and just south of the bend in the Yellow River, beginning the Eastern Zhou period.

The first phase of the Eastern Zhou lasted until 481 B.C.E. The Zhou kings at Luoyang were unable to reestablish their old authority. By the early seventh century B.C.E., Luoyang's political power was nominal, although it remained a center of culture and ritual observances. During the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E., the political configuration was an equilibrium of many small principalities on the north-central plain surrounded by larger, wholly autonomous territorial states along the borders of the plain (see Map 1-4 on page 26). The larger states consolidated the areas within their borders, absorbed tribal peoples, and expanded by conquering states on their periphery.

The second phase of the Eastern Zhou is known as the Warring States period, after a chronicle of the same name treating the years from 401 to 256 B.C.E. By the fifth century B.C.E., all defensive alliances had collapsed. Strong states swallowed their weaker neighbors. The border states grew in size and power. Interstate stability disappeared. By the fourth century B.C.E., only eight or nine great territorial states remained as contenders. The only question was which one would defeat the others and go on to unify China.

### QUICK REVIEW

#### The Western Zhou

- ◆ There were many continuities between Shang and Zhou rule
- ◆ Secondary capital established at Luoyang
- ◆ Rule justified by Mandate of Heaven

#### Read the Document

"Hou-Shih, from the *Shih-Ching*"  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

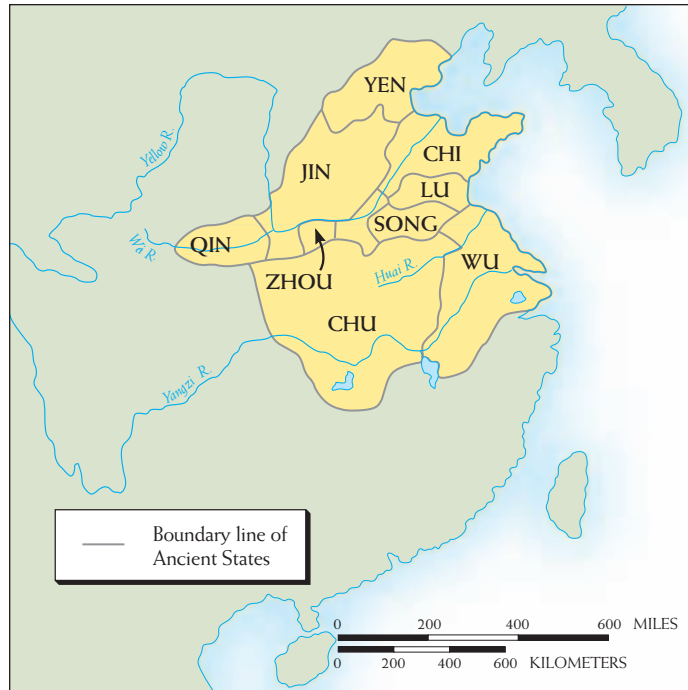
#### Mandate of Heaven

The Chinese belief that Heaven entrusts or withdraws a ruler's or a dynasty's right to govern.

## CHRONOLOGY

### EARLY CHINA

<b>4000 B.C.E.</b>	Neolithic agricultural villages
<b>1766 B.C.E.</b>	Bronze Age city-states, aristocratic charioteers, pictographic writing
<b>771 B.C.E.</b>	Iron Age territorial states
<b>500 B.C.E.</b>	Age of philosophers
<b>221 B.C.E.</b>	Unification of China



**MAP 1-4. Early Iron Age Territorial States in China during the Sixth Century B.C.E.**

After the fall of the Western Zhou in China in 771 B.C.E., large territorial states formed that became increasingly independent of the later Zhou kings.

