THE WEST

FIFTH EDITION

ENCOUNTERS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

VOLUME 1: TO 1715

LEVACK • MUIR • VELDMAN

The West

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Fifth Edition

The West

Encounters and Transformations

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Preface

We wrote this textbook to answer questions about the identity of the civilization in which we live. Journalists, politicians, and scholars often refer to our civilization, its political ideologies, its economic systems, and its cultures as "Western" without fully considering what that label means and why it might be appropriate. The classification of our civilization as Western has become particularly problematic in the age of globalization. The creation of international markets, the rapid dissemination of ideas on a global scale, and the transmission of popular culture from one country to another often make it difficult to distinguish what is Western from what is not. *The West: Encounters and Transformations* offers students a history of Western civilization in which these issues of Western identity are given prominence. Our goal is neither to idealize nor to indict that civilization, but to describe its main characteristics in different historical periods.

The West: Encounters and Transformations gives careful consideration to two basic questions. The first is, how did the definition of the West change over time? In what ways did its boundaries shift and how did the distinguishing characteristics of its cultures change? The second question is, by what means did the West—and the idea of the West—develop? We argue that the West is the product of a series of cultural encounters that occurred both outside and within its geographical boundaries. We explore these encounters and the transformations they produced by detailing the political, social, religious, and cultural history of the regions that have been, at one time or another, a part of the West.

Defining the West

What is the West? How did it come into being? How has it developed throughout history? Many textbooks take for granted which regions or peoples of the globe constitute the West. They treat the history of the West as a somewhat expanded version of European history. While not disputing the centrality of Europe to any definition of the West, we contend that the West is not only a geographical realm with ever-shifting boundaries, but also a cultural realm, an area of cultural influence extending beyond the geographical and political boundaries of Europe. We so strongly believe in this notion that we have written the introductory essay "What Is the West?" to encourage students to think about their understanding of Western civilization and to guide their understanding of each chapter. Many of the features of what we call Western civilization originated in regions that are not geographically part of Europe (such as North Africa and the Middle East), and ever since the fifteenth century various social,

ethnic, and political groups from non-European regions (such as North and South America, eastern Russia, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) have identified themselves, in one way or another, with the West. Throughout the text, we devote considerable attention to the boundaries of the West and show how borderlines between cultures have been created, especially in eastern and southeastern Europe.

Considered as a geographical and cultural realm, *the West* is a term of recent origin, and the civilization to which it refers did not become clearly defined until the eleventh century, especially during the Crusades, when western European Christians developed a distinct cultural identity. Before that time we can only talk about the powerful forces that created the West, especially the dynamic interaction of the civilizations of western Europe, the Byzantine Empire, and the Muslim world.

Over the centuries Western civilization has acquired many salient characteristics. These include two of the world's great legal systems (civil law and common law), three of the world's monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), certain political and social philosophies, forms of political organization (such as the modern bureaucratic state and democracy), methods of scientific inquiry, systems of economic organization (such as industrial capitalism), and distinctive styles of art, architecture, and music. At times one or more of these characteristics has served as a primary source of Western identity: Christianity in the Middle Ages, science and rationalism during the Enlightenment, industrialization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and a defense of individual liberty and democracy in the late twentieth century. These sources of Western identity, however, have always been challenged and contested, both when they were coming into prominence and when they appeared to be most triumphant. Western culture has never been monolithic; even today references to the West imply a wide range of meanings.

Cultural Encounters

The definition of the West is closely related to the central theme of our book, which is the process of cultural encounters. Throughout *The West: Encounters and Transformations*, we examine the West as a product of a series of cultural encounters both outside the West and within it. We show that the West originated and developed through a continuous process of inclusion and exclusion resulting from a series of encounters among and within different groups. These encounters can be described in a general sense as external, internal, or ideological.

External Encounters

External encounters took place between peoples of different civilizations. Before the emergence of the West as a clearly defined entity, external encounters occurred between such diverse peoples as Greeks and Phoenicians, Macedonians and Egyptians, and Romans and Celts. After the eleventh century, external encounters between Western and non-Western peoples occurred mainly during periods of European exploration, expansion, and imperialism. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, a series of external encounters took place between Europeans on the one hand and Africans, Asians, and the indigenous people of the Americas on the other. Two chapters of *The West: Encounters and Transformations* (Chapters 13 and 18) and a large section of a third (Chapter 24) explore these external encounters in depth and discuss how they affected Western and non-Western civilizations alike.

Internal Encounters

Our discussion of encounters also includes similar interactions between different social groups *within* Western countries. These internal encounters often took place between dominant and subordinate groups, such as between lords and peasants, rulers and subjects, men and women, factory owners and workers, and masters and slaves. Encounters between those who were educated and those who were illiterate, which recurred frequently throughout Western history, also fall into this category. Encounters just as often took place between different religious and political groups, such as between Christians and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, and royal absolutists and republicans.

Ideological Encounters

Ideological encounters involve interaction between comprehensive systems of thought, most notably religious doctrines, political philosophies, and scientific theories about the nature of the world. These ideological conflicts usually arose out of internal encounters, when various groups within Western societies subscribed to different theories of government or rival religious faiths. The encounters between Christianity and polytheism in the early Middle Ages, between liberalism and conservatism in the nineteenth century, and between fascism and communism in the twentieth century were ideological encounters. Some ideological encounters had an external dimension, such as when the forces of Islam and Christianity came into conflict during the Crusades and when the Cold War developed between Soviet communism and Western democracy in the second half of the twentieth century.

* * *

The West: Encounters and Transformations illuminates the variety of these encounters and clarifies their effects.

By their very nature encounters are interactive, but they have taken different forms: They have been violent or peaceful, coercive or cooperative. Some have resulted in the imposition of Western ideas on areas outside the geographical boundaries of the West or the perpetuation of the dominant culture within Western societies. More often than not, however, encounters have resulted in a more reciprocal process of exchange in which both Western and non-Western cultures, or the values of both dominant and subordinate groups, have undergone significant transformation. Our book not only identifies these encounters, but also discusses their significance by returning periodically to the issue of Western identity.

Coverage

The West: Encounters and Transformations offers both comprehensive coverage of political, social, and cultural history and a broader coverage of the West and the world.

Comprehensive Coverage

Our goal throughout the text has been to provide comprehensive coverage of political, social, and cultural history and to include significant coverage of religious and military history as well. Political history defines the basic structure of the book, and some chapters, such as those on Hellenistic civilization, the age of confessional divisions, absolutism and state building, the French Revolution, and the coming of mass politics, include sustained political narratives. Because we understand the West to be a cultural as well as a geographical realm, we give a prominent position to cultural history. Thus, we include rich sections on Hellenistic philosophy and literature, the cultural environment of the Italian Renaissance, the creation of a new political culture at the time of the French Revolution, and the atmosphere of cultural despair and desire that prevailed in Europe after World War I. We also devote special attention to religious history, including the history of Islam as well as that of Christianity and Judaism. Unlike many other textbooks, our coverage of religion continues into the modern period.

The West: Encounters and Transformations provides extensive coverage of the history of women and gender. Wherever possible the history of women is integrated into the broader social, cultural, and political history of the period. But there are also separate sections on women in our chapters on classical Greece, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, World War I, World War II, and the postwar era.

The West and the World

Our book provides broad geographical coverage. Because the West is the product of a series of encounters, the external areas with which the West interacted are of major

importance. Three chapters deal specifically with the West and the world.

- Chapter 13, "The West and the World: The Significance of Global Encounters, 1450–1650"
- Chapter 18, "The West and the World: Empire, Trade, and War, 1650–1815"
- Chapter 24, "The West and the World: Cultural Crisis and the New Imperialism, 1870–1914"

These chapters present substantial material on sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, India, and East Asia.

Our text is also distinctive in its coverage of eastern Europe and the Muslim world, areas that have often been considered outside the boundaries of the West. These regions were arenas within which significant cultural encounters took place.

Finally, we include material on the United States and Australia, both of which have become part of the West. We recognize that most American college and university students have the opportunity to study American history as a separate subject, but treatment of the United States as a Western nation provides a different perspective from that usually given in courses on American history. For example, this book treats America's revolution as one of four Atlantic revolutions, its national unification in the nineteenth century as part of a broader western European development, its pattern of industrialization as related to that of Britain, and its central role in the Cold War as part of an ideological encounter that was global in scope.

What's New in the Fifth Edition?

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When students are engaged deeply, they learn more effectively and perform better in their courses. This simple fact inspired the creation of REVEL: an immersive learning experience designed for the way today's students read, think, and learn. Built in collaboration with educators and students nationwide, REVEL is the newest, fully digital way to deliver respected Pearson content.

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Rather than simply offering opportunities to read about and study Western civilization, REVEL facilitates deep, engaging interactions with the concepts that matter most. By providing opportunities to improve skills in analyzing and interpreting primary and secondary sources of historical evidence, for example, REVEL engages students directly and immediately, which leads to a better understanding of course material. A wealth of student and instructor resources and interactive materials can be found within REVEL. Some of our favorites are mentioned in the information that follows.

- **Enhanced Images**
  Interactive visuals in each chapter include contextual "hotspots" that highlight the details of historic images or photos that students might otherwise miss.

- **Interactive Maps**
  Custom-built interactive maps with chronological layers, and pan-and-zoom functionality provide students with multiple ways of engaging with map visualizations.

- **Video Introductions by the Authors**
  Opening videos in every chapter guide students through a process of historical inquiry. We draw upon a specific topic or theme to connect the past to the contemporary world.

- **Interactive Chronologies**
  Students can check their memory of events and dates with interactive chronologies. After an initial viewing of the timeline, students match event entries to the corresponding date.

- **Source Collections**
  Every chapter concludes with a collection of three to five additional primary or secondary sources. These documents supplement the coverage of the chapter and give students the chance to practice their analytical thinking skills.

- **Vocabulary Flashcards**
  Each chapter includes an interactive deck of key term flashcards that review important concepts, people, places, and events.

- **Integrated Writing Opportunities**
  Writing opportunities help students reason more logically and write more clearly. Each chapter offers three types of writing prompts that measure historical literacy and students' ability to formulate a historical argument.
  - The *Journal* prompt provides students with an opportunity to write short answers in response to focus questions in each section. Journal prompts are not graded and can be used as a note-taking feature for readers.
  - The *Shared Writing* prompt encourages students to address multiple sides of an issue by sharing and responding to each other's viewpoints, encouraging

all to critically analyze a historical event, text, or question. In *The West*, Shared Writing questions are tied to the "Justice in History" feature.

- The *Essay* prompt in each chapter is from Pearson's Writing Space, where instructors can assign both automatically graded and instructor-graded prompts.

For more information about all the tools and resources in REVEL and access to your own REVEL account for *The West: Encounters and Transformations*, go to www.pearsonhighered .com/REVEL.

The Fifth Edition Includes New Coverage in a Brand New Look

- A new two-column design allows us to showcase larger images and maps.

- Several chapters open with new images to illustrate the opening vignettes. For instance, Chapter 9 now opens with an image of Boniface felling the Donar Oak at Geismar; Chapter 15 begins with a new painting of the assassination of William the Silent of Orange at Delft; and Chapter 24 shows Sudanese troops charging the British at the Battle of Omdurman in 1898.

- Chapter 23 invites a fresh comparison of primary sources by comparing Mrs. Humphry Ward's "An Appeal Against Female Suffrage" with "Fourteen Reasons for Supporting Women's Suffrage" published by the British National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

- Chapter 25 features a new section on the defensive use of trench warfare in 1914 and the relative lack of offensive technologies.

- Chapter 28 has been reorganized and substantially rewritten to consolidate the discussion of the Cold War and to explore more fully the impact of decolonization on both the West and the world.

- Chapter 29 contains a new section on Putin's Russia and expanded discussions of both the Islamist challenge to the West and the implications of the European debt crisis for the EU. A new final section returns to the question of "What Is the West?" and explores contemporary definitions of Western identity. A new conclusion brings the student back to the central theme of encounters and transformations.

Key Features and Pedagogical Aids

In writing this textbook we have endeavored to keep both the student reader and the classroom instructor in mind at all times. The text includes the following features and pedagogical aids, all of which are intended to support the themes of the book.

"What Is the West?"

The West: Encounters and Transformations begins with an essay to engage students in the task of defining the West and to introduce them to the notion of cultural encounters. The essay addressing the question "What Is the West?" guides students through the text by providing a framework for understanding how the West was shaped. Structured around the six questions of What? When? Where? Who? How? and Why?, this framework encourages students to think about their understanding of Western civilization. The essay serves as a blueprint for using this textbook.

"Encounters and Transformations"

This feature, which appears in about half the chapters, illustrates the main theme of the book by identifying specific encounters and showing how they led to significant transformations in the cultures of the West. This feature shows, for example, how camels enabled encounters among nomadic tribes of Arabia, which led to the rapid spread of Islam; how the Mayas' interpretation of Christian symbols transformed European Christianity into a hybrid religion; how the importation of chocolate from the New World to Europe changed Western consumption patterns and the rhythms of the Atlantic economy; and how Picasso's encounter with African art contributed to the transformation of modernism. Each of these essays concludes with questions for discussion.

"Justice in History"

Found in every chapter, this feature presents a historically significant trial or episode in which different notions of justice (or injustice) were debated and resolved. The "Justice in History" feature illustrates cultural encounters within communities as they try to determine the fate of individuals from all walks of life. Many famous trials dealt with conflicts over basic religious, philosophical, or political values, such as those of Socrates, Jesus, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther, Charles I, Galileo, and Adolf Eichmann. In other chapters the "Justice in History" feature shows how judicial institutions, such as the ordeal, the Inquisition, and revolutionary tribunals, handled adversarial situations in different societies. These essays, therefore, illustrate the way in which the basic values of the West have evolved through attempts to resolve disputes and conflict.

Each "Justice in History" feature includes two pedagogical aids. "For Discussion" helps students explore the historical significance of the episode just examined. These questions can be used in classroom discussion or as student essay topics. "Taking It Further" provides the student with a few references that can be consulted in connection with a research project. In REVEL, each shared writing prompt is

tied to a "Justice in History" discussion question, enabling students to comment and respond to one another via an online thread.

"Different Voices"

Each chapter contains a feature consisting of two primary source documents that present different and often opposing views regarding a particular person, event, or development. An introduction to the documents provides the necessary historical context, identifies the authors of the documents, and suggests the different perspectives they take. A set of questions for discussion follows the two documents.

Chapter Review and Questions for Discussion

This edition of *The West* offers three different sets of questions in each chapter.

- Each of the major sections of the chapter begins with the main question that the section addresses. In REVEL, students have the opportunity to type short answers in response to these questions at the end of each section.
- At the end of each chapter a set of questions under the heading "Making Connections" ask the student to think about some of the more specific issues discussed in the chapter. In REVEL, these questions are the basis of the Writing Space essay prompts.
- Each "Encounters and Transformation," "Justice in History" and "Different Voices" feature is followed by a set of questions under the heading "For Discussion."

Maps and Illustrations

Artwork is a key component of our book. We recognize that many students often lack a strong familiarity with geography, and so we have taken great care to develop maps that help sharpen their geographic skills. Complementing the book's standard map program, we include maps focusing on areas outside the borders of Western civilization. More than 300 images of fine art and photos tell the story of Western civilization and help students visualize the past: the way people lived, the events that shaped their lives, and how they viewed the world around them. In REVEL, images and maps are further enhanced with interactivity.

Chronologies

Each chapter includes a varying number of chronologies that list in tabular form the events relating to a particular topic discussed in the text. Chronologies present the sequence of events and can be helpful for purposes of review. In REVEL, students can use the chronologies as a review tool by dragging and dropping events to match the corresponding date.

Key Terms and Glossary

We have sought to create a work that is accessible to students with little prior knowledge of the basic facts of Western history or geography. Throughout the book we have explained difficult concepts at length. For example, we present in-depth explanations of the concepts of Zoroastrianism, Neoplatonism, Renaissance humanism, the various Protestant denominations of the sixteenth century, capitalism, seventeenth-century absolutism, nineteenth-century liberalism and nationalism, fascism, and modernism. We have identified these concepts as key terms by printing them in bold in the text. Key terms for each chapter are listed at the end of each chapter. In REVEL, key terms are presented in an interactive flashcard deck for easy review of concepts, people, places, and events.

Suggested Readings

An annotated list of suggested readings for all the chapters now appears at the end of each chapter. The items listed there are not scholarly works for the benefit of the instructor, but suggestions for students who wish to explore a topic in greater depth or to write a research paper. References to books or articles relevant to the subject of the "Justice in History" feature appear in each chapter under the heading "Taking It Further."

A Note About Dates and Transliterations

In keeping with current academic practice, *The West: Encounters and Transformations* uses B.C.E. (before the common era) and C.E. (common era) to designate dates. We also follow the most current and widely accepted English transliterations of Arabic. *Qur'an,* for example, is used for *Koran; Muslim* is used for *Moslem.* Chinese words appearing in the text for the first time are written in pinyin, followed by the older Wade-Giles system in parentheses.

Key Supplements and Customer Support

Supplements for Instructors

Instructor's Resource Center. www.pearsonhighered.com/irc. This website provides instructors with additional text-specific resources that can be downloaded for classroom use. Resources include the Instructor's Resource Manual, PowerPoint presentations, and the Test Item File. Register online for access to the resources for *The West*.

Instructor's Manual. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, the Instructor's Manual contains detailed chapter overviews, including REVEL interactive content in each chapter, activities, resources, and discussion questions.

Test Item File. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, the Test Item File contains more than 2,000 multiple-choice, true-false, and essay test questions.

PowerPoint Presentations. Strong PowerPoint presentations make lectures more engaging for students. Available at the Instructor's Resource Center for download, www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, the PowerPoints contain chapter outlines and full-color images of maps and art.

MyTest Test Bank. Available at www.pearsonmytest.com, MyTest is a powerful assessment generation program that helps instructors easily create and print quizzes and exams. Questions and tests can be authored online, allowing instructors ultimate flexibility and the ability to efficiently manage assessments anytime, anywhere! Instructors can easily access existing questions and edit, create, and store using simple drag-and-drop and Word-like controls.

Acknowledgments

About the Authors

Brian Levack grew up in a family of teachers in the New York metropolitan area. From his father, a professor of French history, he acquired a love for studying the past, and he knew from an early age that he too would become a historian. He received his B.A. from Fordham University in 1965 and his Ph.D. from Yale in 1970. In graduate school he became fascinated by the history of the law and the interaction between law and politics, interests that he has maintained throughout his career. In 1969 he joined the history department of the University of Texas at Austin, where he is now the John Green Regents Professor in History. The winner of several teaching awards, Levack teaches a wide variety of courses on British and European history, legal history, and the history of witchcraft. For eight years he served as the chair of his department, a rewarding but challenging assignment that made it difficult for him to devote as much time as he wished to his teaching and scholarship. His books include *The Civil Lawyers in England, 1603–1641: A Political Study* (1973), *The Formation of the British State: England, Scotland and the Union, 1603–1707* (1987), *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe* (4th edition, 2015), and *The Devil Within: Possession and Exorcism in the Christian West* (2013).

His study of the development of beliefs about witchcraft in Europe over the course of many centuries gave him the idea of writing a textbook on Western civilization that would illustrate a broader set of encounters between different cultures, societies, and ideologies. While writing the book, Levack and his two sons built a house on property that he and his wife, Nancy, own in the Texas hill country. He found that the two projects presented similar challenges: It was easy to draw up the design, but far more difficult to execute it. When not teaching, writing, or doing carpentry work, Levack runs along the jogging trails of Austin and has recently discovered the pleasures of scuba diving.

Edward Muir grew up in the foothills of the Wasatch Mountains in Utah, close to the Emigration Trail along which wagon trains of Mormon pioneers and California-bound settlers made their way westward. As a child he loved to explore the broken-down wagons and abandoned household goods left at the side of the trail and from that acquired a fascination with the past. Besides the material remains of the past, he grew up with stories of his Mormon pioneer ancestors and an appreciation for how the past continued to influence the present. During the turbulent 1960s, he became interested in Renaissance Italy as a period and place that had been formative for Western civilization. His biggest challenge is finding the time to explore yet another new corner of Italy and its restaurants.

Muir received his Ph.D. from Rutgers University, where he specialized in the Italian Renaissance and did archival research in Venice and Florence, Italy. He is now the Clarence L. Ver Steeg Professor in the Arts and Sciences at Northwestern University and former chair of the history department. At Northwestern he has won several teaching awards. His books include *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (1981), *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta in Renaissance Italy* (1993 and 1998), *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (1997 and 2005), and *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera* (2007). His books have also been published in Italian. He is the recipient of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Distinguished Achievement Award and is a member of the Academia Europaea and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Some years ago Muir began to experiment with the use of historical trials in teaching and discovered that students loved them. From that experience he decided to write this textbook, which employs trials as a central feature. He lives beside Lake Michigan in Evanston, Illinois. His twin passions are skiing in the Rocky Mountains and rooting for the Chicago Cubs, who manage every summer to demonstrate that winning isn't everything.

Meredith Veldman grew up in the western suburbs of Chicago, where she learned to love winter and the Cubs—which might explain her preference for all things impractical and improbable. Certainly that preference is what attracted her to the study of history, filled as it is with impractical people doing the most improbable things. Veldman majored in history at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and then earned a Ph.D. in modern European history, with a concentration in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, from Northwestern University in 1988.

As an associate professor of history at Louisiana State University, Veldman teaches courses in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British history and twentieth-century Europe, as well as the second half of "Western Civ." In her many semesters in the Western Civ. classroom, Veldman tried a number of different textbooks but found herself increasingly dissatisfied. She wanted a text that would convey to beginning students at least some of the complexities and ambiguities of historical interpretation, introduce them to the exciting work being done in cultural history, and, most important, tell a good story. The search for this textbook led her to accept the offer made by Levack and Muir to join them in writing *The West: Encounters and Transformations.*

An award-winning teacher, Veldman is also the author of *Fantasy, the Bomb, and the Greening of Britain: Romantic Protest, 1945–1980* (1994) and *Margaret Thatcher: Shaping the New Conservatism* (2016), and the co-author, with T. W. Heyck, of *The Peoples of the British Isles* (2014). She and her family ride out the hurricanes in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She remains a Cubs fan and she misses snow.

The West

What Is the West?

Many of the people who influence public opinion—politicians, teachers, clergy, journalists, and television commentators—refer to "Western values," "the West," and "Western civilization." They often use these terms as if they do not require explanation. But what *do* these terms mean? The West has always been an arena within which different cultures, religions, values, and philosophies have interacted; any definition of the West will inevitably arouse controversy.

The definition of the West has always been disputed. Note the difference in the following two poems, the first by Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), an ardent promoter of European imperialism who wrote "The Ballad of East and West" at the height of the British Empire:

> OH, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
> Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat. . . .[1]

The second, "East/West Poem," is by a Chinese-American living in Hawaii, Wing Tek Lum (1946–), who expresses the confusion caused by terms that designate both cultural traits and directions around the globe:

> O
> East is East
> and
> West is West.
> but
> I never did
> understand
> why
> in Geography class
> the East was west
> and
> the West was east
> and that no
> one ever
> cared
> about the difference.[2]

This textbook cares about the difference. It also shows that East and West have, in contrast to Kipling's view, often "met." These encounters created the idea of the East and the West and helped identify the ever shifting borders between the two.

The Shifting Borders of the West

The most basic definition of the West is of a place. Western civilization is now typically thought to comprise the regions of Europe, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand. However, this is a contemporary definition of the West. The inclusion of these places in the West is the result of a long history of European expansion through colonization and conquest.

THE TEMPLE OF HERA AT PAESTUM, ITALY Greek colonists in Italy built this temple in the sixth century B.C.E. Greek ideas and artistic styles spread throughout the ancient world, both from Greek colonists, such as those at Paestum, and from other peoples who imitated the Greeks.

SOURCE: Galina Mikhalishina/Alamy

This textbook begins about 10,000 years ago in what is now Iraq; the final chapter returns to discuss the Iraq War, but in the meantime the Mesopotamian region is only occasionally a concern for Western history. The history of the West begins with the domestication of animals, the cultivation of the first crops, and the establishment of long-distance trading networks in the Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile River valleys. Cities, kingdoms, and empires in those valleys gave birth to the first civilizations in the West. By about 500 B.C.E., the civilizations that were the cultural ancestors of the modern West had spread from southwestern Asia and north Africa to include the entire Mediterranean basin—areas influenced by Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, and Roman thought, art, law, and religion. The resulting Greco-Roman culture created the most enduring foundation of the West. By the first century C.E. the Roman Empire drew the map of what historians consider the heartland of the West: most of western and southern Europe, the coastlands of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Middle East.

For many centuries, these ancient foundations defined the borders of the West. During the last century, however, the West came to be less about geography than about culture, identity, and technology. When Japan, an Asian country, accepted human rights and democracy after World War II, did it become part of the West? Most Japanese might not think they have adopted "Western" values, but the thriving capitalism and stable democracy of this traditional Asian country that was never colonized by a European power complicates the idea of what is the West. Or consider the Republic of South Africa, which the white minority—people descended from European immigrants—ruled until 1994. The oppressive white regime violated human rights, rejected full legal equality for all citizens, and jailed or murdered those who questioned the government. Only when democratic elections open to blacks replaced that government did South Africa fully embrace what the rest of the West would consider Western values. To what degree was South Africa part of the West before and after these developments?

Or how about Russia? Russia long saw itself as a Christian country with cultural, economic, and political ties with the rest of Europe. The Russians have intermittently identified with their Western neighbors, especially during the reign of Peter the Great (1682–1725), but their neighbors were not always sure about the Russians. After the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries much of Russia was isolated from the rest of the West, and during the Cold War from 1949 to 1989 Western democracies considered communist Russia an enemy. When was Russia "Western" and when not?

Thus, when we talk about where the West is, we are almost always talking about the Mediterranean basin and much of Europe (and later, the Americas). But we will also show that countries that border "the West," and even countries far from it, might be considered Western in many aspects as well.