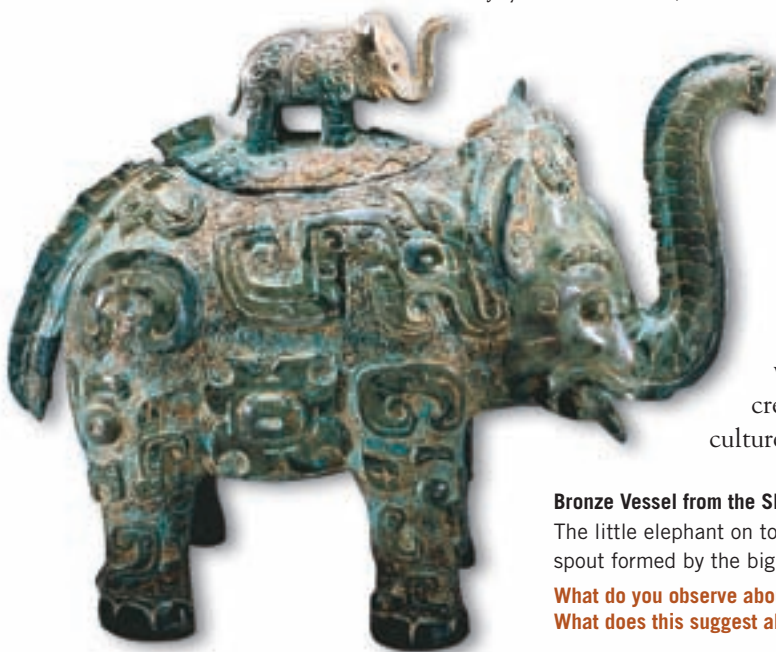
**Which States** appear strongest in this period?

tombs show that China's material and artistic culture leaped ahead during this period.

A third change that doomed the city-state was the rise of a new kind of army. The war chariots of the old aristocracy, practical only on level terrain, gave way to cavalry armed with crossbows. Most of the fighting was done by conscript foot soldiers. Armies numbered in the hundreds of thousands. The old nobility gave way to professional commanders. The old aristocratic etiquette, which governed behavior even in battle, gave way to military tactics that were bloody and ruthless. Prisoners were often massacred.

Change also affected government. Lords of the new territorial states began to style themselves as kings, taking the title that previously only Zhou royalty had enjoyed. To survive, new states had to transform their agricultural and commercial

wealth into military strength. To collect taxes, conscript soldiers, and administer the affairs of state required records and literate officials. Academies were established to fill the need. Beneath the ministers, a literate bureaucracy developed. Its members were referred to as *shi*, a term that had once meant "warrior" but gradually came to mean "scholar-bureaucrat." The *shi* were of mixed social origins, including petty nobility, literate members of the old warrior class, landlords, merchants, and rising commoners. From this class, as we will see in Chapter 2, came the philosophers who created the "one hundred schools" and transformed the culture of China.



**Bronze Vessel from the Shang Dynasty.**

The little elephant on top forms the handle of the lid. Wine was poured through the spout formed by the big elephant's trunk.

**What do you observe about the craftsmanship with which this vessel was created? What does this suggest about the situations in which it might have been used?**

## THE RISE OF CIVILIZATION IN THE AMERICAS

During the last Ice Age, the Bering region between Siberia and Alaska was dry land. Humans crossed this land bridge from Asia to the Americas, probably in several migrations, and moved south and east over many centuries. From these peoples a wide variety of original American cultures and many hundreds of languages arose.

The earliest immigrants to the Americas, like all Paleolithic peoples, lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering. At the time of the initial migrations, herds of large game animals were plentiful. By the end of the Ice Age, however, mammoths and many other forms of game had become extinct in the Americas. Where fishing or small game was insufficient, people had to rely on protein from vegetable sources. American production of plants providing protein far outpaced that of European agriculture. One of the most important early developments was the cultivation of maize (corn). The cultivation of maize appears to have been in place in Mexico by approximately 4000 B.C.E. Other important foods were potatoes (developed in the Andes), manioc, squash, beans, peppers, and tomatoes. Many of these foods entered the diet of Europeans, Asians, and other peoples after the European conquest of the Americas in the sixteenth century C.E.

Eventually four areas of relatively dense settlement emerged in the Americas. One of these, in the Pacific Northwest in the area around Puget Sound, depended on the region's extraordinary abundance of fish rather than on agriculture; this area did not develop urbanized states. Another was the Mississippi valley, where, based on maize agriculture, the inhabitants developed a high level of social and political integration that had collapsed several centuries before European contact. The other two, Mesoamerica and the Andean region of South America, saw the emergence of strong, long-lasting states. In other regions with maize agriculture and settled village life—notably the North American Southwest—food supplies might have been too insecure to support the development of states.