WHERE IS THE WEST? The shifting borders of the West have moved many times throughout history, but they have always included the areas shown in this satellite photo. These include Europe, north Africa, and the Middle East.
SOURCE: GSO Images/The Image Bank/Getty Images

Changing Identities Within the West

In addition to being a place, the West is the birthplace of Western civilization, a civilization that encompasses a cultural history—a tradition stretching back thousands of years to the ancient world. Over this long period the civilization we now identify as Western gradually took shape. The many characteristics that identify it emerged over this time: forms of governments, economic systems, and methods of scientific inquiry, as well as religions, languages, literature, and art.

Throughout the development of Western civilization, the ways in which people identified themselves changed as well. People in the ancient world had no such idea of the common identity of the West, only of being members of a tribe, citizens of a town, or subjects of an empire. But with the spread of Christianity and Islam between the first and seventh centuries, the notion of a distinct civilization in these "Western" lands subtly changed. People came to identify themselves less as subjects of a particular empire and more as members of a community of faith—whether that community comprised followers of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. These communities of faith drew lines of inclusion and exclusion that still exist today. Starting about 1,600 years ago, Christian monarchs and clergy began to obliterate polytheism (the worship of many gods) and marginalize Jews. From 1,000 to 500 years ago, Christian authorities fought to expel Muslims from Europe. Europeans developed definitions of the West that did not include Islamic communities, even though Muslims continued to live in Europe, and Europeans traded and interacted with the Muslim world. The Islamic countries themselves erected their own barriers, seeing themselves in opposition to the Christian West, even as they continued to look back to the common cultural origins in the ancient world that they shared with Jews and Christians.

During the Renaissance in the fifteenth century, these ancient cultural origins became an alternative to religious affiliation for thinking about the identity of the West. From this Renaissance historical perspective Jews, Christians, and Muslims descended from the cultures of the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans. Despite their differences, the followers of these religions shared a history. In fact, in the late Renaissance a number of Jewish and Christian thinkers imagined the possibility of rediscovering the single universal religion that they thought must have once been practiced in the ancient world. If they could just recapture that religion, they could restore the unity they imagined had once prevailed in the West.

The definition of the West has also changed as a result of European colonialism, which began about 500 years ago. When European powers assembled large overseas empires, they introduced Western languages, religions, technologies, and cultures to many distant places in the world, making Western identity a transportable concept. In some of these colonized areas—such as North America, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand—the European newcomers

MARINER'S COMPASS The mariner's compass was a navigational device intended for use primarily at sea. The compass originated in China; once adopted by Europeans, it enabled them to embark on long ocean voyages around the world.
SOURCE: Mariner's compass in an ivory case, probably Italian, c.1570 / National Maritime Museum, London, UK/ Bridgeman Images

so outnumbered the indigenous people that these regions became as much a part of the West as Britain, France, and Spain. In other European colonies, especially on the Asian continent, Western cultures failed to exercise similar levels of influence.

As a result of colonialism Western culture sometimes merged with other cultures, and in the process, both were changed. Brazil, a South American country inhabited by large numbers of indigenous peoples, the descendants of African slaves, and European settlers, epitomizes the complexity of what defines the West. In Brazil, almost everyone speaks a Western language (Portuguese), practices a Western religion (Christianity), and participates in Western political and economic institutions (democracy and capitalism). Yet in Brazil all of these features of Western civilization have become part of a distinctive culture in which indigenous, African, and European elements have been blended. During Carnival, for example, Brazilians dressed in indigenous costumes dance in African rhythms to the accompaniment of music played on European instruments.

Western Values

For many people today, the most important definition of the West involves adherence to "Western values." The values typically identified as Western include democracy, individualism, universal human rights, toleration of religious diversity, ownership of private property, equality before the law, and freedom of inquiry and expression. These values, however, have not always been part of Western civilization. In fact, they describe ideals rather than actual realities; these values are by no means universally accepted throughout the West. Thus, there is nothing inevitable about these values; Western history at various stages exhibited quite different ones. Western societies seldom prized legal or political equality until quite recently. In ancient Rome and throughout most of medieval Europe, the wealthy and the powerful enjoyed more protection under the law than did slaves or the poor. Most medieval Christians were completely convinced of the virtue of making war against Muslims and heretics and curtailing the actions of Jews. Before the end of the eighteenth century, few Westerners questioned the practice of slavery, a social hierarchy of birth that remained powerful in the West through the nineteenth century; in addition, most women were excluded from equal economic and educational opportunities until well into the twentieth century. In many places women still do not have equal opportunities. In the twentieth century, millions of Westerners followed leaders who stifled free inquiry, denied basic human rights to many of their citizens, made terror an instrument of the state, and censored authors, artists, and journalists.

The values that define the West not only have changed over time, but have remained fiercely contested. One of the most divisive political issues today, for example, is that of "gay marriage." Both sides in this debate frame their arguments in terms of "Western values." Supporters of the legalization of same-sex marriages highlight equality and human rights: They demand that all citizens have equal access to the basic legal protections afforded by marriage. Opponents emphasize the centrality of the tradition of monogamous heterosexual marriage to Western legal, moral, and religious codes. What this current debate shows us is that no single understanding of "Western values," or of the West itself, exists. These values have always been contended, disputed, and fought over. In other words, they have a history. This text highlights and examines that history.

Asking the Right Questions

So how can we make sense of the West as a place and an identity, the shifting borders and definitions of the West, and Western civilization in general? In short, what has Western civilization been over the course of its long history—and what is it today?

Answering these questions is the challenge this book addresses. There are no simple answers to any of these questions, but there is a method for finding answers. The method is straightforward: Always ask the *what, when, where, who, how,* and *why* questions of the text.

The "What" Question

What is Western civilization? The answer to this question will vary according to time and place. In fact, for much of the early history covered in this book, "Western civilization" did not exist. Rather, a number of distinctive civilizations emerged in the Middle East, northern Africa, and Europe, each of which contributed to what later became Western civilization. As these cultures developed and intermingled, the idea of Western civilization slowly began to form. Thus, the understanding of Western civilization will change from chapter to chapter. The most extensive change in the place of the West was through the colonial expansion of the European nations between the fifteenth and twentieth centuries. Perhaps the most significant cultural change came with acceptance of the values of scientific inquiry for solving human and philosophical problems, an approach that did not exist before the seventeenth century but became one of the distinguishing characteristics of Western civilization. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, industrialization became the engine that drove economic development in the West. During the twentieth century, industrialization in both its capitalist and communist forms dramatically gave the West a level of economic prosperity unmatched in the nonindustrialized parts of the world.

The "When" Question

When did the defining characteristics of Western civilization first emerge, and for how long did they prevail? Dates frame and organize the content of each chapter, and numerous short chronologies are offered. These resources make it possible to keep track of what happened when. Dates have no meaning by themselves, but the connections *between* them can be very revealing. For example, dates show that the agricultural revolution that permitted the birth of the first civilizations unfolded over a long span of about 10,000 years—which is more time than was taken by all the other events and developments covered in this textbook. Wars of religion plagued Europe for nearly 200 years before Enlightenment thinkers articulated the ideals of religious toleration. The American Civil War—the war to preserve the union, as President Abraham Lincoln termed it—took place at exactly the same time as wars were being fought for national unity in Germany and Italy. In other words, by paying attention to other contemporaneous wars for national unity, the American experience seems less peculiarly an American event.

By learning *when* things happened, one can identify the major causes and consequences of events and thus see the transformations of Western civilization. For instance, the production of a surplus of food through agriculture and the domestication of animals was a prerequisite for the emergence of civilizations. The violent collapse of religious unity after the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century led some Europeans to propose the separation of church and state two centuries later. And during the nineteenth century many Western countries—in response to the enormous diversity among their own peoples—became preoccupied with maintaining or establishing national unity.

The "Where" Question

Where has Western civilization been located? Geography, of course, does not change very rapidly, but the idea of where the West is does change. By tracing the shifting relationships between the West and other, more distant civilizations with which it interacted, the chapters highlight the changing "where" of the West. The key to understanding the shifting borders of the West is to study how the peoples within the West thought of themselves and how they identified others as "not Western." During the Cold War, for example, many within the West viewed Russia as an enemy rather than as part of the West. In the previous centuries, Australia and North America came to be part of the West because the European conquerors of these regions identified themselves with European cultures and traditions and against non-European values.

Map 1 Core Lands of the West

These are the principal geographical features that will appear recurrently throughout this book.

The "Who" Question

Who were the people responsible for making Western civilization? Some were anonymous, such as the unknown geniuses who invented the mathematical systems of ancient Mesopotamia. Others are well known—saints such as Joan of Arc, creative thinkers such as Galileo Galilei, and generals such as Napoleon. Most were ordinary, humble people, such as the many millions who migrated from Europe to North America or the unfortunate millions who suffered and died in the trenches of World War I; they also influenced the course of events.

Perhaps most often this book encounters people who were less the shapers of their own destinies than the subjects of forces that conditioned the kinds of choices they could make, often with unanticipated results. During the eleventh century when farmers throughout Europe began to employ a new kind of plow to till their fields, they were merely trying to do their work more efficiently. They certainly did not recognize that the increase in food they produced would stimulate the enormous population growth that made possible the medieval civilization of thriving cities and magnificent cathedrals. Answering the *who* question requires an evaluation of how much individuals and groups of people were in control of events and how much events controlled them.

The "How" Question

How did Western civilization develop? This is a question about processes—about how things change or stay the same over time. This book identifies and explores these processes in several ways.

First, woven throughout the story is *the theme of encounters and transformations*. What is meant by encounters? When the Spanish *conquistadores* arrived in the Americas some 500 years ago, they came into contact with the cultures of the Caribs, the Aztecs, the Incas, and other peoples who had lived in the Americas for thousands of years. As the Spanish fought, traded with, and intermarried with the natives, each culture changed. The Spanish, for their part, borrowed from the Americas new plants for cultivation and responded to what they considered serious threats to their worldview. Many native Americans, in turn, adopted European religious practices and learned to speak European languages. At the same time, Amerindians were decimated by European diseases, illnesses to which they had never been exposed. The native Americans also witnessed the destruction of their own civilizations and governments at the hands of the colonial powers. Through centuries of interaction and mutual influence, both sides became something other than what they had been.

The European encounter with the Americas is an obvious example of what was, in fact, a continuous process of encounters with other cultures. These encounters often occurred between peoples from different civilizations, such as the struggles between Greeks and Persians in the ancient world or between Europeans and Chinese in the nineteenth century. Other encounters took place among people living in the same civilization. These include interactions between lords and peasants, men and women, Christians and Jews, Catholics and Protestants, factory owners and workers, and capitalists and communists. Western civilization developed and changed, and still does, through a series of external and internal encounters.

Second, *features in the chapters* formulate answers to the question of how Western civilization developed. For example, each chapter contains an essay titled "Justice in History." These essays discuss a trial or some other episode involving questions of justice. Some "Justice in History" essays illustrate how Western civilization was forged in struggles over conflicting values, such as the discussion of the trial of Galileo, which examines the conflict between religious and scientific concepts of truth. Other essays show how efforts to resolve internal cultural, political, and religious tensions helped shape Western ideas about justice, such as the essay on the *auto da fé*, which illustrates how authorities attempted to enforce religious conformity.

Some chapters include another feature as well. The "Encounters and Transformations" feature shows how encounters between different groups of people, technologies, and ideas were not abstract historical processes, but events that brought people together in a way that transformed history. For example, when the Arabs encountered the camel as an instrument of war, they adopted it for their own purposes. As a result, they were able to conquer their neighbors very quickly and spread Islam far beyond its original home in Arabia.

The "Different Voices" feature in each chapter includes documents from the period that represent contrasting views about a particular issue important at the time. These conflicting voices demonstrate how people debated what mattered to them and in the process formulated what have become Western values. During the Franco-Algerian War of the 1950s and early 1960s, for example, French military officers debated the appropriateness of torture when interrogating Algerian prisoners alleged to be insurgents. The debate about the use of torture against terrorist suspects continues today, revealing one of the unresolved conflicts over the appropriate values of the West.

The "Why" Question

Why did things happen in the way they did in history? This is the hardest question of all, one that engenders the most debate among historians. To take one persistent example, why did Hitler initiate a plan to exterminate the Jews of Europe? Can it be explained by something that happened

to him in his childhood? Was he full of self-loathing that he projected onto the Jews? Was it a way of creating an enemy so that he could better unify Germany? Did he really believe that the Jews were the cause of all of Germany's problems? Did he merely act on the deeply seated anti-Semitic tendencies of the German people? Historians still debate the answers to these questions.

Such questions raise issues about human motivation and the role of human agency in historical events. Can historians ever really know what motivated a particular individual in the past, especially when it is so notoriously difficult to understand what motivates other people in the present? Can any individual determine the course of history? The *what, when, where, who,* and *how* questions are much easier to answer; but the *why* question, of course, is the most interesting one, the one that cries out for an answer.

This book does not—and cannot—always offer definitive answers to the *why* question, but it attempts to lay out the most likely possibilities. For example, historians do not really know what disease caused the Black Death in the fourteenth century that killed about one-third of the population in a matter of months. But they can answer many questions about the consequences of that great catastrophe. Why were there so many new universities in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? It was because so many priests had died in the Black Death, creating a huge demand for replacements. The answers to the *why* questions are not always obvious, but they are always intriguing; finding the answers is the joy of studying history.

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Chapter 1
The Beginnings of Civilization, 10,000–1150 B.C.E.

THE THINKER OF CERNEVODA Just 4½ inches high, this Neolithic sculpture is at least 1200 years older than Ötzi the Ice Man. While most surviving Neolithic art focuses on the fundamental concerns of fertility and hunting, this terracotta sculpture depicts a figure deep in thought.
SOURCE: Dea Picture Library/Art Resource, NY

In 1991 hikers toiling across a glacier in the Alps between Austria and Italy made a startling discovery: a man's body stuck in the ice. They alerted law enforcement, but the police soon turned the corpse over to archaeologists: The man had died 5,300 years before. Ötzi the Ice Man (his name comes from the Ötztal Valley where he perished) quickly became a global celebrity, the subject of much speculation and the source of much investigation. We now know that Ötzi suffered from intestinal parasites and had been ill several times in his final months. Healers had marked his body with 61 tattoos, small incisions rubbed with charcoal. Ötzi did not, however, die of disease. Cuts on his hands and an arrowhead lodged in

his left shoulder bore witness to his violent last hours; cerebral trauma—a blow to the head—finished him off.

Ötzi lived (and died) in a transitional time, the end of the **Neolithic Age**. Lasting from about 10,000 to about 3000 B.C.E., the Neolithic (or New Stone) Age was a period of the most fundamental revolutionary change: food production through agriculture and the domestication of animals. The achievement of food production let humans develop new, settled forms of communities; Ötzi probably lived in one such settlement. His stomach contents showed that he had recently eaten not only wild goat and deer, but also herb bread. The cultivation of grain and the milling of flour

for such bread were, in fact, the results of thousands of years of human interaction and experimentation with the natural environment. The story of Western civilization—and of all humanity—begins with this most fundamental encounter of all: that between humanity and nature.

Ötzi's possessions on the day of his death showed how well he knew, and could utilize, his natural environment. He wore leather boots insulated with dense grasses for protection against the cold. The pouch around his waist contained fire-lighting equipment, and in his light wooden backpack he carried containers to hold burning embers. The arrows in his quiver featured a natural adhesive that tightly bound bone and wooden points to the shafts, while his bow was made of wood selected for strength and flexibility.

The most noteworthy find among Ötzi's possessions, however, was his axe. It bore an ordinary wooden handle, but its blade was copper, a much-prized feature in a time when most tools were made of stone. Only someone of high rank would have carried a copper weapon; Ötzi, then, was most likely a warrior. The high levels of arsenic found in his hair may indicate that he also worked as a copper smelter, a position that also would have carried high rank, given the importance of copper in his society.

Learning how to mine and manipulate metal, like learning how to produce food, was a revolutionary transformation. It marked the shift from the Neolithic to the **Bronze Age**, and into more complex societies with distinct social hierarchies and wider and more complicated economic interactions. Once people settled in a region, they began trading for commodities that were not available in their homelands—particularly if those commodities denoted wealth and power. Ötzi's settlement, located in an area rich in copper ore, most likely not only produced its own copper tools and weapons, but also traded its copper goods with other settlements. As trade routes extended over long distances and interactions among diverse peoples proliferated, ideas and technology spread. Out of these multiple encounters emerged civilization itself.

Yet the world's first civilizations arose not in the central Alps, where Ötzi lived and died, nor even in Europe, the geographic heartland of the "West." Instead, civilization first developed in what we now call the Middle East. In this chapter, then, we focus on two questions: *How did the encounters within and between early human societies create the world's first civilizations? And, what was the relationship between these civilizations and what would become the West?*

⌄ Contents and Focus Questions

1.1 Defining Civilization, Defining Western Civilization

What is the link between the food-producing revolution of the Neolithic era and the emergence of civilization?

Anthropologists use the term **culture** to describe all the different ways that humans collectively adjust to their environment, organize their experiences, and transmit their knowledge to future generations. Culture serves as a web of interconnected meanings that enable individuals to understand themselves and their place in the world. Archaeologists define **civilization** as an urban culture with differentiated levels of wealth, occupation, and power. One archaeologist notes that the "complete checklist of civilization" contains "cities, warfare, writing, social hierarchies, [and] advanced arts and crafts."[1] With cities, human populations achieved the critical mass necessary to develop

Map 1.1 The Beginnings of Civilization

Civilizations developed independently in India, China, central Asia, and Peru, as well as in Egypt and southwest Asia. Western civilization, however, is rooted in the civilizations that first emerged in Egypt and southwest Asia. What five features make up the "complete checklist of civilization"?

specialized occupations and a level of economic production high enough to sustain complex religious and cultural practices—and to wage war. To record these economic, cultural, and military interactions, writing developed. Social organization grew more complex. The labor of most people supported a small group of political, military, and religious leaders. These leaders controlled not only government and warfare, but also the distribution of food and wealth. They augmented their authority by building monuments to the gods and participating in religious rituals that linked divinity with kingship and military prowess. Thus, in early civilizations four kinds of power—military, economic, political, and religious—converged.

As Map 1.1 shows, a number of civilizations developed independently of each other across the globe. This chapter focuses on the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilizations because many of the characteristics of "Western civilization" originated in these areas. The history of Western civilization thus begins not in Europe, the core territory of the West today, but in what we usually call the Middle East and what ancient historians call the "Near East."* By 2500 B.C.E.,

* Terms such as the "Near East," the "Middle East," and the "Far East"—China, Japan, and Korea—betray their Western European origins. For someone in India, say, or Russia or Australia, neither Mesopotamia nor Egypt is located to the "east."

when, as we will see, city-states in Mesopotamia formed a flourishing civilization and Egypt's Old Kingdom was well-developed, Europeans still lived only in scattered agricultural communities. Without the critical mass of people and possessions that accompanied city life, early Europeans did not develop the specialized religious, economic, and political classes that characterize a civilization.

1.1.1 Making Civilization Possible: The Food-Producing Revolution

For more than the first 175,000 years of their existence, modern humans, known as *Homo sapiens sapiens* ("most intelligent people"), did not produce food. The end of the last Ice Age about 15,000 years ago, however, ushered in an era of momentous change: the **food-producing revolution**. As the Earth's climate became warmer, cereal grasses spread over large areas. Hunter-gatherers learned to collect these wild grains and grind them up for food. When people learned that the seeds of wild grasses could be transplanted and grown in new areas, the cultivation of plants was underway.

People also began domesticating pigs, sheep, goats, and cattle, which eventually replaced wild game as the

Map 1.2 The Beginnings of Food Production

This map shows early farming sites where the first known production of food occurred in ancient southwest Asia. What were the three areas in which people first began cultivating food?

main sources of meat. The first signs of goat domestication occurred about 8900 B.C.E. in the Zagros Mountains in southwest Asia. Pigs, which adapt well to human settlements because they eat garbage, were first domesticated around 7000 B.C.E. By around 6500 B.C.E., domestication had become widespread.

Farming and herding were hard work, but the payoff was enormous. Even simple agricultural methods could produce about 50 times more food than hunting and gathering. Thanks to the increased food supply, more newborns survived past infancy. Populations expanded, and so did human settlements. With the mastery of food production, human societies developed the mechanisms not only to feed themselves, but also to produce a surplus, which allowed for economic specialization and fostered the growth of social, political, and religious hierarchies.

1.1.2 The First Food-Producing Communities

The world's first food-producing communities emerged in southwest Asia. People began cultivating food in three separate areas, shown on Map 1.2. Archaeologists have named the first area the **Levantine Corridor** (also known as the **Fertile Crescent**)—a 25-mile-wide strip of land that runs from the Jordan River valley of modern Israel and Palestine

to the Euphrates River valley in today's Iraq.* The second region was the hilly land north of Mesopotamia at the base of the Zagros Mountains. The third was Anatolia, or what is now Turkey.

Archaeological evidence from the Anatolian settlement of Çatal Hüyük provides a glimpse into these early food-producing communities. By 6000 B.C.E., Çatal Hüyük (meaning "Fork Mound") consisted of 32 acres of tightly packed rectangular mud houses that the townspeople rebuilt more than a dozen times as their population expanded. About 6,000 people lived in houses built so closely together that residents could only enter their homes by walking along the rooftops and climbing down a ladder set in the smoke hole. Such a set-up, while physically uncomfortable, also strengthened Çatal Hüyük's security from outside attack. Archaeologists have uncovered about 40 rooms that served as religious shrines. The paintings and engravings on the walls of these rooms focus on the two main concerns of ancient societies: fertility and death. In these scenes, vultures scavenge on human corpses while women give birth to bulls (associated with virility). These shrines also contain statues of goddesses whose exaggerated breasts and

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* The term *Levant* refers to the eastern Mediterranean coastal region. "Levant" comes from the French: "the rising [sun]"—in other words, the territory to the east, where the sun rises.

ÇATAL HÜYÜK This drawing illustrates archaeologists' reconstruction of Çatal Hüyük. In such a settlement, modern conceptions of privacy and self-determination would have been inconceivable.

SOURCE: The city of Çatal Hüyük, with its one room houses which were accessed from the roof, drawing, Turkey, VII VI millennium B.C.E./De Agostini Picture Library/Bridgeman Images

buttocks indicate the importance of fertility rites in the villagers' religious rituals.

Only a wealthy community could allow some people to work as artists or priests rather than as farmers, and Çatal Hüyük was wealthy by the standards of its era. Much of its wealth rested on trade in obsidian. This volcanic stone was the most important commodity in the Neolithic Age because it could be used to make sharp-edged tools such as arrowheads, spear points, and sickles for harvesting crops. Çatal Hüyük controlled the obsidian trade from Anatolia to

Chronology: The Foundations of Civilization

150,000 years ago	Modern humans first appear in Africa.	**11,000 years ago**	Food production begins in southwest Asia.
45,000 years ago	Modern humans spread through Africa, Asia, and Europe.	**9,500–3,000 years ago**	Settled villages, domesticated plants and animals, and long-distance trade appear in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and Egypt.
15,000 years ago	Ice Age ends.		

the Levantine Corridor. With increasing wealth came widening social differences. While most of the burial sites at Çatal Hüyük showed little variation, a few corpses were buried with jewelry and other riches, a practice that indicates the beginning of distinctions between wealthy and poor members of the society.

The long-distance obsidian trade that underlay Çatal Hüyük's wealth also sped up the development of other food-producing communities in the Levantine Corridor, the Zagros Mountains, and Anatolia. These trade networks of the Neolithic Age laid the foundation for the commercial and cultural encounters that fostered the world's first civilization.

1.1.3 Transformations in Europe

In all of these developments, Europe remained far behind. The colder and wetter European climate meant heavier soils that were harder to cultivate than those in the Near East. The food-producing revolution that began in southwest Asia around 8000 B.C.E. did not spread to Europe for another thousand years, when farmers, probably from Anatolia, ventured to northern Greece and the Balkans. Settled agricultural communities had become the norm in southwest Asia by 6000 B.C.E., but not until about 2500 B.C.E. did most of Europe's hunting and gathering cultures

give way to small, widely dispersed farming communities. (See Map 1.3.)

As farmers and herders spread across Europe, people adapted to different climates and terrain. A variety of cultures evolved from these differences but most shared the same basic characteristics: Early Europeans farmed a range of crops and herded domesticated animals. They lived in villages, clusters of permanent family farmsteads. Jewelry and other luxury goods left in women's graves might indicate that these village societies granted high status to women, perhaps because these communities traced ancestry through mothers.

Two important technological shifts ushered in significant economic and social change in these early European groups. The first was metallurgy, the art of using fire to shape metals. Knowledge of metallurgy spread slowly across Europe from the Balkans, where people started to mine copper as early as 5500 B.C.E. Jewelry made from copper and gold became coveted luxury goods (recall Ötzi the Ice Man's copper-bladed axe). As trade in metals flourished, long-distance trading networks evolved. These networks provided the basis for the meeting and blending of different groups of peoples and different cultural assumptions and ideas.

The introduction of the plow was the second significant technological development for early Europe. The plow, invented in Mesopotamia in the late fifth or early fourth

Map 1.3 Neolithic Cultures in Europe

During the Neolithic period, new cultures developed as most of the peoples of Europe changed their way of life from hunting and gathering to food production. What features characterized these early European societies?

millennium B.C.E., became widely used in Europe around 2600 B.C.E. The use of plows meant that fewer people were needed to cultivate Europe's heavy soils. With more people available to clear forest lands, farming communities expanded and multiplied, as did opportunities for individual initiative and the accumulation of wealth.

As a result of these developments—and as had occurred much earlier in the Near East—the social structure within European villages became more stratified, with growing divisions between the rich and the poor. From the evidence of weaponry buried in graves, we know that the warrior emerged as a dominant figure in these early European societies. With the growing emphasis on military power, women's status may have declined.

These early Europeans constructed enduring monuments that offer tantalizing glimpses of their cultural practices and religious beliefs. Around 4000 B.C.E., for example, Europeans began building communal tombs with huge stones called **megaliths**. Megaliths were constructed from

Scandinavia to Spain and on islands in the western Mediterranean. The best-known megalith construction is Stonehenge in England. People began to build Stonehenge about 3000 B.C.E. as a ring of pits. The first stone circle of "bluestones," hauled all the way from the Welsh hills, was constructed about 2300 B.C.E.