**Mesoamerica**, which extends from the central part of modern Mexico into Central America, is a region of great geographical diversity, ranging from tropical rain forest to semiarid mountains (see Map 1–5 on page 28). Archaeologists traditionally divide its preconquest history into three broad periods: pre-classic or formative (2000 B.C.E.–150 C.E.), classic (150–900 C.E.), and post-classic (900–1521). The earliest Mesoamerican civilization, that of the Olmecs, arose during the pre-classic period on the Gulf Coast beginning approximately 1500 B.C.E. The Olmec centers at San Lorenzo (ca. 1200–ca. 900 B.C.E.) and La Venta (ca. 900–ca. 400 B.C.E.) exhibit many of the characteristics of later Mesoamerican cities, including the symmetrical arrangement of large platforms, plazas, and other monumental structures along a central axis and possibly courts for the ritual ball game played throughout Mesoamerica at the time of the Spanish conquest. Writing developed in Mesoamerica during the late formative period. As we will see in Chapter 14, succeeding civilizations—including the classic period civilization of Teotihuacán, the post-classic civilizations of the Toltecs and Aztecs, and the classic and post-classic civilization of the Mayas—created large cities, developed sophisticated calendar systems, and were organized in complex social and political structures.

The Andean region is one of dramatic contrasts. Along its western edge, the narrow coastal plain is one of the driest deserts in the world. The

**HOW DID** agriculture influence the development of civilizations in Mesoamerica?

 Hear the Audio  
at [myhistorylab.com](http://myhistorylab.com)

### Mesoamerica

The part of North America that extends from the central part of modern Mexico to Central America.

## CHRONOLOGY

### EARLY CIVILIZATIONS OF MESOAMERICA

<b>1500–400 B.C.E.</b>	The Olmecs
<b>200–750 C.E.</b>	The Classic period in central Mexico. Dominance of Teotihuacán in the Valley of Mexico and Monte Alban in the Valley of Oaxaca
<b>150–900 C.E.</b>	The Classic period of Mayan civilization in the Yucatán and Guatemala



**MAP 1-5. Civilization in Mesoamerica and the Andes.**

Both Mesoamerica and the Andean region of South America saw the development of a series of civilizations beginning between 1500 and 1000 B.C.E.

**What Geographical** features do these civilizations have in common? How do they differ?



**Olmec Head.** This colossal Olmec head, now in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City, was excavated at San Lorenzo. Carved of basalt, it may be a portrait of an Olmec ruler. Olmec civilization thrived between 1500 and 800 B.C.E.

**Compare this head to the statue from Mohenjo-Daro at the beginning of this chapter. How does this head's projection of power differ from the other statue's?**

Andes rise abruptly from the coastal plain and then descend gradually into the Amazon basin to the east. Agriculture is possible on the coast only in the valleys of the many rivers that flow from the Andes into the Pacific. The earliest monumental architecture in the Andean region, built on the coast at the site of Aspero by people who depended on a combination of agriculture and the Pacific's rich marine resources, dates to about 2750 B.C.E., contemporary with the Great Pyramids of Egypt's Old Kingdom.

From 800 to 200 B.C.E. a civilization associated with the site of Chavín de Huantar in the highlands of Peru exerted great influence in the Andes. Artifacts in the distinctive Chavín style can be found over a large area dating to this period, which archaeologists call the Early Horizon. In many areas, this was a time of technical innovation, including pottery, textiles, and metallurgy. Whether the spread of the Chavín style represents actual political integration or the influence of a strong religious center is not known. The period following the decline of Chavín, which archaeologists call the Early Intermediate period, saw the development of distinc-

## CHRONOLOGY

### EARLY CIVILIZATION OF THE ANDES

<b>ca. 2750 B.C.E.?</b>	Monumental architecture at Aspero
<b>800–200 B.C.E.?</b>	Chavín (Early Horizon)
<b>200 B.C.E.–600 C.E.</b>	Early Intermediate period (Moche on the northern coast of Peru, Nazca on the southern coast)

tive cultures in several regions. Notable among these are the Moche culture on the northern coast of Peru and the Nazca culture on the southern coast. A second period of transregional integration—called the Middle Horizon—occurred around 600 C.E., this time probably associated with empires centered on the highland sites of Huari and Tiahuanaco. The succeeding Late Intermediate period was dominated on the northern coast of Peru by the Chimu successors of the Moche state. This period ended with the founding of the vast, tightly controlled empire of the Incas in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries C.E.