A second example of an early European monument stands in the Boyne Valley in eastern Ireland, where more than 30 human-made Neolithic mounds dot the landscape. The most impressive of these is Newgrange, a breathtaking astrological and engineering achievement that dates to approximately 3200 B.C.E. More than 90 monumental standing stones, many of them beautifully carved, wreathe the Newgrange mound. The mound itself consists of 200,000 metric tons of stone and earth, all hauled to the site by human labor. A passage over 60 feet long cuts through the mound and ends in a large vaulted chamber. On the morning of the winter solstice (December 21), the rays of the dawning sun shine through a precisely placed opening

STONEHENGE This megalithic monument in southern England consists of two circles of standing stones with large blocks capping the circles. It was built without the aid of wheeled vehicles or metal tools, and the stones were dragged from many miles away.
SOURCE: Desfa24/Fotolia

and sweep down the passageway to illuminate the entire chamber.

The purpose of these magnificent constructions remains controversial. Were sites such as Stonehenge and New-grange built primarily to measure the movements of the stars and planets? Or were they principally sacred spaces, places where people gathered for religious rituals? Recent excavations at Stonehenge suggest that it may have been a complex devoted to healing ceremonies, while Newgrange was certainly used at least in part for burials. All of these theories could be correct, for ancient peoples commonly associated healing and astronomical observation with religious practice and the afterlife.

Only an advanced level of engineering expertise and astronomical knowledge, combined with a high degree of organization of labor, made constructions such as Stonehenge and Newgrange possible. Yet, if we recall the "complete checklist" needed for a civilization—"cities, warfare, writing, social hierarchies, [and] advanced arts and crafts"[2]—we can see that by 1600 B.C.E., Europeans had checked off all of these requirements except cities and writing—both crucial for building human civilizations. The rest of this chapter, then, will focus not on Europe, but on the dramatic developments in southwest Asia and Egypt from the sixth millennium B.C.E. on.

1.2 Mesopotamia: Kingdoms, Empires, and Conquests

What changes and continuities characterized Mesopotamian civilization between the emergence of Sumer's city-states and the rise of Hammurabi's Babylonian Empire?

The first civilization emerged on the Mesopotamian flood-plain. Standing at the junction of the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe, southwest Asia became the meeting place of peoples, technologies, and ideas.

1.2.1 The Sumerian Kingdoms

About 5300 B.C.E. the villages in Sumer in southern Meso-potamia began a dynamic civilization that would flourish for thousands of years. The key to Sumerian civilization was water. Without a regular water supply, villages and cities could not have survived in Sumer. The name *Mesopo-tamia*, an ancient Greek word, means "the land between the rivers." Nestled between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers,

Sumerian civilization developed as its peoples learned to control the rivers that both enabled and imperiled human settlement.

The Tigris and Euphrates are unpredictable water sources, prone to sudden, powerful, and destructive flooding. Sumerian villagers first built their own levees for flood protection and dug their own small channels to divert floodwaters from the two great rivers to irrigate their dry lands. Then they discovered that by combining the labor force of several villages, they could build and maintain levee systems and irrigation channels on a large scale. Villages merged into cities that became the founda-tion of Sumerian civilization, as centralized administra-tions developed to manage the dams, levees, and irrigation canals; to direct the labor needed to maintain and expand the water works; and to distribute the resources that the system produced.

By 2500 B.C.E., about 13 major city-states—perhaps as many as 35 in all—managed the Mesopotamian floodplain in an organized fashion. (See Map 1.4.) In Sumer's city-states, the urban center directly controlled the surround-ing countryside. Uruk, "the first city in human history,"[3] covered about two square miles and had a population of approximately 50,000 people, including both city-dwellers and the peasants living in small villages in a radius of about 10 miles around the city.

Sumer's cities served as economic centers where craft specialists such as potters, toolmakers, and weavers gath-ered to swap information and trade goods. Long-distance trade, made easier by the introduction of wheeled carts, enabled merchants to bring timber, ores, building stone, and luxury items unavailable in southern Mesopotamia from Anatolia, the Levantine Corridor, Afghanistan, and Iran.

Within each city-state, an elite group of residents regu-lated economic life. Uruk and the other Sumerian city-states were **redistributive economies**. In this type of economic system, the central authority (such as the king) controlled the agricultural resources and "redistributed" them to his people (in an unequal fashion!). Archaeologists excavating Uruk have found millions of bevel-rimmed bowls, all the same size and shape. One theory is that the bowls were ration bowls—containers in which workers received their daily ration of grain. What is certain is that the bowls were mass-produced, and that only a powerful central authority could organize such mass production.

In the earliest era of Sumerian history, temple priests constituted this central authority. Sumerians believed that their city belonged to a god or goddess: The god owned all the lands and water, and the god's priests, who lived with him (or her) in the temple, administered these resources on the god's behalf. In practice, this meant that the priests collected exorbitant taxes in the forms of goods (grains,

Map 1.4 Kingdoms and Empires in Southwest Asia

Between 3000 and 1500 B.C.E., the Sumerian city-states, Sargon's Akkadian Empire, Hammurabi's empire in Babylon, and the Ur III dynasty emerged in southwest Asia. What features did these four different political entities share?

livestock, and manufactured products such as textiles) and services (laboring on city building and irrigation projects), and in return provided food rations for the workers from these collections.

As Sumer's city-states expanded, a new form of authority emerged. The ruins of monumental palaces as well as temples testify to the appearance of powerful royal households that joined the temple priesthood in managing the resources of the city-state. Historians theorize that as city-states expanded, competition for land increased. Such competition led to warfare, and during warfare, military leaders amassed power and, eventually, became kings.

The king's power rested on his military might. Yet to retain the people's loyalty and obedience, a king also needed religious legitimacy. Kingship, then, quickly became a key part of Sumerian religious traditions. Sumerians believed that "kingship descended from heaven," that the king ruled on the god's behalf. According to a Sumerian proverb, "Man is the shadow of god, but the king is god's reflection."[4] To

challenge the king was to challenge the gods—never a healthy choice. The royal household and the temple priesthood thus worked together to exploit the labor of their subjects and amass power and wealth. Religious and political life were thoroughly intertwined.

Although the Sumerian city-states did not unite politically—and, in fact frequently fought each other—a number of factors created a single Sumerian culture. First, the kings maintained diplomatic relations with one another and with rulers throughout southwest Asia and Egypt, primarily to protect their trading networks. These trade networks also helped tie the Sumerian cities together and fostered a common Sumerian culture. Second, the city-states shared the same pantheon of gods. The surviving documents reveal that Sumerians in the different city-states sang the same hymns, used the same incantations to protect themselves from evil spirits, and offered their children the same proverbial nuggets of advice and warning. They did so, however, in two different languages—Sumerian, unrelated to any other known language, and Akkadian,

a member of the Semitic language family that includes Hebrew and Arabic.

1.2.2 The Akkadian Empire of Sargon the Great

The political independence of the Sumerian city-states ended around 2340 B.C.E. when they were conquered by a warrior who took the name Sargon ("true king") and built a capital city at Agade (or Akkad), the ruins of which may rest under the modern city of Baghdad. With the reign of Sargon (ca. 2340–ca. 2305 B.C.E.), the history of Mesopotamia took a sharp turn. Sargon created the first empire in history. The term **empire** identifies a kingdom or state that controls foreign territories, either on the same continent or overseas. Except for relatively brief periods of fragmentation, imperial rule became the standard form of political statehood in southwest Asia for millennia. Because an empire, by definition, brings together different peoples, it serves as a cauldron of cultural encounters. As we will see, such encounters often transformed not only the conquered peoples, but the conquerors themselves.

Map 1.4 shows that the empire Sargon built embraced a string of territories running far west up the Euphrates River toward the Mediterranean. Sargon was probably the first ruler in history to create a standing army, one that was larger than any yet seen in the Near East. This formidable fighting force certainly helps explain how he conquered so many peoples. To meld these peoples into an empire, however, required not only military power but also innovative organizational skills. The formerly independent Sumerian city rulers became Sargon's governors, and were required to send a portion of all taxes collected to Akkad. Akkadian became the new administrative language, and a standard measurement and dating system was imposed to make record-keeping more efficient.

Raising the revenues to meet the costs of running this enormous empire was vital. Akkadian monarchs generated revenues in several ways. They, of course, taxed their people. Hence, the Mesopotamian proverb: "There are lords and there are kings, but the real person to fear is the tax collector."[5] They also leased out their vast farmlands and required conquered people to pay regular tribute. In addition, Akkadian kings depended on the revenue generated by commerce. They placed heavy taxes on raw materials imported from foreign lands. In fact, most Akkadian kings made long-distance trade the central objective of their foreign policy. They sent military expeditions as far as Anatolia and Iran to obtain timber, metals, and luxury goods. Akkadian troops protected international trade routes and managed the maritime trade in the Persian Gulf, where merchants brought goods by ship from India and southern Arabia.

Akkadian troops also waged war. Warfare during this era changed with the use of two new military technologies. The composite bow boosted the killing power of archers. Multiple layers of wood from different types of trees as well as bone and sinew added to the tensile strength of the bow and so increased the distance an arrow could fly and the speed at which it did so. The second important military innovation was an early form of the chariot, a heavy four-wheeled cart that carried a driver and a spearman. Mounted on fixed wheels (and so incapable of swift turns) and pulled by donkeys (the faster horse did not come into use until the second millennium), the early chariot must have been a slow, clumsy instrument. Yet it proved effective in breaking up enemy infantry formations.

The cities of Mesopotamia prospered under Akkadian rule. Even so, Akkadian rulers could not hold their empire together for reasons that historians do not completely understand. One older explanation is that marauding tribes from the Zagros Mountains infiltrated the kingdom and caused tremendous damage. More recent research suggests that civil war tore apart the empire. Regardless of the cause, Akkadian kings lost control of their lands, and a period of anarchy began about 2250 B.C.E. "Who was king? Who was not king?" lamented a writer during this time of troubles. After approximately a century of chaos, the kingdom finally collapsed. Sargon, however, lived on in the memories and folk tales of the peoples of southwest Asia as the model of the mighty king.

1.2.3 The Ur III Dynasty and the Rise of Assyria

With the fall of Akkad, the cities of Sumer regained their independence, but they were soon—and forcibly—reunited under Ur-Nammu (r. ca. 2112–ca. 2095 B.C.E.), king of the Sumerian city of Ur, located far to the south of Akkad. Ur-Nammu established a powerful dynasty that lasted for five generations.

The Ur III dynasty (as it is called) developed an administrative bureaucracy even more elaborate than that of Sargon. Like all bureaucracies, it generated vast amounts of documents—we have more documentary sources for the Ur III era than for any other in ancient southwest Asia. Local elites, who served as the king's governors, administered the empire's 20 provinces. To assure their loyalty, they were often bound to the king by ties of marriage. As governors, these locals controlled the temple estates, maintained the canal system, and acted as the highest judge in the province. Significantly, they did not control the military. Ur III's kings set up a separate military administration and made sure that the generals assigned to each province came from somewhere else. In this way, the king could be sure that the general owed his allegiance to the royal household, not to the local elite. Ur's kings also strengthened their power by assuming the status of gods. Royal officials encouraged the people to give their children names such as "Shulgi is my god" to remind them of the king's divine authority.

THE SUMERIANS AT WAR This Sumerian battle wagon, a heavy four-wheeled cart pulled by donkeys, appears on the "Standard of Ur" (ca. 2500 B.C.E.). Excavated in the 1920s, the "Standard" is actually a wooden box, about 8.5 × 20 inches, with an inlaid mosaic of shells, red limestone, and lapis lazuli. One panel of the mosaic depicts a Sumerian war scene, the other a banquet; hence, archaeologists have labeled the panels "War" and "Peace."
SOURCE: Tim Parmenter/DK Images

Despite their sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus and their claims to divinity, the kings of Ur proved unable to stave off political fragmentation indefinitely. Rebellions increased in size and tempo. About 2000 B.C.E., semi-nomadic peoples known as Amorites began invading Mesopotamia from the steppes to the west and north. The Amorites seized fortified towns, taking food and supplies and causing widespread destruction. Their invasions destabilized the economy. Peasants fled from the fields, and with no food or revenues, inflation and famine overcame the empire. Ur collapsed, and Mesopotamia shattered again into a scattering of squabbling cities.

1.2.4 Assyria and Babylonia

For a long period, the political unity Sargon forged in Mesopotamia remained elusive, as states and peoples fought each other for control. This period of political fragmentation allowed for an important development: a partial "privatization" of the Mesopotamian economy, as individuals began to trade on their own behalf. Not connected in any way to the temple or the palace and, therefore, outside the redistributive economy, many of these free people grew prosperous. Merchants traveling by land and sea brought textiles, metals, and luxury items such as gold and silver jewelry and gems from lands bordering the Mediterranean and along the Persian Gulf and Red Sea.

Assyrian merchants, for example, developed an elaborate trade network linking the city-state of Assur with Anatolia. (See Map 1.4.) In Assur, they loaded up donkey caravans with tin and textiles for an arduous 50-day journey to the southern Anatolian city of Kanesh. (The surviving documentation is so detailed that we know that each donkey carried 150 pounds of tin or 30 textiles weighing about five pounds each.) Once they arrived in Kanesh, the merchants sold the donkeys, exchanged their merchandise for silver and gold, and headed back to Assur. Meanwhile, Assyrian merchants stationed in Kanesh sold the tin and textiles throughout Anatolia. The enterprise was risky—a storm, bandits, or a sick donkey could imperil it—but the profits were huge: 50 to 100 percent annually. Building on this economic prosperity, Assur (or Assyria) flourished as a powerful city-state until one of the most powerful empire-builders in the history of ancient southwest Asia reduced its power.

By 1780 B.C.E., the kingdom of Babylon had become a mighty empire under Hammurabi (r. 1792–1750 B.C.E.). Hammurabi never entirely conquered Assyria, but he

dominated Mesopotamian affairs. Like Ur-Nammu and Sargon, Hammurabi developed a centralized administration to direct irrigation and building projects and to foster commerce throughout his realm. Both his law code (discussed later in this chapter) and his surviving letters to his royal agents reveal that no detail of economic life was too small for Hammurabi's notice. In one letter, for example, he ordered his agent to give "a fallow field that is of good quality and lies near the water, to Sin-imguranni, the seal-cutter."[6] Hammurabi did not, however, reverse the partial privatization of the economy that had developed during the era of political fragmentation. Babylonian society contained a prospering private sector of merchants, craftspeople, farmers, and sailors. Hammurabi liked to think of himself as a benevolent ruler, a kind of protective father. He declared, "I held the people of the lands of Sumer and Akkad safely on my lap."[7]

Nevertheless, Hammurabi and his successors imposed heavy taxes on their subjects. These financial demands provoked resentment, and when Hammurabi died, many Babylonian provinces successfully revolted. The loss of revenue weakened the Babylonian imperial government. By 1650, Hammurabi's empire had shrunk to northern Babylon, the territory Hammurabi had inherited when he first became king. Hammurabi's successors remained in control of northern Babylon for another five generations, but by 1400 B.C.E., a new people, the Kassites, ruled the kingdom.

1.2.5 Cultural Continuities: The Transmission of Mesopotamian Cultures

Although the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires punctuated the political history of Mesopotamia between the emergence of Sumerian civilization in 5300 B.C.E. and the collapse of Babylon in 1500 B.C.E., Mesopotamian culture exhibited remarkable continuity. Over these millennia, Sumerian religious values, architectural styles, literary forms, and other cultural concepts were absorbed, transformed, and passed on by the various peoples they encountered in both commerce and conquest.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN WORLDVIEW: RELIGION Religion—powerfully influenced by Mesopotamia's volatile climate—played a central role in the Sumerian and, hence, the wider Mesopotamian worldview. The Sumerians did not tend to think of their gods as loving or forgiving. Sumerian civilization arose on a floodplain subject to extreme and unpredictable climate conditions, with results ranging from devastating drought to torrential floods. Sumerians knew firsthand the famine and destruction that could result from sudden rainstorms, violent winds, or a flash flood. They envisioned each of these natural forces as an unpredictable

god who, like a human king or queen, was often unfair and had to be pleased and appeased:

> The sin I have committed I know not;
> The forbidden thing I have done I do not know.
> Some god has turned his rage against me;
> Some goddess has aimed her ire.
> I cry for help but no one takes my hand.[8]

Sumer's religion was **polytheistic**. Sumerians believed that many gods controlled their destinies. In the Sumerian pantheon, the all-powerful king Anu, the father of the gods, ruled the sky. Enlil was master of the wind and guided humans in the proper use of force. Enki governed the Earth and rivers and guided human creativity and inventions. Inanna was the goddess of love, sex, fertility, and warfare. These gods continued to dominate Mesopotamian culture long after Sumer's cities lost their political independence. After Hammurabi conquered most of Mesopotamia, Babylon's city-god Marduk joined the pantheon as a major deity.

Because the priests conducted the sacrifices that appeased the often-angry gods, the priesthood dominated Mesopotamian culture as did the temples in which they served and the gods to whom they sacrificed. In the center of every Sumerian city stood the temple complex, comprising temples to various gods, buildings to house the priests and priestesses, storage facilities for the sacrificial gifts, and looming over it all, the **ziggurat**. As the photograph of the ziggurat of Ur reveals, ziggurats were enormous square or rectangular temples with a striking stair-step design. Ur's ziggurat, built around 2100 B.C.E. by Ur-Nammu, had a 50-foot-high base, on which three stairways, each of 100 steps, led to the main gateways. The top of Ur's ziggurat did not survive, but in Ur-Nammu's time, a central staircase would have led upward to a temple.

Ur-Nammu built Ur's ziggurat to house the chief god of the city. The Sumerians believed that one god or goddess protected each city, and that the city should serve as an earthly model of the god's divine home. Towering over the city, the deity's ziggurat reminded all the inhabitants of the omnipresent gods who controlled not only their commerce, but their very destiny.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN WORLDVIEW: SCIENCE Struggling to survive within an often hostile environment, Mesopotamians sought to understand and control their world through the practice of **divination**. To "divine"—to discern or to "read"—the future, a local wise woman or a priest looked for the messages imprinted in the natural world, such as in the entrails of a dead animal or in an unusual natural event. Once a person knew what the future was to hold, he or she could then work to change it. If the omens were bad, for example, a man could seek to appease the god by offering a sacrifice.

ZIGGURAT OF UR Built of mud-brick, the Ziggurat of Ur was the focal point of religious life in the city. This vast temple was built by King Ur-Nammu of the Third Dynasty (2112–2095 B.C.E.) and restored by the British archaeologist, Sir Leonard Woolley, in the 1930s.
SOURCE: North eastern facade of the ziggurat, c.2100 B.C.E. (photo), /Ur, Iraq/World Religions Photo Library/Bridgeman Images

Divination and religious sacrifice seem to have little to do with science—and in Western culture in the twenty-first century, "religion" and "science" are often viewed as opposing or at least separate realms. Yet the Mesopotamian practice of divination helped shape a "proto-scientific" attitude toward the world. Much of divination consisted of "if . . . then . . . " equations:

> If a horse attempts to mount a cow, then there will be a decline in the land.
> If a man's chest-hair curls upward, he will become a slave.
> If the gallbladder [of the sacrificial sheep] is stripped of the hepatic duct, the army of the king will suffer thirst during a military campaign.[9]

Such statements seem silly, not scientific. Yet they rest on one of the fundamentals of modern science: close observation of the natural world. Only by observing and recording the *normal* processes of the natural world could Mesopotamians hope to recognize the omens embedded in the *abnormal*. Moreover, in the practice of divination, observation of individual events led to the formulation of a hypothesis of a general pattern—what we call induction, a crucial part of scientific analysis. In their effort to discern rational patterns in the natural world to improve the circumstances of their own lives, Mesopotamians were moving toward the

beginnings of a scientific mentality—a crucial aspect of Western civilization.

This proto-scientific understanding is even more evident in the technological, astronomical, and mathematical legacy of ancient Mesopotamia. Sumerians devised the potter's wheel, the wagon, and the chariot. They developed detailed knowledge about the movement of the stars, planets, and the moon, especially as these movements pertained to agricultural cycles, and they made impressive innovations in mathematics. Many Sumerian tablets show multiplication tables, square and cube roots, exponents, and other practical information such as how to calculate compound interest on loans. The Sumerians divided the circle into 360 degrees and developed a counting system based on 60 in multiples of 10—a system we still use to tell time.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING Perhaps the Sumerians' most important cultural innovation was writing. The Sumerians devised a unique script to record their language. Historians call the symbols that Sumerians pressed onto clay tablets with sharp objects **cuneiform**, or wedge-shaped, writing. The earliest known documents written in this language come from Uruk about 3200 B.C.E. Writing originated because of the demands of record-keeping. By around 4000 B.C.E., officials in Uruk were using small clay tokens of different shapes to represent and record quantities

of produce and numbers of livestock. They placed these tokens in clay envelopes, and impressed marks on the outer surface of the envelopes to indicate the contents. By 3100 B.C.E., people stopped using tokens and simply impressed the shapes directly on a flat piece of clay or tablet with a pointed stick or reed.

As commodities and trading became more complex, the number of symbols multiplied. Learning the hundreds of signs required intensive study. The scribes, the people who mastered these signs, became important figures in the royal and religious courts because their work enabled kings and priests to regulate the economic life of their cities. Sumerian cuneiform writing spread, and other peoples of Mesopotamia and southwest Asia began adapting it to record information in their own languages.

THE *EPIC OF GILGAMESH* Writing made a literary tradition possible. Sumerians told exciting stories about their gods and heroes. Passed on and adapted through the ages, these stories helped shape ideas about divine action and human response throughout Mesopotamian history.

One of the most popular of these stories concerned the legendary king Gilgamesh of Uruk. Part god and part man, Gilgamesh harasses his subjects. He demands sex from the young women and burdens the young men with construction tasks. The people of Uruk beg the gods to distract this bothersome hero. The gods send the beastly Enkidu to fight Gilgamesh, but after a prolonged wrestling match that ends in a draw, the two become close friends and set off on a series of adventures. The two heroes battle monsters and even outwit the gods. Finally the gods decide that enough

CUNEIFORM TEXTS A Sumerian scribe in the city-state of Uruk wrote in cuneiform on this stone tablet around 3200 B.C.E.

SOURCE: Tablet with cuneiform script, from Uruk, c.3200 B.C.E. (stone), Mesopotamian, (4th century B.C.E.) / Iraq Museum, Baghdad /Bridgeman Images

Justice in History

Gods and Kings in Mesopotamian Justice

Mesopotamian kings placed a high priority on ruling their subjects justly. Shamash, the sun god and protector of justice, named two of his children Truth and Fairness. In the preface to his law code, Hammurabi explained the relationship between his rule and divine justice:

> At that time, Anu and Enlil [two of the greatest gods], for the well-being of the people, called me by name, Hammurabi, the pious, god-fearing prince, and appointed me to make justice appear in the land [and] to destroy the evil and wicked, so that the strong might not oppress the weak.[10]

Mesopotamian courts judged cases involving property, inheritance, boundaries, sale, and theft. A special panel of royal judges and officials handled cases involving the death penalty, such as treason, murder, sorcery, theft of temple goods, or adultery. Mesopotamians kept records of trials and legal decisions on clay tablets so that others might learn from them and avoid additional lawsuits.

A lawsuit began when a person brought a dispute before a court. The court consisted of three to six judges chosen from among the town's leading men, such as merchants, scribes, and officials in the town assembly. The judges could speak with authority about the community's principles of justice.

Litigants spoke on their own behalf and presented testimony through witnesses, written documents, or statements made by leading officials. Witnesses took strict oaths to tell the truth in a temple before the statue of a god. Once the parties presented all the evidence, the judges made their decision and pronounced the verdict and punishment.

Sometimes the judges asked the defendants to clear themselves by letting the god in whose name the oath was taken make the judgment. The accused person would then undergo an ordeal or test in which he or she had to jump into a river and swim a certain distance underwater. Those who survived were considered innocent. Drowning constituted proof of guilt and a just punishment rendered by the gods.

The following account of one such ordeal comes from the city of Mari, about 1770 B.C.E. A queen was accused of casting spells on her husband. Her maid, a woman named Amat-Sakkanim, was forced to undergo the ordeal on her behalf. Amat-Sakkanim drowned; we do not know what happened to the queen:

> Concerning Amat-Sakkanim . . . whom the river god overwhelmed. . . . : "We made [the maid] undertake her plunge, saying to her, 'Swear that your mistress did not perform any act of sorcery against Yarkab-Addad her lord; that she did not reveal any palace secret nor did another person open the missive of her mistress; that your mistress did not commit a transgression against her lord.' In connection with these oaths they had her take her plunge; the river god overwhelmed her, and she did not come up alive."[11]

This account illustrates the Mesopotamian belief that sometimes only the gods could make decisions about right and wrong. By contrast, the following trial excerpts come from a homicide case in which humans, not gods, made the final judgment. About 1850 B.C.E., three men murdered a temple official. For unknown reasons, they told the victim's wife, Nin-dada, what they had done. When the case came to trial, nine accusers asked that the three murderers be executed. They also requested that Nin-dada be put to death because she had not reported the murder to the authorities. The accusers said:

> They who have killed a man are not worthy of life. Those three males and that woman should be killed.

In her defense, two of Nin-dada's supporters pointed out that she had not been involved in the murder and therefore should be released:

> Granted that the husband of Nin-dada, the daughter of Lu-Ninurta, has been killed, but what had the woman done that she should be killed?

THE LAW CODE OF HAMMURABI Hammurabi receives the law directly from the sun god, Shamash, on this copy of the Law Code.
SOURCE: Iberfoto/SuperStock

The court agreed, on the grounds that Nin-dada was justified in keeping silent because her husband had not provided for her properly:

A woman whose husband did not support her . . . why should she not remain silent about him? Is it she who killed her husband? The punishment of those who actually killed him should suffice.