## SUMMARY

**WHY IS** “culture” considered a defining trait of human beings?

**Early Humans and Their Culture.** Language facilitates the transmission of culture—the lifeways of a group—from one generation to the next. Cultural adaptation has allowed humans to spread around the globe. Beginning in 10,000 B.C.E., human beings shifted from a hunter-gatherer way of life to one marked by settled agriculture and the domestication of animals—a shift known as the Neolithic Revolution. Between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E., civilization began to appear in the Tigris and Euphrates valleys in Mesopotamia, then along the Nile River in Egypt, and somewhat later in the Indus valley in India and the Yellow River basin in China. Each of these early civilizations developed urban centers, monumental architecture, a hierarchical society, and a system of writing. The period is known as the Bronze Age because it coincided with the discovery of the technique for making bronze tools and weapons. *page 1*

**HOW DID** control over water resources influence early Middle Eastern civilizations?

**Early Civilizations in the Middle East to about 1000 B.C.E.** The Sumerians founded the oldest

Mesopotamian cities around 3000 B.C.E. Beginning around 2370 B.C.E., the Sumerian city-states were conquered and absorbed in turn by the Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires. The Sumerians passed much of their civilization down to their successors: a system of writing on clay tablets called *cuneiform*, the worship of gods based on natural forces, semidivine kings, and a highly developed bureaucracy. Watered by the Nile River and protected by deserts and the sea, Egyptian civilization was more secure and peaceful than that of Mesopotamia. Egypt became a unified kingdom around 2700 B.C.E. Religion dominated Egyptian life. The kings, or pharaohs, were considered gods on whom the lives and prosperity of their people depended. Egyptian history is divided into three main periods: Old Kingdom (2700–2200 B.C.E.), Middle Kingdom (2025–1630 B.C.E.), and New Kingdom (1550–1075 B.C.E.). Under the New Kingdom, Egypt contended for mastery of the Near East with the Hittite Empire. *page 5*

**HOW DID** conquest and trade shape early empires in the Near East?

**Ancient Near Eastern Empires.** The Hittites, based in what is now Turkey between 1400 B.C.E. and 1200 B.C.E., helped transmit Mesopotamian and



Egyptian culture to the Greeks. They were also early smelters of iron. The Kassites, with their military aristocracy, helped preserve Babylonian culture. The Mitannians were horse-based warriors. The Assyrians were significantly influenced by Babylonian culture. By 665 B.C.E., thanks to military conquest, they controlled a vast territory. The Assyrian Empire fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 612 B.C.E., and the neo-Babylonians built their empire on trade. *page 14*

**WHAT INFLUENCES** did the first Indus valley civilization have on later Indian religious and social practices?

**Early Indian Civilization.** By 2300 B.C.E. at least seventy Indus cities, the largest being Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, had developed a sophisticated urban culture. Between 1800 and 1700 B.C.E., Indus civilization disappeared for unknown reasons. In its place, Indo-European (or Aryan) invaders established the Vedic culture, named after the ritual writings known as the Vedas. In turn, Vedic culture evolved into a “new” Indian civilization that spread over the whole subcontinent. *page 16*

**WHY DID** territorial states arise in ancient China?

**Early Chinese Civilization.** The Shang Dynasty (1766–1050 B.C.E.) founded the earliest known Bronze Age civilization in China. The Shang and their successors, the Zhou (1050–256 B.C.E.), ruled as warrior aristocrats from city-states that fought outsiders and each other. By the fourth century B.C.E., as population and commerce expanded, rulers needed bigger armies to defend their states and trained bureaucrats to administer them. The result was the consolidation of many petty states into a few large territorial units. *page 23*

**HOW DID** agriculture influence the development of civilizations in Mesoamerica?

**The Rise of Civilization in the Americas.** The first civilizations in the Americas arose in places that produced an agricultural surplus. In Mesoamerica (central Mexico and Central America) this was based on the cultivation of maize (corn). In the Andes valleys, it was based on a combination of agriculture and the rich marine resources of the Pacific. The Olmecs (1500–400 B.C.E.) established the first civilization in Mesoamerica, whereas the first monumental architecture appeared in the Andes region around 2750 B.C.E. *page 27*

## KEY TERMS

<b>Aryans (AIR-ee-uhns)</b> (p. 17)	<b>Mandate of Heaven</b> (p. 25)
<b>Bronze Age</b> (p. 5)	<b>Mesoamerica</b> (p. 27)
<b>chattel slavery (SHAT-1)</b> (p. 7)	<b>Mesopotamia</b> (p. 4)
<b>civilization</b> (p. 5)	<b>Neolithic Revolution</b> (p. 4)
<b>culture</b> (p. 1)	<b>Paleolithic Age</b> (p. 2)
<b>cuneiform (koo-NAY-form)</b> (p. 6)	<b>pharaoh</b> (p. 9)
<b>diffusion</b> (p. 3)	<b>rāja (rah-JAH)</b> (p. 20)
<b>Harappan (huh-RAHP-uhn)</b> (p. 17)	<b>Upanishads (oo-PAHN-ee-shahdz)</b> (p. 22)
<b>hieroglyphs</b> (p. 12)	<b>Vedas (vay-DAHZ)</b> (p. 17)
<b>Indo-European</b> (p. 19)	
<b>Mahabharata (muh-HAH-BAHR-uh-tuh) and Ramayana (RAH-MAH-yuh-nuh)</b> (p. 20)	

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How was life during the Paleolithic Age different from that in the Neolithic Age? What advances in agriculture and human development had taken place by the end of the Neolithic era? Is it valid to speak of a “Neolithic Revolution”?
2. What defines civilization? What are the similarities and differences among the world’s earliest civilizations?
3. What general conclusions can you draw about the differences in the political and intellectual outlooks of the civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia?
4. Why were the Assyrians so successful in establishing their Near Eastern empire? How did their empire differ from that of the Hittites or Egyptians? In what ways did this empire benefit the Near East? Why did the Assyrian Empire ultimately fail to survive?
5. How does the early history of Indian civilization differ from that of the river valley civilizations of China, Mesopotamia, and Egypt? What does the evidence suggest were the social, economic, and political differences between the Indus civilization and the Vedic Aryan civilization?
6. What were the stages of early Chinese history? What led each to evolve toward the next?
7. What does the story of the appearance of civilization in the Americas tell us about the development of civilization generally? In what ways did the development of Mesoamerican civilizations follow patterns similar to those of early civilizations in the Middle East, the Near East, India, or China? In what ways did it differ?

Note: To learn more about the topics in this chapter, please turn to the Suggested Readings at the end of the book. For additional sources related to this chapter please see [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

## myhistorylab Connections

Reinforce what you learned in this chapter by studying the many documents, images, maps, review tools, and videos available at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)

### Read and Review

#### ✓ Study and Review Chapter 1

- **Read the Document** *From Hunter-gatherers to Food-producers—Overcoming Obstacles*, p. 2
- The Development of Religion*, p. 2
- The Toolmaker (3300 B.C.E.)*, p. 2
- Redefining Self—From Tribe to Village to City 1500 B.C.E.*, p. 3
- The Neolithic Village*, p. 4
- Sumerian Law Code: The Code of Lipit-Ishtar*, p. 5
- Geography and Civilization: Egypt and Mesopotamia—Impact of Agriculture*, p. 5
- Two Accounts of an Egyptian Famine 2600s B.C.E.*, p. 6
- The Development of Religion in Primitive Cultures*, p. 7
- Excerpts from The Epic of Gilgamesh*, p. 7
- Workings of Ma'at: "The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant"*, p. 9
- The Report of Wenamun*
- Papyrus of Ani, The Egyptian Book of the Dead c. 1200 B.C.E.*, p. 13
- Hittite Law Code: excerpts from The Code of the Nesilim*, p. 14
- Excerpt from Mahābhārata (1000-600 B.C.E.)*, p. 20
- "Hou-Shih, from the Shih-Ching,"* p. 25
- **See the Map** *The Beginnings of Food Production*, p. 3
- Egypt in the Middle Kingdom*, p. 11
- Egypt in the New Kingdom*, p. 12
- Empire of Assiria, ca. 1800 B.C.E.*, p. 15
- The Neo-Babylonian Empire, ca. 580 B.C.E.*, p. 16
- The Shang Kingdom*, p. 24
- **View the Image** *Hammurabi Receives His Law Code from the Gods*, p. 6
- The Pyramids at Giza*, p. 11

- The Sphinx*, p. 11
- Egyptian Throne of Tutankhamun, 1333–1323 B.C.E.*
- Great Temple of Abu Simbel*, p. 12
- Scene from the Egyptian Afterlife*, p. 13
- Egyptian Relief of Anubis*, p. 14
- An Inscribed Oracle Bone*, p. 24

- **Watch the Video** *The Temple of Karnak*, p. 13
- Ramses II's Abu Simbel*, p. 14

### Research and Explore

- **See the Map** *Prehistoric Human Migration Patterns: From 1 million to 15,000 years ago*



- **See the Map** *Ancient China on page 23*



### • Hear the Audio

Hear the audio file for Chapter 1 at [www.myhistorylab.com](http://www.myhistorylab.com)