Nin-dada lived; the three accused murderers were executed. This court decision became an important precedent that later judges frequently cited.

For Discussion

1. How would a city benefit by letting a panel of royal officials make judgments about life-and-death issues? How would the king benefit?

2. In these trials, one woman (Amat-Sakkanim) dies and one woman (Nin-dada) survives. What do the fates of these two women tell us about Mesopotamian ideas of justice? What do they tell us about social and gender hierarchies in the Mesopotamian world?

Taking It Further

Greengus, Samuel. "Legal and Social Institutions of Ancient Near Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson, Vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001). Describes basic principles of law and administration of justice, with a bibliography of ancient legal texts.

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is enough and arrange for Enkidu's death. Mourning for his stalwart friend, Gilgamesh sets out to find the secret to living forever. In the end, immortality eludes his grasp. A mere mortal, Gilgamesh becomes a wiser king, and his subjects benefit from his new wisdom. He realizes that while he must die, his fame may live on, and so he seeks to leave behind him a magnificent city that will live forever in human memory.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* as we know it was recorded in Akkadian, but it is clear that the stories date from long before the rise of the Akkadian Empire. Recited and read by Mesopotamian peoples for millennia, the Gilgamesh story's influence extended beyond the borders even of the empires of Sargon or Hammurabi. Its themes, plots, and characters reappear in revised form in the literatures of such diverse peoples as the ancient Hebrews (recorded in the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament) and the early Greeks. These peoples, however, reworked the stories in accordance with their own cultural values. In its Sumerian form, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* demonstrates a Mesopotamian worldview: It emphasizes the capriciousness of the gods, the hostility of nature, and the unpredictability of human existence. It offers no hope of heaven, only resignation to life's unpredictability and the chance of finding some sort of reward during one's short time on Earth.

LAW AND ORDER Mesopotamian culture also made a lasting imprint on future societies through another important innovation: the code of law, preserved in written form. Archaeologists have so far uncovered three Sumerian law codes, the earliest dating to around 2350 B.C.E. The most famous lawgiver of the ancient world was the Babylonian empire-builder Hammurabi. The Law Code of Hammurabi—282 civil, commercial, and criminal laws—is the world's oldest surviving complete compendium of laws.

We do not know to what extent these laws were actually implemented. Many scholars argue that the code was a kind of public relations exercise, an effort by Hammurabi both to present a social ideal and to persuade his people (and the gods) to view him as the "King of Justice." (See *Justice in History* in this chapter.)

What is clear is that Hammurabi's laws unveil the social values and everyday concerns of Babylonia's rulers. For example, many of the laws focus on the irrigation system that made Babylonian agriculture possible. One such law reads: "If a man has opened his channel for irrigation and has been negligent and allowed the water to wash away a neighbor's field, he shall pay grain equivalent to the crops of his neighbors"—or be sold as a slave.[12]

Hammurabi's law code buttressed Babylon's social hierarchy by drawing legal distinctions between classes of people. The crimes of noblemen (called free men) were treated more leniently than were the offenses of common people, while slaves were given no rights at all. If a nobleman killed a commoner, he or she had to pay a fine, whereas if a commoner killed a nobleman, he or she was executed. But the code of Hammurabi also emphasized the responsibility of public officials and carefully regulated commercial transactions. If a home was robbed, and city officers failed to find the burglar, then the householder had the right to expect reimbursement for his losses from the city government. If a moneylender suddenly raised interest rates beyond those already agreed on, then he forfeited the entire loan.

Almost one-quarter of Hammurabi's statutes concern family matters. The laws' focus on questions of dowry and inheritance reflect the Mesopotamian view of marriage as first and foremost a business matter. The Sumerian word for *love* literally translates to "measure the earth"—to mark land boundaries and designate who gets what. Hammurabi's

Chronology: Mesopotamian Civilization

ca. 3000 B.C.E.	Sumerian city-states emerge.		**ca. 2000 B.C.E.**	Collapse of Ur.
ca. 2340 B.C.E.	Sargon unites Sumerian cities into the Akkadian Empire.		**ca. 1790 B.C.E.**	Hammurabi creates the Babylonian Empire.
ca. 2250 B.C.E.	Collapse of the Akkadian Empire.		**ca. 1400 B.C.E.**	Kassites overrun Babylon.
ca. 2100 B.C.E.	Ur-Nammu reunites Sumerian cities; empire of "Ur III."			

laws also highlight the **patriarchal** structure of Mesopotamian family life. In a patriarchal society, the husband/father possesses supreme authority in the family. Hence, Hammurabi's code declared that if a wife had a lover, both she and her lover would be drowned, while a husband was permitted extramarital sex. If a wife neglected her duties at home or failed to produce children, her husband had the right to divorce her. Yet Mesopotamian women, at least those in the "free" class, were not devoid of all rights. If a husband divorced his wife without sufficient cause, then he had to give her back her entire dowry. Unlike in many later societies, a married woman was an independent legal entity: She could appear in court and she could engage in commercial contracts. Some Babylonian women ran businesses, such as small shops and inns.

Many of Hammurabi's laws seem harsh: If a house caved in because of faulty workmanship and the householder died, then the builder was put to death. If a freeman hit another freeman's pregnant daughter and caused her to miscarry, he had to pay 10 silver shekels for the unborn child, but if his blow killed the daughter, then his own daughter was executed. Yet through these laws Hammurabi's Code introduced one of the fundamentals of Western jurisprudence: the idea that the punishment must suit the crime (at least in crimes involving social equals). The principle of "an eye for an eye" (rather than a life for an eye) helped shape legal thought in southwest Asia for a millennium. It later influenced the laws of the Hebrews and, thus through the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament), still molds western ideas about justice.

1.3 Egypt: The Empire of the Nile

What distinctive features characterized Egyptian civilization throughout its long history?

As the civilizations of Mesopotamia rose and fell, another civilization emerged far to the south: Egypt. A long and narrow strip of land in the northeast corner of Africa, Egypt depended for its survival on the Nile, the world's longest river, which flows north into the Mediterranean Sea from one of its points of origin in eastern Africa 4,000 miles away. The northernmost part of Egypt, where the Nile enters the Mediterranean, is a broad and fertile delta. The river flooded annually from mid-July to mid-October, leaving behind rich deposits of silt ideal for planting crops. Unlike in southwest Asia, the annual floods in Egypt came with clockwork regularity. For the Egyptians, nature was not unpredictable and random in its destruction, but a benevolent force, generous in sharing its riches.

Egypt was also fortunate in another of its physical features: It rested securely between two desert regions that effectively barricaded it from foreign conquest. Whereas Mesopotamia stood at the intersection of three continents, vulnerable to invading armies, Egyptian civilization emerged in a far more easily defended position. Egyptian history, then, is remarkable for its political stability. This stability, combined with the predictability and generosity of the Nile, may explain the confidence and optimism that marked Egyptian culture.

Historians organize the long span of ancient Egyptian history into four main periods: Predynastic and Early Dynastic (10,000–2680 B.C.E.), the Old Kingdom (ca. 2680–2200 B.C.E.), the Middle Kingdom (2040–1720 B.C.E.), and the New Kingdom (1550–1150 B.C.E.). Times of political disruption between the kingdoms are called *intermediate periods.* Despite these periods of disruption, the Egyptians maintained a remarkably stable civilization for thousands of years.

1.3.1 Egypt's Rise to Empire

Like the peoples of Mesopotamia, the Egyptians were originally hunter-gatherers who slowly turned to growing crops and domesticating animals. Small villages, in which people could coordinate their labor most easily, appeared along the banks of the Nile between 5000 and 4000 B.C.E. By 3500 B.C.E., Egyptians could survive comfortably through agriculture and herding. Small towns multiplied along the Nile, and market centers connected by roads emerged as hubs where artisans and merchants exchanged their wares.

Toward the end of the Predynastic period, between 3500 and 3000 B.C.E., trade along the Nile River resulted in a shared culture and way of life. Towns grew into small kingdoms whose rulers constantly warred with one another, attempting to grab more land and extend their power. The big consumed the small; by 3000 B.C.E., the towns had been absorbed into just two kingdoms: Upper Egypt in the south and Lower Egypt in the north. These two then united, forming what historians term the Old Kingdom. (See Map 1.5.)

THE KINGS AND THE GODS IN THE OLD KINGDOM In the new capital city of Memphis, the Egyptian kings became the focal points of religious, social, and political life. While in Mesopotamia, kings were regarded as the gods' representatives on Earth, Egyptian kings were

Map 1.5 Egypt: The Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms

As this map shows, Egyptian power expanded from its base along the Nile delta, first southward along the Nile River, and then, through trade and conquest, into southwest Asia. Egypt's control of mineral resources, especially gold, turquoise, and copper, played an important role in its commercial prosperity. How did the New Kingdom compare to its predecessors? How does this map help explain the rivalry between New Kingdom Egypt and the Hittite Empire?

acknowledged as gods who ruled Egypt on behalf of the other gods. Hence, Egyptians in the Old Kingdom called their king "the good god" (the label *pharaoh* was not used until the New Kingdom) and told tales that emphasized the divinity of the king. In one such story, the god Osiris, ruler of Egypt, was killed and chopped into bits by his evil brother, Seth. Osiris's son, Horus, avenged his father by defeating Seth and reclaiming the Egyptian throne. All Egyptian kings, then, embodied Horus during their reign.

The story of Osiris, Seth, and Horus not only emphasized the divinity of the king, it also stressed the central theme of the Egyptian worldview: the struggle between the forces of chaos and of order. Seth embodied the forces of evil and disorder. In defeating Seth, Horus overcame chaos and restored what the Egyptians called *ma'at* to the world.

The word **ma'at** has no English equivalent; in various contexts, it can mean truth, wisdom, justice, or stability. *Ma'at* was the way the gods had made the world—everything in its proper place, everything the way the gods wanted it to be. The king's essential task was to maintain *ma'at*, to keep things in order and harmony. The king's presence meant that cosmic order reigned and that the kingdom was protected against forces of disorder and destruction.

Like the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians believed in many gods, but in Egypt the gods were not prone to punish men and women without reason. Because the Nile River flooded regularly and predictably, each year leaving behind rich soil deposits, the natural world seemed far less harsh and erratic to the Egyptians. They thus regarded their gods as largely helpful. Ordinary Egyptians tended to pray to minor household gods, such as Tauret, portrayed as a pregnant hippopotamus who protected women during childbirth. Official religion, however, centered on the major state gods, worshiped and housed in monumental temples across the kingdom. The sun god Re was one of the most important Egyptian deities. Re journeyed across the sky every day in a boat, rested at night, and returned in the morning to resume his eternal journey. By endlessly repeating the cycle of rising and setting, the sun symbolized the harmonious order of the universe that Re established. Evil, however, in the form of Apopis, a serpent god whose coils could trap Re's boat like a reed in the Nile, constantly threatened this order. Re's cosmic journey could continue only if *ma'at* was maintained.

THE PYRAMIDS One spectacular feature of Egyptian religion in the Old Kingdom was the construction of pyramids. These elaborate

monuments reflected Egyptian emphasis on the afterlife. The earliest pyramids, erected around 2680 B.C.E., were elaborate temples in which priests worshiped statues of the king surrounded by the enormous mud-brick monument. The pyramid contained compartments where the king could dwell in the afterlife in the same luxury he enjoyed during his life on Earth. King Djoser (2668–2649 B.C.E.) built the first pyramid complex, and the world's first monumental stone building, at Saqqara near Memphis. Known today as the Step Pyramid (pictured below), this structure rests above Djoser's burial place and rises high into the air in six steps, which represent a ladder to Heaven.

In the centuries after Djoser's reign, kings continued building pyramids for themselves and smaller ones for their queens, with each tomb becoming more architecturally sophisticated. The walls grew taller and steeper and contained hidden burial chambers and treasure rooms. The Great Pyramid at Giza, built around 2600 B.C.E. by King Khufu (or Cheops), was the largest human-made structure in the ancient world. It consists of more than two million stones that weigh an average of two and a half tons each. Covering 13 acres, it reaches over 480 feet into the sky.

Building the pyramid complexes was a long and costly task. In addition to the architects, painters, sculptors, carpenters, and other specialists employed on the site throughout the year, stone masons supervised the quarrying and transport of the colossal building blocks. Peasants, who were organized into work gangs and paid and fed by the king, provided the heavy labor when the Nile flooded their fields every year. As many as 70,000 workers out of a total population estimated at 1.5 million sweated on the pyramids every day. Entire cities sprang up around pyramid building sites to house the workmen, artisans, and farmers. The construction of elaborate pyramids stopped after 2400 B.C.E., probably because of the expense, but smaller burial structures continued to be built for centuries.

DJOSER'S STEP PYRAMID Djoser ascended to the throne of Egypt around 2668 B.C.E. and immediately ordered his vizier Imhotep to oversee the construction of his tomb. Up until this point, Egyptians constructed pyramids out of mud-brick, but Imhotep deviated from tradition and chose stone.
SOURCE: Geoff Brightling/DK Images

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ORDER IN THE OLD KINGDOM   The king and the royal family stood at the top of the Old Kingdom's social and political hierarchy. As a god on Earth, the king possessed absolute authority. All of Egypt—all the land, every resource, every person—theoretically belonged to the king. Yet royal Egyptians were not free to act in any way they might choose. As we have seen, maintaining *ma'at*—ensuring that things remained in divine order—was central to the Egyptian worldview. For Egyptian kings, maintaining *ma'at* meant following carefully regulated rituals at almost all times. The rules that governed royalty differed from those for commoners. Kings, for example, had many wives and frequently married their daughters and sisters, whereas ordinary Egyptians were monogamous (a man took only one wife) and married outside the family.

Below the royal family stood the nobility, made up of priests, court officials, and provincial governors. Men in these ranks carried out the king's orders. Egypt, like the Mesopotamian empires, was a redistributive economy. The kings' officials collected Egypt's produce and redistributed it throughout the kingdom. The job of keeping records of the kings' possessions and supervising food production fell to the scribes, who were trained in **hieroglyphic** writing. *Hieroglyphs* (literally "sacred carvings") represented both sounds (as in our alphabet) and objects (as in a pictorial system). Learning the hundreds of signs for literary or administrative purposes took years of schooling. It was worth the effort, however, for knowledge of hieroglyphs gave scribes great power. For 3,000 years, these royal bureaucrats kept the machinery of Egyptian government running despite the rise and fall of dynasties.

Ordinary Egyptians fell into three categories: skilled artisans, peasants, and slaves. Craftsmen and skilled workers such as millers and stone masons stood below the nobility on the social ladder. Employed in large workshops owned by the king or nobility, the craftsmen served the privileged classes above them. Below them were the peasants, who not only farmed, but also labored on public works such as temples, roads, and irrigation projects. As in medieval Europe, these peasants were tied to the land: They could not leave the estates that they farmed for the king or nobility, and if the land was sold, they were passed on to the new owner as well. Slaves occupied the bottom of the social ladder. They toiled on monumental building projects as well as within the temples and royal palaces. Slavery, however, was not dominant in the Egyptian economy. Free Egyptians did most of the work.

Free Egyptian women—whether from the nobility or the skilled artisans—possessed clear rights. They could buy and sell property, make contracts, sue in court, and own their own businesses. In a marriage, the husband and wife were regarded as equals. Women dominated certain occupations, such as spinning and weaving, and even worked as doctors.

WHERE IS *MA'AT*? THE COLLAPSE OF THE OLD KINGDOM   Around 2200 B.C.E. the Old Kingdom collapsed, perhaps because terrible droughts lowered the level of the Nile. Famine followed. *Ma'at*—the divine harmony and order that stood at the center of the Egyptian worldview—had disappeared. For 200 years, anarchy and civil war raged in Egypt during what historians call the First Intermediate Period.

The chaos and disorder of the First Intermediate Period resulted in a significant religious and cultural shift. The optimism that had characterized Egyptian culture gave way to uncertainty and even pessimism as Egyptians wondered how to restore *ma'at* in a world so out of balance:

> Whom can I trust today?
> Hearts are greedy,
> And every man steals his neighbor's goods.[13]

In their quest to make sense out of the chaos, Egyptian writers began to emphasize rewards in the afterlife as recompense for righteous action here on Earth. In the Old Kingdom, Egyptians had sought to act justly in accordance with *ma'at* because they were confident that right action would be rewarded in the here and now. In the new climate of turmoil and hunger, however, they found comfort in the idea that although the good suffered in their earthly life, they would be rewarded in the life to come. During this period, the Egyptians developed the concept of a final judgment—the earliest known instance of such an idea in human history. After death, a person's heart would be weighed in the balance against *ma'at*. Those who tipped the scales—those who failed the test—would be consumed by the Devourer, a god with a crocodile's head. But those who passed would live like gods in the afterlife. (See *Different Voices* in this chapter.)

THE MIDDLE KINGDOM   The First Intermediate Period ended when the governors of Thebes, a city in Upper Egypt, set out to reunify the kingdom. In 2040 B.C.E., Mentuhotep II (r. 2040–2010 B.C.E.) established a vigorous new monarchy, initiating the Middle Kingdom. (See Map 1.5.) He and his successors restored *ma'at* to Egypt: They rebuilt the power of the monarchy, reestablished centralized control, and repaired Egypt's commercial and diplomatic links to southwest Asia. Prosperity and stability returned.

Yet the Middle Kingdom was not a reincarnation of the Old Kingdom. The chaos of the First Intermediate Period modified political ideas and social relations. The king was no longer an omnipotent god. Capable of making mistakes and even of being afraid, the Middle Kingdom monarch

appeared in texts as a lonely figure, seeking to serve as a good shepherd to his people. With this new concept of kingship came a slightly altered social order, with the nobility possessing more power and autonomy than in the Old Kingdom.

New developments also marked religion. With the return of *ma'at*—with life on Earth more prosperous and stable—Egyptians began to see the final judgment as more of a problem that needed to be solved than as a source of comfort. How could one enjoy life and yet be assured of living like a god for eternity, rather than being consumed by the Devourer? To be sure that they passed the final judgment, Egyptians had themselves buried with special scarabs. A scarab is a small figure of a dung beetle, but these funeral scarabs featured human heads and carried magic incantations or charms. This powerful magic prevented the heart from testifying against the individual when it was weighed in the final judgment. In other words, it was a kind of false weight, a finger on the scales, a way to deceive the gods and ensure passage to the afterlife.

ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHER CIVILIZATIONS   While Egypt's position between two deserts guaranteed its military security, it did not isolate Egypt from the rest of the ancient world. During both the Old and Middle Kingdoms, Egyptian kings forged an economic network that included trading cities in the Levant, Minoan Crete (see Chapter 2), the southern Red Sea area called Punt, and Mesopotamia. To protect the trade routes along which raw materials and luxury goods were imported, rulers did not hesitate to use force. They also, however, used diplomacy to stimulate trade.

Egyptian interactions with Nubia (modern Sudan) were particularly important. Rich in gold and other natural resources, Nubia also benefited from its location at the nexus of trade routes from central and eastern Africa. Agents of Egyptian rulers, called Keepers of the Gateway of the South, tried to protect this trade by keeping the peace with the warlike Nubian tribes. Slowly, Egyptian monarchs made their presence more permanent. King Mentuhotep II, whose reign marked the start of the Middle Kingdom, not only reunified Egypt but also gained control of Lower Nubia. This expansion of Egyptian control ensured the free flow of Nubian resources northward. Around 1900 B.C.E., King Amenemhet built 10 forts at strategic locations where trade routes from the interior of Africa reached the Nile River. These forts reinforced Egyptian access to Nubian gold, ivory, and other natural resources.

Attracted by Egypt's stability and prosperity, peoples from different lands settled in the Nile Valley. They took Egyptian names and assimilated into Egyptian culture.

The government settled these immigrants, as well as war captives, throughout the kingdom where they could mix quickly with the local inhabitants. This willingness to accept newcomers into their kingdom lent Egyptian civilization even more vibrancy.

Immigrants from Canaan (modern-day Lebanon, Israel, and parts of Jordan and Syria) played a significant role in Egyptian history toward the end of the Middle Kingdom. Around 1720 B.C.E., centralized state control began to deteriorate (for reasons that remain unclear), and Canaanites began to seize political control over the regions in which they had settled. A century of political decentralization and chaos—the Second Intermediate Period—ensued, with even larger groups of Canaanite immigrants settling in Egypt's Delta region:

> Foreigners have become people [i.e., Egyptians] everywhere. . . .
> See now, the land is deprived of kingship by a few men who ignore custom.[14]

By approximately 1650 B.C.E., one of these Canaanite groups had established control over the entire northern delta region and forced the Egyptian rulers there to pay them tribute. The era of Hyksos rule had begun. Although *Hyksos* meant "rulers of foreign lands" in Egyptian, the Hyksos dynasty (ca. 1650–1540 B.C.E.) quickly assimilated Egyptian culture. They used Egyptian names and symbols, worshiped Egyptian gods, and employed native Egyptians to staff their bureaucracies and keep their state records—in Egyptian hieroglyphs.

But the Hyksos, and the Canaanite immigrant community from which they emerged, not only absorbed Egyptian ways, they also transformed them. Canaanite immigrants brought with them into Egypt a vital skill: the ability to make bronze. An alloy of copper and tin, bronze is much harder and lasts much longer than either copper or tin alone. From about 3500 B.C.E. when people living in northern Syria and Iraq began making bronze, the technology spread slowly throughout southwest Asia. Archaeologists talk about the "Early Bronze Age" (roughly 3500–2000 B.C.E.), the "Middle Bronze Age" (ca. 2000–1550 B.C.E.), and the "Late Bronze Age" (ca. 1500–1100 B.C.E.). It was in the Middle Bronze Age, then, that Canaanite immigrants introduced bronze to Egypt. Bronze meant new possibilities in agriculture, craft production—and war.

In particular, bronze made possible the horse-drawn light chariot. This advanced military technology was already revolutionizing warfare throughout southwest Asia, Anatolia, and Greece when the Hyksos brought it to Egypt. Unlike earlier chariots, the Bronze Age model featured only two wheels fixed to an axle for easier maneuvering. Bronze spokes made the wheels more durable. Two

Different Voices

Explaining Evil in Ancient Times

The gap that separates twenty-first-century Western readers from the inhabitants of ancient Mesopotamia or Egypt is huge, and yet some of their questions sound familiar: Why do the good and the just suffer? Where do we turn for hope when life seems hopeless? The two documents that follow offer different responses to evil times. The first is an excerpt from a lengthy poem inscribed on four tablets during the Akkadian Empire in Mesopotamia. The Akkadian era was generally prosperous, but as this document shows, daily survival remained difficult for many. The second document comes from the tumultuous intermediate period following the collapse of Egypt's Old Kingdom. The writer may have been king of one of the fragmented states that emerged as the Old Kingdom disintegrated. In *The Instructions for Merikare*, he shares with his son the lessons he has learned in a world gone mad.

I. From Mesopotamia: I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom

I turn around, but it is bad, very bad;
My ill luck increases and I cannot find what is right.
I called to my god, but he did not show his face,
I prayed to my goddess, but she did not raise her head.
Even the diviner with his divination could not make a
	prediction,
And the interpreter of dreams with his libation could not
	elucidate my case. . . .
What strange conditions everywhere!
When I look behind [me], there is persecution, trouble.
Like one who has not made libations to his god,
Nor invoked his goddess when he ate,
Does not make prostrations nor recognize [the necessity
	of] bowing down,
In whose mouth supplication and prayer are lacking,
Who has even neglected holy days, and ignored
	festivals . . .
Like one who has gone crazy and forgotten his lord,
Has frivolously sworn a solemn oath by his god, [like such
	a one] do I appear.
For myself, I gave attention to supplication and prayer;
My prayer was discretion, sacrifice my rule.
The day for worshipping the god was a joy to my heart;

The day of the goddess's procession was profit and gain
	to me.
The king's blessing—that was my joy. . . .
I wish I knew that these things would be pleasing to one's
	god!
What is good for oneself may be offense to one's god,
What in one's own heart seems despicable may be proper
	to one's god.
Who can know the will of the gods in heaven?
Who can understand the plans of the underworld gods?
Where have humans learned the way of a god?
He who was alive yesterday is dead today. . . .
As for me, exhausted, a windstorm is driving me on!
Debilitating Disease is let loose upon me;
An Evil Wind has blown [from the] horizon,
Headache has sprung up from the surface of the
	underworld. . . .
Feebleness has overcome my whole body,
An attack of illness has fallen upon my flesh.

SOURCE: I. James B. Pritchard (ed.), The Ancient Near East: Supplementary Texts and Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, 597–598. Copyright © 1968 Princeton University Press, 1996 renewed Princeton University Press. Reprinted by permission of Princeton University Press.

II. From Egypt: The Instruction for Merikare

DO JUSTICE WHILST THOU ENDUREST UPON THE EARTH. Quiet the weeper; do not oppress the widow; supplant no man in the property of his father; and impair no officials at their posts. Be on thy guard against punishing wrongfully. Do not slaughter: it is not of advantage to thee. . . .
	THE COUNCIL [OF GODS] WHICH JUDGES THE DEFICIENT, thou knowest they are not lenient on that day of judging the miserable. . . . they regard a lifetime as (but) an hour. A man remains over after death, and his deeds are placed beside him in heaps*. However, existence yonder is for eternity, and he who complains of it is a fool. (But) as for him who reaches it without wrongdoing, he shall exist yonder like a god, stepping out freely like the lords of eternity.
	. . .
	Well directed are men, the cattle of the god. He made heaven and earth according to their desire, and he repelled the water-monster. He made the breath of life (for) their nostrils. . . . He has slain the treacherous of heart among them, as a man beats his son for his brother's sake. For the god knows every name.

For Discussion

1. What picture of Akkadian religious practice can we draw from the first document?

2. How does *The Instruction for Merikare* demonstrate the new religious concepts that the Egyptians developed in response to the disappearance of political stability and economic prosperity during the First Intermediate Period?

SOURCE: II. "The Instruction for King Meri-kare." James B. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 415 (right column), p. 417 (right column).

* "his deeds are placed beside him in heaps": the Council of Gods weighs his wrongdoing.